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GENERAL CONCEPT PAPER

by Laura Guazzone and Daniela Pioppi

Documento preparato nell'ambito del progetto pluriennale
"The Dynamics of Change in the Arab World: Globalisation and the re-structuring of State Power"
in collaborazione con lo Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI-SIIA)

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Project Rationale Recent international events brought Arab politics to the forefront of the world's attention and revealed the failure of current explanatory paradigms to foresee and explain political change in the region, namely those paradigms that identify Islam as the fundamental explanatory variable or that portray globalisation as an unquestionably democratising force. Given the strategic relevance of the Arab countries for global security and peace, a better understanding of developments on the ground and a new conceptualisation of the dynamics of change in the Arab world are strongly needed.

Project Aim The research project aims at elaborating new empirical data and a new conceptualisation of the political, economic and security changes in the Arab countries today as well as their policy implications for domestic and international actors.

1. The background of the research: political change without democratisation in the Arab World

In the last two decades, the study of change in developing countries has been dominated by a framework of analysis and a set of assumptions largely inspired by the theories of transition towards democracy.¹ Although the Arab world is often considered a latecomer and/or an exception with respect to the much more advanced political and economic transitions in other parts of the world, it is still widely analysed in the same perspective.

Recent studies, however, have started to criticise the so-called *democratisation paradigm* for its prescriptive and normative bias. More precisely, they question the idea that political change can be analysed and measured on a rigid and universal path going from authoritarianism to democracy through a set of pre-given sequences, thus determining a sort of teleological search for democracy, even where empirical evidences are very weak to say the least.²

Moreover, critics of the democratisation theory pointed out that most democratisation studies do not consider structural variables – such as the structure of the economy, the process of state-formation and so on – as relevant factors in the onset and outcome of the transition process, as if success of transition could simply be granted by applying a universal recipe, independently from the context.³ As Carothers quite rightly argued:

¹ O'Donnell, Guillermo, Schmitter, Philippe; Whitehead, Laurence (eds.) (1986), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule. Comparative Perspectives*, Baltimore and London: the Johns Hopkins University Press; Huntington, Samuel P.(1991), *The Third Wave. Democratisation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press.

² Carothers, Thomas (2002), 'The end of the transition paradigm', *Journal of Democracy*, 13, 1

³ Rueschmeyer, Dietrich ; Stephens, Evelyne H. ; Stephens, John D. (1992), *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.

“All that seemed to be necessary for democratisation was a decision by a country’s political elites to move toward democracy and an ability on the part of those elites to fend off the contrary actions of remaining antidemocratic forces”.⁴

According to the critics of the democratisation ‘paradigm’, the prescriptive and voluntaristic bias of the transition theory had the consequence of granting a primary importance to the institutional and formal aspect of politics, to the disadvantage of the analysis of power relations and variables, both in their national and international dimensions.

As far as the Arab world is concerned, post-colonial regimes had to face in the last two to three decades a number of internal and external challenges (i.e. fiscal crisis, legitimacy crisis, end of the cold war, etc.). Indeed, those challenges were the main drive to a transformation process reaching all aspects of political life: the political discourse used by the regimes and the oppositions changed; the organisation of the economic system changed through structural adjustment policies, privatisation and liberalisation; and, finally, political institutions changed through an ever broader institutional and juridical reform which, at least formally, improved the mechanisms and the guarantees of political participation.

However, while transitologists believe this process to be leading toward economic and political liberalisation and, eventually, democratisation, their critics have recently pointed to the adaptation capacity of regimes, which successfully implemented tactical opening with no substantial change on their authoritarian nature.⁵

In fact, notwithstanding recent transformations which, as precarious as they may be, seem to converge towards the construction of more liberal political regimes, a significant number of analysts agree that the reforms carried out or under way do not represent a real process of democratisation, nor are they preliminary to it, and that they actually configure and legitimate a restructuring of the power system, both at the national and international level, that does not change the authoritarian and patrimonial nature of the regimes.

Yet, in spite of the growing academic consensus on the *neo-authoritarian* character of the ongoing transition in the Arab world, its inner and international dynamics and consequences are still in many senses obscure. This is probably due to the large space given to the democratisation debate since the eighties: both transitologists and their critics have long been concentrated in either forecasting systemic change or in denying it, thus neglecting the important study of political transformation below the level of systemic transition.

This project aims precisely at filling this void by investigating the internal and international dynamics and the socio-political consequences of the on-going restructuring of the power system in the Arab World and by taking a more open

⁴ Carothers, op. cit., p. 8.

⁵ See, for instance, Albrecht, Holger; Schlumberger, Oliver (2004), “Waiting for Gødot: Regime change Without Democratisation in the Middle East”, *International Political Science Review*, October; Bicchi, Federica; Guazzone, Laura; Pioppi, Daniela (eds.) (2004), *La questione della democrazia e il mondo arabo. Stati, società, conflitti*, Monza, Polimetrica; Posusney, Marsha Pripstein; Angrist, Michele Penner (eds.) (2005), *Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Regimes and Resistance*, London, Lynne Rienner.

approach that takes into account change below that of transition from one type of regime to another.⁶

In other words, rather than approaching the most debated questions of transition to democracy or, on its opposite, authoritarianism resilience and adaptability, the main object of this research would be *change within authoritarianism* in the Arab world:

- In what ways are current regimes in the Arab World different from their post-independence predecessors in terms of social bases and ruling coalitions, distribution of resources, modes of governing, political discourses?
- How does change in the Arab world interact with structural change at the global level and with specific external actors' policies?
- What are the internal and international consequences of this change?

2. Interpreting change in the Arab World: globalisation and the changing structure of state power

Most analysts of present-day societies would agree on identifying the driving force of change in the contemporary world with that cluster of dynamics commonly referred to as *globalisation*. Ironically, no common definition of globalisation could be found in the literature, although all definitions comprise a number of historical events such as the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the communication technology revolution and, generally speaking, growing global economic interconnectedness in which international financial management and global orthodoxies concerning fiscal practises, openness, loans, and national indebtedness are essential ingredients.

For Arab countries, globalisation has mainly implied growing external interferences in their economic, security and political spheres or - to be more precise - a growing sharing in a subordinate position into a renewed globalised order. In fact, Arab countries have been increasingly exposed to standardisation with the globalization's leading countries and therefore have engaged in "externally" imposed structural adjustment programmes, security arrangements and liberalisation reforms. This is true to the point that the current situation, despite important differences, bears many analogies with the epoch of the so called *first globalisation*, i.e. the period of European colonial expansion in the Middle East (1870-1914). Yesterday as today, the directions of political and economic change – or the process of state formation - are largely determined by the capacity of local actors to adapt or react to external pressures for reform and by the intended and/or unintended effects of these interactions.

Transition theories agree on the fact that growing external pressure is one of the most powerful factors in leading to political change, but then assume that the direction of this change in authoritarian political systems is, at least potentially, towards political

⁶ An important step in this direction was the workshop “Dynamics of Stability: Middle Eastern Political Regimes Between Functional Adaptation and Authoritarian Resilience” organised by Oliver Schlumberger and Farid al-Khazen at the 5th Mediterranean Social & Political Research Meeting, Florence & Montecatini Terme, March 2004.

liberalisation and, eventually, democratisation. For Arab countries the argument goes that post-Second World War authoritarian regimes relied heavily on the state's almost complete control of the political sphere and of the economy to grant their citizens' political compliance. Once the fiscal crisis and international pressures reduced the ideological and allocative capacities of the state, the basis of support would also decrease and the required political reform and structural adjustment of the economy would encourage the emergence of new political and economic actors, thus fostering the expansion of political and economic participation.

Recent studies on Arab countries, however, have effectively demonstrated that political and economic reforms do not necessarily imply a loosening of the state's control over society and, hence, the emergence of independent actors.⁷ In countries like Morocco and Egypt, for example, privatisation processes have represented a chance for ruling elites to reorganise or, better, shift patronage networks towards the private sector without undermining the power of the state as the ultimate source of rent. On the contrary, they have provided it with new sources of wealth and new opportunities for accumulation and distribution. In fact, the emerging private sector in Arab countries remains dependent upon state connections for its own survival and thus easily cooptable by the regime.⁸

At the political level, the introduction of limited or formal institutional reform and multiparty systems allows for, in the best-case scenario, a system of controlled and limited representation of those social groups benefiting from economic reform. At the same time, it eases internal tensions and provides regimes with international legitimacy, while the majority of the population remains excluded from significant political processes, as demonstrated by the lack of social constituencies of most opposition parties and groups.⁹

These empirical findings question the *state retreat/expanding society approach* that characterises much of the transition literature. In fact, they all indicate that *the state is still the main source of authority and control, albeit by delegating some of its functions to private actors, and using more indirect and sometime informal modes of government.*¹⁰

The empirical observation of the endurance of state power in the Arab world has produced a large debate on the Arab states' exceptional 'resistance' to global trends.¹¹ In general, the 'post-democratisation' literature emphasises the successful *survival strategies* of incumbent Arab elites that have

⁷ Hakimian, Hassan; Moshaver, Ziba (eds.) (2001), *The State and Global Change. The Political Economy of Transition in the Middle east and North Africa*, Richmond: Surrey, Curzon

⁸ See the concept paper for the economic sector of the research.

⁹ Catusse, Myriam; Vairel, Frédéric (2003), "Ni tout à fait le même, ni tout à fait un autre. Métamorphose et continuité du régime marocain", *Monde arabe – Maghreb – Machrek*, 175; Hibou, Béatrice (1996), "Les enjeux de l'ouverture au Maroc. Dissidence économique et contrôle politique", *Les études du CERI*, 15, April; Kienle, Eberhard (2001), *Democracy and Economic Reform in Egypt: A Grand Delusion*, London: I.B. Tauris; Kassem, May (2004), *Egyptian politics: the dynamics of authoritarian rule*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers. See the concept paper for the political sector of the research.

¹⁰ Hibou, Béatrice (ed.) (2004), *Privatising the State*, London: Hurst & Company.

¹¹ Henry, Clement M.; Springborg, Robert (2001), *Globalization and the Politics of Development in the Middle East*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

permitted them to exceptionally maintain state power *despite* externally imposed political and economic reforms.

Yet, the existence of a coherent global trend towards reducing state power to which the Arab world would be 'resistant' is far from being verified. At a closer look, in fact, the state not only does not seem to be globally in question, but also significantly remains the *main internationally recognised framework for political action* and the *main mediation structure between the global and the local*.¹² Local ruling elites in the Arab world derive their power and their patronage network precisely from the fact of controlling a *globally recognised* state, in as much as political and economic elites in core industrialised countries utilise state power to expand and protect their interests.

As Hibou and Bayart quite rightly point out in their thought-provoking works, the idea of a global trend of state 'retreat' and, we add consequently, the opposite but symmetrical thesis of the Arab state's exceptional resilience, are based on a substantialistic and normative definition of the state, artificially separated from the social group detaining power inside it and from society at large.¹³ A more useful approach to study the dynamics of political change in the Arab world, as elsewhere, would be instead to consider the state as a *system of power*, which can extend its control well beyond its formal institutions. For instance, the state can 'retreat' from certain functions (e.g. providing social services to the population), but still maintain its control on the economy and on wealth accumulation and distribution through its informal patronage networks. Or the appearance of extra-state actors, apparently in opposition or competition with the state itself, can be interpreted as a *redployment* of the latter using new strategies that include a growing reliance on private intermediaries (e.g. informal association of state officials with private entrepreneurs in most Arab countries - but also in the US or in Italy -, with smugglers in Morocco or with private providers of social services - including NGOs and Islamists - in Egypt and Morocco).¹⁴

Hence, what is in question at the global level (and in the Arab world) is not the relevance of the state as a system of power, but the forms and points of state intervention and the nature of the values and norms that the state reproduces. *Globalisation could therefore be exemplified as an on-going process of state restructuring both for industrialised core countries and for peripheral weak-states*. There is nothing particularly new in this process. In fact, the role, functions and formal boundaries of the state are constantly changing categories reflecting internal and external power relations: what pertains to the private sphere and what to the public; what distributional role the state should have; what is the sacred realm of national sovereignty and what is of international competence, depend on the historically and geographically varied results of a struggle between relevant internal and international actors for the management and distribution of political and economic resources. In this perspective, the epoch we live in does not necessarily represent a radical cut with the past, such as a qualitative transformation of the capitalist mode of production or the interruption of that multi-secular connection between capitalism and the formation of a states system, but it definitely corresponds to a significant alteration of the distribution of political and economic resources both within states and between them.

¹² Bayart, Jean-François (2004), *Le gouvernement du monde. Une critique politique de la globalisation*, Paris, Fayard; Hibou, op. cit., 2004.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Hibou, op. cit., 2004

The present phase of global *state re-structuring* begins in the 1980s and 1990s, the decades of economic liberalization and privatisation, during which economic reform and structural adjustment unfolded in free-market West European economies, in centrally controlled markets, such as China and Eastern Europe, and in interventionist regimes of Less Developed Countries (LDCs). As varied as they may be, these reforms bear several common characteristics: they all find approval in the (neo-)liberal discourse, they all make increasing use of private means for governing, they all alter not only the forms of economic regulation but also the forms of political regulation and the forms of sovereignty. In other words, they all displace, relativise and re-draw the borders between the 'public' and the 'private'.

However, the effects, arrangements and responses to this global process of *state restructuring towards an increased use of private and indirect modes of government* vary greatly from context to context, for instance from Western democracies to authoritarian Arab regimes, depending *inter alia* on the local historical configuration of power, so that some global trends (e.g. the change in the distributional role of the state reflecting changes in the power relation between labour and capital in favour of the latter) could determine very different local or national arrangements or responses.

2.1 Working hypotheses of alternative futures for Arab political regimes

The process of state *restructuring* and *redeployment* resulting from the interactions of international and domestic actors could lead to very different regional and national outcomes.

In some cases, it could *consolidate neo-authoritarian political regimes*, in which the state increasingly represents the sum of the private interests of the members of the regime and is less and less accountable to its own citizens (privatisation of the state). This development would be characterised by a fragmentation of the power structure and by an increase in informal modes of government (neo-patrimonialism, corruption), with a parallel political and economic marginalisation of large social sectors.

However, a reduction in budget revenues and corresponding financial difficulties for the public administration; a reduction in expenditure and in the quality of services and, hence, a loss of legitimacy by the state administration and public authorities; a fragmentation of decision-making powers; and the primacy accorded to external rather than internal legitimacy, are all factors that are bound to create their own local dynamics and growing internal opposition. To this should be added the growing articulation of the national political and economic arenas and the effects of the trans-national flow of ideas and information, which could give new room for opposition to and transformation of traditional power.

Yet, only a bottom-up process of mobilisation and politicisation can break the neo-patrimonial mechanisms on which the regimes are based, thus triggering a real *enlargement of political and economic participation and, possibly, democratisation*. For this to happen, an international context favourable to real democratisation is needed.

Growing political instability and opposition to incumbent regimes could also bring about a *return of more populist and nationalist forms of authoritarianism*, especially where a loss of the regimes' legitimacy is coupled with a conflict-ridden and hostile international environment.

3. The research

3.1 *The research focus*

Following on from what has been discussed in the previous paragraph, the research will analyse the transformations in power relations in the Arab world and, hence, the direction of political change, by examining two general and interrelated dynamics:

- (1) *The changing structure of state power.* The internal process of state *restructuring*; i.e. the changing role, functions and formal boundaries of the state resulting from historically and geographically diverse struggles for the management and distribution of political and economic resources;
- (2) *The dynamics and consequences of the growing Arab world sharing into a globalised order.* The impact of the Arab world increased exposure to standardisation with globalisation's leading countries (e.g. externally

imposed structural adjustment programmes, security arrangements and liberalisation reforms). The directions of political and economic change – or the continuous process of state formation - are in fact largely determined by the capacity of local actors to adapt or react to external pressures for reform and by the intended and/or unintended effects of these interactions. Interactions between domestic and international actors are complex and can have opposite effects. Outside pressures could either benefit (e.g. by providing new sources of wealth accumulation) or undermine local ruling elites (e.g. by delegitimising the regime) or contribute to creating certain internal political arrangements (e.g. by supporting specific opposition groups and contrasting others). The side effects of these complex interactions (e.g. emerging economic or political actors; new political discourses and forms of mobilisation) could in turn determine unexpected political developments.

3.2 *The research sectors*

These two general dynamics determining the direction of political change in the Arab world will be investigated in the three inter-related *research sectors* corresponding to the fundamental areas of post-independence state power:

- (1) *Security and coercion (security sector);*
- (2) *Wealth accumulation and distribution (political economy sector);*
- (3) *Political mobilisation (political sector);*

For each sector, the research will focus on a set of *sectorial research areas* with the final aim of giving new insight into the general dynamics of change mentioned previously:

- (1) How is the structure of state power changing in that specific sector?
- (2) What are the interactions of domestic and international actors and the side effects of their actions in that specific sector?

3.3 *The national case studies*

The *national case studies* envisaged by the project are the following: Morocco, Egypt, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia.

The main reason for the selection of the four countries mentioned above is that they constitute a good sample of the Arab world diversity:

(1) Morocco, Egypt and Saudi Arabia are representative of different sub-regions within the Arab world (Maghreb, Mashreq, Gulf); while Lebanon is in many ways a ‘deviant’, yet critical case to include in the analysis.

(2) The four countries selected have *very different processes of ‘state formation’* and very different political regimes, thus representing a fairly good sample of the Arab World regimes’ variety:

Egypt: prototype of the ‘radical’ nationalist populist regime in the 50s-60s; policy shift with Sadat and Mubarak, but still ‘strong’ state (bureaucracy, hegemonic party, military)

Morocco: traditional monarchy (Makhzen-tribes) – indirect system of rule

Lebanon: ‘weak’ communitarian state – externally vulnerable (civil conflict 1975-1991)

Saudi Arabia: traditional monarchy (kin-ordered), but also prototype of rentier state/oil exporting economy

Moreover, in all the four countries selected, recent national, regional and/or international events have multiplied the effects of the general process of state restructuring, thus accelerating the pace of change

(e.g. the issue of succession in Morocco and Egypt; Syrian withdrawal in the case of Lebanon; 9/11 and growing internal and regional opposition in the case of Saudi Arabia, etc.).

Time-frame of the research

In terms of research time-frame, it is important to keep a historical comparative perspective to highlight structural change, although the focus of the analysis should be on the last ten years (mid-1990s till today- the exact periodisation depending on the research sector and country).

3.4 *Introduction to the three sectors of the research*

The following paragraphs offer a brief introduction of the three *sectors* of the research. The sectorial frameworks of the research are fully developed through separate *concept papers*, which discuss the sectorial research areas and provide the research guidelines for the elaboration of the case studies.

The research sector of security and coercion (security sector)

In the last two decades, a number of new factors, international (end of the Cold War and new US Greater Middle East strategy), regional (first and second Iraq war, collapse of Oslo process) and internal (political and economic reform) have modified the Arab states' organisation of internal and external security.

This trend has been accelerated in recent years by the challenge of global terrorism and Western responses to it (e.g. military interventions and increased intelligence control), which have bolstered the use of force as a means of regulating international relations, while limiting weaker states' margin of manoeuvre in security matters and increasing their dependency on external support.

The increasing importance of foreign intervention, foreign bases and stationed troops in Arab states' internal and external security has both a stabilising and de-stabilising effect on the states concerned (Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq) and on their chances of peaceful political change.

Armies have not become smaller and have maintained substantial budgets, often keeping a 'behind the scenes' political role. The military are traditionally key political actors in Arab regimes. Military personnel and expenditures in most Arab countries represent an important aspect of the 'body and muscle' of the state, while military elites remain crucial – if not pivotal – partners in most ruling coalitions.

As far as the functions of the armed forces are concerned, there has been a progressive 'civilianisation' of cabinets and other political and administrative organisations, combined with an increased emphasis on professionalism within the armed forces and growing efforts aimed at depoliticising the military. An indicator of this might be the expanding 'economic wing' of the army, which in many countries is involved not only in military industries (as was the case in the '50s and '60s), but also in extensive public works and various semi-private economic activities (e.g. Egypt, Algeria). This can be seen as an example of the redeployment of state bureaucracies from public to private sectors.

As far as the management of internal security is concerned, today both regimes and armed oppositions organise their strategies by taking external factors increasingly into consideration, lest they bring on (at least theoretically) foreign intervention or hostile mobilization (e.g. Syria, Lebanon). But due *inter alia* to the effects of the global war on terror, this development does not always translate into a more peaceful approach to the resolution of internal conflicts. For example, the timing of suppression of radical Islamic opposition by military means is often a by-product, however manipulated and/or negotiated, of the regime's obedience to international requirements and foreign pressures. For all the new emphasis on democratisation as the new Western security goal in the Middle East, strategic rent is still received by local pillars of regional or sub-regional stability or, conversely, countries acting as pivots for externally-driven change, as proved by the enduring flows of military aid, and remains an important asset for many Arab regimes (Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia).

Research areas The consequences of these trends of change in the organisation of the internal and external security of Arab states will be analysed through the following research areas:

- (1) The impact of the redefinition by foreign actors of national and regional security architecture (e.g. foreign interventionism and arms proliferation; competition for strategic rent and military aid).
- (2) The changing functions of the armed forces and their role in regime transition (e.g. 'civilianisation'; alliance with old/new interest groups);
- (3) The changing strategies of national security apparatuses and armed opposition groups (e.g. change in patterns of repression vs. cooptation of dissent or reliance on foreign assets for territorial control; relationship between local and trans-national terrorist networks);

The research sector of wealth accumulation and distribution (political economy sector)

Since the end of the Cold War, the restructuring of the global economy – both in terms of production and finance – has resulted in a growing vulnerability on the part of the Arab states to external pressures for liberalisation and privatisation.

As a consequence, all Arab countries - without exception – have implemented some form of economic liberalisation, with some more advanced cases (e.g. Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Egypt) and some more problematic ones (e.g. Algeria, Syria, Libya and the oil-producer monarchies).

Yet, in spite of the ambitions of the world's leading countries and international financial institutions to make their economic prescriptions universal, the concrete implementation and effects of economic reform vary greatly from one context to another and depend *inter alia* on the bargaining capacity of local ruling elites, on international actors' local interests and, finally, on pre-existing and historically determined political and economic structures.

Generally speaking, economic reforms in the Arab countries have not produced the predicted results (i.e. economic efficiency, emergence of a competitive and productive private sector, more rational distribution of resources, etc.). Economic liberalisation measures have been used mainly by incumbent elites as a strategic tool for restructuring external relations (e.g. negotiating external rents and re-orienting international trade) and the internal distribution of resources (e.g. coopting new social groups and excluding others). For instance, privatisation policies in Morocco, Egypt or Jordan – just to mention a few – have largely implied a shift in patronage networks from the public to the private sector allowing for the persistence of existing regimes and the formation of crony capitalists, rather than competitive markets. At the same time, the reduction in state budgets and the decline of social services have caused the growing marginalisation of a large part of the population.

These policies should not be seen as necessarily in opposition to outside pressures. On the contrary, they can be reinforced or legitimised by international trends. For example, international businesses or foreign states could very well operate through government channels thus reinforcing the internal government/private sector symbiosis. Moreover, by providing profitable connections at the global scale, internal liberalisation and privatisation processes, as well as international exchange, offer members of the regime and their clients an opportunity for enrichment and a way out of the fiscal crisis, while

externally imposed cuts in public administration and welfare push for a new distribution of resources which is more favourable to the upper social echelon.

In general, internationally imposed reforms and their local interpretations contribute by means of their contrasts and alliances to a re-structuring of the state's economic functions, which imply greater reliance on indirect (and informal) modes of government. This process is part of a global trend, but finds a specific expression in each regional and national context.

Research areas The dynamics and consequences of the process of state re-structuring in the economic sector will be analysed through the following research areas:

- (1) The modalities of wealth accumulation and redistribution under economic reform
- (2) The changing role of the state in the provision of social welfare services
- (3) The changing state-labour relations

The research sector of political mobilisation (political sector)

The decline of post-independence state ideologies (Arab socialism, Arab nationalism), the growing trans-national flow of ideas and information coupled with increased outside intervention in domestic politics and international pressures for reform have radically altered the organisation of the forms and contents of political mobilisation in the Arab world.

One of the main transformations has been the introduction under international pressure of participatory mechanisms that are formally more democratic (multi-party systems, reform of the legal framework for non-governmental organisations, etc.), but that take on a different meaning in practice, mainly for two reasons. First, participatory mechanisms have been combined with repressive policies towards political actors that are potentially autonomous or that simply have a grass-roots base (e.g. the Islamists). But above all, they have been accompanied by the depoliticisation of political confrontation, that is to say, by a system of settling contrasting political interests that is, paradoxically, managed even less than in the past through the formal system of political representation (e.g. parties, trade unions).

In general it can be said that the ongoing political processes imply a general transition – despite their diversity – from post-colonial *inclusive hegemonic regimes* (i.e. political regimes characterised by large popular mobilisation (populism), strong ideology and nearly absent political competition) to more *competitive oligarchies* (i.e. political regimes characterised by higher intra-elite political competition).

This transition is more evident in countries such as Egypt, Lebanon or Morocco, where recent national events have multiplied its effects (e.g. the debate on the succession of Mubarak in Egypt; the withdrawal of Syrian troops in Lebanon; the death of Hassan II in Morocco), producing more acute intra-elite struggles.

Political theory suggests that increased intra-elite competition could have a positive impact on the political mobilisation of those social strata previously excluded from any active political involvement. In brief, increased conflictuality between elite factions,

typical of competitive oligarchies, could drive elite groups to search for the support and, hence, the mobilisation of progressively larger parts of the population.

Yet, when carried out by a top-down process, political mobilisation of larger social strata does not necessarily lead to greater *active political participation* capable of contributing to a real process of political liberalisation and democratisation.

A real enlargement of political participation depends on a number of complex variables, such as the intensity of political pressure for enlargement of participation coming from lower social strata organised in parties, trade unions or similar organisations; the degree of institutionalisation of civil and political rights and freedoms; and the efficacy of the regime's repressive apparatus.

Furthermore, the growing external vulnerability of Arab political systems could have a negative impact on domestic political transitions. In fact, the prevailing international discourse equates democratisation with a liberalisation compatible with the strategic interests of dominant powers. Domestic actors could be supported or opposed by foreign states depending on their propensity to defend and represent those states' interests. Or, domestic actors could find it more useful to seek international legitimacy, rather than support for the mobilisation of their own constituencies. The so-called 'Beirut spring' or the recent Egyptian presidential elections are good examples of this trend.

Research areas

- (1) The changing political strategy of regimes in terms of cooptation and mobilisation of different social groups
- (2) The changing elites and their impact on the mobilisation and participation of different social groups
- (3) The changing channels and forms of political mobilisation from below

RESEARCH OUTLINE

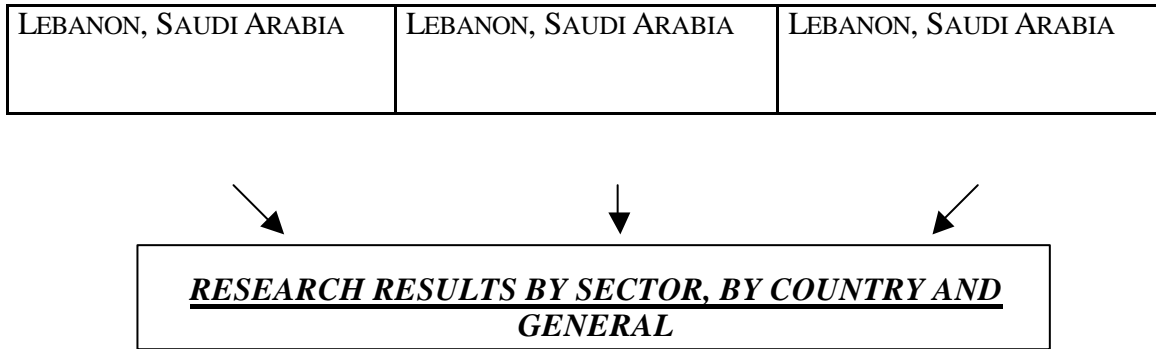
The direction of change in the Arab World will be investigated through the analysis of two general dynamics:

1. The changing structure of state power;

2. The dynamics and consequences of the growing Arab world sharing into a globalised order;

These two general dynamics will be investigated in the three inter-related *research sectors* corresponding to the fundamental areas of post-independence state power:

SECURITY SECTOR	POLITICAL ECONOMY SECTOR	POLITICAL SECTOR
<p>Sectorial research areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The impact of foreign actors' redefinition of national and regional security architecture (e.g. foreign interventionism and arms proliferation; competition for strategic rent and military aid). - The changing functions of the armed forces and their role in regime transition (e.g. 'civilianisation'; alliance with old/new interest groups); - The changing strategies of national security apparatuses and armed opposition groups (e.g. change in patterns of repression vs. cooptation of dissent or reliance on foreign assets for territorial control; relationship between local and trans-national terrorist networks); 	<p>Sectorial research areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Modalities of wealth accumulation and redistribution under economic reform - The changing role of the state in the provision of social welfare services - The changing state-labor relations 	<p>Sectorial research areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The changing political strategy of regimes in terms of cooptation and mobilisation of different social groups - The changing elites and their impact on the mobilisation and participation of different social groups - The changing channels and forms of political mobilisation from below
<p>Case studies: MOROCCO, EGYPT,</p>	<p>Case studies: MOROCCO, EGYPT,</p>	<p>Case studies: MOROCCO, EGYPT,</p>



The Project timeline and Activities

The project activities include:

October 2005 – March 2006

- (1) The elaboration of one general and three sectorial *concept papers* by the IAI-UI core research group;

April – June 2006

- (2) Selection of the national case studies for the project (4 for each sector of the research) and selection of 12 international experts for case studies' elaboration;

September 2006

- (3) Final assignment of 12 papers on *national case studies* (4 for each sector of the research) to the selected group of international experts;

February-March 2007

- (4) A *mid-term workshop* in Rome with the enlarged group of international experts to discuss the conceptual framework of the research and the case study papers' outlines;

June 2007

- (5) First draft of national case studies' papers

September – October 2007

- (6) Second draft of national case studies' papers and the elaboration of by-sector and general *conclusions* by the IAI-UI research team;

Winter 2007-8

(7) *International conference* to present and discuss research results;

Spring 2008

(8) Research results *dissemination* through publication;

* Laura Guazzone is scientific advisor at the Institute of International Affairs of Rome (IAI) and Professor at the University of Rome 'La Sapienza'; Daniela Pioppi is Senior researcher at the IAI.