The recent actions of Tunisian President Kais Saied have grabbed the world's attention and can only be compared with the Arab Spring, the cradle of which the North African country was ten years ago.

The nonpartisan president Kais Saied, elected in 2019, showed a personal responsibility in the need to curb corruption and the political demagoguery of parliament. He fired top ministers, froze parliament for 30 days, took over executive powers, and oversaw the prosecutor's office, saying he must save the country, suffering from a new wave of coronavirus and a crumbling economy.

Saied publicly spoke out "against corrupt lawmakers and tycoons" and increased military oversight of pandemic control measures. "The main victim" of his decisions the Islamist Ennahda Party promises to resist. Its supporters are trying to arrange protests, participating in mass clashes with supporters of President Kais Saied. The Tunisian president himself and his aides held a host of meetings with foreign allies, promising that his seizure of power was temporary and that his actions would not exceed the requirements of the country's constitution.

Let's recall, in the 2019 presidential election, 63-year-old law professor Kais Saied, supported by more than 72% of voters due to his non-partisanship. He campaigned in social networks, cafes, and public places, advocating decentralizing power and electoral reform. Therefore, it is not surprising that many Tunisians welcomed his latest
moves, although some critics tried to call them a coup.

Countries in the region, from Egypt to Saudi Arabia and Europe, are closely watching further developments. European countries, especially nearby Italy, are already worried about a possible increase in the flow of migrants if Tunisia plunges further into chaos.

In late July, a Tunisian judicial official said that investigations had already begun into allegations of political crimes. The spokesman added that the investigation began even before President Kais Saied decided to dismiss the prime minister and freeze the work of parliament. The investigation concerns three political parties - the country's two largest, Ennahda, Heart of Tunisia, and the Aish-Tounsi association - over allegations that they received foreign funding during the 2019 elections.

Tunisian President Kais Saied said on July 30 that he would not allow the Tunisian people to be robbed and the state to be damaged. "All those who have been arrested are the accused," the Tunisian leader said, commenting on the detentions taking place in recent days. "I did not interfere, but I will never allow them to rob the Tunisian people, damage the state and threaten its institutions," he added.

According to Saied, "there were thieves in the Assembly of the People's Representatives (APR, a unicameral parliament) and wrongdoing took place there."

On August 2, Kais Saied received Marouane El Abassi, governor of the Central Bank, at the presidential palace and declared that the state would overcome its difficulties thanks to the will of the people and the support of brotherly friendly powers alike. Recalling that the treasury is now empty, Kais Saied stressed "This war will be won without bullets or bloodshed, but by a law based on justice and liberty." According to him, economic and political assistance will allow Tunisia to meet domestic and foreign financial obligations. The national leader assured that the country would not deviate from the principles of law and freedoms because it respects the will of Tunisians, not political unions. "I have decided to be on the side of the people to preserve the unity of the state and protect it from gnawing corruption," the president summarized.

As local media reported on August 4, President Kais Saied fired Tunisia's Ambassador to the United States and governor of Sfax province. No explanation of these steps is given.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Hassan Shoukry said his country "fully supports" Tunisian President Kais Saied and his actions toward security. He said this during a visit to the North African country on August 4. For his part, the Tunisian president stressed the state's interest in constantly strengthening ties and coordination with Cairo.

In addition to Egypt, Algeria, and Libya, Tunisia's neighbors and the United Arab Emirates (an essential sponsor of Tunisia), and Syria have already expressed support for the measures taken by the Tunisian president.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Russia) stressed: "We assume that the internal contradictions in Tunisia will be resolved solely in the legal field. We expect that Russian-Tunisian friendly relations and multifaceted cooperation will continue to develop steadily to benefit the peoples of our countries.

In an article presented in Il Messaggero, former Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi wrote that the European Union's silence on the situation in Tunisia means support for the coup organized by President Kais Saied and his allies, the "autocratic" regimes of Saudi Arabia and Egypt. In addition to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain, which have already supported the actions of the Tunisian president, Romano Prodi singled out Turkey and Qatar. They sponsor the Muslim Brotherhood (an organization banned in Russia), with which the Tunisian Islamists are associated, as the primary external players with influence on the processes in Tunisia.

Given the close ties between the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (a formation banned in the Russian Federation) and the Tunisian Ennahda, it was not easy for Erdogan to come to terms with his second loss after the failure of the Islamists he supported in Egypt. Therefore, official Ankara was not slow to react to the actions of Tunisian President Kais Saied and considered them "a coup against democracy and the will of the Tunisian people." However, as the Lebanese Al Mayadeen notes, the recent events in Tunisia are also a personal defeat for Erdogan. In this connection, it is predicted that the Turkish president will inevitably lose ground in Libya, followed by Syria, after which Erdogan can be deprived of Turkey.

In terms of regional politics, Kais Saied's actions have strengthened the position of the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Russia, and France, while Qatar and Turkey have lost influence. The events in Tunisia will directly affect the balance of power in Libya. It is no secret that Rachid al-Ghannouchi, the leader of Ennahda in Tunisia and speaker of the
Tunisian parliament, now in disgrace, supports Sarraj, who Erdoğan also supports. But Tunisian President Kais Saied has changed Tunisia’s position since he took office, taking a different stance from al-Ghannouchi. We can assume that this position will become more evident in the coming days.

The US reaction to the events in Tunisia so far has boiled down to an hour-long telephone conversation between the United States National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and the Tunisian president on August 1, calling on Kais Saied to restore the democratic regime in the country as soon as possible. According to the White House, Jake Sullivan expressed US President Joe Biden's strong support for the people of Tunisia and Tunisian democracy based on a commitment to the rule of law. Sullivan stressed that the priority is to "quickly form a new government headed by a functioning prime minister to stabilize the Tunisian economy and counter the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as to ensure that an elected parliament returns to work in a timely manner."

As for the future of Tunisia, it will be decided next month, when not only the reaction of internal Tunisian forces to the initiatives of the president will become apparent, but the initiatives themselves will develop, acquiring the outlines of a political program.

*Vladimir Danilov, political observer, exclusively for the online magazine "New Eastern Outlook".*