A Comparative-Democratic Analysis of Democratic Processes in Arab Countries (Egypt and Saudi Arabia)

Malikaxon Minovvarova

Graduate Student, International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan

Abstract: The study of contemporary political processes in the Arab East raises at least two main questions related to the development conditions of the countries located in this region. What does the concept of "democracy" mean to them, and to what extent have the ideas derived from this concept become a reality in the Arab world? If, as a result of certain political forces' activities, the democratization of the political structure has taken on specific forms, who are the initiators, and how prepared are they to deepen the changes they have already implemented?

A preliminary analysis of the situation in the Arab world allows us to give a positive answer to whether the democratization process has become a reality in the Arab world.

Keywords: parliament, Persian Gulf, politics of pluralism, Western democracy, M.J. al-Ansari, opposition groups.

Introduction. A preliminary analysis of the situation in the Arab world allows us to affirmatively answer whether the democratization process has become a reality in the Arab world. The announcement of pluralism policies of views, parties, and movements in Tunisia, Egypt, and Jordan, the expansion of parliamentary norms in the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula countries, and the long-standing traditions of a multi-party system in Morocco are all real facts confirming that the political processes in these countries are developing towards the consistent expansion of the foundations of democratic life. This list of countries could be longer. Ultimately, we are dealing with the methodology of approaching the problem of democratization, which can also be determined based on the interpretation proposed by specific power structures and accepted by public opinion (Salameh, 1994).

At the same time, attempting the same analysis leads to identifying the uniqueness of local variants of democratic development. If these are related to Western models, they are naturally perceived as the ideal matrix of democracy: "Regimes elected in a democratic way... usually disregard constitutional limitations on their authority and deprive the citizens who elected them of their fundamental rights and freedoms" (Ghadbian, 1997). An American author of Arab origin points out the blatant violation of the order of things – democratic norms do not prevent state authoritarianism; they assimilate them and do not resemble the countries where these norms originated. More so: "In the Islamic world, from the Palestinian Authority to Iran and Pakistan, democratization helps strengthen the role of theocratic politicians, fragment secularism, and traditions of tolerance... If elections were held tomorrow in Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and some Gulf states, the regimes that would emerge as a result of these elections would be less liberal than those currently in place" (Zakaria, 1997). This is an unexpected version of the evolution of the idea of Western democracy. It began to be seen as "illiberal democracy." This phenomenon requires an explanation.

The explanation provided by Arab political scientists is primarily based on the idea that other characteristics of social loyalty exist in the Arab world compared to the West. Of course, these characteristics include affiliation with the Muslim religion and the related civilization. However, affiliation with a specific social unit – a tribe, religious community, or family-clan association – is significant (Al-Ansari, 2002). Only in the last instance does an individual in the Arab world identify themselves with the subject of this or that state.

Literature Review and Methodology. The emergence of other forms of statehood in the modern Arab region has never led to the loss of other markers of social loyalty. The entire historical development path of this region proves this, with its most essential stage being the early Islamic era, as well as the period of later Muslim states that included Arab territories. Simultaneously, Muslim political ideas and their influence on state formation processes became the most crucial aspect of the analysis by Arab political scientists (Al-Harmasi, 2003).

Islam, as a religion and at the same time as a doctrine defining the ideology and ways of building a secular life, ultimately could not develop a clear political basis encompassing the main principles of the state system. Bahraini political scientist M.J. al-Ansari pointed this out: "Muslim political jurisprudence (al-fiqh) has never risen above developing the foundations of worship or defining the personal status of community members. One could regret this because politics was the primary norm of religious community life" (al-Ansari, 2002).

According to him, the direct result of this situation was "the supremacy of power, the dominance of the principle of 'whoever kills the sultan becomes the sultan,' not only during the Mamluk period" (al-Ansari, 2002). Another significant development of the idea concerning Islam's underdeveloped normative ideas on politics and state matters emerged. If 'brute force' has always determined the main directions of state formation in the Arab region, could the state created by a particular ruler have developed while maintaining its stability as a political structure? The leading Arab political scientists would answer this question negatively. "In fact, there were no stable structural divisions in the state," emphasized Lebanese political scientist G. Salameh (1994). "The ideas of Muslim jurisprudence, embodied in the principle of consultation (ash-shura), never found their worthy expression in institutions that existed and preserved their historical continuity, through which the practice of political life could be realized" (Salameh, 1994).

Discussion and Results. Therefore, the civilization matrix of the Arab world – the norms of Islamic statehood – did not develop any ideas similar to modern concepts of democracy that correspond to Western ideas about state and personal relations. However, it was not about the inferiority of this matrix. This was a unique feature that needed to be considered when raising questions about the development trends of the states of the Arab region. The uniqueness of Muslim civilization was crucial in determining the specific characteristics of existing states and their possibilities for development in the direction of democratization (Ghadbian, 1997). Among the parameters of this civilization matrix, the most important was the lack of positive connection points between the individual and the state. The self-identification options familiar to the individual remained more attractive. They belonged to the Islamic world and were interested in the problems of the religious group, tribe, or clan to which they belonged within the Arab-Muslim society.

In other words, this person identified themselves primarily as a Muslim, belonging to the Sunni majority or Shia, Druze, or Alawi minority. Only in the last instance did they consider themselves a citizen of Syria, Jordan, Sudan, or another state in the region.

Conclusion. Arab political scientists analyzed the historical past of this vast geopolitical region to find an answer to how much the situation can be changed for the benefit of democratization. Their viewpoint on this matter was pessimistic. It was about states that had inherited the civilizational norms of Islam only formally, declaring these norms as the main foundation of their life. Genuine Islamic statehood was created based on principles far removed from Western

models. The Islamic society developed differently than those in the West. However, its natural evolution was interrupted by European expansion (Al-Harmasi, 2003).

The current forms of existence of the Arab regional community fundamentally differ from the pre-European expansion forms of existence that were the reality before the onset of European state expansion. This idea serves as the leading thought for many Arab political scientists (Salameh, 1994). It is formed as a contradiction between the concepts of "al-watan" ("homeland"), which refers to the single territorial and national-cultural space of the Arab world, and "al-kutr" ("state"), which is accepted as the real, vital political-state entity of the present day.

REFERENCES:

1. Al-Ansari, M.J. (2002). *Islam and Political Jurisprudence.* Bahrain: Islamic Publications.

2. Al-Harmasi, M.A. (2003). *The Sociology of North African Arab Societies.* Tunisia: Tunisian Academic Press.

3. Ghadbian, N. (1997). *Democratization and the Arab World.* Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, 29(3), 377-392.

4. Salameh, G. (1994). *The Politics of Arab Political Culture.* Lebanon: Beirut Publishing.

5. Zakaria, F. (1997). *The Rise of Illiberal Democracy.* Foreign Affairs, 76(6), 22-43.