**Panel 5**

**Origin and Development of the Political Party System in the Arab World: A Comparative Perspective**

*Workshop directors:*

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Our panel proposal aims at examining the political party systems of the Arab World. Studying political parties is among the best ways to understand societies, because parties are exercising a function of mediation between state and society, by mobilizing citizens in order to get them involved into the political system. However, because of the authoritarian nature of most of the Arab regimes, political parties are often underestimated by political scientists and sociologists, who prefer to focus on the state itself, the Islamist protest, or on the civil society and social movements. Arab political parties are usually seen as a mere foil, tokens of liberalization put forward by the authoritarian regimes. Nonetheless, the study of political parties under such regimes is still interesting, because of what it tells us about the authoritarian mechanisms and the lack of representation. Henceforth, the Arab Spring gave us an opportunity to see how the political trends organize themselves into political parties when the authoritarian constraints weaken and the elections become free and fair. Nonetheless, we think that the same political trends exist in all the Arab countries, even those where political parties have always been forbidden (namely the Gulf states): the liberalism, the socialism, the nationalism and the Islamism. Regarding the issue of minorities in each countries, we should add at this list some political forces based upon religious, linguistic or regional identities. One of the objectives of this panel is to examine this hypothesis through national case studies. At what time and under what circumstances these political trends emerged in different countries? What are their social basis, either formal, informal, or even clandestine? Did the legislation allowed them to form political parties, and in the affirmative, how free and independent of the power have been these parties? In return, how did these parties affect the social basis upon which they rely?

Beyond the current political situation, our objective is to examine the history of the main political families of the Arab World, and to compare the effect of the various degrees of authoritarianism which have been existing throughout this area.

*Papers submission*

We would like to attract different national case studies. The two directors will present a paper each, regarding the Egyptian and Algerian situation, and we will need four more papers including ideally Morocco, Lebanon, a Middle Eastern monarchy (Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia...) and a Republic from the same geographic area (Iraq or Syria). Contribution from political scientists, historians, sociologists, economists or jurists are welcome.

Due to our comparative goals, we want each paper to follow the same guidelines: a presentation of the birth and history of the main political trends of the country studied, and an analysis of the effect of the legislation – and its evolution throughout contemporary history – on this political families and on the concrete organizations which represent them in the social and political arenas. We will not accept papers presenting only a party or a political family: the authors will have to examine the whole political spectrum of the studied country.

The two directors and the discussant being francophone, we will accept papers both in English and in French.

*Research dissemination*

Organizers of the panel stated that the papers presented will be published, after evaluation, as a book or as a special issue of international journal. In the former case, we will try to attract more papers, in order to publish a book as comprehensive as possible. We are already sure to find extra contributions on the Yemenite, Mauritanian and Tunisian cases. In the latter case, if our issue proposal does not fit any external journal, we will propose it to the Oriental Institute journal, Archiv Orientální, which publishes papers either in French and in English.