

Democratization of islamic countries



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Revolutionary events that engulfed a number of Arab countries in 2010 – 2011 (in the media, they were called the event “ Arab Spring”), have introduced a wide range of radical changes in the political situation in the Middle East and for the whole region had far-reaching consequences. As a result of these events, instead of the authoritarian regimes in a number of countries came to power moderate Islamist forces (“ Muslim Brotherhood” in Egypt, “ An-Nahda” in Tunisia), who set themselves the task of development in these countries regimes “ Islamic democracy” , mainly due to the Turkish model. Moderate Islamists (the party “ Justice and Development”) won the parliamentary elections in Morocco, the country that has remained a monarchy, but went to a certain democratization of their political institutions. In another country, the “ Arab Spring” – Libya – as a result of the general democratic elections came to power liberal “ Alliance of National Forces. “ All of the above events led many experts to conclude that new prospects for democratization in the region, which eventually should lead to a homogenization of the Middle East into a single policy area, where the main role will be played by pro-Islamic democratic regimes.

However, in other Arab countries such as Syria and Yemen, the event “ Arab Spring” has not been so successful, because here they have exacerbated the internal contradictions and resulted in civil war. In 2013, the prospects for the development of Islamic democracy were at issue in Egypt, where on July 3 was a military revolt, which resulted in the management of “ Muslim Brotherhood” was behind bars. Meanwhile, in late May, internal political situation deteriorated and in a relatively stable until now Turkey.

All these events have reopened the debate on an issue that worries experts in recent years: whether moderate Islamic regimes to stay in power and to bring democracy and stability in the political process in the Middle East? Or region again waiting for the dominance of authoritarian rule and civil war? Unfortunately, experts' forecasts are not as optimistic as it was a few years ago, because it is clear that the risk of political instability poses a serious threat to many countries in the region.

Over 2011-2012, it was possible to observe how the democratic reforms in the countries of the “ Arab Spring” began to gradually become a reality. In particular, in the elections to the People’s Assembly, the lower house of parliament in Egypt, which lasted more than 2 months, won a landslide victory moderate Islamic “ Freedom and Justice Party,” which is the political wing of the Islamist movement “ Muslim Brotherhood. “ For this political force voted about 47% of voters. In the upper house of the Egyptian Parliament, the Advisory Council, it took another 105 members of this party. It is not surprising that the presidential elections held in Egypt in May-June 2012 he was elected leader of the country the candidate of “ freedom and justice” S. Mursi, collected in the second round, more than half of all votes.

Fortunately events developed for the Islamists in Tunisia. Here in the parliamentary elections, which took place in October 2011, won a landslide victory moderate Islamic party “ Ennahda”, for which voted 41% of voters. According to the results of the election, the Prime Minister was elected General Secretary of the party H. Dzhebali.

Overall, as a result of the impact of the “ Arab Spring”, the democratic process and intensified in a number of other Arab countries of the Greater Middle East. In particular, parliamentary elections were held in February 2012 in Kuwait, where Islamists have received 34 of the 50 parliamentary seats. In Algeria, the country’s parliamentary elections took place in May 2012. They moderate Islamists (“ Green Algeria Alliance”), although a small number of votes received (48 of 426 seats in parliament), but they have been admitted to the election authority and thus were included in the political process. Party moderate Islamic orientation are also a number of other Islamic countries, in particular: “ The movement of the Islamic Action” in Jordan, “ AK Party building” in Libya, “ Hamas” in Palestine, the party “ Justice and Development in Morocco” and others.

Unfortunately, all of the successes of new Islamic democracy were thwarted further developments. Since the revolutions of the “ Arab Spring” has passed about two years, but the situation in these countries is still unstable. In particular, in Libya armed fighting between militants of various revolutionary brigades, carried out the attacks and armed attacks on government offices. In Egypt, mass demonstrations by the secular opposition led by the “ National Salvation Front” led to bloody clashes with supporters of Islamist and began to threaten to escalate into civil war, resulting in power in the country again into their own hands took the military. In Syria still ongoing civil war which resulted in the already killed more than 100, 000 people. But the main thing that became restless and “ exemplary” country of Islamic democracy – Turkey. May 28 at Taksim Square in Istanbul began a peaceful demonstration, which later resulted in the massive anti-government riots

that swept a number of Turkish cities. On the streets of Turkish cities came mainly supporters of the Turkish secular parties and opponents of gradual Islamization of the country, who demanded the resignation of the leader of the Islamist Erdogan and Islamic forces removal from power.

It is clear that all the events are not some spontaneous actions, they have deep historical roots.

In general, the main difficulties faced by Islamic democracy, are as follows:

The first problem is related to the existence of a deep split in most Islamic societies through secularism / Sharia. This split has developed historically: the processes of modernization, which covered most Muslim societies in the twentieth century, contributed to the formation of a new elite focused on the Western model of development. The latter, which is concentrated mainly in the cities, took an active part in the updated state institutions and became their mainstay. At the same time, another part of society remained a supporter of traditional Islamic values. As a consequence, there was a split society through peripherals (province, traditional) and the center (urban, modern). Dissatisfied with existing secular regime organized in the Islamic movement and the beginning of democratization – in the Islamic parties. 1980-1990 were the years of revival and the triumph of political Islam in Turkey, Tunisia, Algeria. However, in defense of secular regimes in these countries have become military, led to some curtailment of democratic processes. Now another round of such aggravation we see in Turkey, where the secular circles opposed the policy of the ruling Islamic party “ Justice and

Development” aimed at the Islamization of the country as well as in Egypt, where the secular parties and the military opposed the president S. Mursi.

The second problem is related to the existence of a difficult socio-economic situation, which is observed in most of the “ Arab Spring. “ Experts believe that one of the most important factors in the success of democracy is to ensure an adequate level of economic development, which, unfortunately, is not present at a number of Islamic revolutionary countries. The emergence of civil society and democracy can not be there where people need to think about their vital necessities of life. In this context, the economic problems of Egypt, which in no way failed to weaken the government S. Mursi proved to be a factor that contributed to the exit of people on the street.

The third problem is characterized by the existence in Muslim societies of the whole complex of inter-clan, inter-faith and inter-ethnic conflicts. Society of the Middle East have a pretty motley composition, because they consist of various religious groups (such as Syria, Iraq and Lebanon), the various ethnic and tribal groups (such as Libya and Yemen), patrimonial clans, etc. As part of an authoritarian regime, all these groups are under government control. But in the case of destabilization of the political situation, they actively intervene in the political struggle for power and tend to inflame tribal and religious struggle, which could result in civil war. In particular, in Syria faced the interests of a number of different groups: Shiite Muslims, Sunni Muslims, Kurds, Christians.

Fourth obstacle to the development of democracy in Islamic countries stands stratum military circles that actively interfere in the internal political

processes in their countries. The army's role in politics in the Middle East has always been significant. Military circles mainly act on the side of the secular community in their struggle against political Islam. In Egypt, the secular army positions were greatly strengthened by General G. Nasserom that from 1952 to 1970 led the country. The armed forces in Turkey and have always played an important role in the political life of the country.

Prospects for democratization of Islamic countries “ Arab Spring”

There are historical experience shows that any significant shocks and abrupt changes in the policies of individual countries are becoming a significant catalyst for people's activity, pushing it to the protest. Free elections bring to the surface of the political forces that are most consistent with the interests of the masses. It is not surprising that such forces in the countries of the “ Arab Spring” in the first place were the Islamists. But the imposition of its policies mainly towards realization of the Sharia inevitably leads to the emergence of opposition from secular circles and has the effect of further destabilization of the situation in a particular country.

The level of this risk is not the same for all countries. It depends on many factors: the duration and nature of the tensions in society, especially the political groups that came to power, the state of the economy, etc... But in any case it must be assumed that the current realities in countries emerging from popular uprisings and armed insurgencies characterized by imbalance and threaten to destabilize the political regimes in violation of inner balance. And this can happen in case of problems in the economy and the exacerbation of social problems.

In Egypt, there was just such a situation. The revolutionary events and changes in the political regime drew deeper roots of general economic frustration, which was due to too straightforward strategy for market development in the context of significant lack of resources and numerous imbalances in the economy. The revolution led to a further decline in living standards and an increase in the number of unemployed. S. Mursi government failed to stabilize the situation, not of an economic success of the policy of Islamization of the country has caused discontent among a significant number of Egyptians and forced the military to take over power in their hands. Given recent events, the democratization of Egypt in the future looks pretty controversial. Most likely, military forces will continue to try to control the situation in the country.

Tunisia, which all States “ Arab Spring” looks most promising in terms of the development of democracy, is now also going through difficult times. Killing one of the leaders of the opposition Sh. Belaida caused outrage among many people. And after the military mutiny July 3, 2013 in neighboring Egypt guide Tunisia announced the introduction in the country for 3 months of emergency.

Still among the Muslim countries in the region, the most successful looks Turkey. But much depends on the leadership of the ruling Islamic party “ Justice and Development”. If its leaders will provide a balanced internal policies, taking into account the interests of minorities, including secular circles, the forecast further development of democracy in the country is positive. If the country’s leaders will ignore the interests of the minority, the country may also threaten political destabilization.

Considering the broader context of the prospects for democratization of Islamic countries, it should be noted that some of the Arab world as a whole immune to political change. Saudi Arabia is undoubtedly the most striking example, when an authoritarian regime operates without any obstacles. Similarly, in other Gulf countries authoritarian regimes seem strong enough and immutable. Despite the existence of substantial domestic opposition, the events of the “ Arab Spring” almost no impact on Iran. Local authoritarian regime seems to be safe, at least in the medium term. With regard to Iraq, after the withdrawal of US troops, the situation looks increasingly fragile and weak in the face of the fragmentation of the state. Undoubtedly, the war of 2003 and continued US military presence in Iraq has not led to the desired Americans democratic change, but on the contrary, caused a further aggravation of internal problems.