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The purpose of the journal is to promote scientific exchange and cooperation between Russian and foreign political scientists.

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STRATEGIES OF MAIN ACTORS OF WORLD POLICY REGARDING THE MIDDLE EAST AND MODERN SYRIA (ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE USA AND THE EUROPEAN UNION)

The article is devoted to the study of foreign policy strategies of the main actors of the world politics, represented by the USA and the countries of the European Union, regarding the Middle East and the Syrian Arab Republic.

The interest in this topic is explained by the particular attractiveness of the Middle East region for the above-mentioned actors, since it has significant economic and transport potential and a favorable geographical position, which opens up opportunities for establishing strong partnership trade and economic ties between the US and the EU on the one hand and Middle Eastern states on the other. At the same time, the Middle East, as a region of increased military-political and social tension, directly influences peace and security situation in the entire world, and because of that the most developed countries of the world seek to establish control over the internal politics in the Middle East and spread their influence on its territory.

The author pays great attention to the study of factors that have contributed to the formation of certain US and EU foreign policy courses in respect of the entire Middle East and Syria in particular, and comes to the conclusion that all of them can conditionally be divided into several large groups that equally affect the development process strategies. Their comparison allowed us to establish that in general both the USA and the countries of the European Union have similar perspective goals and objectives, however, they use different methods and forms of implementing their strategies. This explains the difference in the results achieved: while the United States successfully implement their geopolitical aspirations and gradually strengthen their presence in the Middle East, the EU countries are faced with a number of problems that impede their participation in the current regional events. Nevertheless, despite the successes and failures, the importance of the Middle East region for both the United States and the EU is beyond doubt.

Key words: *Middle East, foreign policy strategy, geopolitics, Syria, EU strategy, US strategy.*

Currently, the Middle East is one of the “hot spots of the planet,” being a region of increased tension and conflicts. At the same time, the existing political and economic potential of the Middle Eastern states, together with their advantageous geographical position and significant mineral resources, determine the status of the region as a center of intersection of geopolitical aspirations of the leading actors of the world politics.

The interest of the leading states of the world in the Middle East is enhanced by the fact that peace and tranquility not only in the regional states, but on the whole planet depend on how quickly and efficiently security issues within the region are resolved and how quickly possible conflict situations are eliminated. It is clear that the current situation in the territory of the the Middle East largely influences the formation of foreign policy strategies of the world political leaders. This primarily applies to the United States and European Union countries.

Before proceeding to the analysis of their strategies regarding the Middle East region and, in particular, the Syrian Arab Republic, it seems important to describe the current situation within the country.

First of all, we note that the Syrian Arab Republic is a typical example of a state that maintains a stable tone, since it is at the center of the regional political process. As a result, Syria is forced to either take an active part in this process, or it will be completely excluded from it with all the ensuing negative consequences for itself.

Syria is sometimes metaphorically called “the heart of the Arab world” [2. Pp. 159-166] and the entire Middle East, emphasizing in this way that the numerous events taking place in the territory of the the Syrian Arab Republic directly affect the political and social situation within the state itself. As a result, the political elite of Syria, while administering the country, cannot ignore the events in which Syria has been involved since 2014, as well as the unstable situation in the border territories (primarily in Lebanon, Iraq, Israel and Palestine).

Despite the fact that the modern Syrian Arab Republic is developing in accordance with the values of a secular society, worldviews, cultural traditions and foundations that have been developed over several centuries continue to be of great importance to the Syrian society. Thus, according to the Constitution of the country [10], the government provides all kinds of support to the multiconfessional world and guarantees equality to all citizens regardless of their “sex, origin, language, religion or faith” [10]. In this regard, much attention is paid to countering extremism by representatives of Islamist and other religious movements and organizations.

The SAR differs from most other regional states by its desire to form and implement its own independent domestic and foreign policy. However, this does not meet the geopolitical interests of the United States or the EU countries, that exercise pressure on the Syrian government. Aggressive intentions are demonstrated by Israel, de facto satellite of the United States and NATO, whose poli-

cy directly depends on the will of Washington. In such circumstances, the SAR government faces the need to combine implementation of independent domestic and foreign policies with the policy of “peaceful resolution of conflict situations” [9. P. 9]. However, this did not allow the SAR to avoid numerous political and economic problems, which put the country in the state of a long political confrontation. Among such problems, it is worth highlighting increased social instability, rising unemployment, low incomes and the consequences of the civil war, which lasted since 2011.

Such conditions contributed to the activation of the foreign policy of foreign states wishing to establish control over the SAR. Increasingly, force-based methods were applied against the SAR, they included “blackmail, manipulation, propaganda, sabotage, economic and other sanctions, the use of military force, discrediting and physically eliminating uncontrollable leaders, etc.” [4. Pp. 9-13]. As for the United States, according to Zb. Brzezinski, the Middle East is a kind of “a cornerstone of their foreign policy” [7. Pp. 30-44], at the expense of which Washington will be able to maintain the status of “the world leader” for a long time even in the face of aggravation of internal political and economic problems.

In addition to the above, the formation of foreign policy strategies of leading world actors is generally influenced by numerous factors. Among the most significant are the following:

Geostrategic factors, that is such factors that ensure “qualitative certainty of the existing social environment” [13. P. 354].

Territorial and geographical factors, namely the advantageous location of the region at the intersection of transport routes connecting Europe, Asia and Africa.

The international political factor, the role of which is played by the complexly organized Middle East conflict, which includes the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Arab-Israeli confrontation, internal confrontations in the Arab states and the terrorist activities of extremist organizations.

Military-strategic factors based on a constantly growing conflict-generating potential of the states of the region and, as a result, private armed clashes in their territories.

Factors of a cultural and civilizational nature, which significantly depend on the efforts that the United States and their allies are making in the struggle against the Islamic world.

The above circumstances, as well as the obvious importance of the SAR from an economic point of view, explain the desire of the main geopolitical actors to spread influence over the region.

USA. For the first time, the United States appeared in this region at the end of the 19th century. and since then they have consistently sought to gain a foothold here, actively interfering in the internal processes of the regional and national level. A number of researchers agree that initially in the Middle East Region the American ruling class was interested in establishing its own world hegemony [3. Pp. 126-134].

The US confidence in its own exclusiveness, as well as the country's desire for world domination are well known and are openly declared by the American society and in the official doctrinal documents. The 2015 US National Security Strategy [12] emphasizes the indisputability and legality of the US global leadership, recognized by the country itself and other subjects of the international relations [12]. The same is true for the new 2018 Strategy [11].

The formation of the US foreign policy strategy in relation to the Middle East Region and Syria is inextricably linked with how the US views on its own place in the world political system have been developing. Washington began to show its first initiatives in relation to the Middle East in the 1950s, when the issue of the need to eliminate the "vacuum of power" in this region was on the agenda [1. P. 75]. The vacuum allegedly arose as a result of the weakening of the British-French influence. At that time, US policy regarding the Middle East Region was determined by the "Eisenhower Doctrine," which proclaimed counteraction to the spread of the communist ideas the Washington's main strategic goal [5. P. 96].

Gradually, the United States expanded its presence in the Middle East, strengthened its influence here and, in fact, shaped the agenda and policies of most Middle Eastern states. In fact, the US strategy with respect to the Middle East Region is reflected today in two large geopolitical projects, the Greater Middle East and the New Middle East. Both of them are designed to ensure the strategic interests of the United States in the region by achieving world domination and the desire to liberalize the existing model of the political system.

The 2018 National Defense Strategy of the US [11] also contains important provisions, which outline the main US foreign policy priorities that are being formed with the account for the current global processes: strengthening of the importance of the developing states, weakening of the role of traditional transnational unions, the emergence of new centers of power, etc. [11].

An analysis of these projects and geostrategic documents makes it possible to single out the following US priorities for Middle East Region and the SAR:

- ousting possible opponents from the territory of the Middle East Region with the subsequent consolidation of the dominant role of the USA in the region;
- establishment of economic ties, creation of conditions for the supply of the hydrocarbon stocks from the Middle East Region to the USA;
- selective and situational struggle against the regional and international terrorist, extremist and separatist organizations and movements;
- Western-style democratization of the Arab world, with a focus on standards, canons, and values prevailing in the American society.

There is no doubt that such US political strategy, focused solely on the implementation of hegemonic aspirations, causes the legitimate discontent and indignation of other actors of the world politics, among which the EU countries play a particularly important role.

The **European Union** is also implementing its Middle East strategy. Like the United States, the European states are largely interested in spreading their influence in the territory of the Middle East Region. For the European Union, leadership in the region means an opportunity to show the world community the importance of its economic and political weight in the international arena and its ability to participate in the resolution of the pressing international problems in the context of a general weakening of the Union.

The common foreign policy of the EU is regulated by the fundamental strategic documents adopted in the XXI century [6. P. 41]. In respect of the Middle East Region and Syria, the organization's policy is governed by the European Union Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy [8]. This document, proclaims counteraction to the illegal terrorist groups, many of which are formed and operate in the territory of Middle East Region as the main objective of the EU in the region. In addition, goals and objectives are formed taking into account the problems and challenges of our time, in the solution of which the EU countries are forced to participate. Among them, primarily is the aggravation of the situation in the Middle East and the intensification of the illegal migration to the European countries.

Under the current conditions, the EU is greatly interested in the development of economic projects with the Middle East countries, since the use of their rich resource potential for the development of the European economy will allow the EU to pursue a policy more independent from the White House. To this end, a course has been taken towards the implementation of a policy involving the reform of Middle Eastern states along the European lines with a focus on achieving economic and social stability in them and spreading democratic values.

In conclusion, it can be noted that despite the fact that today the Middle East region is a zone of increased tension, it is still an object of geopolitical aspirations of the leading actors in the world politics. Both the US and the EU countries are interested in strengthening their influence in the region. To date, a set of documents has been developed that formulate the strategies of both the United States and the EU in relation to the Middle East Region.

At the same time, it can be argued that the American government today is able to successfully achieve its goals. Thanks to the combination of soft and hard power methods within the framework of the developed projects the Greater Middle East and New Middle East, it became possible to increase the American influence in the Middle East Region and establish partnership relations with a number of countries.

The implementation of the EU foreign policy strategy regarding the Middle East Region and SAR was not as successful. Trying to take an active part in the affairs of the region, the EU met with numerous problems, which the EU, unlike the USA, does not have sufficient resources to solve. That is why the actions of the European Union are not effective enough and demonstrate a certain weakness of the organization.

Assessing the consequences of the implementation of these strategies for the Middle East itself, it can be argued that they are often negative due to the selfish intentions laid down in them. Because of this, the development of the region and the safeguarding of its security are significantly complicated, which is clearly illustrated by the example of modern Syria.

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