‘This pioneering study brings high politics into the analysis of labour emigration. Richly textured and theoretically fecund, it deserves a close reading by scholars of the Middle East, international migration, and authoritarian states.’

David Scott FitzGerald, University of California, San Diego.
Author of Refuge Beyond Reach: How Rich Democracies Deter Asylum Seekers.

‘The significance of migration for economic development is indisputable, but its political effects are often overlooked. In this highly original work Tsourapas shows us how population movements drive political change in Egypt and the Middle East, from the rise of Arab nationalism under Nasser to the “Arab Spring” and beyond.’

James F. Hollifield, Southern Methodist University

‘The Politics of Migration in Modern Egypt makes a major contribution to the nascent literature on migration states beyond the Global North. Melding analytical insights from immigration and emigration, as well as diasporas and development, Tsourapas provides a framework for thinking about migration policy as a multidimensional set of strategic decisions. His study offers an invaluable benchmark, especially for comparisons to other authoritarian regimes.’

Audie Klotz, Syracuse University

‘The Politics of Egyptian Migration provides a valuable contribution on the complex links between political authoritarianism and emigration. The book challenges widely held assumptions about authoritarianism and shows how autocrats use and abuse migration for political ends.’

Fawaz A. Gerges, London School of Economics

‘This is an important and insightful book that develops an original argument around the politics and the political economy of migration in modern Egypt. Gerasimos Tsourapas unravels with consummate skill the threads that bind the fate of Egyptian governments to the success or otherwise of Egypt’s export of human capital over the course of the past sixty years. In a lucid and highly readable account, he explores the ways in which this phenomenon has been a key factor in Egypt’s regional as well as domestic political predicaments.’

Charles Tripp, SOAS University of London
‘In this book, Gerasimos Tsourapas deeply researches and conceptualises labour emigration policies, bringing out their political rationale over three successive articulations of the Egyptian authoritarian regime between the 1950s and 2011. The primary sources he has used are impressive. The book will be essential material for researchers in migration studies, Egyptian politics and politics of authoritarianism more generally.’

Ibrahim Awad, The American University in Cairo

‘A unique book on how the most sedentary people on earth suddenly discovered exodus, and the world’s oldest nation its citizens abroad. Tsourapas offers a major contribution to both the history of contemporary Egypt and the scientific study of international migration.’

Philippe Fargues, European University Institute

‘A pioneer study theorising across a spectrum of non-democratic regimes and perceptively tracing the relationships in Egypt (1952–2011) between different policies (de)regulating the emigration of workers and professionals and regime legitimation, the policy priority being political survival. This well documented study is enriched by intrepid interviewing in Sisi’s Egypt and lightened by abundant cartoons.’

Clement M. Henry, The University of Texas at Austin

‘This engaging and superbly researched book convincingly demonstrates how the analysis of emigration policies can provide fascinating insights into the broader domestic and international politics of an authoritarian regime. It is a much-needed and stimulating contribution to a stronger linkage between the research agendas on migration and politics in the Global South.’

Eva Østergaard-Nielsen, Autonomous University of Barcelona
In this groundbreaking work, Gerasimos Tsourapas examines how migration and political power are inextricably linked, and enhances our understanding of how authoritarian regimes rely on labour emigration across the Middle East and the Global South. Dr Tsourapas identifies how autocracies develop strategies that tie cross-border mobility to their own survival, highlighting domestic political struggles and the shifting regional and international landscape. In Egypt, the ruling elite has long shaped labour emigration policy in accordance with multiple tactics aimed at regime survival. Dr Tsourapas draws on a wealth of previously unavailable archival sources in Arabic and English, as well as extensive original interviews with Egyptian elites and policy-makers, in order to produce a novel account of authoritarian politics in the Arab world. The book offers a new insight into the evolution and political rationale behind regime strategies towards migration, from Gamal Abdel Nasser’s 1952 Revolution to the 2011 Arab Uprisings.

Gerasimos Tsourapas is a Lecturer in Middle East Politics at the University of Birmingham. Prior to this, he was a Senior Teaching Fellow in International Relations at SOAS, University of London, and a Visiting Graduate Scholar at the Centre for Migration and Refugee Studies, The American University in Cairo. He received the 2017 Martin O. Heisler Award of the International Studies Association for work on the politics of migration interdependence in the Middle East. His forthcoming book is entitled Migration Diplomacy in the Middle East (2019).
The Politics of Migration in Modern Egypt

Strategies for Regime Survival in Autocracies

GERASIMOS TSOURAPAS
University of Birmingham
To my father, Antonios Tsourapas (1945–2018)
The number of people makes the wealth of states
Frederick the Great
Contents

List of Figures  page x
List of Tables  xi
Acknowledgements  xiii
Chronology of Key Events  xvi

1  Introduction  1
2  ‘Egyptians Don’t Emigrate’: The Domestic Politics of Migration Restriction  32
3  Exporting the Free Officers’ Revolution: Migration and External Regime Legitimation under Nasser  59
4  ‘Our Most Precious Asset’: The Domestic Politics of Migration Liberalisation  90
5  ‘The Rich Hive Invaded by Foreign Bees’: Migration and External Regime Legitimation under Sadat and Mubarak  128
6  Egypt’s Road to Revolution  161
7  Conclusion  205

Notes  213
Appendix Primary Sources Index  216
Bibliography  223
Index  244

ix
Figures

2.1 ‘The Ministry of Transport’ page 53
2.2 ‘Liberate the Canal!’ 54
3.1 ‘African liberation’ 71
3.2 The first girls’ school in Sana’a, run by Egyptian teachers 72
3.3 Egyptian nurses employed in Yemen 83
3.4 Egyptian pamphlets intercepted in Yemen 85
3.5 Egyptian military in Sana’a 86
3.6 Infrastructure in Yemen built by Egyptians 87
4.1 Televisions in Egypt 104
4.2 Sadat demolishing al-Torah 111
4.3 ‘One way!’ 117
4.4 Sadat at the June 1975 re-opening of the Suez Canal 123
4.5 ‘The 15 May Revolution’ 124
5.1 ‘The Peak | The Summit’ 142
5.2 ‘After the battle for Sinai, Golan and Oil . . . Success’ 145
5.3 Sadat embracing Faisal 148
6.1 Population growth striking development 166
6.2 Family planning week 167
6.3 Overpopulation carried by development 169
6.4 Egyptian migrants as birds 171
6.5 Personal remittances received, 1977–2011 173
6.6 Personal remittances by migrants’ host country 174
6.7 ‘Gaddafi the murderer’ 193
6.8 The speech of President Anwar Sadat 194
Tables

1.1 A framework of labour emigration and authoritarian regime durability

1.2 Stock of Egyptian migrants abroad, 2012

2.1 Projected labour supply in Egypt

2.2 Work permits for employment abroad

2.3 Number of emigrants by country of immigration

2.4 Comparative growth rates: Cairo & Egypt, 1897–1972

3.1 Egyptian teachers in Arab and other countries, 1953–1964

3.2 Egyptian teachers seconded to Arab states by destination, 1953–1962

4.1 Wages in Egyptian pounds, local and foreign

4.2 Estimated number of Egyptian regional migrants

4.3 Income of migrants before and after emigration

5.1 Population of the GCC states

5.2 Destination of Egyptian migrants on government contracts, 1973

5.3 Emigration-related accords between Egypt and Arab states, 1971–2011

5.4 Egyptian teachers officially seconded to Arab countries, 1983–1989

5.5 Egyptian workers and families in key Arab countries

6.1 Egyptian population growth, 1975–2010

6.2 Youth unemployment in Egypt, 1991–2010

6.3 Estimate of employment in Egypt

6.4 Official remittances by Egyptians working abroad

6.5 Estimates of total earnings, savings, and remittances of Egyptians abroad

6.6 Sources and uses of foreign exchange of the al-Infitah banks, June 1981
List of Tables

6.7 Employment in Libya by economic sector and nationality, 1975 191
6.8 Percentage of Arab migrant workers in Libya, by country of origin, 1972–1976 192
6.9 Geographical distribution of Egyptian regional migrants, 1990 and 1993 (%) 199
6.10 Arab share in foreign populations, 1975–2002 201
Acknowledgements

In a project that has lasted for almost four years, one incurs many debts to all those who have sacrificed their time in helping make this manuscript a reality. I wish to offer my heartfelt thanks to Laleh Khalili, Charles Tripp, and Gilbert Achcar for the inspiration and advice they provided throughout my time at SOAS, University of London. One could not have asked for a stronger group of senior scholars to see this project to its successful completion. I also owe gratitude to my two mentors, Fiona Adamson and Maria Koinova. Fiona’s unfailing encouragement has been instrumental in my academic endeavours. Her energy and dedication to the study of migration made the experience of conducting research infinitely more enjoyable. Maria is also deserving of my warmest thanks for her insightful comments and support, while also encouraging me to find my own voice as I navigated my way through the world of migration and diaspora politics. My thanks to both of you. I remain profoundly grateful, and I hope you find that the end result is worthy of your help. I am also indebted to staff members of the SOAS Department of Politics and International Studies, who have, at various times, shared their feedback on my work, including Reem Abou-El-Fadl, Arshin Adib-Moghaddam, Felix Berenskoetter, Phil Clark, Bhavna Davé, Enze Han, Stephen Hopgood, Salwa Ismail, Mark Laffey, Matt Nelson, Anna Rader, Meera Sabaratnam, Lawrence Saez, Kristin Surak, and Leslie Vinjamuri.

This manuscript was completed at the Department of Political Science and International Studies, University of Birmingham, which has been a welcoming and supportive home since 2016. During the course of writing, there have been many colleagues who have graciously given me their time, energy, and advice. I would like to mention Tereza Capelos, David Dunn, Giuditta Fontana, Tim Haughton, George Kyris, Scott Lucas, Richard North, Adam Quinn,
Asaf Siniver, Eleni Vezirgiannidou, Marco Vieira, Robert Watt, Mark Webber, Mark Wenman, Stefan Wolff, Christalla Yakinthou, and Sotiris Zartaloudis. I have striven to emulate their determination, intellectual vigour, and academic engagement in my own work.

In researching the politics of Egyptian emigration, I benefitted from a variety of funding sources, including a generous three-year SOAS Research Studentship. During my fieldwork in Egypt, I was affiliated with the American University of Cairo and the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo. I am grateful to both institutions, particularly for the help of Ibrahim Awad and Rudolf de Jong. Additional grants from the University of Birmingham School of Government and Society and the Department of Political Science and International Studies, the SOAS Department of Politics and International Studies, the SOAS Doctoral School, the American Political Science Association, the British International Studies Association, the European University Institute, the Middle East Studies Association, and the Political Science Association have been instrumental in allowing me to present my work, and significantly improve it. James F. Hollifield, Theodore Couloumbis, and Neophytos Loizides have been constant sources of useful advice and guidance. Much gratitude is owed to Philippe Fargues, David Scott FitzGerald, Fawaz A. Gerges, Clement M. Henry, and Audie Klotz. Valuable comments by Walter Armbust, Michael Farquhar, Sirada Khemanitthathai, Dana Moss, Michelle Pace, Sherene Seikaly have helped strengthen this manuscript in numerous ways. I have had the pleasure of working with exceptional students, including Ahmed Barakat, Hannah Betyna, Noam Chen-Zion, and Ziad Abu Mustafa, who have provided excellent research assistance.

At Cambridge University Press, my thanks are also due to Maria Marsh for believing in this project and seeing it through various stages of publication, as well as to the manuscript’s anonymous reviewers for their generous and detailed comments. I am also grateful to Abigail Walkington, Helen B. Cooper, and Natasha Whelan for their indefatigability and expert support. This book builds on previous work published in diverse outlets since 2011, including the British Academy Review, British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, International Political Science Review, International Studies Quarterly, Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies, Journal of Middle East & North African Migration Studies, Mediterranean Politics, as well as in the American Political Science Association Migration &
Acknowledgements

Citizenship Newsletter. Feedback from journal editors and anonymous reviewers has made a great contribution to my thinking.

I owe my disbelief in the unwritten rule that academic research is a solitary experience to my friends and family. Their enthusiasm and encouragement have been instrumental in so many different ways. Without the help of Tara Buss, this project would have been completely different, and a few lines do not give credit to her enormous contribution. Yoni Abramson, Christian Achreiner, Ahmed Azzam, Hannes Baumann, May Darwich, Emanuele Degli Esposti, Somaia El Sayed, Sarah Garding, Maria Gianniou, Triantafyllos Gouvas, Omar Hammam, Christian Henderson, Janine Hirt, Katie Igras, Dženeta Karabegović, Nancy A. Khalil, Iosif Kovras, Iman Mahdy, Nadejda K. Marinova, Ben Mason, Akanksha Mehta, Covadonga Meseguer, Sruithi Muraleedharan, Kelsey P. Norman, Eleni Papacharalampous, Cathy Purcell, Anna Rader, Mohamed Rahmy, Niamh and Gillian Reoch, Samar Saeed, Ilyas Saliba, Omar Sirri, Jonathan Stephens, Summaiya Zaidi, and Mathilde Zederman have been wonderful sources of camaraderie across different states, countries, and continents. I am grateful to Lachezara Stoeva for her friendship and love of intellectual debate. Alexandros Politis continues to provide unwavering support, through good times and bad. My brother, Dimitris, and my mother, Aikaterini Tsourapa, have always been there for me. Over the past five years, Christine and Torquil Reoch have been an invaluable source of encouragement and bonhomie. Finally, I owe thanks to Fergus Reoch, who has read more drafts on the politics of Egyptian migration than anyone should have to. He has made this book possible with his kindness, enthusiasm, and love for anything Middle Eastern. Here’s to many more years of travel and adventure.
Chronology of Key Events

1952  The Free Officers Movement, led by Muhammad Naguib and Gamal Abdel Nasser, overthrows the British-backed Egyptian monarchy, forcing King Farouk into exile in a process known as the 1952 Revolution.

1954  Nasser places Naguib under house arrest; he becomes prime minister and, in 1956, president.

1954  The Egyptian Ministry of Education is designated the Ministry of Education and Public Instruction, as high-skilled regional emigration is expanded, systematised, and politicised.

1956  Great Britain, France, and Israel’s failed attempt to remove Nasser from power during the Suez Crisis catapults the popularity of Nasser and Nasserism across the Arab world.

1958–61  Egypt and Syria form a political union, the United Arab Republic.

1967  The Six-Day War between Israel and Arab states leads to a humiliating military defeat for Egypt, which loses the Sinai Peninsula to Israel and faces massive socio-economic problems.

1969  Confronted with exorbitant amounts of emigration requests, the Egyptian state suspends all permits.

1970  Nasser dies at 52. He had appointed Anwar Sadat as vice-president only in December 1969.

1971  Sadat purges the Nasserist elements from government and security forces, initiating a sustained process of de-Nasserisation known as the 15 May, or Corrective, Revolution.

1971  Sadat has the new Permanent Egyptian Constitution adopted via referendum. Article 52 states that ‘Egyptian
citizens shall now have the right to permanent or temporary migration’.

1973  Egypt launches a surprise attack against Israel that leads to the October War. Egyptian forces cross the Suez Canal and regain the Sinai. Sadat becomes the Hero of the Crossing.

1973  Detailed state statistics on Egyptian emigration cease to be collected.

1974  Any remaining measures regulating labour emigration are formally abolished, as per Egypt’s open-door economic policy, or al-Infitah.

1975  Prime Minister Mamduh Salim declares that ‘Egypt’s policy is to encourage export of its manpower to the Arab world … so that Egyptians can participate in the development plans of sister Arab states’.

1978  Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin sign the Camp David Accords.

1978–89  Immediately following Camp David, Arab states impose an economic and diplomatic embargo on Egypt.

1980  Egyptian military experts, followed by servicemen and, ultimately, civilians, are recruited by the Saddam Hussein regime during the 1980–88 Iran–Iraq War.

1981  Sadat is assassinated during an annual celebration of the Suez Canal crossing. Hosni Mubarak becomes president, without any changes to state emigration policy.

1981  Presidential Decree 574 establishes a separate Ministry of State for Emigration Affairs.

1983  Law 111 on ‘The Emigration and Egyptians’ Welfare Abroad’, still in use today, formalises the distinction between temporary and permanent Egyptian migrants.

1990–91  More than 0.5 Egyptian migrants forcibly return from Iraq and Kuwait.

1996  Presidential Decree 31 establishes a Ministry for Manpower and Emigration.

2011  Mubarak is forced to resign during the January 25 Revolution.