THE MODERNIZATION OF SOCIETY AND TRANSFER OF POWER IN MUSLIM COUNTRIES

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Introduction

Power and its transfer is a key issue in Islam and is related to the traditional and basic values of national and religious identity, as well as to reform and democracy in contemporary Muslim societies.

The transfer to new democratic methods and forms of rule in traditional societies, as most Muslim countries still are, is usually a slow and arduous process. In such societies, the people's traditional mindset and mentality, particularly among those who lead a settled way of life, transform at a slower pace than in Western countries. But there is no doubt that in the globalizing world this process is gaining momentum and becoming an irreversible political phenomenon.

At present, several new trends are emerging that determine the degree to which the region is being drawn into globalization. But, regardless of the level of these transformation processes, the influence of the spiritual component, which largely relates to the people's religious views, remains the same. Islam extensively shapes the culture, customs, traditions, lifestyle, and, most important, the centuries-long practice of self-government among the region's residents. Today its significance is growing and this is having an impact on the forms and other aspects of the democratization process, as well as on the establishment and expansion of civil society institutions. This is being promoted, among other things, by the in-

crease in nongovernmental noncommercial organizations, including religious charity associations. Not only is the cultural-historical mindset changing, but a new type of political thinking is also forming under the influence of the Islamic customs and morals passed down from generation to generation, which is making it possible to create the foundations of a civil society.

The ways in which power is being transferred at present in Muslim countries, including in the Middle East, usually become a set pattern and can be improvised by the elites, including in the Central Asian states. The aim is to make a smooth transfer to more contemporary forms of government while retaining the traditional foundations and succession of power. So it seems expedient to examine this question using the example of the Middle Eastern Arab states since their sociopolitical relations are the closest to those currently practiced in Central Asia.[1]

[1] See: I.L. Fadeeva, *Kontseptsiia vlasti na Blizhnem Vostoke. Srednevekovie i novoe vremia*, 2nd ed., RAS Oriental Literature, Moscow, 2001, p. 40.

On the Nature of Power in the Golden Age[2] of Islam

During his lifetime, the Prophet Muhammad acted as an intermediary between Allah and the ummah, which lived according to the text passed down by the Prophet containing the ultimate Revelation (since Muslims consider Muhammad the "seal of the prophets"). The Prophet was not only a preacher, he also organized the ummah's way of life. The Quran and Sunnah contain both strictly religious instructions and principles regarding the sociopolitical structure of society. This is why Islamic ideologists have always emphasized the inseparability of spiritual and secular rule. The theocratic nature of the rule of the Prophet and his first successors still serves as the ideal for building society on Islamic principles.[3]

After the Prophet's death, the link between Allah and Muslim society was broken in the minds of the Muslims, which gave rise to the problem of power succession. During the bitter struggle for power,[4] which was accompanied by a dispute over interpretation of the Quran and Sunnah, the sides formed different value systems. The Sunnites, the supporters of the first three caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman) maintained that the caliph should be chosen through election, believing that the ummah's opinion reigned supreme. The Shi'ites, the supporters of Ali ibn Abi Talib, the nephew and son-in-law of the Prophet, proceeded from the conviction that the Prophet bequeathed Abi Talib with the exclusive right to supreme power, that is, they promulgated a different (at that time second) paradigm of power succession that ensued directly from Allah's Messenger. This idea formed the basis for the conception of the imamate. The Shi'ites rejected the principle of electing the imam as the head of Muslim society and state and were in favor of supreme power being passed down by inheritance through members of the Alid family. Based on the divine nature of the imamate, the Shi'ites believe the legitimate imam—"God's governor on earth," "the gates," through which it is possible to come closer to Him, the inheritor of the Prophet's knowledge —to be the supreme authority in religious and secular affairs."[5] The third group,

[2] Muslims understand the Golden Age of Islam as the time the Prophet Muhammad was active and the theocratic formation of the first Muslim state under the four righteous caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali) (622-661).

[3] Admittedly, the rule of his first four successors is also often related to this same age.

[4] See: I.L. Fadeeva, op. cit., p. 46.

[5] Ash-Shakhrastani and Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Karim, *Kniga o religiiakh i sektakh*, Transl. from the Arabic, introduction and comments by S.M. Prozorov, Nauka Publishers (Main Editorial Board of Oriental Literature), Moscow, 1984, pp. 220-221.

the Kharijites, proceeded from the principle "obedience to God is more important than obedience to people," that is, it was based on the basic value of "faith in Allah." The Kharijites played a significant role in drawing up dogma on the theory of the caliphate. In terms of supreme power, they were opposed both to the Sunnites with their principle of provisional election of the caliph and to the Shi'ites with their ideas about the inheritance and sacral nature of the imamate.[6]

Throughout the entire subsequent history of state formations, which were based in their ideological structures on political, legal, and other Islamic values, the choice of forms of power and the mechanisms of its transfer were concentrated on these three political-ideological concepts.[7]

Political Processes in Present-Day Arab Muslim Countries

At present, two forms of power function in Muslim countries: monarchies (Morocco, Jordan, the Persian Gulf countries) and republics (Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Syria, Lebanon, and others), which are all authoritative to one degree or another.

Researchers note that as early as the beginning of the 20th century most of the region's states "were essentially traditional societies with a rudimentary political system in which feudal-class, dynastical, caste, clan, and sometimes ancestral political forms and relations based on a special hierarchy of social origin, religion, and tradition predominated."[8] The Middle Eastern states are distinguished by a low level of differentiation of political institutions and their functions, as well as by their interrelations with and integration into non-political social structures—religion, culture, rituals, traditional morals, and low level of individual political interest and activity.

In countries with a monarchial structure, the main link in the political structure is the monarch and the ruling family, the members of which hold the most important posts in the government and the state apparatus. Only the ruling family assisted by the religious authorities decides who will inherit power.

In republics the head of state—the president or a revolutionary council headed by a chairman—is the backbone of the political structure. Here the ruling parties and public organizations are integrated with the state, particularly in single-party regimes. In such countries as Tunisia and Egypt, democratic elements—pluralism and a parliament—have long remained only external attributes that conceal the authoritative nature of the political system.

The political systems in the Arab countries have several common characteristics born by their historical development. As transitional systems, they were built on a synthesis of traditional and modern institutions and regulations. In addition, due to their socioeconomic backwardness, some of these countries only had a perfunctory understanding of contemporary democratic institutions. The underdeveloped social foundation was compensated for by authoritarianism, centralization, and personification of state power. Charismatic leaders and traditions of the sacral nature of power play a signifi-

[6] See: S.M. Prozorov, "Al-Khavarij," in: *Islam: Encyclopedic Dictionary*, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1991, p. 260; D. Barrett, G. Kurian, and T. Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia. A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, in 2 vols., 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, New York, 2001, 719 pp.

[7] See: D. Oganesian, "Tsennostnaia sistema islama: nachalo puti," *Otechestvennye zapiski*, No. 1 (16), 2004, available at [http://www.religare.ru/ article8821.htm]

[8] L.N. Gerasina, "Osobennosti politicheskogo razvitiia gosudarstv aziatskogo mira v kontekste globalistskoi sotsiologii politiki," Kharkov, 2001, available at [http://www.sociology.kharkov.ua/docs/chten_01/ gerasina.doc].

cant role in them.[9] For example, legitimization of the power of the ruling dynasties of Jordan and Morocco, the seyids (***sādat***), is built on the principle of the sacral. Several of the Egyptian rulers, beginning with Muhammad Ali (1805-1849) and his grandson, hediv Isma'il (1863-1883), were charismatic.

But many states of the contemporary Muslim world are trying to meet democratic ideals and political power mechanisms. They are beginning to implement the pluralistic model: the state has limited control over independent social groups, citizens are becoming more active and participating in politics according to their own will, the state's leaders are closer to society, material interests and moral values are becoming differentiated, which is shown in the secularization of politics and separation of religion from the state.

All the same, this is a slow and arduous process with frequent revival of or re-adaptation to the former religious values due to the retention of the Islamic traditions and Shari'a rules that have shaped public consciousness for many centuries. When fighting for their independence and reinforcing it, the Arab leaders acquired great powers. Whereby these powers were not limited to the functions of presidents, prime ministers, political and military leaders but also included the role of "fathers of the nation" and heads of the national-liberation movements. The authoritarianism[10] of most of the Arab leaders who came to power on the crest of independence is largely explained by the specific historical circumstances and the people's psychological willingness to accept a strong authoritative power. So essentially all the Middle Eastern states, while differing in forms of rule, are characterized by a strong (charismatic) supreme power that society perceives as an entirely legitimate form of national-state existence.

Power Transfer and Social Modernization

The last decade has seen frequent changes in the ruling elites and the ascension to power of a young generation of leaders in the Middle East. Since the beginning of the gradual democratic transformations these changes have been occurring at an accelerated pace both under the influence of external "recommendations" and by indirect or direct external interference into the domestic affairs of the Arab countries. The power transfer mechanisms in these countries have acquired even greater significance with respect to determining the fundamental vectors of their future development.

Many researchers and politicians are now realizing that the mentality and religious traditions of the Middle Eastern nations are not conducive to the power transfer practice customary in the West that relies on universal elections and an organized opposition. In the Arab countries this is leading to a weakening of centralized power and often to a split in the army or ruling party (which continue to be a symbol of national sovereignty in the Arab countries), and consequently to possible destabilization of the political expanse.

In this respect, power in the Arab world is still largely changing hands by means of traditional mechanisms. However this process is often accompanied by domestic crises. One of the main problems here is the contradiction between "the inviolability of the state foundations," on the one hand, and the internal evolution of society and the ruling regimes, on the other, which is leading to re-examination and reform of the former political structures and ideology.

[9] See: L.W. Pye, *Asian Power and Politics: The Cultural Dimensions of Authority*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1985, 414 pp.

[10] Some Western authors call this style of rule a "dictatorship" (see: D.A. Rustow, *Middle Eastern Political Systems*, The City University of New York, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1971, pp. 72-73).

The Arab leaders are generally much older than the leaders of other countries of the world (President of Egypt Hosni Mubarak, President of Yemen Ali Abdullah Saleh, and President of Lebanon Muammar Qaddafi). When he ran for president in 2005, Hosni Mubarak began actively and successfully developing the image of "president-reformer" who, after ruling for 24 years, decided at the age of 77 to continue the radical reforms in the country. His present-day and energetic style began to form along this new image and under the slogan of "Mubarak-2005: Leadership and Transition to the Future." However, at the first stage, more intensive movement toward reform and liberalization of public life is inevitably accompanied by an increase in domestic instability due to the cautious and frequently also "archaic" approach of the Arab leaders to changes in principles of political succession that form the foundation of the traditional political culture.

Traditionally, power in the Arab countries has been based on the right of an influential family or group of people rallying around a strong individual. Before the revolution of 1952, people from Muhammad Ali's dynasty who came to power in 1805-1806 ruled in Egypt.[11]

In Saudi Arabia, an absolute monarchy, power is controlled by the al-Saud clan which originates from one of the largest Arab tribes of Anazah. The Saudite clan and its branches became the dominating tribe. Kindred ties play a key role in the country's state structure. This predetermined the mechanism of inherited power transfer in the Arab countries or ascension to power by means of coups.[12]

The reforms of the 1970s-1980s essentially removed the threat of new military coups and designated a long period of stable power in the Arab countries. But the lack of deep-cutting reforms meant that authoritarianism among the ruling elite remained firmly in place, performing the function of maintaining political stability.

Attention should also be paid to the experience of other Arab leaders in resolving power succession issues in the conditions of the geopolitical changes in the Middle East and in the world as a whole, particularly after the beginning of the war on Iraq in 2003 and initiation by the American administration of the "transformation strategy" in the region.

The state governance policy carried out in Syria by President Bashar al-Asad is of particular interest. Researchers note that "the political institutions in the Syrian Arab Republic are deeply embedded in the social structure. The state has a monopoly on all the legal means for maintaining domestic stability and order."[13] The opposition forces reject violence as a way to bring about political change and are willing to hold a dialog with the government to support its program of a gradual transition to democracy. The president's reform plans are supported by most of Syrian society.

In recent years the Syrian leadership itself has been talking about the need for democratic reform, particularly in light of the extremely unfavorable foreign factors encountered by the political leadership of the Syrian Arab Republic headed by Asad. After he came to power in July 2000, Bashar al-Asad was able to build a sufficiently strong political power system. However, both the Syrian ruling circles and the international community primarily regard Asad as the successor of his father, Hafiz al-Asad, who created a strong authoritative state. Bashar al-Asad even has many of his father's advisors in his closest entourage. So he has to prove that he is strong and capable enough to govern the state, which he has been successfully doing so far. Bashar al-Asad has succeeded in bringing young blood into the political elite and expanding the support base within the ruling party, the state appara-

[11] See: D.A. Rustow, op. cit., pp. 47-49.

[12] Researchers point out that there were around 30 military coups in the Arab countries between 1952 and 1986. Approximately at the same time (1951-1991), 14 Arab leaders (Abdullah bin Hussein in Jordan, Muhammad Boudiaf in Algeria, etc.) became victims of the struggle for succession to power (see: V.M. Akhmedov, "Blizhniy Vostok: problema smeny vlasti i osushchestvleniia reform. Siriiskiy opyt," Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, Moscow, 16 January, 2005, available at [http://www.iimes.ru/rus/frame_stat.html].

[13] Ibidem.

tus, and the security structures. He was also able to fill the work of such previously formal structures as the parliament, public organizations, and trade unions with real content under his democratic reform strategy.

Bashar al-Asad (like president of the Arab Republic of Egypt Hosni Mubarak) upholds the conception of "succession for the sake of reforms," which implies carrying out gradual political and economic reforms within the framework of the former system. This makes it possible to maintain a balance of forces in the influential ruling elite and avoid social upheavals. This is also promoted by the respect most of the Syrian population still feels for Hafiz al-Asad's Arab nationalism and the long period of political stability of the regime he created.

But this idea of "succession for the sake of reforms" is no longer entirely inviolable. Opposition forces are beginning to appear which are finding the closed nature of power and lack of access to the government's resources a hindrance to their political strivings and ambitions.

One of the main threats to the traditional Middle Eastern elites is the Islamist opposition. For example, due to the popularity of the Muslim Brothers among Egypt's young voters, it will be difficult for the local authorities to justify nominating Hosni Mubarak's 43-year-old son, Gamal Mubarak, as the next Egyptian president by claiming there is no other strong alternative. The rise in influence of the Muslim Brothers has become a direct threat to Gamal Mubarak's political ambitions, since defeat of most of his associates from the young guard of the National Democratic Party at the elections made the reform wing of the ruling party see the need to create a new political party that is not associated with Mubarak Jr.

The Democratic or Islamic Alternative

Another driving political force that has become actively involved in the struggle for power in the Muslim countries on the wave of the democratic processes in the last twenty-five years is the so-called parallel Islamic sector.

As some Arab researchers note, "Islamism, buoyed by the religious renaissance, has deeply penetrated everyday life and is having an impact on standards of behavior. It has developed into a special system of symbols and signs of Islamic identity, which is reflected in the everyday lifestyle, choice of clothing, performance of rituals, marital traditions, and definition of the role of women in the family, as well as in commerce, education, and upbringing."[14] In particular, ***hijab*** and ***nikab*** have become popular as the national dress code of Arab women, thus showing the personal freedom of citizens. In public transport, marketplaces, and recreation sites popular music has been replaced by the broadcasting of prayers and sermons; the owners of residential buildings who set up prayer rooms in the basements of these buildings equipped with microphones have been exempted from some property taxes.

Trade unions and public organizations in which Islamists predominate have become a kind of forum where Islamist and anti-Western propaganda is spread.[15] The Muslim Brothers,[16] a popular organization in the Middle East, and other Islamist groups are actively engaged in improving the so-

[14] See: *The State of Religion in Egypt Report*, ed. by Abdel-Fattah Nabil and Rashwan Diaa, Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Cairo, 1995-1997, pp. 5-6.

[15] See: C.R. Wickham, "From the Periphery to the Center. The Islamic Trend in Egypt's Professional Associations," in: *Mobilizing Islam. Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, pp. 176-183.

[16] Founded in 1928 by school teacher Hassan al-Banna in Ismailia (Egypt).

cial conditions, particularly in public health, education, and charity. They have taken patronage over schools, hospitals, professional training centers, and other institutions and drawn up and introduced curriculums that include study of the Quran, the training of specialists, etc. into the social system. Members of Islamist organizations have become increasingly involved in capitalistic production—plants and factories, investment companies, agricultural enterprises.[17]

Egypt is the most noteworthy country in this respect. For example, active establishment of the so-called parallel Islamic sector began here in the last quarter of the 20th century. The institutions that have emerged in the country belonging to this sector can be divided into three categories:

1) private mosques;

2) Islamic public organizations—charity, cultural, and enlightenment societies, schools, medical institutions, and so on; and

3) Islamic commercial enterprises—banks, investment companies, production enterprises, publishing houses, and so on.

One of the most vivid trends in Egypt's institutional development in the 1970s-1980s was the unprecedented increase in the number of private mosques. In contrast to state mosques (***hukumiya***), which are managed by government funds and where the imams are appointed by the authorities, private (***ahliya***) mosques are self-organized institutions created using money from private donations and staffed by imams who are elected by members of the local community. According to some data, the number of private mosques in Egypt rose from 20,000 in 1970 to more than 46,000 in 1981. In 1991, there were 91,000 mosques in the country, including 45,000 private and 10,000 ***zaviya.***

In December 1992, the Egyptian journal *Ahir sa'a* counted 60,000 private mosques in the country. Other data place the number even higher. In particular, according to the data of one law-enforcement organization, in 1993 there were 170,000 mosques functioning in Egypt, only 30,000 of which were controlled by the state.[18]

At the initial stage, the new private mosques were mainly financed by voluntary donations from private individuals collected by means of ***zakat***, as well as by financial assistance from governmental and private funds in the Persian Gulf countries. The spread of private mosques was encouraged by legislation stipulating that any building that housed a mosque was considered a religious facility and exempt from taxes. This greatly encouraged construction companies and investors to build new "mosques," which in fact were often small prayer rooms (***saviya***) located on the first floor or in the basement of new buildings.

In addition, the parallel Islamic sector included thousands of semi-independent **religious non-commercial organizations—*jami'at***. The increase in their number can be seen as part of the wide spread in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Egypt during Hosni Mubarak's time.[19] But these associations cannot justifiably be called NGOs since in Egypt institutions of the nongovernmental sector are state-controlled.

According to laws No. 32 of 1964 and No. 64 of 2002, all the private and civil associations in the country are regulated by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The law states that they should all obtain a license at the ministry for carrying out activity in the country. In addition, if necessary, the ministry has the right to interfere in the NGOs' activity. In particular, the state can appoint members of the

[17] See: D.J. Sullivan and A.-K. Sana, *Islam in Contemporary Egypt. Civil Society vs. the State*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers, London, 1999, p. 22.

[18] See: *The Middle East Watch. Third World Traveler*, available at [http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/ Middle_East/ Middle EastWatch.html].

[19] See: M.K. Al Sayyid, "A Civil Society in Egypt," in: *Civil Society in the Middle East?*, ed. by A.R. Norton, Vol. 1, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1995, 300 pp.

organization's board, demand written reports on their work, and control their financial sources and technical furbishing based on the need to "maintain general order and the proper behavior" of entities of the nongovernmental sector. But religious noncommercial organizations, which we are talking about here, are not always and far from ubiquitously under state control.

Some researchers note that the total number of nongovernmental (private) noncommercial organizations (NNO) in Egypt at the beginning of the 1990s amounted to between 14,000 and 15,000, although according to some data there were 30,000 of them.[20] Sarah Ben-Néfissa claims that their numbers reached 11,360, 27.6% of which were Islamic. According to the researcher, in 1990 there were more than 3,000 Islamic NNOs in Egypt.[21] But as early as 1994, Saad Eddin Ibrahim[22] claimed that Egypt boasted 8,000 such organizations.

By this time, Islamic NNOs occupied a central role in Egypt's social life. Some religious organizations continued working in their traditional sphere of activity, helping believers to organize ***hajj***, providing needy families with charity assistance, helping to restore and equip local mosques, and so on. Other NNOs provided the population with social services in public health, education, enlightenment, and finding jobs. In some cases they remained oriented toward local needs. But many Islamic NNOs were well-equipped, rich national organizations with branches in many cities and villages. One of these well-known organizations was al-Jam'iyya ash-shar'iyya, which had branches in all 26 provinces, whereby 123 in Cairo alone.

Although information on the financial sources of the Islamic sector has not been studied in sufficient depth, some trends are obvious. Many Islamic NNOs that operate under the auspices of mosques or religious funds (waqfs) have access to charity resources that are collected and distributed beyond the state's control. Access to such sources has made it possible for Islamic NNOs to circumvent Law No. 32 which limits the "independent collection of funds." In this way, Islamic NNOs have obtained greater room for maneuver in the financial sphere than non-religious nongovernmental organizations.

Some Islamic NNOs have also obtained support from rich sponsors from the Persian Gulf countries. For example, a state-of-the-art hospital belonging to the Mustafa Mahmud Society in Cairo was built on money from a philanthropist from Saudi Arabia who has close ties with the founder of this Egyptian organization.

Islamic NNOs have also been receiving financial aid from Islamic investment companies and banks that help to collect and distribute ***zakat*** funds. As S. Ben-Néfissa notes, with the help of 4,500 committees, in 1991 the Nasser Bank of Social Services collected 21 million Egyptian pounds in ***zakat*** and distributed them among the Islamic NNOs, including children centers and medical institutions.[23]

Islamic associations are also engaged in self-financing. This applies to many of the country's hospitals, which, as observers note, differ from most of the state medical institutions in their strict order and latest technical equipment. Whereby they offer the population much cheaper paid services. In some cases, the funds they accumulated went to subsidizing religious and other public activity.

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[20] See: C.R. Wickham, "The Parallel Islamic Sector," in: *Mobilizing Islam. Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt*, p. 99.

[21] See: S. Ben-Néfissa, "NGOs, Governance and Development in the Arab World," *Management of Social Transformations–MOST. Discussion Paper,* No. 46, 2000, available at [http://www.unesco.org/most /nefissae.htm]; M. Revel, P.J. Roca, "Les ONG et la question du changement," in: J.P. Deler, Y.A. Fauré, and P.J. Roca, *ONG et développement*, Karthala, Paris, 1998, 221 pp.

[22] See: "Egyptian-American Human Rights Activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim Receiving Second Trial for Receiving Unauthorized Foreign Donations and Embezzling," *High Beam Research*, 20 May, 2002, available at [http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P1-53105022.html].

[23] See: S.P. Ben-Néfissa, op. cit.

The parallel Islamic sector also includes commercial enterprises engaged in the banking sphere, construction, production, and commerce. The Islamic financial sector consists of Islamic banks and companies. According to some estimates, in the mid-1980s the total assets of these institutions reached 16 billion Egyptian pounds. This sector also included large Islamic production conglomerates, such as ar-Rayyan and as-Sa'ad, which invested capital in strategic branches—the food industry and the construction of residential buildings, maintaining close ties with government circles. These companies were able to provide financial and technical support to Islamic NNOs involved in direct work with broad strata of the population.

Islamic companies are becoming more active in the production of cultural and intellectual ware. Islamic publishing houses, bookstores, and libraries began to flourish in the 1980s-1990s. Publishing houses such as ad-Dar al-islami li-t-tawzi' wa-n-nashr, Dar as-shuruk, Dar al-wafa,' and Dar al-'itizam concentrated in Egypt's large cities published a wide range of religious literature, including commentaries to the Quran and hadith, books on religious practice and dogma, essays on the history of the Islamic movement in Egypt and abroad, speeches and essays by Islamic ideologists, works by theologians, and brochures from the sphere of *da'wa*.

Organizations that belong to the parallel Islamic sector cannot be regarded as political in the narrow sense of this word. They do not promulgate a specific political program and do not participate in the political struggle. Moreover, Egyptians engaged in this area of public life usually claim that they do not have anything to do with politics and are only concerned with enlightening Muslims regarding their rights and religious duty.

Nevertheless, in the 1980s-1990s institutions of the parallel Islamic sector were more involved in directly assisting Islamist mobilization of the population than the democratic reforms. First, they provided financial and technical support to Islamist groups with a political agenda, including Islamist student organizations (***jama'at***), the Muslim Brothers, and other underground radical religious groups. Second, they created conditions for ideological brainwashing of the population, establishing a network of independent religious-political activists, and expanding the base of Islamist organizations involved in politics.

Conclusion

So in most countries of the Arab Muslim world state-building is far from complete and renovation and modernization of the political systems is still going on.

The main distinguishing feature of power succession in the Middle East, as in other Muslim countries, is indivisibility of the government's functions, a centralized hierarchal power system, and similar stereotypes of collective thinking which are inclined to legitimize this form of state governance. So many Arab Muslim regimes are generally inclined toward authoritarianism, which is based on the striving to preserve the patriarchal principles of power and its transfer. This is expressed in increased control over political parties and patronage of public organizations.

The strong centralized power in Egypt and Tunisia, for example, essentially does not give the opposition forces much leeway to engage in political competition or gain access to the government's resources. Moreover, attempts to liberalize the political regimes in these countries by involving anti-government forces and movements in the political process usually lead to the emergence of direct risks both to the ruling elites and to public consent and unity. In Egypt, drawing the Islamist opposition into the legal political sphere has already led repeatedly to dangerous consequences, in particular to the assassination attempt on President Nasser and the murder of President Anwar El Sadat. In Tunisia, Habib Bourguiba lost power as the result of a state coup carried out by forces worried about radical Islamists coming to power.

The slowly changing mentality of most of the population and their perception of power in general is also an important factor, which is distinguished, as mentioned above, by several special features in societies with an overwhelming Muslim population. This mentality is largely associated with upholding traditions, including a deep-rooted understanding of the functions of power and its succession.

So power succession is still one of the most difficult and cornerstone problems in the Arab world since it is associated with stronger protective mechanisms aimed at ensuring the stability of the existing regimes, as well as due to the vulnerability of most of the countries to the influence of external factors—destructive transnational radical movements, the ambitions of regional forces, and the policies of the world nations. In this respect, the transfer to more up-to-date mechanisms of governance in Arab Muslim countries has been occurring for some time now at a much slower pace than in Western countries.