

EUDEM

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Jean Monnet
Information and
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on EU Foreign
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Promotion
(EUDEM)



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EUDEM LAUNCH

Since the 1990s the European Union (EU) has regarded democracy, human rights and the rule of law as values to promote in its relations with third countries. In particular, since the launch of the EuroMediterranean Partnership (in 1995) the EU has claimed that Mediterranean partner countries were urged to proceed with political reforms. More recently, in the EU Agenda for action on Democracy Support in EU external relations (November 2009), the Council recognized that democracy cannot be imposed from the outside and local actors must take the lead of democratic reforms.

Now that the MENA region is experiencing a democratic turmoil, the EU is faced with a sort of "coherence test": time has come to prove that the EU is able to provide democracy assistance to

local actors of democratic change. As the literature on democratization argues, democratization is a domestic affair at the start up; however, the anchoring function of the international community can be very helpful in determining the democratic outcome of the transition. Alongside the Arab states and the Arab League, the international community (and the EU) has now an important role to play. Yet, different interests and strategies of EU member states render difficult the elaboration of a EU quick and coherent response to the democratic uprising of 2011. After having privileged for too long good relations with old authoritarian regimes, the EU must now find the way to promote democratic change by delivering the necessary political and

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Human Rights, Borders and Culture: a Political Philosophical Approach

The research group on Political Philosophical issue is coordinated by prof. Fabrizio Sciacca, full professor of Political Philosophy at the University of Catania. The research group aims to deepen EUDEM themes with a genuine philosophical political methodology. This group is made by post-doc fellows, PhD students, Master students and bachelor students. The research is organised in four different study sessions.

One direction of the research,

focuses on the role of the concept of Freedom within the Mediterranean geopolitical framework post September 11th, under a philosophical prospective. Two issues are addressed. One is concerned with the outcomes of the strategy promoted by the Bush administration, whose aim is to export freedom and democracy through military force. The second analyses the revolution attempts ongoing in several countries in the southern shores of the Mediterranean, using as conceptual

framework: Hannah Arendt's distinction (addressed in "On Revolution") between the moment of the freedom from an oppressive government and the moment of the authentic foundation of the freedom and of a truly political democratic arena.

A second research session aims to verify whether cosmopolitan democracy could be regarded as a medium range positive utopia. This profile aims to take this question seriously, assuming the idea that the EU represents well cosmopolitan principles. However, it critically assesses the possibility of their direct implementation, as advanced by several other critics. The hypothesis to be verified concerns the possibility that the cosmopolitan democratic experiment, embodied by the European Parliament, may represent an important model and a significant element of comparison for the realization of a democratic reform of the international system.

A third research track will focus on the themes of tolerance and human rights, issues selected for the frequent violence and suffering endured by millions of human beings. The tolerance issue, here considered in different way from its historical significance of "endurance", addresses the way in which we must

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EUDEM launch (continue from page 1)

economic incentives. This is a crucial time to invalidate the "Arab exceptionalism", and the international community has a great responsibility. The result of transitions can never be taken for granted.

The EUDEM project which is funded by the European Commission under the LLP- Jean Monnet Action, adopts a multidisciplinary approach to better understand EU democracy promotion. First of all, the meaning of different roles and processes is conceptualized. Can the EU act as an external actor in the Arab democratic transitions? Is the MENA region facing an Arab 1989? Is civil society able to support democratic transition from below? The effects of the current

crises in the MENA region will be explored by this information research project. They represent a testing case for the EU acting as a democracy-promoter.

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Education and Culture DG

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Tunisia

People besiege the palace. Passion and prudence in the Tunisian transition

'Determination and dignity' shouted protesters in Redeyef, a Tunisian mining town, in 2008. Now as then, in the recent upheaval, similar slogans and claims have been made, by demonstrators waving national flags. Likewise, the driving force came from outlying regions, such as Kasserine and Thala, hitherto cut off from investments and development.

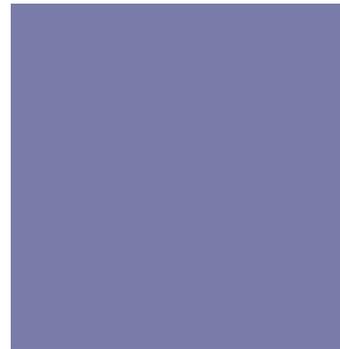
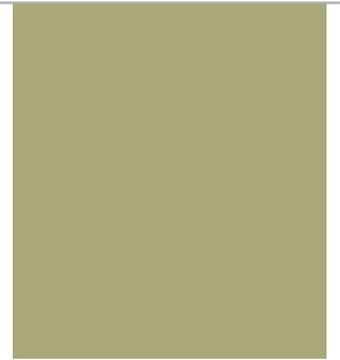
Although Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali's overthrow marked a significant turning point, the 'jasmine revolution' decapitated the regime without entirely renovating the ruling class. Tunisians, in fact, have been taking to the streets demanding clean break with the past.

The political élite is not insensitive and it is seriously seeking popular legitimacy. Faced with worrying lawlessness, the caretaker governments are adopting a series of decisive political measures.

The handover initially took place according to article 56 of the Constitution, which stipulates a provisional delegation of the President's powers to the Prime Minister. In the face of the demonstrators' demands, the Tunisian government had to draw on the article 57 of the Constitution that provides for a definitive vacancy of the Republic Presidency.

Finally, Ben Ali was ousted and an international arrest warrant issued for him, who has taken refuge in Saudi Arabia, and his family. Likewise, the former Tunisian Interior Minister, Rafiq Belhaj Kacem, was arrested. Two enquiry commissions have also been set up in order to investigate abuses made during the uprising as well as cases of embezzlement and corruption.

Another commission, headed by Yadh Ben Achour, former dean of the Faculty of Political and Social Science in Tunis,



has been charged with political reform (first of all the electoral code) after the manipulations of the Ben Ali era.

'Winds of change' seemingly blew in the first government line-up. There were members of the main national Trade union (*Union générale tunisienne du travail*), who however immediately resigned, as well as leaders of the opposition parties (Ahmed Nejib Chebbi, Progressive Democratic Party, and Ahmed Ibrahim, Ettajdid, the former communist party), who stepped down on 1 March. Also the Internet users' front had its representative (the independent blogger Slim Amamou was named Minister for Sport and Youth) and the Ministry of Information, that was responsible for strict censorship during Ben Ali's regime, was abolished.

Nevertheless, since key ministries were still in the hands of men linked to Ben Ali, a cabinet reshuffle was imposed by the persisting protests, and ministers have been urged to resign. Ahmed Ouanis, former

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Human Rights, Borders and Culture (continue from page 2)



deal with those considered "different from us": the "different person" should be understood, ensured freedom and a degree of autonomy and the fully enjoyment of human rights associated with person dignity, without distinction of race, sex or religious beliefs. A fourth research path has as main object the multiculturalism issue. Multiculturalism is one of the most important issues in the

contemporary Political Philosophy and here it is addressed from the perspective of the "normative" political philosophy, that is, through an analytical approach that looks at the reasons to justify the compatibility of different conceptions of what it is right, inside several social contexts which are complex and conflicting.

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... Passion and prudence in the Tunisian transition

Minister of Foreign Affairs, stepped down after having expressed approval for his French counterpart. In the end, protesters could no longer tolerate a Prime Minister who had served Ben Ali since 1999.

In spite of the constitutional limits that foresee a period of no more than sixty days for organising presidential elections, Tunisians are conscious that such a step requires reliable leaders and experienced parties. Although a long-standing authoritarian regime has inevitably affected a society that is entering now, en masse, on the political scene, the interim government was urged to announce elections for a national constituent assembly in mid-July (24 July).

The tentacular *Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique* was

suspended awaiting dissolution. It is anticipated that it will not contest the multi-party elections, whilst the Islamist En-Nahda has been legalised.

Step by step reforms have been introduced in Tunisia. In the national tradition of State reformism, the process involves firstly the ruling elite. Anyway, people remain vigilant, mobilised and intransigent. A prolonged sit-in outside the Prime Minister's Office by the Freedom Caravan showed how Tunisians, especially from peripheral regions, intend to persevere and not to abandon the front line.

Nevertheless citizens are not unanimous in their requests. Voices have been emerging from a 'silent majority' that object to the original *dégagé!* ('clear off!') for a more constructive *je m'engage* ('I go into action'). Fearing perpetual disorder and institutional stagnation, they have been striving for a resumption of ordinary activities. They trust politicians who, as Mohammed Ghannouchi, in spite of their links with Ben Ali, showed competence and honesty.

Initiatives are flourishing in Tunisia continuously from different sides. Intellectuals are also involved, as the new-born *Forum de Tunis pour la démocratie et la culture* witnesses. It is a further sign of Tunisians' willingness to care for their country's future and assume the burden of transition to democracy.

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EUDEM Students' Research Network

A synergetic relationship between senior and young researchers and students is part of EUDEM project. Accordingly a students network has been established mainly based at Catania University and it involves students of different education levels and disciplinary fields backgrounds. Using different methodological and analytical tools, they are studying topics such as EU as a democracy promoter, human rights and freedom concepts, blocked democratic transitions, civil society's role, etc. The students network is primarily working within three different research tracks. Alongside the group on Philosophical issues, coordinated by prof. Sciacca, presented in the previous page, there are other two groups. The so called "press review"

group, coordinated by dr. Daniela Melfa and dr. Guido Nicolosi, is examining MENA Countries' democratic and human rights performance under an historical perspective and through the *discourses* of the main newspapers. The so called "NGOs report group", coordinated by prof. Panebianco, is mapping the local and international NGOs involvement in the area to grasp their contribution on democratic transitions. Other PhD students from Universities based in London, Cairo, Siena, Toulouse are involved in the project. All research outcomes will be disseminated during EUDEM final Conference addressed to students and civil society associations.

Libya:

The International Community and the Prospects for 'Contagion'

Tunisia and Egypt were among the ultimate success stories customarily used by international financial institutions as examples of countries that successfully reformed their economies (reforms being simplistically defined as unfettered liberalisation of markets in goods, capital and services; and success being equally simplistically defined as significant growth of GDP and FDI inflows). Yet, in 2011 they have come forcefully in the limelight for an altogether different reason: the emergence of unprecedented mass movements calling for the removal of presidents in power for 24 years in Tunisia and almost 30 in Egypt. And succeeding in doing so.

Some commentators did not hesitate to draw a link between reformed economies and political change. Then came Libya and the whole castle fell apart. Defined by Fred Halliday as 'a state of kleptocracy', Qaddafi's regime corresponds to the classical definition of a patrimonial system: wealth and assets heavily concentrated in the hands of the ruling family, no meaningful distinction between public and private sector, and – very relevant in the Libyan case, as we came to learn – an army loyal to the leader and not to the nation.

More than in the case of Tunisia and Egypt, what is happening in Libya today and the final outcome of the ongoing struggle are likely to shape what will happen next in the region. This is so particularly because, taking into account losses of life and what is at stake in oil-abundant Libya, both the United States and the European Union appear to be taking a more active role than in the previous crises. Within this increasingly internationalised context, three alternative scenarios can be identified.



In the first case, US and EU member states are able to move beyond their quarrels and find enough resolve to intervene directly, not necessarily in military terms, eventually succeeding in ousting Qaddafi. After starting the transition in Libya, and considering the costs and risks involved in these processes, it would not be surprising to see these international actors pushing for the Libyan to be the last revolution in the Arab Mediterranean for the time being. It is still worth noting that this does not necessarily mean that it will actually be the last revolution in the area, as neither the Tunisian nor the Egyptian one started with the blessing of the international community, which legitimised them once the balance of domestic forces was already tilting heavily against Ben Ali first and then Mubarak.

In the second case, US and EU member states are unable to sort out the crisis and Qaddafi's forces succeed in gaining ground, forcing

rebels to surrender. This would certainly be the bleakest scenario for protest movements in the region. Other leaders – presidents and monarchs alike – would probably be induced to think that repression is effective internally and tolerated internationally. As a consequence, grassroots movements everywhere else in the region might be deterred from taking to the streets in the fear of a crackdown.

In the third scenario, rebels are able to obtain the dismissal of Qaddafi without intrusive intervention on the part of international actors. In this case, protest movements in the region, democratic or otherwise, might get from the Libyan example that morale boost pushing them to move towards outright confrontation against their regime.

If some sort of contagion is to materialise, Algeria undoubtedly appears as the most likely candidate for troubles. All the right

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EGYPT's revolution from below

With mounting protests spreading across the Arab world, reaching as far as Syria, and Libya being subject to external military intervention with the ultimate goal to force Mu'ammar al-Qaddafi out and to restore order, it is important not to lose sight of the two countries where the uprisings started and were so far most successful. The cases of Tunisia and Egypt were in fact the first and paradigmatic examples of popular protests originating from deteriorating socio-economic conditions compounded by political disaffection and frustration. Despite country-specific dynamics, the two uprisings were characterised by a number of common elements, among which the diffuse and uncoordinated popular origin of the

protest movements is one of the most important features.

The Egyptian case is particularly interesting from the point of view of the society's strenuous engagement in the uprising that led to Mubarak's stepping down from power on February 11, 2011, after 18 days of mass protest. A number of factors coalesced breeding the sense of anger towards the political establishment and empowering people to speak out loud their demands. One of them was certainly the turning point represented by the successful outcome of the Tunisian uprising leading people to ask

themselves why the same scenario could not occur in their own country. People's determination was further bolstered through the use of social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, text messages and mobile phones, which became the primary instruments for mobilising people and spreading messages. In the era of the expansion of new communication technologies, this feature of the Egyptian, as well as the Tunisian uprisings should not be dismissed in a simplistic reading. Indeed there is a fundamental link between the spread of new technologies and the authoritarian character of political developments in most

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Libya: the International Community and the Prospects for 'Contagion'

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ingredients seem to be there. An ageing and unaccountable president in power for more than a decade. An economic system increasingly resembling the Libyan one, characterised by power- and wealth-sharing arrangements benefiting a small clique of army officials and high-ranked bureaucrats. And a political system as authoritarian as any in the region, with no effective opposition being allowed since the civil war of the 1990s.

Incidentally, Algeria also happens to be the

EU's second largest natural gas supplier, and a long-time French *domaine réservé*, as they like to put it. Under those circumstances, would the EU simply sit by and watch, once more? And if resorting to action, where would it throw its weight: in favour of an Algerian population asking for more freedom and social justice or in favour of a heavily autocrat yet increasingly accommodating regime?

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countries of the Arab world.

Despite this important virtual dimension, the main story was on the streets. An unprecedented number of people turned out to protest in Tahrir Square and for the first time in their memory, in many occasions, they outnumbered police. One of the most striking features of the protest movement was the absence of leaders, a specific programme and a coordinating structure. People did not wait for the political parties and movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, to endorse their demands and to steer the uprising. They took to the streets, socialised with other protesters and fought to achieve their goals fuelled by a feeling of fatigue and weariness vis-à-vis the state's corruption and arbitrariness. The strikingly clarity and apparent simplicity of their demand, namely that Mubarak steps down, became the precondition and the barometer of their success and eventually helped unite people beyond divisions of socio-economic status, religious affiliation and age and bridge across possibly conflicting agendas

at the deeper level. All groups and classes turned out to protest, although the middle and upper middle classes were disproportionately represented in Tahrir Square.

All in all, what accounted for the opposition's strength during the uprising has turned into a liability in the current phase of transition. The lack of a unified leadership and the absence of a clear and constructive agenda have already started to create divisions and to hamper the transition from the old system of power to something new. The recent debate around the results of the referendum on the constitutional amendments exemplifies this trend.

Given the nature of the current events that are deeply changing the face of the southern Mediterranean and the need for the European Union and other external actors to rethink their policies towards this region, it is of utmost importance to reflect on these aspects of the "Arab spring" uprisings. A mixture of long-held socio-economic grievances and unprecedented feelings of empowerment gave rise to the first popular revolutions of the twenty-first century. The role of the society as a catalyst factor of political



change in Egypt and elsewhere should be duly recognised also with a view to developing more targeted policies that take into account societal change and people's aspirations.

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Current political parties' movements in EGYPT

For three decades, the National Democratic Party (NDP) was the ruling dominant party in Egypt although the Egyptian constitution allows for a multi-party system. The opportunity for opposition parties to become powerful actors in the political sphere was only an artificial one. At that time, the law prohibited the formulation of religious-based parties; therefore the Muslim brotherhood was an outlawed movement.

After the revolution, the current ruling military council announced a new law regulating the founding of political parties. It annulled eight articles from the 1977 political parties' law which has hindered registration. Consequently, all new political parties can be now registered just after notifying a seven-member judicial committee. However, the new law requires procuring 5,000 signatures of potential members from different governorates which presents a hurdle to some coalitions. In fact, the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) is the only group capable of collecting so many

signatures across such a large geographical swathe till the parliamentary elections in September 2011.

Legal experts believe that while effectively banning clearly religious parties, the new law will not prevent the formation of civil parties with a religious background. A party that offers a manifesto that approaches current issues from a religious perspective is likely to be allowed to take part in the political life. This may lead in the long run to a scenario of a party system with religious dominance, as many observers fear.

The most prominent religious opposition movement is the MB. It is now working to implement a clear hierarchical distinction between the mother movement and their new Freedom and Justice Party which is currently waiting for license to work for the first time in public. On the other hand, young members of the MB declared that they are opposing the formation of such

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Current political parties' movements in Egypt

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political party. Other moderate members have split off into right-wing parties such as Al-Wasat, a new MB offshoot which was established lately.

Also for the first time in Egypt, members belonging to the militant Islamic Jihad group disclosed the idea of founding a new political party reflecting fundamentalists' ideology. Their key figure El-Zomor, was recently released from jail.

On the other hand, several secular and youth forces are currently organizing new political parties and coalitions. Some have been formed at a breakneck pace such as the Coalition of the Youth Revolution (CYR), which is bringing together young people who participated in the revolution. It is made up of youth from the Gabha Party associated with the El-Baradei campaign, the 6 April Youth Movement, the Youth Socialist Renewal Movement, and various

independents. Other organizations have also joined CYR including the Union of Progressive Youth and the youth wings of the Wafd, Karama and Ghad parties because they do not longer trust the old established parties. They believe they rebelled to gain freedom and they should use this freedom to foster competition and diversity apart from the "old opposition".

There is a danger that the parties formed by young people will be weak because of the disadvantage in experience compared with MB as well as NDP and the old opposition parties. Therefore, various youth groups from Cairo and the governorates have agreed on the necessity to unite.

All new movements are afraid of remnants of the former regime. Members of the NDP want to reorganize the party under a different umbrella while other parties are calling them malignant.

NDP's youth wing figures have experience of many years that others do not have and this will help them to form new parties and attract young people who have little political knowledge.

Never before Egypt's Christians have faced a more challenging political future. What would be the fate of Egypt's Christians if the project of establishing the Islamic state becomes a potential model? Christians have rejected a recent MB invitation to join the proposed party as they are not willing to participate in any religious-based party. The latest bloody incidents by the Salafia group have once again exacerbated inter-faith tensions. Their merging with other secular parties or forming their new ones is still under consideration.

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EUDEM CONFERENCE

Catania, 19-21 May 2011

Winds of Democratic Change in the Mediterranean? Actors, Processes and possible Outcomes

Panel 1: Understanding democratic change in the Mediterranean area

Panel 2: A country-by-country analysis: the historical perspective

Panel 3: The EU as an ethical actor? Philosophical perspective on rights, justice and democracy

Panel 4: Democratic processes involving the Med countries

Round Table: Civil society's contribution to democracy promotion: discussing bottom-up strategies

Time for QAs and research reports

