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THE MIDDLE EAST: TRANSFORMATION AND NEW CHALLENGES



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This article aims to analyze the processes of the early 21st century and its influences on the world policy in the Middle East. Much of the research has been focused on the transformation of social and political system, and external influence of the region. Due to the protests' performances which took place in the Middle East and North Africa and led to certain changes in a set-up of Arab regimes that had seemed to be one of the greatest examples of solidarity, sustainability and performance have had a serious effect on neighboring countries and around the Middle East (Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Yemen). It has led to instability and a serious aggravation of an internal political situation (in Syria, Bahrain, Jordan Saudi Arabia, and Algeria). There was an extremely explosive situation characterized by high level of dynamics and at the same time uncertainty.

Keywords: Middle East, «Arab Spring», conflicts, bi-polar world, regional hegemony, world order, regional conflicts, local wars, international actors, the arms race.

The end of bipolar era of the Cold War in the early 1990s has undergone significant changes in the system of the international relations. The great world powers established their military power rejection to the existing international problems and their will for diplomatic ways in solving depression and conflicts. However, global changes didn't provide harmony and stability in the world order. The 20th century is apparently full of wars including world conflicts, terror and repression which caused millions of death, came to the end. However, we started new century with unsolved regional and local conflicts, struggle for the natural resources, confessional and ethnic wars, and tough ecological situation.

Moreover, the end of the bipolar world has opened a number of deep contradictions which were delayed for a long. It was clear, that some of the concepts such as regional superpower, interference of world leaders into the policy of weak international ones which equally refers to the West and the East powers disappeared from political arena.

In the modern interacted world, people has to solve and answer global challenges and threats such as terrorism, crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, environmental catastrophes, hunger and poverty, etc. There is very urgent necessity to create effective control mechanism for conflict and crises regions. Unfortunately, as respectful international organizations so regional integrations according to the events of past

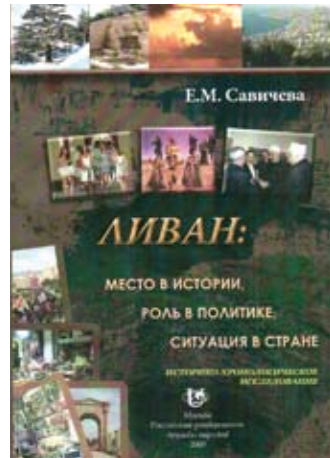
years especially in the Middle East were not possible to solve crises and provide international security and stability.

Also, the Western intention to establish its values of democracy and liberty as a universal in the East, to level original traditions and beliefs and as well as efforts to preserve military superiority, and to strengthen the economic power is quite natural counteraction of the Eastern civilizations. Globalization process including the Afro-Asian states into the world development suppresses them as it happens as an active and aggressive expansion of the western world. This caused by activations of integrated factor, refinement of cultural, and civilizational identity underlining the great enduring values of the distinctive cultures, which, for example, was the Arab-Muslim civilization in Caliphate period. Especially, it is not a clash of civilizations itself that threatens to international relations, but, the weakening of the civilizational principles that the West currently contributes itself, claiming for the priority of their system.

Even at the turn of the century the futurists predicted a growing of chaos in international affairs. The well-known American philosopher, founder of the world-system analysis I. Vallerstajn, pointed out that the coming half-century – 2000 – 2050 years – will be marked by a transition to some unpredictable in form and content of the world order. According to his opinion, the most dangerous conflicts will be most likely based on the interaction of Western arrogance, Islamic intolerance and Chinese affirmation.

The Middle East regional subsystem of international relations was changed sufficiently over the last decades. The entire basis of «the Middle Eastern order» was totally reformed and replaced the so-called «Arab exclusivist system» which actually omitted the states such as Israel, Turkey, and Iran. Another order came into existence determined by the development of new «the non-Arab» centers of power. Prior to 2003, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia began to apply a crucial influence on the regional processes.

The Middle East region is traditionally characterized by a high level of conflict. During a long period of time it continues to be one of the most intense depression and military confrontation of regions in the world. Perhaps, it holds one of the highest «ratings» of large-scale events and considerable changes such as a prolonged conflict in the Middle East, incredibly intricate and sometimes intensifying Lebanon depression, also the numerous armed conflicts in the Persian Gulf, then the unsolved Kurdish problem, and complicated situation in Afghanistan. The distinctive features of conflict situations in the Middle East are becoming global affecting the interests of international and regional security, duration, and extensive involvement of various political forces, extremely negative consequences



(aggravation of the situation in the region, the arms race, suspicion and mistrust in the international relations), then the active interaction of «the Islamic factor».

Moreover, the experts state that transition of any conflicts from the inactive to the active phase threatens to aggravate many various ways by activating and synthesizing several conflicting nodes at once¹.

Thus, more than half a century, the international community cannot overcome a complex and multidimensional issue of settlement of the Arab- Israeli conflict. Nowadays, the situation “neither war, nor peace” still occurs, sometimes a short-term aggravation of the situation takes place. From time to time, the attempts of conflicting parties to establish mutual dialogue on a number of specific questions are traced. However the main issue associated with the creation of territorial integrity of the Palestinian state and the coexistence of two states in peace and security is not solved. In this case, the time works for one of the conflicting parties, namely Israel.

The overflowed region protest waves of «the Arab Spring» set back the Palestinian-Israeli track. However, to ensure regional security settlement of this long-standing conflict has independent value and should be realized on an internationally recognized legal basis, including the UN Charter, the Security council resolutions 242 and 338 and the relevant decisions of the United Nations General Assembly, the principles of the Madrid conference in 1991, «Road map», the Arab peace initiative, and others².

Underlining, that the positive circumstances for development of conflict situations are created by the complex combination and interaction of political, economic, ideological, and personal factors. Political rivalry, territorial disputes, and confessional disagreements between the Islamic states of the region are taking place in the Middle East.

Serious challenges which originated on the ethnic and confessional basis for security of the region create the conflicts; also the negative political consequences create the general destabilization of a situation. “Lebanon-bound” is the vivid example to long-lasting depression which drawn into its orbit many Arab and non-Arab forces; unsolved Cyprus problem, i.e. confrontation between the two major communities of the island such as Greek and Turkish Cypriots and another example, the Islamic Movement of Kurdistan, literally affects the countries such as Iraq, Turkey, and Iran. The ethnic factor plays an important role in hazardous situation in Afghanistan and Sunni- Shiite confrontation in Iraq.

There are no disadvantages in the following examples – whether it is a relatively recent rivalry between the two Baathist regimes of Syria and Iraq, originating in the

¹Ryzhov I. V., Prelov V. V. Problems of regional security in the Middle East. – Bulletin of the Academy of Military Sciences. – Moscow, № 2 (27) 2009. P. 55.

²Joint Statement of the first session of the Russian-Arab Cooperation Forum. Moscow, February 20, 2013. – http://mid.ru/BDOMP/Brp_4.nsf/arh/5FBDC6705A1B70ED44257B1900475A79.



internal Ba’ath split (or Arab Socialist Renaissance Party) in the mid – 1960s., or territorial claims against each other states of the Arabian Peninsula such as Saudi Arabia and Yemen, Bahrain and Qatar, and etc. , or the Moroccan-Algerian continued confrontation associated with the struggle of the Kingdom of Morocco for the accession of the Western Sahara and the current Algerian support of the POLISARIO FRONT, or regional disagreements of the states concerning the rational use of water resources (e.g., Turkey, Syria and Iraq, Israel and the neighboring Arab countries; the states located in the basin of the Nile), and personal or ideological incompatibility modes.

The threat of disintegration of the sovereign states (which has been in Sudan and, de facto, in Somalia; the threat is still virtual but carrying an enormous risk for Iraq, Libya and Syria) brings an additional serious destabilizing factor into the political situation in the Middle East.

In recent decades, there have certainly been some positive shifts in the regional and in the international relations in the Middle East. The clearly identified objective of the states in resolving disputed issues by negotiations and acceptable compromises brought into life a peaceful negotiation process on the Middle East settlement as called Madrid Framework. It seemed the Arab-Israeli conflict has begun moving forward. However, the tendency to resolve the conflicts peacefully didn’t accept a comprehensive and irreversible character in the Middle East, which serves as evidence to the failure of the Madrid process.

In order to deepen the integration processes turned out to be a response to the globalization challenges. New alliances and integrations such as The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Persian Gulf (SSA GPZ-1981), and The Union of the Arab Maghreb (UMA-1989) appeared along with the existing regional formats – LAG, OAPEK, and OIK (OIS).

In the early 1990s, the countries in the Arab Gulf states which include Egypt and Syria put forward an initiative of creating a system of collective security on a regional basis without the participation of foreign countries (the Damascus Declaration). Unfortunately, political rivalry didn’t allow this initiative to be implemented, but its importance was already articulated in the issue.

The Gulf countries are feverishly armed by spending enormous monetary funds to the unstable political conditions, which would suffice to resolve socio-economic development issues. The Middle East has become one of the major world markets for weapons and military equipment. Nowadays, it remains one of the highest militarization regions in the world. So, the Middle East countries share up to 40% of the all purchased weapons in the world³. Most Gulf countries, which turned into a real «gunpowder barrel», especially oil-producing countries such as the Arab states of the Persian Gulf and Iran, have great financial resources allowing them to get large quantities of products of military-industrial complexes.

Experts believe, without any reliance that, the military

power created in the Arabian Peninsula, is obviously beyond the scope of defensive requirements. Any armed conflict urges on a regional armed race by accumulating hostility, and the external and internal threats. It propels the Middle East countries to building up arms, consumption of modern military technology.

During the «Cold War», the intervention of external forces and attempts to resolve certain conflicts by force permanently complicated the situation in the Middle East, and deepening the watershed between the regional states which became a serious calamity. According to the recent years’ events, the experience of carrying out military operations in Iraq, and power methods at their apparent efficiency are deadlock in resolving conflicts. They usually lead to their exacerbation and can become a breeding ground for the developing of new ones, also cause the unprecedented growth of terrorist activity. Generally, any outside violent acts are perceived in the Arab world. The reaction has purely nationalist sense, which has been developed throughout colonial past as well as the Arab- Israeli conflict.

Currently, due to the protests’ performances which took place in the Middle East and North Africa and led to certain changes in a set-up of Arab regimes that had seemed to be one of the greatest examples of solidarity, sustainability and performance have had a serious effect on neighboring countries and around the Middle East (Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, and Yemen). It has led to instability and a serious aggravation of an internal political situation (in Syria, Bahrain, Jordan Saudi Arabia, and Algeria). There was an extremely explosive situation characterized by high level of dynamics and at the same time uncertainty.

Experts state that anti-colonial and antimonarchical revolutions initiated the end of a certain era of the regional countries development in the middle of the last century⁴. The young reformers⁵, who have come then to the power most from the army circles, built a new model of socio-economic and political development that worked for several decades, but has gone off at the turn of the century. Thus, the regional elite accepted their developed schemes of authoritarian rule, caught new tendencies of development and adequately evaluated the rapidly changing internal political situation. Therefore, the bloodshed and the death of thousands of people, waves of the refugees and the destroyed cities and villages, also new threats and challenges to national and regional stability and security, including threats to the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of a number of Arab countries increased the countries which traditionally took a leading position in the inter-Arab relations suffered a setback.

The most serious problem has been revealed by «The Arab Spring». The lack of any actual mechanization in the region could effectively contribute to the stabilization of the internal situation in the «revolutionary» civilized countries and promote the solution of urgent and pressing issues of political, social, economic and ethno-confessional character⁶.

The serious disbalance of a situation in the region and essentially new balance of forces in the Middle East can generate heated discussions. These have revealed in an increased polycentrism which has been amplified here by creating new local «powerful centers» and rivalry for leadership, and also the further delimitation in the Arab world that

³Ryzhov I. V., Prelov V. V. Problems of regional security in the Middle East. – Bulletin of the Academy of Military Sciences. Moscow, № 2 (27) 2009. P. 53.

⁴Annual Journal of the Institute of International Studies, MSIR – University of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. – M., Issue 1 (3), 2013. P. 172.

⁵Ryzhov I. V., Prelov V. V. Problems of regional security in the Middle East. – Bulletin of the Academy of Military Sciences. – Moscow, № 2 (27) 2009.

⁶Baklanov A. G. The Middle Eastern security - missed opportunities. 06.02.2013 // New Eastern Outlook. - <http://www.ru.journal-neo.com/print/120425>.

every single country chooses its own way to condemn to oblivion the idea of an Arab unity and solidarity.

Thus, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the Persian Gulf monarchies, are eager to seize the moment and use the current situation to eliminate its regional competitors in fighting for influence and leadership in the Arab world on behalf of historically created «powerful centers» such as Egypt and Syria.

The constant competition among such countries like Tehran, Riyadh and Ankara that led to a significant increase in the conflict potential in the region was eloquently represented in the situation mentioned above. In addition, the intricate political maneuvers, change targets and allies, bizarre alliances and sudden splits-are part of their everyday political reality.

In conclusion, the following factors indicate to a long-lasting instability in the region as a whole and also in certain countries the large-scale protest movements which opened a way to inter-political turbulence and social crises that has been threatening to develop into civil conflict, the internationalization of almost any conflict arising in the region, the continuing increase in military costs, fueled by new arms race , the activation of the Islamist movements, including fundamentalist interference of external-regional powers, primarily the United States and other NATO countries, are able to accelerate emerging changes and create new inter-Arab and international conflicts.

Е. М. Савичева, Р. С. Фаизова: Таяу Шығыс: Трансформация және жаңа қайшылықтар.

Мақалада ХХІ ғасырдың басында Таяу Шығыста болып жатқан оқиғалар және олардың әлемдік тәртіпке ықпалы талданады. Әлеуметтік және саяси жүйенің трансформациясы жағдайында сыртқы факторлардың әсерінен бұл аймақ барған сайын тұрақсызданып барады. Таяу Шығысты және Солтүстік Африканы жайлаған наразылықтардың салдарынан және біршама тұрақтылыққа ие болған араб режимдерінің ауысуынан (Тунис, Ливия, Египет, Йемен), ішкі саяси жағдайлардың айтарлықтай шиеленісуінен (Сирия, Бахрейн, Иордания, Сауд Арабиясы, Алжир) мұнда динамиканың жоғары деңгейімен сипатталатын жарылыс қауіпті жағдай қалыптасты.

Түйінді сөздер: Таяу Шығыс, «араб көктемі», дау-жанжалдар, екі полюсті әлем, аймақтық үстемдік, әлемдік тәртіп, аймақтық жанжалдар, жергілікті соғыстар, халықаралық акторлар, жанталасақарулану.

Е. М. Савичева, Р. С. Фаизова: Ближний Восток: Трансформация и новые вызовы.

В статье анализируются события, происходящие на Ближнем Востоке в начале ХХІ и их влияние на мировой порядок. В условиях трансформации социальной и политической системы, влияния внешних факторов данный регион становится более нестабильным. Вследствие протестных выступлений, охвативших Ближний Восток и Северную Африку и приведших к смене ряда арабских режимов, которые обладали, казалось, наибольшей долей устойчивости (Тунис, Ливия, Египет, Йемен), и серьезному обострению внутривосточной ситуации (Сирия, Бахрейн, Иордания, Саудовская Аравия, Алжир), здесь сложилась крайне взрывоопасная ситуация, характеризующаяся высоким уровнем динамики и в то же время неопределенности.

Ключевые слова: Ближний Восток, «арабская весна», конфликты, двухполюсный мир, региональный гегемонизм, мировой порядок, региональные конфликты, локальные войны, международные акторы, гонки вооружений.