

TALLINN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

School of Business and Governance

Department of Law

Gleb Stepus

THE ARAB SPRING: A CONTINUATION AFTER THE END

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Supervisor: Vlad Vernygora, MA

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the paper independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors has been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.
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Gleb Stepus
14.05.2020
Student code: 166337TASB
Student email address: stgleb987@gmail.com

Supervisor: Vlad Vernygora, MA
The paper conforms to requirements in force

.....
(signature, date)

Chairman of the Defence Committee: Peeter Mürsepp
Permitted to the defence
.....
(name, signature, date)

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of ‘Arab Spring’ has been comprehensively discussed by academia, and a predominant range of scholarly observations on the topic has framed up a conclusion that the process is still on. In a direct way, ‘Arab Spring’ led to a high number of issues such as massive migration, poverty, economic crisis, political instability, while ruining lives of millions of civilians. Indeed, the multi-dimensional instability continues and can be measured in different clusters, but the geo-strategic nature of this particular ‘continuation’ is a distinctly under-researched area of international relations. This paper, therefore, aims at testing a claim that the ‘Arab Spring’s prolonged ‘life’, largely, depends on the factor of longevity for the crisis-bound region to remain a ‘fertile’ geo-strategic ground for proxy conflicts between different global and regional powers.

Keywords: ‘Arab Spring’, North Africa, Middle East, regime change, revolution, poverty, unemployment, war, politics, geo-strategy, proxy conflicts.

INTRODUCTION

In the XXI century, asymmetric conflicts, including wars by proxy, become increasingly popular in the process of changing political regimes, especially when such conflicts are interlinked with internal or region-wide mass protests. For the context, it is no matter whether or not the former precedes the latter, or the other way around. The main issue here is the outcome that is usually very similar when it comes to comparing different localities. For example, the ‘Arab Spring’, a wave of revolutionary mass unrest in the Arab world, leading in some countries to a change in the ruling regimes, and in others to noticeable changes in domestic politics, has been associated with predominantly indirect involvement of different global and regional actors.

The ‘Arab Spring’, which began in 2010, has not only domestic political, but also geo-strategic significance. Until recently, political stagnation in the Arab countries was something exceptional for the modern, highly dynamic world: an authoritarian system, decades-old leaders, repressive systems of suppression of any resistance. We cannot ignore the fact that the region had archaic political systems, customs, and an inert social structure that did not keep pace with the development of the world. The ‘Arab Spring’ caused revolutionary changes, where it was a natural social process and without direct intervention of foreign powers – in Tunisia and Egypt – the situation is reaching a certain degree of positive stability. However, in Algeria, Libya, Syria, and Yemen – the general status quo represents a high level of instability that is also associated with unpredictably when it is impossible to see the end and edge. The range of foreign actors involved into the process is extremely diverse, featuring Russia, Saudi Arabia, the US, Turkey and some of the EU Member States. The events of the ‘Arab Spring’ had a great impact on world politics, as the events went far beyond the Arab region. The political regimes that have taken place have shown that they are not able to respond to modern trends in international development through the expansion of democracy.

The unrest that led to the change in 2011 of political regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya (and the latter to foreign military intervention) destabilized the situation in this strategically important region and had a tangible impact on what is happening in the world. It is not easy to assess the full extent of this influence, since events are dynamically developing in other countries, and not only in the Near and Middle East. The political future of the countries that survived these shocks is still foggy, and new hotbeds of conflict are emerging one after another. In such a context, there is even a not so rhetorical question is increasingly being asked on whether or not events in

other parts of the world can be developed according to a similar scenario. Political disasters in this region, coupled with not always successful attempts by the international community to cope with these challenges, lead to cracks in the entire system of international law that formed after World War II, despite the fact that the old system is malfunctioning and the new one is not formed due to different ideas of the powers about it the future.

The subject of the study is the ‘Arab Spring’ and its impact on world politics. The aim of the study is to find the factors, which facilitate the continuation of ‘Arab Spring’, while testing a claim that the ‘Arab Spring’s prolonged ‘life’, largely, depends on the factor of longevity for the crisis-bound region to remain a ‘fertile’ geo-strategic ground for proxy conflicts between different global and regional powers. In a way, it is already detectable that global players are interested in achieving competing goals, while maintaining personal interest and presence in the region. At the same time, the situation is more nuanced than it seems, and, in order to tackle the aforementioned claim, there is a need to answer the following set of questions: 1) what exactly the ‘Arab Spring’ was about from international relations point of view? and 2) in what segments of socio-political, politico-economic and security-building activity the ‘continuation’ of the ‘Arab Spring’ can be detected? Both process tracing and comparative analysis were used to form a methodological base of the work. The theoretical and informational base of the study was made up of official documents of international organizations and states, as well as periodicals, articles and statistical materials. The structure of the study is determined by the purpose and objectives of the study as well as the study-associated research questions.

1. THE REASONS AND COURSE OF THE ‘ARAB SPRING’

1.1. The ‘Arab spring’ and its prerequisite

Today it is becoming apparent that the ‘Arab Spring’ is a deep, protracted crisis, it is the reality of our time. With the advent of the ‘Arab Spring’, complex and contradictory actions, as well as fierce confrontation between the parties, unfortunately could not end for the present moment. As claimed by Sidani (2019, 31) the Arab world has long attracted the attention of the world community. This phenomenon is largely explained by the fact that the states of the Arab region live in their own special coordinate system, ranging from political structure, ethno-confessional features and ending with religious, clan contradictions that are inherent only to the Arab-Muslim society. Sidani (2019, 32) found out that the events of the ‘Arab Spring’ clearly demonstrated the possibility of changing the political regime using both, internal and external political strategies, which are based on the use of both armed and non-violent actions. Obviously, an analysis of the causes, mechanism and consequences of political changes in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa in 2011 allows to understand the logic and direction of political conflicts in modern society.

In the countries of the region under consideration, there were serious social differences in the structure of society, characterized by clannishness and corruption of the state system. The authoritarian nature of political power excluded democratic transformations or carried them out slowly. The desire of the young educated elite of states to expand political and civil liberties came up against the opposition of an authoritarian political system, in the point of Dixon (2018, 310).

The desire for political changes and improving the economic situation in the countries of the region does not originate in the events of 2011. In the previous two decades after the end of the Cold War, public and student performances in North Africa and the Middle East were quite frequent and were constantly suppressed by army units and the police, which the Western media practically tried not to mention. The internal contradictions that have been accumulating over a long period of time, sooner or later had to lead to a conflict situation connected with the need to change the authoritarian political regimes in power, planted for decades in the states of the Arab world. It is no coincidence that the beginning of the second decade of the XXI century was marked by a series of anti-government protests in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

Talking about the main reasons events that have occurred, should be mentioned the most likely ones. Unemployment can be called the first and very significant cause of discontent. Moreover, unemployment, which struck the educated layers of the young population, lacking a vertical social elevator, unable to find a worthy place in life. A second reason is the ever-widening gap between the poor and the rich. Tunisia was far from the poorest country in the Arab world, where no one was dying of hunger or vegetating in slums. But it was precisely the contrast between the incomes of the mainstream population and the ruling elite that caused more and more indignation and discontent. This income gap is connected with the third reason – corruption in the higher echelons of power. The fourth reason is rooting, dominance of power and unwillingness to attract fresh strength. For example, Muammar Gaddafi has been in charge of Libya since 1 September 1969 (Davidson 2017, 93)

At the first stage of the development of the protest movement, the most active force in a number of countries (especially Egypt and Tunisia) was young people, mostly educated, but not finding decent work, owning new information technologies and consolidated through social networks of the Internet. Dixon (2018, 312) notes that the layer of the population gave dynamics to the protest movement. It is noteworthy that in recent years the share of youth in the total population has been growing not only in Arab countries. Demographers often call this phenomenon youth riot.

According to Hodler (2018, 826) at the second stage, the ‘baton’ of youth activists was seized by representatives of more organized and politically experienced Islamist movements, which after the parliamentary elections in Egypt and Tunisia in late 2011-early 2012 turned out to be the main beneficiaries of the change of government. Hodler (2018, 829) figured that the driving force behind the protests was by no means the poorest segments of the population, but rather those who could be defined as the middle class, whose representatives lost their ability to maintain their previous standard of living due to unemployment. With such a large social and economic stratification, this class became smaller and could no longer maintain stability in society.

Sidani (2019, 34) noticed that almost all troubled Arab countries, in recent years there has been an explosive population growth, which was accompanied (due to scientific and technological progress and medical advances) a decrease in mortality. The authorities understood the complexity of the tasks arising in connection with this, but were unable to cope with them. Nada (2020) made the research and found out that few people then could have imagined that the matter would end in a revolution, but it was already obvious that the population growth of Egypt was gaining alarming

rates, and today more than one hundred million people. The problems were aggravated by the migration of rural residents to cities and, accordingly, an increase in the urban population. In Tunisia, for example, the trend has played a significant role.

Finally, the trigger for destabilizing the region was the rise in food prices, because world food prices began to rise rapidly. It is important to keep in mind that Arab countries import most of the food and are particularly dependent on grain supplies. According to Bebler (2012, 103) recognizing the priority of internal causes, the role of the external factor in the development of events in the Middle East and North Africa cannot be ignored. Its effect manifested itself most vividly in Libya, where not only the interests of a number of Western and Eastern countries coincided, but for the first time on the spring of 2011 a precedent was created for the joint participation of the NATO and some Arab states in a violent regime change in the Arab country.

1.2. The very beginning of the ‘Arab Spring’

The beginning of the second decade of the XXI century was marked by turbulent events in the countries of the Arab East, which went down in history as the ‘Arab Spring’. First of all, it should be noted the widespread involvement of the masses who opposed the established regimes in the region. The protest movement that began in Tunisia in January 2011, like a steppe fire, quickly spread to neighbouring countries and swept over the vast territory of the Arab world (Özçelik, Çakmak 2018, 3) The authorities promised to quickly carry out reforms, as it was in Algeria, it managed to resist, or the power was swept away due to the refusal of reforms. This happened in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen. The monarchy in Bahrain was saved by the armed forces of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Oman, which intervened at a critical moment. The Arab monarchies have once again proved that they are the reactionary forces of the Arab East. In December 2010, a young fruit seller, Mohamed Bouazizi, committed a self-immolation act in Tunisia, after which a wave of protests swept the country, and on 14 January 2011, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia. Mass protests that began in Tunisia led to the fall of President Ben Ali’s regime and his hasty flight to Saudi Arabia (Abushouk 2016, 56).

In the framework of the events of the ‘Arab Spring’, social networks, primarily *Facebook* and *Twitter*, were actively used for the political organization of the masses. It was through the system of social networks that the activities of protesters for political speeches were coordinated.

Undoubtedly, the use of Internet resources has become quite an effective organizational weapon in the hands of the coordinators of political speeches (Abushouk 2016, 60).

Later, protests began in Egypt, Yemen and Bahrain. In Libya, foreign intervention led to the overthrow of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, and in Syria, the civil war continues to this day. In the beginning of events, there was a vision, especially in Western media, that the Arab region was entering a period of democratic transformation, which in each country would take from several weeks to several months and would remain relatively peaceful, marking the beginning of a new regional era of representative democracy (Abushouk 2016, 57).

President Hosni Mubarak's regime in Egypt fell very soon after the events in Tunisia: 11 February 2011, and two days later in the east of Libya unrest began and a demonstration demanding the resignation of the country's leader Muammar Gaddafi. The confrontation between the authorities and protesters took the form of armed struggle there. On 18 March 2011, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution establishing a no-fly zone over Libya (Voltaire Network 2011). The military intervention of NATO countries made a decisive contribution to the fall and death of the Libyan leader in the fall of 2011. In January, major demonstrations began in Yemen, Jordan, Bahrain and Morocco. However, events in these countries developed in different ways. In Jordan and Morocco, the royal authorities reacted quite quickly to what was happening and hastily carried out some reforms that somewhat reduced the intensity of passions, at least temporarily.

Heath J. (2016) marked that one of the internal factors that started the protests in a number of countries was the aggravation of socio-economic problems. First, in recent decades, stratification of society has intensified, and the income gap between the poor and the rich in almost all Arab countries has widened. Secondly, Heath J. (2016) noticed that the unemployment rate has risen, which in some Arab countries has reached 60–70% of the working population, with the vast majority of the unemployed being young people under 25 years old, who have received education, but are practically deprived of job prospects and the opportunity to secure a decent standard of living and who make up the majority in a number of Arab states. For example, Egypt is a country experiencing a powerful demographic leap, its population is growing by more than 1 million people a year, while the average age of the Egyptians is 24 years. In Tunisia, 500 thousand unemployed are registered at the labour exchange, of which 150 thousand are university graduates. It can be stated that one of the factors of dissatisfaction of the Arab population was the inability of the government to pursue an effective youth policy (Heath J. 2016).

The ‘Arab Spring’ was the result of a cultural and political mutation born of a new generation connected to the global culture thanks to new information and communication technologies. According to this vision, the speeches were, at least in essence, if not exclusively, a struggle for political freedom and democracy. However, the point of view was not entirely erroneous. These dimensions were without doubt a characteristic feature of the speeches. However, the key point that was emphasized from the very beginning is that the speeches had primarily social and economic roots, and only then political ones. What happened, first of all, was a social explosion, even if it, like any large-scale social explosion, acquired a political character, claimed by Saiya (2017, 45).

One can speak about the social prerequisites on the basis of the fact that he first started in two countries that in previous years experienced an extraordinary accumulation of social and class conflicts: in Tunisia and Egypt. The slogans of the speeches themselves were not only political, not just about democracy and freedom, but also to a large extent voiced social demands. In general this integral process is progressively developing, both within the framework of the traditional internal foundations of the local society and under global control and the influence of external circumstances. It also depends on many factors: activity of the authority on the local, particular market, financial and other important resources and opportunities, of those ones, who are involved for a long time in this complicated game.

1.3. Politico-military aspects of intervention in Libya

The alliance began military operations in Libya as a formally legitimate operation to implement UN Security Council resolution 1973, which authorized UN member countries to introduce a ban on flights in Libyan airspace, according to Voltaire Network (2011). However, during the operation, the mandate of which was renewed several times and was officially terminated on 31 October 2011, NATO countries went far beyond the scope of this resolution. Actions in Libya showed that NATO countries are ready to launch an air offensive operation in a short time according to a scenario similar to those that the United States and its allies previously carried out in the Balkans and the Middle East (Hallams, Schreer 2012, 315).

Hallams and Schreer (2012, 316) research shows an operation called ‘Odyssey Dawn’ began on the night of 20 March. It was attended by the United States, Britain, France, Italy, Canada, Spain and other countries. Near the Libyan coast, a NATO naval grouping of 25 warships and submarines

was concentrated, including three US Navy ships with Tomahawk missiles on board, an Enterprise aircraft carrier and several landing helicopter carriers. Later, they were joined by the French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle.

The target of the Allies was, first of all, the Soviet-made S-200 missile systems that were in the Libyan army, as well as 15 early warning radars on the Mediterranean coast. They were incapacitated on the very first night of hostilities, like the entire Libyan integrated air defence management system. The objects of the attacks were also the positions of the regular Libyan army, command posts and communications centres, and military industry enterprises. The government complex in Tripoli, parliament buildings, military intelligence and television and radio broadcasting, as well as airfields, the country's power supply system and even oil storage facilities, for example, in the Misurata area on the north coast east of Tripoli were repeatedly attacked. (Hallams, Schreer 2012, 320)

Over the past year, enough information has appeared in the specialized literature and in the media about the weapons and tactics of the allies, figures of losses on both sides are presented. The main thing that should be emphasized: never before has such a large number of heterogeneous aviation equipment been used simultaneously in the course of a single military campaign, which made high demands on the communications automation, reconnaissance and tactical command automation system. In the early days of the war, the general coordination of the allies was carried out by a US general.

The opinions of experts on the effectiveness of NATO aviation are mixed. Some believe that it demonstrated the strengths: high intelligence effectiveness, the ability to strike at identified targets a few minutes after they are identified. The high efficiency of the aviation operations of the alliance was the result of the modernization. Now, many aircraft, in addition to the full range of weapons, can carry a range of reconnaissance, surveillance and targeting equipment. This increases the autonomy of aviation over the battlefield. Until now, based on the experience of military operations in Afghanistan, there was a widespread belief that attacks on complex objects can be carried out only if there is target designation from the ground.

However, critical experts note that the actions of the Allied aviation were ineffective and costly. Among the main drawbacks of the use of strike aircraft, an overly lengthy process of processing intelligence, which took place at least five instances, is noted. As a result, individual air groups

were forced to return to bases with empty fuel tanks, without having been bombed. European allies lacked tanker aircraft. Therefore, 80% of all refuelling in the air was carried out by US planes. Another drawback of NATO aviation was a great dependence on the United States in solving problems of suppressing enemy air defence (Hallams, Schreer 2012, 321).

In attacks on ground facilities in Libya, about 570 military bases, bunkers and command and control facilities, 355 anti-aircraft missiles, more than 500 tanks and other armoured vehicles, and about 860 ammunition depots were destroyed. However, the main 'achievement' of NATO was different. First of all, the alliance tested the political format of its actions, carried out its plans under the auspices of the UN, but at the same time arbitrarily interpreting the provisions of the UN Security Council resolution in its favour. And in addition, as argued, it 'tested' the military format for conducting future NATO interventions using strike aircraft, cruise missiles, including those launched from submarines, as well as using strikes (DeYoung, Jaffe 2011)

According to Feinstein (2011), there have been cases of the use of expensive French and British long-range cruise missiles on Soviet-made Libyan T-55 and T-62 tanks of little military value. Obviously, here the French and British competed with each other for future arms contracts. There is a point of view that Libya was not ready to repulse the strike, because it did not manage to modernize its armed forces, however, it is more likely to be in the field of assumptions, as well as what a decisive role could have played a Russian naval base in Benghazi, Libya, had it been established. The question, however, arises: why did the Libyan army not offer real resistance? Why Gaddafi, having shown decisiveness in actions against the rebels on the ground, did not take off the air? Obviously, the Libyan Air Force could not fight on equal terms with NATO aviation, but they could damage the alliance forces. However, not a single air battle between the Libyan Air Force and NATO aircraft occurred. Combat helicopters that could work effectively on ground targets were also not involved (DeYoung, Jaffe 2011).

The key role was played by the suddenness of the operation, the poor training of the Libyan army personnel, as well as the technical backlog of Libya associated with international sanctions that have been in force for many years. It is also important that the Allied aviation in the very first days of the operation struck primarily at the Libyan air defence system and airfields. It must be said that, in general, the combat operations of NATO aviation have shown the inability of the alliance countries to independently carry out major military operations due to the lack of a sufficient

number of aircraft-carrying ships, refuelling aircraft, combat support aircraft and aircraft. And there are objective reasons.

In the operation against Libya, strikes were carried out exclusively by high-precision weapons, without the use of conventional bombs without guidance systems. At the same time, even in these relatively small-scale military operations, stocks of aircraft weapons were used up rather quickly, and they were replenished only through American supplies. The situation in Libya is complicated by the actions on its territory by militants of the Islamic State group, who entered the country in the spring of 2014 through practically unguarded borders. In February 2015, militants occupied the city of Sirte and, having spread influence to smaller cities in the north of the country, by the spring of 2015 controlled about 290 km of the Mediterranean coast, where more than a dozen fields and oil refineries are located. On the territory of the country, Islamic State training camps were deployed (Moscsp 2016). In May 2016, PNE formations began an operation to expel ISIS terrorists from the country. In agreement with the Saraj's cabinet, in August 2016, the U.S. Air Force attacked IS positions. On October 12, 2016, the Libyan military announced the completion of the military unit to liberate Sirte (Moscsp 2016).

The Libyan campaign once again demonstrated the great importance of aircraft-carrying ships as platforms for basing aircraft of various types and purposes. In proportion to *Figure 1*, approximately 2,500,000 people need humanitarian assistance and protection. 435,000 people are internally displaced living in makeshift camps and warehouses.



Figure 1: Libya after the 'Arab Spring': in numbers

Source: Amnesty 2016

1.4. The overthrow of Gaddafi

According to Tekasuk (2018, 3), Muammar Gaddafi, who ruled Libya for 42 years, overthrew the monarchy and established a new political regime in the country, the Jamahiriya, which was different from the monarchy and the republic. Gaddafi's government directed oil production

revenues to social needs, thanks to which large-scale programs for the construction of public housing, the development of health systems and education were implemented in the country. But while in power, Gaddafi showed a lack of political instinct and lack of foresight. He became interested in the idea of building a Unified African State and claimed the role of its leader. He often spoke sharply about the problems of the world community, which extremely distracted him from running the country. At the same time, he did not pay due attention to internal processes in the country where corruption and the aggravation of internal factors in all processes began to flourish. It also caused aggravation of the situation in Libya and, to a certain extent continue to influence some neighbouring countries. In February 2011, amid the events of the ‘Arab Spring’ in Tunisia and Egypt, mass protests began in Benghazi, the second largest city in Libya (Tekasuk 2018, 5).

The demonstrators demanded the democratization of political life and the removal from power of Muammar Gaddafi. Quickly enough, the protests spread to other cities. In less than a month, the rebels managed to take control of the territory and launch an offensive in other regions. Government forces used artillery, tanks and aircraft against the rebels. Under these conditions, on 26 February 2011, the UN Security Council imposed an arms embargo on Libya (Çakmak 2018).

According to Voltaire Network (2011) on 17 March, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1973, which provided for the introduction of a no-fly zone over the entire territory of the country and the protection of the local population with all necessary measures (Russia and China abstained in the voting). This document was used by Western countries and their Arab allies as the basis for military intervention in the Libyan conflict. On March 19, the French Air Force launched the first airstrikes on Gaddafi’s troops. On 23 March, NATO’s full-scale Unified Protector military operation began. Thanks to the support of Western countries, the opposition managed to establish control over almost the entire territory of the country. On 20 October 2011, former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi was killed in the vicinity of besieged Sirte. The motorcade, in which Gaddafi was trying to escape from the city, was hit by NATO aircraft, which had been conducting a military operation in Libya since March 2011 (Voltaire Network 2011).

As a result of the blow, the former Libyan leader was injured in both legs and head. The wounded Gaddafi took refuge in a drainage structure, but the West-backed rebels - one of the units of the transitional National Council of Libya – overtook him and captured, and later brutally killed. After the fall of the regime of Muammar Gaddafi, the country actually broke up into several territories

controlled by different groups. In 2012, power in Libya passed from the Transitional National Council, formed during the Civil War, to the General National Congress. By the end of 2015, Libya had two parliaments and two governments. Executive and legislative bodies controlled by Islamists worked in Tripoli. In Tobruk, under the protection of the troops of General Khalifa Haftar, a former commander of the army of Gaddafi, there was a government recognized by the UN and a national parliament elected in general elections. In 2016, the Libyan government of national accord was formed, led by businessman Fayez Sarraj. On 31 March of the same year, it began work in the Libyan capital (Çakmak 2019). Now the authorities in Tripoli, which rely on a coalition of various pro-Islamist formations in the west of the country, are considered internationally recognized, but the Haftar government is not. Meanwhile, oil-rich zones fell into the hands of extremists.

1.5. The role of Turkey in the ‘Arab spring’

Aras & Akarcesme (2012) noticed that in stormy events in the Middle East, the regional powers played a leading role along with the Western ones. And if Iran had a restraining effect on the revolutionaries, cooling their ardour, in particular in Syria, and Israel was inclined to the unusual role of an observer, then Turkey and a number of Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, assumed the burden of responsibility for events taking place, actively participating in them. The role of Turkey here should be emphasized especially, since the wave of Arab revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East led to an increase in the regional role of this country and caused a change in its foreign policy towards the east. However, Turkey’s ambitions are already facing new challenges.

Over the past years and up to the ‘Arab spring’, Turkey’s foreign policy was based on the concept of ‘strategic depth’, the basic principles of which were ‘zeroing out’ problems with neighbours and creating a zone of stability and security in the immediate environment. Following these principles, Turkey was able, if not resolved, at least to smooth over the decades-old problems with Syria, Iran and Iraq and intensify relations with the countries of the Middle East. It managed to gain popularity both on the ‘Arab street’, and among the political parties and leaders of the region who consider the experience of modernization of this country and the strengthening of its role in the world arena as an example to follow, as maintained by Aras & Akarcesme (2012).

The Arab revolutions further strengthened the attractiveness of Turkey's political structure to other regional powers. Arab experts even started talking about the fact that the experience of modernizing the Turkish political system could be an example for the future post-revolutionary structure of Egypt. With the beginning of the Arab revolutions, the concept of strategic depth has lost its relevance, because, according to the Turkish leadership, in the current geopolitical situation, Turkey's role in the world has changed and from an intermediary it has turned into a player that directly affects regional politics.

Events in the Middle East again led to a political rapprochement between Turkey and the United States, turning Ankara into Washington's reformatting of the region. If, until 2010, Euro-Atlantic strategists, discussing the shift of the Turkish political vector towards the East, called Turkey a sworn friend and a lost ally, recently these characteristics have gradually changed, and Turkey has begun to turn into a model country, with which the West needs to learn to speak on equal terms. According to the calculations of Turkish strategists, the result of rapprochement with the United States should be an increase in the influence of Turkey in the changed geopolitical space of the region (Aras, Akarcesme 2012).

Saiya (2017, 49) pointed out that there is an opinion, that the United States has never been and will not be interested in an economically and politically strong Turkey, especially given the strategy that they are implementing in the Middle East. Their goal is the creation of satellite states' loyal to the White House. It is possible that the new policy of the Turkish authorities could eventually hit Turkey itself with a boomerang, eventually turning it into the next centre of regional upheaval. The actions of the Turkish leadership in the Syrian direction exacerbated its relations with Iran, which warned Turkey that in the event of its armed intervention in Syria, he would not stand aside and take retaliatory measures. An even greater increase in tension between Ankara and Tehran was facilitated by Turkey's agreement to deploy American radars on its territory. In response, Iran threatened to attack the Turkish missile defence system if the United States or Israel would have attacked them first (Aras, Akarcesme 2012).

The main opposition People's Republican Party, whose leader, K. Kılıçdaroğlu, claims that the Turkish leadership, by interfering in the internal affairs of other states, is helping to fuel a war in the region (Ahval 2019). Turkey's relations with Iraq, Iran and Syria have worsened due to government intervention in the domestic politics of these countries, and this has reduced Turkey's chances of becoming a regional power, according to Ahval (2019). The leaders of other Turkish

opposition parties, such as the Nationalist Movement Party and the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party, believe that the current government's policy towards Syria is very dangerous and takes Turkey to the brink of war with its neighbours. The United States and NATO, of which Turkey is a member, for several reasons did not seek to conduct a military operation in Syria according to the Libyan scenario. However, the overthrow of the Syrian regime, if it begins, can be carried out with the help of regional opponents of Syria, with Turkey playing one of the leading roles in the scenario. Realizing this and not wanting to take on such responsibility, nevertheless, it must be taken into account that Washington's recognition of Turkey's leading role in the region will require its concrete participation in changing the geopolitical space of the Middle East. Against this background, Turkey's claims for regional leadership will encounter problems caused by increased instability in the Middle East.

2. A CONTINUATION AFTER THE END

2.1. Ongoing tensions in North Africa and Middle East

Among the countries affected by the ‘Arab Spring’, Syria has suffered the most. The conflict in Syria went far beyond the framework of the civil war, after the country turned into a platform of confrontation between world and regional forces from Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar to permanent members of the UN Security Council – Russia and the United States. Anti-government militants were logically supported by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, the United States, and several other states. Syrian government was supported by – Iran, Russia, North Korea and Venezuela. (Paige 2019, 210)

In Syria, war is erupting, gaining global proportions, because many countries of the world are already involved in it and their circle is expanding. Paige (2019, 211) explained, it began with massive anti-government unrest and unrest in various cities of Syria, directed against the country's president Bashar al-Assad and to end the long reign of the Ba'ath party. In June-July 2011, unrest escalated into an open armed confrontation - the Syrian crisis: an armed conflict between the troops of the Assad government and militia loyal to the Syrian government on the one hand and armed rebel groups (mainly consisting of Islamists) on the other. Bammarny (2016, 478) noticed that the third party to the conflict is the Kurds who created a *de facto* autonomous region in the north-east and north-west of the country with their own government. Bammarny (2016, 490) pointed out that the current conflict in Syria creates a really extremely dangerous situation in the whole region, the authorities of this country are not going to give up their positions and are determined to continue the war with the opposition.

According to Paige (2019, 208), since April 2011, in Syria, the government has increasingly resorted to harsh repressive measures to keep the situation under control. The League of Arab States, while trying to crush the Syrian economy, and thereby weaken the support of the regime of President Bashar al-Assad, introduced a series of severe economic sanctions against Syria, almost declaring it an economic war. In almost all Arab countries, Islamic parties and movements, formal and informal associations - both included in legal political systems and prohibited. Initially, they limited themselves to publicly recording their participation in the protest movement, but today they have not tried to either head it or redirect it to the ideological path they need. After the victory

of the revolutions, Islamic parties were among the leaders of the elections held or planned in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.

The war in Syria was superimposed on a military operation against the Islamic state - the intervention of a number of states in the conflicts taking place in Iraq, Syria and Libya, in order to prevent the spread of the Islamic State terrorist organization. Under this sign, Russia joined the war in Syria. What is Russia fighting in Syria for? According to Assad, military assistance from Moscow saved the situation in Syria. As the conflict intensified, the situation became more radical. In the territories inside Syria and in its eastern part, terrorists appeared and established themselves who proclaimed ISIS. These are immigrants, mainly from Iraq, as well as extremists from various countries (Al Jazeera 2017).

According to Fawcett (2017, 793), due to the fierce nature of the resistance, the crisis escalated into a protracted campaign. The Syrian state, retaining its sovereignty, is one of the obstacles to the final democratization of the 'Greater Middle East'. Throughout the conflict in Syria, the Alliance headed for consistent support for the Syrian opposition. Similarly, the armed forces acted in Yemen and Syria. In Libya, the loyalty of government troops was not absolute, so the conflict took on almost immediately the character of an armed rebellion that grew into a civil war.

The neutral position taken by the military in Tunisia and Egypt gave them great popularity and respectability, turning the army into a factor in strengthening the events of the 'Arab spring'. One of the characteristic features of the 'Arab spring' is the religious nature of the performances. Since 2011, in Syria, 250, 000 people were killed, according to the United Nations. 65,000 people are missing after being arrested by government forces, according to SHNR and 4, 000, 000 people are now refugees abroad (see *Figure 2*).



Figure 2: Syria since 2011: in numbers

Source: Amnesty 2016

Today it is quite obvious that the ongoing confrontation in North Africa and the Middle East has taken on the whole a lingering and hard-core character. In a number of states, the most pressing problems of the population are related to their provision, employment, education, healthcare, security, etc. There is a serious threat to the physical existence of some countries, including Libya. Against the general background, the so-called 'bargaining' continues (sometimes fading, sometimes moving back to the active phase). Along with the 'bargaining', the 'Arab Spring' itself continues, which can be described as a proverb: to whom is war, to whom is mother loyal.

Unfortunately, most of all, these processes are being transformed to military conflicts, to more profitable and rapid ones. At the same time, ordinary people are doomed to suffering and hardship, not related to the arranged showdowns, which take place without very special reasons, but still they have. Nevertheless, without any serious and special reasons this long-term processes take place. These players are sometimes not very noticeable from the outside, sometimes unexpectedly rise under a far-fetched pretext - sometimes under the slogan of good intentions and wishes. However, this far-reaching phenomenon has an enviable constancy, clearly pursuing its own benefits and clear profits.

2.2. The economic consequences of revolutions for the involved countries

The consequences of the 'Arab spring' are felt today at the global level, but first of all they were felt in the centres of revolutions and neighbouring countries, especially against the background of general negative trends in the global economy and the growing interconnectedness of the modern world. Therefore, over the past year and a half, the already difficult economic situation of the Arab countries that are not members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), uniting six Arab monarchies, has sharply worsened. Moreover, a slowdown in the EU's economy could have a significant negative impact on the economic situation in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt, since for these countries Europe is the main trading partner (more than 60% of exports), the source of tourism revenues (80–90%) and foreign direct investment (80%). More than 60% of migrant workers' transfers to Morocco and Tunisia are carried out precisely from the EU countries. Under these conditions, national governments will not be able to increase social spending to stabilize the situation in their countries.

In the first half of 2012, the situation in these countries remained difficult. On the one hand, the economic growth model in them is not able to solve the key social problem - the reduction of

unemployment. True to Heath J. (2016), due to these circumstances, the restoration of social and political stability in the group of Arab oil importers will largely depend on agreements with creditors, primarily with foreign states.

According to Guecioueur (2019, 28) as for the Arab countries-oil exporters that are not members of the GCC (Algeria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Sudan), their economic development trends also remain extremely unstable. The economic situation in Yemen, according to international experts, is in a state of collapse. Half of the population lives below the poverty line, unemployment has risen to 35%, more than 40% of children suffer from acute malnutrition. In addition, in connection with the intensification of inter-tribal rivalry, separatist sentiments in the south and the intensification of al-Qaeda, the economic situation in this country will only worsen. There is a high risk that such a development of events will cause destabilization of the domestic political situation in the key state of the region - Saudi Arabia, on the report of Guecioueur (2019, 41).

Revenues from hydrocarbon exports leave these countries room for manoeuvre in structural economic reforms. However, given their difficult internal situation, the current regimes most likely lack the necessary political will to carry out reforms. Here it should be noted the desire of the United States to saddle the processes taking place in the Arab world and, if possible, use them to maintain or even strengthen its economic positions in the region.

With respect to oil importing countries, the United States has more leverage because of its growing dependence on external financial assistance. In Middle Eastern politics, Washington is betting on the reanimation of its idea of a Greater Middle East. At that time, it was the American initiative to call for wide political, democratic and economic reforms in the region in exchange for large-scale financial assistance from the West. The purpose of these actions is to create a new economic and political model of the region to reduce the level of instability, radicalism and territorialism, given that the threats emanating from there are also dangerous for the West.

According to Naama (2020, 160), the 'Arab Spring' led to a significant recession in the economies of the countries that survived it. The GDP growth in the region decreased from 4.2% in 2010 to 2.2% in 2011 and to 2.4% in 2012 - these are the lowest growth rates in the last years. The most severe blow was suffered by countries that survived revolutions and civil wars. Only Morocco's economy accelerated over the period. Oil production and industry of these countries suffered. Therefore, if in 2010 in Libya 1.65 million barrels of oil were produced per day, then in 2011 on

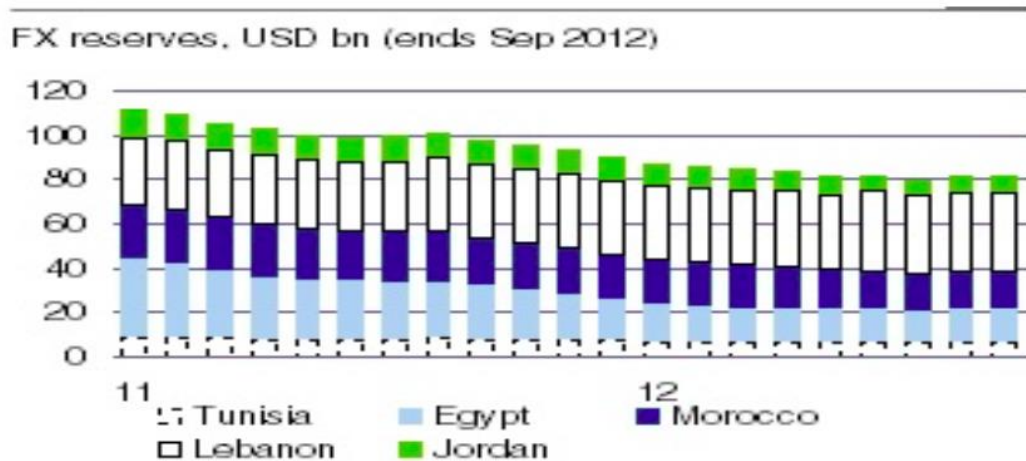
average 0.47 million barrels. In Tunisia, the extractive sector declined by 40%. In Syria, from 2010 to September 2012, oil production declined by 60%. (Naama 2020, 161)

According to Bar 1., as a result of the ‘Arab Spring’, tourism declined sharply. In the first half of 2010, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan and Lebanon were visited by 20 million people, in the first half of 2011 – 15 million. The flow of tourists to Tunisia and Egypt decreased by 40%. This significantly slowed the growth of the economy. Until now, tourism has not fully recovered.



Bar 1. Tourists stayed away

Sources: Consensus Economics Panellist 2013



Bar 2. FX reserves USD bn (ends Sep 2012)

Sources: Consensus Economics Panellist 2013

Due to the drop in oil and tourism exports, the current account deficit has grown significantly: in Egypt, Morocco and others, it doubled from 2010 to 2011. This led to a drop in exchange rates. Deep devaluation was avoided only with the help of central bank interventions, which markedly reduced reserves. (See bar 2:) In Egypt, reserves declined from \$ 35 billion in January 2011 to \$ 20 billion in September 2012. (Consensus Economics, 2013) A full-blown crisis was avoided only with the help of the IMF and other countries that agreed to support the Arab states. However, a significant part of the promised assistance has not yet been received.

Following *Figure 3*, it should be noted that the unemployment rate in MENA* among young people is a consequence of the ‘Arab Spring’. It was stable from 2007 till 2009, 25% and 25% respectively. In the middle of 2009 the number of unemployment youth become rising up till 2012, from 25% it has grown to 30% and declined to 28% in 2013, the number of percentage stood on the same level until the beginning of 2015, from where it risen back to 30% untill today.

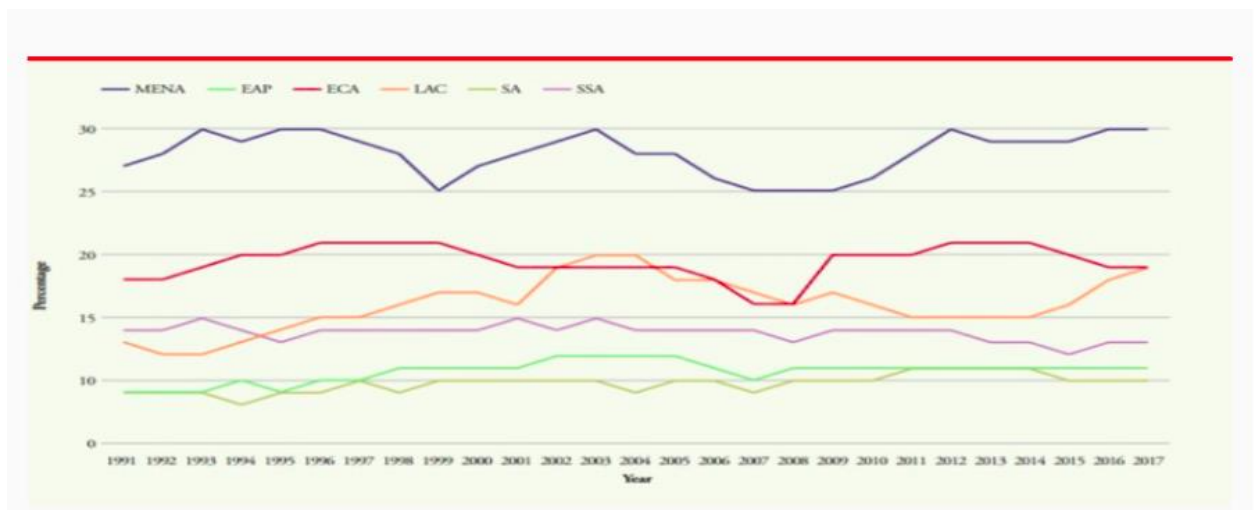


Figure 3. Youth unemployment rates by region

Source: International Labour Organization, 2018

* MENA - Middle East and North Africa

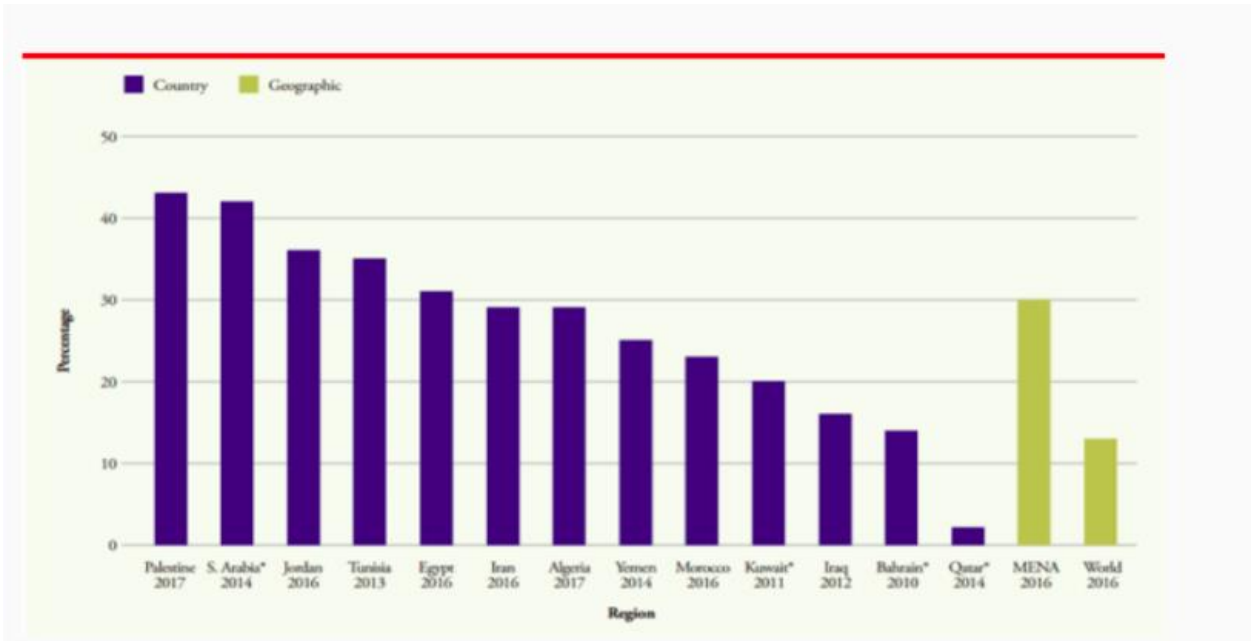


Figure 4. Youth unemployment rates by country

Source: International Labour Organization, 2018

Following *Figure 4*, comparing the countries themselves, the highest unemployment rate in Tunisia, in 2013, it was 35%. In Egypt, in 2016. 31 percent. In Algeria, 29% in 2017. The best situation remained in Yemen 25 percent in 2014, in Morocco, 23% in 2016. MENA region countries had 30% of unemployment youth in 2016. World number of the young people, who could not find the job, was 12% in 2016.

3. DISCUSSION

Note, that the countries involved in the transformation, which gave them the opportunity to ‘Arab Spring’, relatively recently (several decades ago), have embarked on a path of independent development. Moreover, it was very difficult for these countries to navigate in the ongoing processes. Let us take Libya as an example: even sufficiently educated Libyans in 2010 openly shared their ignorance of the processes, actively occurring in the world. It is not surprising, since just recently, at the end of the XX century, many of them lived without any of the achievements of civilization (without electricity, radio, television, etc.)

Part of these processes also occurred under the influence of older traditional neighbours (Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria - from France). In other cases, with the help of their older neighbours - partners, who were eager to regain their previously won and lost positions (Libya – from Italy, Britain, USA and others). The analysis of the events of the ‘Arab Spring’ conducted in this paper allows us to conclude that the revolutionary protests in these countries were caused by a complex set of political and socio-economic problems, which, accumulating and intertwining, caused a powerful surge of popular discontent. Moreover, the ‘Arab Spring’ led to massive migration, mostly in Libya and Syria. The economic crisis and the political instability lead to poverty, unstable and tense situation in North and Central Africa.

This paper, tested a claim that the ‘Arab Spring’s prolonged ‘life’. The ‘Arab Spring’ is a concept that began to be called the turbulent socio-political and to a much lesser extent economic processes and changes in North Africa and the countries of the Middle East. As a result of the ‘Arab Spring’, almost the entire political map of North Africa and the Middle East has changed, and it is still not clear in what direction. At the moment, only the following can be stated. Firstly, the Islamic war covered the Arab world. There is no doubt the dominant role of Islamists in countries where the former regime was overthrown (Egypt, Tunisia, Libya). In countries where the political system remained intact (Morocco and Jordan), the authorities were forced to carry out liberal reforms. These steps taken by the government naturally reinforced the position of the Islamists. Secondly, the authority and influence of the countries that were in the centre of events of the ‘Arab Spring’ are substantially affected. The collapse of the economy, political instability, and complete uncertainty about the future – all this no longer allows countries such as Egypt and Syria to claim leadership in the region, as they did in peacetime in the Middle East. Coming from far away, one cannot help but mention that the Arab region itself indistinguishable by special stability.

Due to the United States intervention to the Middle East and Northern Africa it can be assumed that in the near future the US will be able to expand the range of levers of political and economic influence on the Arab countries, but in the future, as the conditions for the provision of American economic assistance are tightened, the negative attitude of the Arab population towards the United States will most likely increase, especially against the background of worsening socio-economic situation in the region. It is possible that some national governments will even try to shift the responsibility for failures in economic policy and their unpopular decisions to the West, and especially to the United States. Over the past year, the social status of young people has not changed, tensions in Arab society are growing, and the likelihood of a second revolutionary wave and radicals coming to power cannot be ruled out. Such a development of events may give an additional impetus to the growth of extremism in the region.

Wasser (2019, 4) indicated that for Russian economic interests, the processes taking place in the Arab world will have both negative and positive consequences. Among the negative ones are the crowding out of Russian business from countries where opposition forces won with the support of the Western coalition. At the same time, the fall of those Arab regimes that were more oriented toward the United States might lead to changes in the foreign policy orientation of these countries, which opens up new opportunities for Russia. Moreover, given the uncertainties and the high risk of new socio-economic upheavals, Russia should not yet initiate new large trade and investment projects with Arab countries. It is important to keep abreast of rapidly developing events and to focus on establishing and developing contacts with all the leading political forces, abandoning the hard, uncompromising support of one of them and providing metered humanitarian assistance to countries on a bilateral basis.

As it was already stressed, the 'Arab Spring' entered into its active phase after it had begun to interact and pay close attention to the countries of the European Alliance and the USA. These countries acted under the single slogan of bringing democratic changes into the region of responsibility. Dwelling on Libya, as an important country, rich in hydrocarbons and with a favourable strategic position. After mentioned appeal to the formed community, Turkey quickly joined the Alliance. It is interesting, just a few months before this episode, Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan (at that time), visited Libya, Tripoli and very generously praised the existing order in Libya, gratefully accepted the highest Libyan reward. The reason for Turkish flexibility was the economic interests that Turkey developed very actively with Libya. Turkey's steady interest in

Libya is not weakening now. This is confirmed by the numerous attempts of Turkey to regain its presence by any means.

However, to date, Libya has been experiencing painful difficulties, caused by numerous attempts by major players, both in the West and in the East. The artificially unleashed, senseless war tears the country apart and puts it into decline. At the same time, not only the EU countries, the USA, rich neighbours in the Middle East region (Saudi Arabia, etc.), but also the Russian Federation are showing open, but lost interests in Libya. Today, Russia cooperates with all parties to the conflict and acts on the principle of both ours and yours. However, these attempts, which it has already secured in Syria, are not quite effective for the moment.

Quite different approaches are considered in relations to another important partner of Libya in 'Arab Spring' – Egypt, where a military conflict 'in principle' is not possible today. This is facilitated by the numerous contacts of Egypt with various players in the world and the region. This leads to a certain balance of power and maintains stability in Egypt. In addition, with a lot of efforts from the Egyptian side, it maintains stability in Egypt itself (with the Islamists, Coptic problems, Middle East problems of settlement) and with a lot of efforts, including very active diplomacy from the Egyptian side.

Will the next military aggravation of the situation in Libya, as well as in a number of other countries of the region be confirmed, or will be an open conflict? This is quite obvious, although such development of situation is extremely undesirable. It seems, it is possible to avoid it, provided that the parties to the conflict are able to agree in details and discuss all pressing issues in advance, without taking hasty steps, paying attention to the negotiation process with all the respect to the parties. For a long time, under the influence of global processes and trends in the Arab region, objective prerequisites have been formed for a transition to a more modern type of relations in society, greater social mobility of citizens, and the opening up of growth opportunities (career, economic, spiritual) for its members. The need for social modernization arose as a result of the economic development of recent decades and with the improvement of market relations. All Arab states are involved in the process of globalization, in which highly developed countries with well-established democratic systems set the tone and vector for changes. At the same time, the revolution damaged just the weak links of Arab autocracies. Egypt, Libya and Tunisia are more open to world trends and maintain regular, most importantly, multidirectional ties with the West. At the same time, states such as Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, which closely cooperate with the United

States, carry out their contacts with them through a narrower number of channels, in particular, oil, military, and the security channel, while fencing themselves off from unnecessary, these points of view, ties and limiting the flows of foreign and unnecessary influence in the cultural, information and other fields.

Socio-political processes in the post revolutionary Arab countries are in constant development and, apparently, are still far from complete. Apparently, the confrontation in Syria, the destabilization processes in Yemen and especially in Libya and its neighbouring regions will continue. At the same time, democratic forces are actively trying to participate in the 'Arab Spring'. It is possible that the citizens of Tunisia and Egypt, who are freed from corrupt authoritarian regimes, will be able to build democratic states on the basis of their historical traditions and cultural values, the main of which is Islam. The new political regimes emerging on the ruins of authoritarian states will no longer be uniquely pro-Western, which will create a new political configuration in the Middle East and affect the situation both in Europe and, to some extent, in the world as a whole, according to Basu and Miroshnik (2015, 214). Autocratic Arab states, primarily monarchies, survived the 'Arab Spring'. A special case is Syria, where the regime is severely autocratic and repressive, but where society is in many respects much more advanced and modern than monarchies. The described loss of the weak link is often called democratic revolution in the Arab world. The definition of revolution has already managed to gain a foothold in socio-political relations, and therefore one has to use entrenched terminology in one way or another.

CONCLUSION

Summing up the preliminary results of the ‘Arab Spring’, we can distinguish several of its options. The first is Tunisian-Egyptian, when the overthrow of the ruling regime was due to internal factors. (At the same time, the Tunisian and Egyptian cases each have their own peculiarities.) The second is Libyan, when there was military intervention by external forces that led to the collapse of the regime and the actual disintegration of the state, which provoked further armed confrontation between various clan and political groups. The third is Syria, when the main factor that destabilizes the internal situation was external support of the radical opposition, which was also largely formed by external forces. According to Yousef and Sayre (2016, 21), it is noteworthy that one of the most faithful allies of the West – Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt – turned out to be the more resistant among the countries affected by the ‘Arab Spring’. At the same time, countries such as Libya, Algeria, Syria and Yemen which initially followed various forms of socialist orientation, turned out to be the ‘weakest link’ to the ‘spring winds’.

The Middle East today objectively put the region at the centre of world politics and have an ever-increasing influence on the general situation in the world in the 21st century. Indeed, the political situation in the Middle East and North Africa is characterized by significant mobility, multi-level complexity and poor predictability of the development of further events. In addition, the trends that are developing today, which, obviously, are destined to determine the development of the region in the future, often have a multidirectional orientation and speed. The events of the ‘Arab Spring’ can be considered just from these positions. The change of political regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Libya (later foreign military intervention), destabilized the situation in strategically important region and had a tangible impact on what is happening in the world. The political future of the countries that survived these shocks is still foggy, and new hotbeds of conflict are emerging one after another.

The ‘Arab spring’ turned out to be unexpected for the world community and the possible future consequences are only beginning to be realized. The current results of the ‘Arab spring’ are a complete change of the ruling clans and, accordingly, a complete reformatting of the foreign political and economic relations of the post-spring countries, and the overall significant strengthening (both ideological, political and organizational) of radical Islam. True, then the

Western countries took the course to seize the initiative and switched to early support of all protest movements. Assessing the consequences of the 'Arab spring' for the states of the Middle East and North Africa, it should be noted that in a number of countries in the Arab world, conflicts were not only not resolved, but in a number of cases intensified. Extremist and terrorist groups have intensified in some countries of the region, fundamentalist sentiments have begun to grow, and ethnic conflicts have intensified.

What can be expected in the 'Arab Spring' in the near future? This paper, with references to many respected Middle East experts, drew attention to the history of the conflict, to the reasons that dramatically and completely influenced the change of atmosphere and situation itself. It is obvious, that the parties involved in this very complex process, are interested in unconditional achievements of their goals. However, peaceful solution of these tasks as a whole, in the long run, becomes possible only against the background of the stability, shown by all leading players in maintaining the general principles of respect and trust. It also seems important to continue the regular patient dialogue on the most acute issues, uncomfortable items and peaceful resolutions, only to accept resolute measures. It is to be accomplished very quick and flexible technically, to become a general achievement and to serve, in the first, to the interests of 'Arab Spring' countries. Practically, almost all of this work should be done through obligatory compromise measures. This measures will serve to restore and strengthen peace in the region, maintain stability and security throughout the world.

The conflict in North Africa and the Middle East did not end. Moreover, the political regime was violated, the economy, the problem of migration, and the dangerous situation in countries where pressure is still coming from the Western countries, the USA, and the United Arab Emirates, suffered. Until now, tensions remain associated with religious and tribal hostility. The geography of terrorist activity of radical Islamic groups has intensified and expanded. As a result of the humanitarian catastrophe, the problems of uncontrolled migration of a huge stream of refugees to Europe have become more acute. Moreover, part of the problems mentioned may be the subject of further discussion on the topic of 'Arab Spring'.

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