

MONARCHIES AND REPUBLICS OF THE ARAB EAST IN THE AFTERMATHS OF “ARAB SPRING”

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Abstract. *The article depicts the main political characteristics of monarchies and republics and highlights the main changes in the political and social life in them in the result of consequences of the processes of modernization. It presents the opinion of scholars that the determining dominant of the political and public life of the countries of the Arab East is the religious factor of Islam which penetrates into all socio-political spheres of the states of the Arab East. The article brings some points of views of serious authors on the issues of durability and change of monarchies and republics in the aftermaths of Arab spring in the context of democratic requirements. It tackles some social problems that arose on the path of modernization of the Arab states, such as poverty, unemployment, limited opportunities for women, etc. that serve like a barrier to the modernization of Arab countries.*

Introduction. The development of education in modern society sets the task of regional studies as a complex socio-political discipline that considers the processes of transition to democracy in different regions of the world. One of them, the Arab East, on the example of the Arab Spring, showed the whole world the need for processes of modernization of social relations within the framework of various forms of political regimes - monarchies and republics.

Changes in society, its social structures, interests and values of different strata of the population, relations between different social phenomena in the context of democratic changes are called modernization. The transformations that took place in modern Arab monarchies and republics under the influence of the Arab Spring were aimed at modernizing the existing regimes, giving them additional legitimacy and resilience. The events of the Arab Spring stimulated the ruling elites to initiate a series of reforms in public structures. Their identification will allow us to understand the protective mechanisms that ensure the modernization of society, its development into a new quality while preserving the fundamental traditions.

Studying the evolution of political regimes in the Arab East allows us to understand their features in the context of creating favorable conditions for the establishment of mutually beneficial relations between states such as, for example, Ukraine, which also has its own political and economic interests in the Middle East. The events taking place in the Arab monarchies and republics are important for understanding the transformation of political institutions in Ukraine, which, since the proclamation of independence, has been creating the foundations of democracy and civil society.

The purpose of the article is to trace the evolution of the modernization paradigm using the example of the functioning of two different forms of the states of the Arab East - monarchies and republics and highlighting directions in their reforms based on identifying key issues of Arab society after the Arab Spring of 2011-2013. We will try to consider the classification of political systems of developing countries in the Middle East with subdivision of monarchic and republican types to overview the consequences of Arab spring on durability and change of monarchies and republics in the aftermaths of Arab spring in the context of democratic requirements.

Research methods. In the article various methods as means of research analyses are used. They are traditional methods implemented by political scientists. To them we refer such methods as: comparative – we compare different point of views of the researchers on the development of monarchies and republics done by the scientists from the Western countries and the states of the post – Soviet area; historic – we compare the events happened in the aftermaths of the Arab spring in a historic perspective; cognitive – give us knowledge of what has happened in the Arabic monarchies and republics in politics; descriptive – describes the course of some events which happened in the Arab world; explanatory – helps us find out how political events affected the strategies of behavior of the main political actors in the MENA region. These and other methods are the tools of our investigation of political institutions and processes in the Arab countries.

Text. The majority of scientists engaged in Arabic studies, consider political regimes of the Arab East as of authoritarian or totalitarian type of governing (dictatorships, military and oligarchical, despotisms etc.). At the same time, they also point at some democratic trends in their functioning. The new republican

regimes in the Arab countries began to develop as a result of liquidation of colonial oppression and overthrow of monarchy – in Egypt (1952), Iraq (1958), Yemen (1962), Libya (1969). At the beginning of the XXI century, the political regimes in the Arab countries can be divided into monarchies and republics. As Bank A., Richter T. & Sunik A. stated “there were three distinct types of durable monarchies in the Middle East prior to the Arab Spring: a first group consisting of the five Gulf monarchies of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, a second group consisting of the non-Gulf monarchies of Jordan and Morocco and a third, hybrid category, represented by the Sultanate of Oman, which blends some features with the other Gulf monarchies, for example, the oil wealth, and others with Jordan and Morocco, for example, the non-dynastic character of political decision making. Our argument about three distinct types of monarchy supplements the commonly held dualism in Middle East monarchy studies, which typically distinguishes the Gulf monarchies, including Oman, from Jordan and Morocco [1].

The absolute monarchy is characterized by the concentration of functions in the monarch’s hands. They are both religious and secular. The monarch takes part in the activity of three powers: executive, legislative and judicial. There is no separation of power in absolute monarchies like Saudi Arabia, UAE and Oman. For example, the Sultan of Oman is not only the head of state, but also the head of government. He also serves as the supreme commander of the armed forces, prime minister, defense minister, finance minister and foreign affairs minister. Modern authors highlight the most important powers of the monarch - his prerogative in the legislative branch that is of great concern of an absolute monarch.

If we compare absolute and dualistic monarchies, we notice that under the conditions of a dualistic monarchy, two socio-political institutions coexist: a monarchical power based on feudal strata, and a bourgeois parliament. The monarch is de jure and de facto independent of parliament, he concentrates in his hands all the powers of the executive branch, but does not have the ability to influence the formation of government bodies and is in fact powerless against some alliances.

All monarchical states have Constitutions, according to which parliaments are created on the basis of direct secret ballot. However, in Saudi Arabia there is only a proto-parliament appointed by the king - the Consultative Council. The parliaments of the monarchies of the Persian Gulf have limited powers. They cannot dismiss the prime minister and the government, although in some countries they have the right to require a report to the highest legislative body.

The monarch in Arab countries is influenced by institutions that are not specified in the constitutions. These are the so-called "family councils", members of dynasties, as well as informal gatherings (diwanis), which gather sporadically and include dynastic relatives and influential persons of the region and the world.

“In the presidential republics of the Arab East, the head of state, along with his functions, is also the head of the executive branch, and according to the constitution, he can also exercise legislative power. The most striking example of the Arab presidential republic is Syria, in which the president occupied key positions in the system of supreme bodies and had in his hands the most important levers of influence on other authorities in the country” [2, p. 181].

The monarchies and republics experience the influence of Islam in the Arab countries. For example, Saudi Arabia has Coran as Constitution. Moreover, there has been a significant spread of political Islam in the political process of a number of Arab states, for example, in Iran, Pakistan, Egypt, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Syria. The Islamic factor in Muslim states takes various forms both in cultural heritage and in political practice. States use Islamic ideology to legitimize the political regime.

Modern world practice of state development shows that the institution of monarchy is not an obsolete form of government. This is evidenced by the facts confirming the existence of monarchies not only in the Arab region, but throughout the world. The processes of democratization have affected not only the republics, but also the absolute systems of government. At the crossroads of two centuries in many Arab states, new constitutions were adopted (1996 - Oman, 2002 - Bahrain, 2003 - Qatar) or the old texts were amended. This is primarily due to the increasing complexity of the activities of state structures, as well as the emergence of new democratic initiatives that affect the development of Arab monarchies.

The aftermaths of the Arab spring showed a variety of monarchical reactions to the events of 2011-2013. For example, all oil rentier states increased their spending, Jordan, Morocco and to some extent Oman underwent slight constitutional reforms, inter-monarchical cooperation (financial, diplomatic, military) became more intensive.

After the Arab Spring, there happened some modernization tendencies to expand the powers of consultative bodies in Arabian monarchies, and the procedures for their formation and functioning

have changed. For example, “Shura councils in countries such as Oman, Qatar, Bahrain were transformed into a kind of parliamentary structures... Adopted constitutional amendments allowed for parliamentary elections in some countries on a multi-party basis, as a result of which Islamic parties (in Egypt and Tunisia) came to power. The new constitutions provide the largest possible number of rights and freedoms and redistribute powers in favor of the legislative body; new electoral laws, adopted in Arab countries after 2011, have become more democratic than previous’ [2, c. 112, 58].

Protest movements of the Arab spring changed a socio-political situation in a number of the Arab countries. The requirement of democratic transformations during the Arab spring led to different actions in the states with the monarchic and republican forms of rule. In the monarchic states it came down to resignation of some governments and reforming of an electoral system, restriction of a role of monarchs in exercising the executive power, but it didn’t undermine the basics of a monarchist system.

In the republics the requirement of democratization could lead not only to disorders, but to violent actions toward political regimes. At the same time, the political uprising in the Middle East have led to the breakdown of some authoritarian regimes and tested the durability of others. “The eight authoritarian monarchies in the region, in particular, have proved strikingly durable, while a number of heads of state in authoritarian republics (Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya) have been ousted. While the phenomenon of widespread monarchical durability is certainly relevant, it tends to obscure the diversity that exists within the group of the eight Arab monarchies” [1].

As time passed after the Arab spring, the power positions of the old elites are still preserved as they control significant financial flows and make major political decisions. “Many Arab states are still countries fragmented by different clans and power teams: party-bureaucratic, power, oligarchic, ethno-confessional, tribal, and so on. The population relies in their security and well-being not so much on state institutions but on connection with or belonging to a particular clan or a team” [3, p.170]

The Arab Spring was unable to solve the social problems that arose on the path of modernization of the Arab states. One of the most important is high population growth, which often contributes to a decrease in the real standard of living. 2/3 of the population in Arab countries are young people under the age of 30. Hence unemployment, and as a consequence, migration, which is much higher in the republics than in monarchies, becomes a major problem.

“In order to tackle this problem, all Gulf governments, with varied levels of success and seriousness, have reformed their labor policies based on a labor market segmentation between nationals and expatriates on the one hand, and between public and private sector on the other. The “Arab Spring” has pushed governments to accelerate labor market policies aimed at encouraging nationals to seek employment in the private sector. They can even be considered an integral part of the counter-revolutionary arsenal. Far from being politically benign however, these reforms have far reaching and sometimes unexpected effects on the relations between state, business and labor” [4].

The next issue is connected with the position of women in the Arab East. “Arab women, long relegated to the private sphere by law and social custom, are gaining new access to public life. But Arab Muslim women in the Middle East still face some social and legal inequalities. Even as governments in the region tout female advancement abroad finds, at home they still enforce traditional gender roles” [5].

New modern tendencies come to the ordinary life of people in monarchies as the result of modernization. Since August 2019, women in Saudi Arabia may obtain passports, travel abroad and register marriages and births on their own. Saudi Arabia initiative to grant women the right to drive in 2018 is “a historic move that cracked open a window to new freedoms for women who have long lived under repressive laws” [6].

The high level of unemployment, illiteracy, and limited opportunities for women to take part in economic development serve like a barrier to the modernization of Arab countries.

Considering the reasons of defeat of the Arab spring, the western researchers emphasize that monarchy was steadier against democratization events during the Arab spring, than the republics. Llamaran A. in his article introduced his personal explanation of events on the base of the books published by R. Snyder: *The Arab Uprising and the Persistence of Monarchy and What made monarchies more resilient during the Arab Spring as compared to republics?* He writes that Robert Snyder offers an ideological-institutional framework in his publishing and allocates the major reasons which, according to him, promoted defeat of the republican states during the Arab spring: «The monarchies took a strong position against revolutionary nationalism from the beginning of their establishments as States. They understood the appeal of such an ideology to their subjects and took

measures accordingly. They ensured that the state and nation remained separate. They fared better than revolutionary republics by being more politically inclusive, enforcing property rights, and forging a more cooperative foreign policy» [7].

After the Arab spring the most influential monarchies, united in Council of the Persian Gulf, – Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, the UAE, Oman and Saudi Arabia – undertake the reforms which are directed at giving stability and legitimacy to their political regimes. They constitute a powerful group of regional actors who also play a significant role in the international arena. While estimating the influence of the Arab countries in the state construction of the Arab region, an expert from the MENA-region states that the key players of this process are the same, as for the last 20-30 years, with shift in the centers of influence. All new actors are tools of influence in hands of regional and global powers, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, the USA, Russia or Israel [8].

The Anniversary 40th summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council (SSAGPZ) in Riyadh showed this shift in the centers of influence in the Gulf area even on the organizational level. “This summit will become already the third from the moment of not settled still diplomatic crisis between Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt which has joined them on the one hand and Qatar with another. Level of participation of Qatar remains the main intrigue of the summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council” [9].

Many famous researchers in the Arab East and everywhere consider the regime change as a remedy against political instability. Some of them argue that the regime change is a proper solution to avoid destabilization while comparing countries such as Jordan, Egypt, Syria and Libya. “The more authoritarian the political system is, the more chaotic and bloodier is the “freedom” that eventually erupts.” [10, p.202] The instability of political regimes in a number of states has led to a complication of the military-political situation and, as a result, to civil wars in Syria, Libya, Somalia, Iraq, Yemen, which has significantly accelerated the pace of emigration in recent years.

The Arab Spring contributed to the expansion of democratic rights of the population in the field of freedom of speech and human rights. The most striking example of this is the Republic of Yemen, which hosted a debate on the meaning and process of justice. «Debates had to build on the history and existing practices in Yemen but also implied some theoretical discussions. Such debates on justice in Yemen and on state distributive policies in rentier states are just two of the many policies that mobilizations have triggered in the Arabian Peninsula since 2011» [10, p.202].

Some changes also happened in the international arena where the Middle East regional order since 2011 has changed in several ways. “This is evidenced by the decline in US power and Russia’s comeback, the rise of sectarianism, the growing influence of non-state actors, the return of Arab state permeability, intensified rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the emergence of regional players such as Turkey, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, the fluidity of alliances and shifting centers of gravity. However, these and other changes constitute a change within the order, rather than of order” [8].

Results of investigation. The beginning of the XXI century has confirmed the opinion of scholars that the determining dominant of the political and public life of the countries of the Arab East is the religious factor of Islam which penetrates into all socio-political spheres of the states of the Arab East, not only as a religion, but also as a way of life. Islam regulates all aspects of the life of an individual and a state. Arab countries follow a special path of modernization, determined by the norms of religion.

In general, most of the political regimes in the Arab states are still authoritarian, the desire for democratization is very weak, so political changes in these countries are often undesirable. The opposition to the ideas of democracy based on the use of authoritarian methods in management are inherent to the ruling circles of the Arab East.

Conclusions. Political processes in the life of monarchies and republics of the Arab East after the Arab Spring are characterized by two interrelated trends: on the one hand, the adaptation of traditional institutions to the modern political realities of Islamic societies, and on the other, these institutions (constitution, parliament, advisory councils, judicial system, political parties, electoral system) transform society itself on the basis of new forms of the political process and political culture. These trends are developing in line with the modernization of the Arab society, its involvement in global processes. They add a more modern look to the existing monarchies and republics and provide them with additional strength in the face of the new challenges of our time, which cherish the events of the Arab Spring.

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