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## **EUROPEAN STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

**Introduction.** In recent decades, the Middle East Region has become the epicenter of the struggle between the world's leading powers to establish strategic control over it. Speaking about the geostrategic attractiveness of the Middle East, it is safe to assume that it is dictated not only by its unique natural resource potential.

From the beginning of the Cold War until its end, the Middle East was one of the most "hot spots" in the world. Superpowers have fought for influence in the Middle East, putting serious pressure on direct participants in international relations within the region. After the end of the Cold War, and because Russia no longer had such an influential position in the international arena as the USSR once had, European countries are rapidly returning to the Middle East region, but no longer as separate states, but as the European Union — the only force capable of competing or, for the opportunity or necessity, cooperating with other countries [4].

Taking into account the current balance of power at the international arena, caused by increased military and political tensions, today there is a tendency to change the central-power configuration of the modern political system, namely, the conduct of multilateral foreign policy by international and, in particular, regional organizations. A great example is the Middle East policy of the European Union, whose security is currently severely undermined by such phenomena as interethnic Islamist terrorism and uncontrolled migration. The European Union promotes practical cooperation with the Middle East on countering terrorism, providing food, and eliminating the consequences of natural disasters.

Since the establishment of the foundation in relations with the Middle East since the early 1970s, the formats and level of dialogue have changed repeatedly, which shows the strengthening and development of cooperation: if in the last century there were three central themes: political interaction, economic benefits, and energy security, today the EU and the Middle East are creating and expanding new areas of cooperation that are vital for the Middle East region, primarily in the issue of continental security. The active cooperation between the EU and the countries of the Middle East region, of course, determines *the relevance* of this research.

**Review of recent publications.** Turning to the review of recent publications, the literature was structured into 3 groups.

The first group includes works that reveal the specificity of the Near-Eastern Region and its formation. The following scientists were engaged in the study of this issue: T.A. Ganiev and V.V. Karyakin "The Great Middle East: geopolitical regionalism of the conflict center of world civilization" [7]; L. Korolkov "Changing the geometry of Middle Eastern layouts" [10]; A.Z. Yegorin "War for peace in the

Middle East” [8]; L.M. Isaev, A.V. Korotaev, A.R. Shishkina “Factors of the Arab Spring of 2011” [9]; E.S. Melkumyan “GCC in global and regional processes” [11], and others.

The second group includes research that brings to the surface the contradictions that existed between Euro-Atlantic partners and differences in their approaches to security problems in the post-bipolar world, namely: Daalder I. “The End of Atlanticism” [14]; Calleo D. “The Broken West” [12]; Kupchan C. “The Alliance Lies in the Rubble” [15]; Caplan G. “Transatlantic Relations and the Middle East: Partnership or Rivalry?” [13]; Batyuk V. I. “Relations between the United States and NATO at the beginning of the XXI Century” [2] and others.

The third group includes research by scientists who were thoroughly engaged in covering the problems of the current state of the EU's strategic interests in the Middle East: Vasiliev M. V. “The Struggle of global business in the context of the Syrian conflict” [4]; Vasiliev M. V. “The West” [5]; Voskresensky A. D. “Theoretical and applied aspects of the regional dimension of international relations” [6]; Asimov A. “Middle East. 100 centuries of history” [1]; Bykov A. M. “International Security: Past, Present, Future” [3], and others.

**The objective of the paper** – to review and explore the problems and features of the EU's strategic interests in the Middle East.

**Results of the research.** For today, the Middle East region remains a source of challenges and threats to the entire global political system as a whole. In turn, the conflicted flow of the region is associated with the presence of "old" conflicts and contradictions that have existed for more than a decade, such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Sunito-Shiite confrontation in the broadest sense, as well as a "new" set of problems that arose as a result of the events generated by the "Arab Spring", which the greatest danger to the world as a whole is: the destruction of the regional security system, the crisis of statehood, the dramatic growth of Islamic radicalism and extremism, as well as the increase in the level of a terrorist threat. The most relevant at the present stage is the destabilization of the internal political situation in such states as Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, the rapid growth of Islamic radicalism and extremism, the activities of the terrorist organization "Islamic State", as well as a huge number of other non-state actors using violence. Analysis of the conflicts of this region allows us to distinguish three main reasons: the first is the incompleteness of modernization transformations or their complete absence in most states of the region, secondly, it is the struggle between the main intraregional actors for regional leadership, which is happening at the present stage mainly along the line of Sunito-Shiite confrontation, and, thirdly, it is the destructive influence of non-regional actors on the Middle East political process.

**Conclusion.** We can identify the following conclusion: to establish, strengthen and deepen the dialogue between the EU and the Middle East, it is necessary to create a clear mechanism for conducting dialogue and improving previously established forms of dialogue with the Middle East – within the framework of the Union's work for the Mediterranean and European neighborhood policy. Especially in conditions of full coherence between all EU member states that are directly responsible for

viability and security in the region, as well as for defending and maintaining interests in dialogue with the Arab world.

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## **TRANSFORMATION OF SPECIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE USA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM AT THE PRESENT STAGE**

**Introduction.** "Special relations" are political, diplomatic, cultural, economic, military, and historical relations between the United Kingdom and the United States of America, as well as between their leaders.