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Editorial article / Редакционная статья

Introductory Note

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Вступительное слово

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The international system is undergoing a period of rapid change, and the Mediterranean region is no exception. In the past decade alone, we have witnessed the Arab uprisings sweep across North Africa and the Levant, a more assertive Turkey and Qatar expand their influence in the region along with an equally assertive bloc of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the UAE, and Egypt. The Abraham Accords have drawn Israel and some Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) state interests closer together and facilitated an unprecedented level of cooperation between them. The East Mediterranean Gas Forum includes some shared energy and geo-strategic interests between Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, and Palestine. At the same time the situation in theatres of conflict such as Libya and Syria have become more complex considering the juxtapositions of non-state, regional and global actor interests. Historically, this region has experienced conflicts of various types, some of which are still ongoing, notably in Israel — Palestine. However, the Greater Mediterranean occupies a unique place in the history of civilizations and continues to represent important trade and other economic connections and opportunities.

Key themes in the Mediterranean include the struggle for access to hydrocarbon fields and the demarcation of Exclusive Economic Zones, military conflicts (Israeli — Palestinian, Syrian, Libyan, Western Sahara and others), terrorism, irregular migration and internal displacement, political economy, climate change (including food and water security) and health diplomacy taking place during COVID-19. The geographical features of the Greater Mediterranean basin, which includes such straits as the Bosphorus, the Dardanelles and Gibraltar, as well as the Suez Canal, suggests that the region will retain its special geostrategic, geopolitical and geoeconomic status.

The paper by Yannis A. Stivachtis (Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University) examines the Mediterranean region as a security complex that includes three sub-complexes — the East Mediterranean, the Central Mediterranean, and the West Mediterranean. In order to explain the regional processes many factors — economic, energy, environmental, as well as migration and refugee flows are being examined. The author applies regional security complex theory and argues that security threats are not necessarily the product of enmity among states or the result of a

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state's foreign policy, but they also issue from the political and economic instability facing Mediterranean states. The paper reveals that the Mediterranean security complex is very dynamic thereby contributing to the process of the complex's internal transformation.

Mirmehdi M. Aghazada (RUDN University) first defines the concept of the Greater Mediterranean, analyzing it in the short, medium and long term and, accordingly, in a narrow regional, wide regional and global scale, then considers it from the point of view of the regional security complex theory. Obviously, the article has its novelty as the author suggests a new regional security complex — the Greater Mediterranean regional security complex. He further argues that it constitutes a global-level security complex as it includes such states as Russia, France, Great Britain, which have a significant influence on world politics, as well as Turkey, Italy, Israel and Iran with rather powerful capabilities that extend beyond their neighbors.

Ivan A. Chikharev (Lomonosov Moscow State University) identifies the historical foundations, current state and strategic prospects of Russia's presence and international influence in the Greater Mediterranean region. An important element of the article is the thesis about the special role of Russia in the Pacific-European (Eurasian) transit. From the author's point of view, it includes not only the full implementation of Russia's transport and logistics potential in the macro-region but also the transfer of modern technologies, as well as the promotion of the formation of sustainable political regimes.

The reasons for Turkey's growing interests in the Eastern Mediterranean is examined in the paper by Nikos Moudouros (University of Cyprus). In recent years, after the discovery of large oil and gas fields in this region, Ankara's growing interest in it is fixed, expressed in various forms of interventionist policy. This article examines the change of the geopolitical doctrine of Turkey and how this process influences Turkey's perception of the Eastern Mediterranean. The author consistently studies the process of identifying the Eastern Mediterranean region with the broader idea of a

“hostile region” and analyzes the place of the Turkish “Blue Homeland” concept in it.

With the rising fear of Islamisation in Europe and increasing Muslim sentiment in Turkey, the article by Saroj K. Aryal, Adithyan Nair (University of Warsaw) and Gaurav Bhattarai (Tribhuvan University) signifies the role of religion in term of integration between Turkey and the European Union and provides an answer to the question as to why they should consider religion as one of the variables in European integration.

Ebru Birinci (Lomonosov Moscow State University), Ali M. Sucu and Ivan A. Safranchuk (MGIMO University) describe the role of Turkey and Israel in the construction of Russian great powerness. The article considers to what extent Russia's bilateral relations with Turkey and Israel, which are traditional non-Western allies of Western countries, can contribute to the formation of a Russian great power identity and for this purpose, the factors of Russian great power construction and its role in Russian foreign policy are examined.

The paper by Vladimir A. Avatkov (IMEMO RAS, the Diplomatic Academy of the MFA of Russia) explores the role and features of the populism in the modern Turkish foreign policy and special attention is paid to R.T. Erdoğan's populist statements made in the context of the key foreign policy ideologies — Neo-Ottomanism, Neo-Panturkism and Islamism. The author believes that, unlike other countries, Turkey's populism is quite effective and assists the ruling elite in achieving its foreign policy goals.

Pavel A. Gudev (IMEMO RAS) analyzes historical, political and legal bases that determine Turkey's current policy with regard to maritime delimitation and the settlement of maritime disputes in the Eastern Mediterranean. Special attention is paid to the ideological and practical framing of Turkish claims within the framework of the Blue Homeland doctrine. The author shows that there is a set of circumstances that significantly limit the prospects of solving interstate contradictions between Turkey and Greece within the framework of international judicial instances, including the International

Court of Justice and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

Aleksandr A. Irkhin and Olga A. Moskalenko (Sevastopol State University) view the Black Sea region as becoming a frontline zone for the formation of a new system of international relations. The paper examines the geopolitical projects of the great powers in relation to the Black Sea region in the chronology of 1991 to 2019. The authors emphasize that the geopolitical significance of the Black Sea basin is determined by its strategic position at the intersection of the interests of key actors.

The article by Alexey M. Vasiliev and Natalia A. Zherlitsina (Institute for African Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences; RUDN University) is dedicated to the tenth anniversary

of the revolutionary events in the region of the Middle East and North Africa, called the Arab Spring. Particular attention is paid to the growing popularity of Islamist political forces, which provided their answers and pseudo-answers to acute public questions.

The paper by Natalia V. Ivkina (RUDN University) considers Germany's position on the Greek-Turkish dispute in the Aegean Sea and in the Eastern Mediterranean through theories of intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism. The author assesses Germany's aspirations as a moderator in resolving conflicts between Ankara and Athens and concludes that Germany's policy towards Turkey and Greece is focused more on the country's own national needs, rather than on the interests of EU institutions.

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