P05 / Politics and Policymaking in MENA Countries After the Arab Uprisings

Topic : POLICY, POLITICS AND POLITICAL REGIME

Chair : Robert Hoppe (University of Twente)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

The major aim l is to enrich comparative policy studies by throwing light on public policymaking in the Arab world, which so far is hardly visible. The second aim is to explore policymaking practices in extremely uncertain conditions such as post-revolutionary situations in non-democratic states. This exploration may start from two perspectives: first, the influence of contested politics and citizen activism on public policymaking under the new political opportunity structure; and second, policymaking and governing practices embraced by the political élites in response to the Arab Uprisings.

The Uprisings shocked the world when the masses broke decades of fear by occupying public squares in many Arab cities, demanding freedom, democracy and justice. This constituted a rupture from the established 'social contract' of the post-colonial modern Arab states. The most apparent demand was the need to transform the governance, and the relationship between the people and their rulers. But the revolutionary moment did not last. Counter-revolutions aiming at reinstating Arab ancienregimes became the norm. Bayat (2017) argues that instead of completing a full-scale revolution, the uprisings appeared to be satisfied by just pressing for reforms for more democracy and social justice. Thus, the Arab uprisings were not a revolution in the sense of rupturing the old political structures, but a 'refolution'.

Nevertheless, a new opportunity structure for civil society emerged, partly due to sidelining , elimination or suicide of established political parties. Hence (religious, civil-domestic and externally financed) civil society associations became vehicles for articulating citizen demands to governments. This opened up long suppressed political debates (e.g. about gender and labor issues), and offered some space for novel policy initiatives. One interesting and relevant task would be to develop a taxonomy of roles for civil society associations in influencing public policies under these exceptional conditions, and compare it to standard western models of contested politics and citizen activism, deliberation and participation.

Another comparative axis would be to ask whether it is be possible to apply theories about policymaking in stable democratic regimes to post-Arab Uprising states. Would this just lead to concept stretching; and if so, how would the theories have to be amended to analyze policymaking in the Arab world without conceptual 'overstretch', bias and blind spots? It would be interesting to demonstrate where these theories run into problems when applied to unstable and less-than-democratic contexts.

E.g., policy process theories from the West all assume that a substantive policyissue logic governs everyday politics; but in unstable democracies, or post-revolutionary situations (like after the Arab Uprisings) there is always a regime logic that may trump issue logic - a form of powering that trumps even policy issue powering. Another potential enriching of comparative policy studies would be to study actual policy formulation and design practices (if any) in Arab states. Instead of incrementalism, or mixed scanning or design by policy-oriented learning (Howlett and Mukherjee, 2014) policy practices may follow other patterns, like constraint dodging and feasibility testing, driven by extreme resource scarcity, sharply circumscribed distributional constraints, and prescribed, inflexible institutional frameworks (Hoppe, in Yassin & Hoppe, 2019).

CALL FOR PAPERS

We are interested in submissions that explore questions including, but not limited to:

- How did the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings affect public policymaking in MENA countries?
- Do concepts like 'policy' and 'policymaking' make sense in applying them to what are obviously not 'policy states' (Orren and Skowronek, 2017)?
- To what extent is applying policymaking theories in good standing from western countries (ACF, MST, IAD, etc.) to governing practices in MENA countries possible without concept overstretch and creating bias and/or blind spots?
- What impact does civil society activism (by 'the street', by spontaneous movements, by religious CSOs,

civil-domestic CSOs, or internationally financed NGOs) have on different stages (agendasetting, policy formulation, policy adoption policy implementation, policy evaluation, policy termination) of the policymaking process?
- How to trace and analyze the influence of 'conditionalities' and 'donors' on policymaking practices in MENA-countries?
- How can we objectively assess policy performance, democratic quality and governance capacity in MENA countries?
- Which policy issues in MENA countries lend themselves (better) to external (political, economic, social, cultural) influences?

P05 / Politics and Policymaking in MENA Countries After the Arab Uprisings

Chair : Robert Hoppe (University of Twente)

Session 1Policymaking in post-Uprisings MENA countries (1)

Friday, June 28th 10:30 to 12:30 (MB 3.255)

Discussants

Robert Hoppe (University of Twente)

“Neglegislation”: Why parliaments and parties fail in public policy making in North Africa

Jan Claudius Völkel (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Institute for European Studies)

Though hopes were high that the ongoing uprisings which swept across the Arab world in 2011 would eventually lead to a thorough crack-up of the authoritarian regimes, and thus to the establishment of more democratic polities, not much of this has yet materialized. In contrast, with the notable exception of Tunisia, in no countries democratic institutions and processes have been strengthened; in fact, in some countries the overall trends has taken a dramatic downturn, with “democratic qualities” now even below the levels of before 2011, according to leading democracy indices.
This paper will analyze the dominant factors that so far have prevented a higher relevance of democratic institutions, focusing mainly on parliaments and political parties, in Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. For this, it will identify internal as well as external reasons that have made them largely fail on the political scene. While this includes “technical obstacles” like lack of funding, capacities and organisational structures, it also touches upon rather “societal barriers” such as low levels of trust and support from the citizens.
However, as largest impediment must be seen the old regimes, whose decade-old power structures have survived the 2011 uprisings rather untouched, and who have not been willing to distribute power on more shoulders than their own. This is particularly the case in Egypt and Morocco, while in Tunisia, the “battle” between old elites and new actors is still underway.
Thus, the consequences for public policy making are obvious: the old elites are still the dominant players in the legislative and executive processes of these countries, driven by their own logics which are less rooted in the citizens’ interests but their own retention of power. Under this logic, basic provisions from the state, such as access to health, education and social services, are less understood as indispensable right of every citizen, but rather as “generous grace” by the leader. This, in turn, helps the regimes to upheld their harsh grip on the citizenry, even justifying massive infringements of people’s privacy, or blatant violations of human rights and the withholding of legal security.
In consequence, the paper will show that the widespread failure of democratic institutions in post-2011 North Africa does not only mean a consideration of public policies from the “wrong” perspective; it also shows that the suppression of institutionalized political actors is a successful strategy of the incumbent regimes to secure their power and keep potential opposition under control.

REFUGEE POLICY-MAKING IN THE MIDDLE EAST: THE CASE OF THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

Ola El-Taliawi (University of Twente)

Refugees fleeing violent conflict represent a complex policy challenge to host governments, because of the considerable strain they place on social, economic and environmental resources. This is especially the case in developing countries, where refugees are increasingly originating from and settling in; and in the case of mass refugee flows, whose assistance then becomes a humanitarian necessity. The lack of systematic evidence, and the skewedness of the literature towards examining countries of resettlement, points to a compelling need to understand how countries of first-asylum respond to mass refugee situations.

This paper aims to contribute to our understanding of refugee policy-making in the Middle East by analyzing

state policy responses to the Syrian Refugee Crisis. It relies on the use of qualitative primary and secondary data, including semi-structured elite interviews conducted with high-level government officials, political figures, experts, international organizations and non-governmental organizations. Data is analyzed using NVivo software by relying on two analytical techniques: process tracing, and chronologies.

Understanding Policy-making in Lebanon: An Application of the Multiple Streams Framework to the 2012 Wage Hike.

Lea Bou Khater (American University of Beirut)

Robert Hoppe (University of Twente)

This paper is a critical empirical application of the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) as one of the most frequently used theories in the 'western canon', to a recent case of wage policymaking in Lebanon.

In 2011, after more than a decade of agenda denial, wage policy reemerged on the public policy agenda of the Lebanese government. In January 2012, the monthly minimum wage for private sector workers was raised for the first time in many years. Using as primary interpretative focus Multiple Streams Theory (MST), this paper seeks answers to two questions: (1) how and why did the wage issue reemerge on the government agenda in Lebanon at this particular time? and (2) why were comprehensive, innovative solutions to the wage increase problem rejected in favor of a very modest, incremental wage hike?

In terms of research design, this study relies on conventional process tracing and the construction of a detailed timeline of major process events through content analysis of governmental documents and articles and op-eds in the major media, and elite interviews with pivotal policy actors from government, trade unions and issue experts.

More importantly, conceptually, this empirical case study of public policymaking in Lebanon provides a unique opportunity for studying the specific characteristics of public policymaking in countries of the Middle East - the Arab world being as good as invisible in comparative policy work. But moreover, it is an application of one of the 'canon' policy process theories in a different political system context. Lebanon is widely still considered an example of consociational democracy, relying on power-sharing and confessional 'federalism' to manage continuous conflicts between its sectarian communities. Events during and since the 1975-1990 civil/proxy war on its territory have thrown the system into severe domestic and international instability. Lebanon's national formal institutions and informal power-sharing arrangements proved to be highly vulnerable to external (regional and even global) conflicts.

The use of MST is critical in a double sense. On the one hand, we show how an unquestioned, tacit assumption of 'issue logic' in consolidated, stable democracies pervades both interpretative schemes as typical 'western canon' theorizing. On the other hand, by showing how and why the 'issue logic' of the wage hike policy problem in Lebanon is in fact trumped by a 'regime logic', it becomes possible to amend and enrich the MSF particularly. In that score, we rely on the “problem politics” concept to interpret the assemblage of forces governing the opening or closing of policy windows amidst the “regime logic”. In turn, the three sub-concepts mentioned under 'problem politics' coupling logic, decision style, and institutional context are used to respectively frame the regime logic, the constraint-dodging and inconsistency management and transnationally dependent consociationalism and sectarian clientelism.

P05 / Politics and Policymaking in MENA Countries After the Arab Uprisings

Chair : Robert Hoppe (University of Twente)

Session 2Policymaking in post-Uprisings MENA countries (2)

Friday, June 28th 14:00 to 16:00 (MB 3.255)

Discussants

Jan Claudius Völkel (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Institute for European Studies)

Which Civil Society? The Role of Traditional Media in Shaping the Politics of NGOs in Egypt

Nermeen Kassem (Ain-Shams University (Egypt)/ University of Texas at Austin)

This study focuses on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other formal, organized associations as constituting elements of civil society. It mainly explores the role of traditional, state-run media as tools for both; promoting policy, and providing feedback about NGO-related policies. For the purpose of this study, the social construction and policy design theory is employed. The main proposition tested is ‘the target population proposition’. In order to answer the questions of the study, content analysis of Law 70 of 2017 on NGOs in Egypt, and thematic framing analysis of state-run news media articles were employed. The research delineates that policy tools of the law impose significant burdens on, and grant sub-rosa benefits to NGOs that vary according to their social construction and level of power. State-run media variously frame policy rationales of Law 70 of 2017. This distinction in policy rationales draws the line between developmental NGOs and other advocacy organizations whose goals are perceived as sources of threat to the sovereignty, political independence, and national interests of the state. The study presumes that state-run media would function as a mental heuristic that filters information in a biased manner in order to promote the new law. It was found that NGOs are dichotomously portrayed as either imposing threat to the nation-state, or creating opportunity for development as valenced frames of policy rationale were obtained by the press.

Governance Reforms and Its Implications in Egypt

Shahjahan Bhuiyan (American University in Cairo)

This article highlights on governance reforms that the post-revolutionary governments introduced as an effort to ensure “bread, freedom, dignity and social justice” to all Egyptians. The core of the mantra is to develop state building institutions to reduce poverty, economic deprivation, unemployment and quality delivery of public services. In this context, the governments that came into power after the 2011 and 2013 revolutions have taken several reform initiatives such as civil service reform, tax system and state subsidies, and anti-corruption strategy. Although it is quite early to make any conclusive comments about the ultimate outcomes of the reform initiatives, the early results show somewhat mixed reactions. Apart from some success in *Takaful and Karama* (social safety net) programs, the study found the dismal performance public service delivery continues, among other things, due to endemic corruption, poor public bureaucratic performance, and glancing of civil society activities, which signals a deficit in governance. The canvas painted here essentially limits the trust between citizens and the government and thus minimizes the prospect to achieve good governance in Egypt.

The Regime and the Political Elite after the Arab Spring in Morocco: A Power Struggle or a Reluctant Elite?

Amina Drhimeur (Sciences Po Lyon)

Abstract

This paper examines the regime logic and the incumbent political party’s governing practices (Party for Justice and Development, PJD) and what they meant for policy formulation and making after the Arab Spring in Morocco.

During the protests that swept across the country in 2011, a new political consciousness rose advocating for the importance of democratic reforms, social justice and freedom. Under pressure, the King announced a new constitution that sought to grant the parliament more power and the judiciary more independence. Yet, the new constitution has also sought to preserve the King’s political and religious prerogatives, and to protect his executive powers over strategic issues. For instance, he is at the head of the ministerial council and has the right to dissolve the parliament.

2011 probably saw Morocco's first transparent legislative elections, which put a pro- Islamic party at the head of the government for the first time. However, soon after the elections, the regime started showing signs of unwillingness to give up some of its prerogatives. The political elite was then faced with two choices: either to choose not to pursue democratic reforms, maintain the King's consent and probably remain in power, or to challenge the regime by initiating reforms that would limit its power, grant political institutions more independence and therefore lose the King’s consent; this would mean an existential risk for any political party to survive.

It seems that the political elite prioritized building a trust relation with the palace over confrontation, which led to minor political reforms. This paper will argue that the regime logic of preserving its prerogatives impeded policy reformulation, and will further argue that the political elite was reluctant to pursue political reforms to maintain power. Therefore, failure to initiate reforms, which has heavily impacted on public policies in Morocco, was not only due to the regime logic but also to a

reluctant political elite. The King, however, seems to remain the only dominant political actor who initiates reforms. Hence the Arab Spring, which once sparked hope of reforms, failed to change the old political structure and the regime.