

Struggles over Socioeconomic Reforms. Political Conflict and Social Contention in Egypt and Tunisia post 2011 in Interregional Comparison

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Socioeconomic reforms sit atop the political agenda in Egypt and Tunisia. Given that a certain degree of politico-institutional stabilization has been achieved, governments in both countries since 2014 have reacted to the worsening economic situation by addressing highly contested topics such as subsidies and public sector reforms. This has led to heated struggles that are sure to be of vital significance for Tunisia's fragile democracy and Egypt's reconstituted authoritarian regime. This project analyzes the contentious negotiations over socioeconomic reforms with a view to identifying their consequences for societal peace and political order. In focusing on socioeconomic conflicts and their political impact, the project directly builds upon the work of the project "Socioeconomic protests and political transformation: dynamics of contentious politics in Egypt and Tunisia against the background of South American experiences", but, at the same time, adopts a much broader view on socioeconomic struggles. The negotiation of socioeconomic reforms specifically includes established political actors as well as business associations, think tanks/NGOs and international financial institutions. The previous focus on contentious politics will therefore be replaced by an analysis of the interactions between contentious and routine politics and the previous theoretical framework (contentious politics approach) will accordingly be embedded in a broader political economy framework. The innovative approach pursued by this research project lies in its combined analysis of the contested contents of socioeconomic reforms as well as the ways in which reform struggles are carried out. The guiding assumption is that not only the reforms as such but also the processes through which they are designed and implemented decisively shape their societal acceptance and politico-economic implications. The project will continue to enrich the in-depth case studies on Egypt and Tunisia through an interregional comparison with Latin America.

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