The study of democratic polity and citizenship in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco

The 2010-2011 Arab uprisings have broken many myths and questioned the underpinnings of US and EU engagement with the region. We believe the ‘Arab Awakening’ represents a critical juncture in regional politics and in international relations, redefining a number of assumptions and approaches.

Many of the current debates in Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco focus on citizenship rights and their evolution. There is also a need to understand the the background to these debates, including the implementation of sharia, the clash over the confessional or the secular nature of the State, of a social welfare agenda, the expansion or reduction of the role of the state or of the market.

The research project "Democracy and Citizenship rights in North Africa after the Arab Awakening: challenges to US and EU foreign policy" (EUSPRING) aims at understanding how concepts of democracy and citizenship rights are interpreted by different social and political forces in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. At the same time, the project will investigate the extent to which a transatlantic dialogue over democracy assistance policies towards North Africa is taking place.

This collaborative project will analyse:
• the new constitutions or constitutional drafts
• the negotiations over the terms of the norms
• and the way in which they have been presented to the public, criticized and defended.

This will offer new highly policy-relevant elements to be taken into account by external actors formulating new MENA strategies and approaches.

Coordinating Institution
Università l'Orientale, Naples, Italy
http://www.unior.it/Project Management Team
Ruth Hanau Santini, Project Coordinator,
ghanausantini@jhuc.it
Pietro Longo, Post-doctoral Fellow,
plongo@unior.it
Arianna Morelli, Project Manager,
arianna_morelli@yahoo.it

 Democracy and Citizenship rights in North Africa after the Arab Awakening: challenges to US and EU foreign policy
The first series of policy briefs

This series of policy briefs provides a regular update of debates concerning key rights issues in three Arab states, Morocco, Egypt and Tunisia. In a first round of briefs on the three countries, we provide background on these debates since the beginning of the Arab spring.

Arab Citizenship Review No. 1 - Egypt

By Moataz El Fegiery and Ragab Saad, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies

Arab Citizenship Review No. 2 - Morocco

By Ward Vloeberghs and Youssef Benkirane, CERAM / Ecole de Gouvernance et d’Economie de Rabat, Morocco

Arab Citizenship Review No. 3 - Tunisia

By Ahmed Driss, Centre for Mediterranean and International Studies

The first objective of the project is to understand the ways in which the concept of democratic polity, and one of its structural components, citizenship, is understood by different social and political forces in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. Against the background of a comparison between Western and Arab interpretations of rights, the project examines which social and political forces advocate the expansion or limitations of some specific rights. Analyzing discourses and debates surrounding rights provides unique lenses for an innovative and informative analysis of these transitions.

The second objective of the project is to analyze to what extent international actors are redefining their democracy assistance policies as a consequence of the epochal changes and the actual shapes North African polities are evolving into. Through discourse analysis and in-depth interviews, we look in particular at the ‘world views’ behind democracy assistance by US and EU policymakers. Understanding the changes that the experience of the Arab Awakening may have triggered in Western policies towards MENA will also contribute to reformulating actor-based conceptions of their international role. The ways in which the US and the EU will redefine their goals and engagement paradigms will have an impact on the model they claim to pursue and on the theoretical understandings of their role.