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CONGRESS

Middle East and Muslim Worlds
Studies

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Panel 74

Civilians, Armies and Citizens: Rights and duties in the contemporary Middle East and North Africa region

Whether they are “wedded” to the political regimes in place or ruling from the shadow, Arab armies have been studied and known for their incessant interference in politics. The latest examples are the cases of Algeria, Sudan and Lebanon whereby the armies interfered directly in politics by forcing the head of the regime to step down, came to power or directly coerced protestors.

In other cases that date back ten years now, during the 2011 Arab uprisings, the armies in the various affected countries reacted differently, which has been documented by some scholars. From the cases of Egypt to the case of Syria, which have shown two extremes, many entangled aspects have affected the armies’ reactions to popular dissent. Why and how do Arab armies continue to interfere in politics in the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA)? How does that affect civil-military relations? How does it affect the rights and status of civilians? Does the military interference in politics affect the definition of citizenship?

This panel aims to bring together academics and researchers interested in the topic and the above-mentioned questions while examining these questions on a comparatively regional and updated level. The panel is meant to cover numerous aspects:

Military forces and citizenship in the Arab constitutions;

The role of the army in shaping the political party system, either directly or as a structuring issue;

Military-state ties at the institutional and economic levels.

Person in charge : Tonsy Sara (IEP Aix, Cherpa/Iremam)

Discussant : Dazi-Héni Fatiha (IRSEM)

Program

Ashraf el-Sherif Habiba (Cairo University, Faculty of Economics and Political Science)

The Saudi Arabian War in Yemen and the Success of the Houthis Resistance

The Saudi Arabian War in Yemen and the success of the Houthis resistance is a paper that examines the following questions: How did the Houthis last for five years in a war? How was this para-military movement able to stand up against the Saudi coalition? This contribution is based on fieldwork and a recent review of the relevant literature.

Pluta Audrey (IEP Aix, IREMAM)

A security apparatus under pressure? Police-military relations in post-2011 Tunisia

The Tunisian army, often described as historically depoliticized – and even marginalized since Bourguiba – is present in the political space and the media since 2011. Retired officers intervening in the media,

creation of political parties, nomination of the top brass in the Ministry of Interior, candidacy of the Minister of Defense at the presidential elections... All these transformations in the politicization and the public appearance of the military affect the security apparatus, subject to reorganizations due to the struggle opposing different bodies. In 2011 particularly, after Ben Ali's dismissal, policemen feel threatened by the popularity of the military, and its control over security issues.

This paper will examine the evolution of the relations between those two bodies, affected by the regime change and the post-revolutionary political context. It will be based on a dozen semi-structured interviews realized in Tunis, Gafsa, and Sfax, with police and National Guard's sub-officers, and with Infantry officers.

This paper benefited from the financial support of the ERC-funded project (convention No. 695674): "Political and socio-institutional change in North Africa. Competition of models and diversity of trajectories" (TARICA).

Steuer Clément (Institute of International Relations, Prague)

The Role of the Military within the Institutions: An Issue Structuring the Egyptian Party System

The Egyptian military has been playing a key role in the institutions of this country since the proclamation of the Republic in 1952. Nevertheless, starting in the 1970s, it had not been directly involved in the political field until 2011 and had favored instead the building of an economic empire. The 2011 revolution put it at the front stage for a second time, and it has since then intervened in the political arena to protect its interests. In so doing, it has transformed the issue of its place in the institutions into a political stake, participating in the structuring of the Egyptian party system. This explains why the revolutionary/ counter-revolutionary cleavages has become the second most important issue for the organization of the Egyptian political life, the first one being the Islamist/secularist cleavage, which is a common characteristic shared by all the North-African party systems. This paper benefited from the financial support of the ERC funded project (convention No. 695674): "Political and socio-institutional change in North Africa. Competition of models and diversity of trajectories" (TARICA).

Tonsy Sara (IEP Aix, Cherpa, Iremam)

Militarization of Citizens in the Egyptian Political Field

A decade ago, the Arab Uprisings that hit the region resulted in varied outcomes. These outcomes affected the various countries politically, socially and economically. Among these outcomes was the rise of various Arab armies to the forefront of the political field in Egypt, Algeria, Sudan, with a failed attempt in Turkey. In Egypt, the presence of the army resulted in a drastic change in civil-military relations, which in turn affected the status of the civilians and/or citizens. How did the rejuvenation of the army's presence in the Egyptian political field affect the 'citizen?'

Al-mowatanah (citizenship) is a term that was introduced to the Egyptian constitution only in 2007 amid other constitutional amendments by ex-president Hosni Mubarak. The term replaced the previously used "alliance of popular forces," a souvenir from the 1952 coup d'état. This paper intends to highlight the recent elements related to citizens' rights, which were affected upon the rejuvenation of the army's presence in politics. This varies from the military trials of civilians, entry to the Military Academy and the financial/ economic aspects related to this presence. Another crucial point is the status of the mowaten (citizen) as compared to the status of the armed forces and its members.