

In this Issue

The global dimension of the conflict changes and war taking place in the Eastern Partnership space allows one to argue about the contradictory transformation of modern international and regional relations into a different state, which is quite different from that which was typical in previous centuries. On the one hand, new international and regional relations are characterized by a greater degree of rationality, which is manifested in the desire of global and regional actors to regulate international relations based on their own interests. On the other hand, there is a growing spontaneity emanating from international and regional relations itself. At the same time, spontaneity and chaos develop to a certain extent as a counterbalance to the tendency towards rationalization or orderliness. The interaction of rationality and spontaneity accelerates the transformation of interstate relations.

Despite the fact that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is universal in nature and is designed to equally draw the attention of the world community to the problems of all states without exception, it nevertheless emphasizes the special responsibility of developed countries for the future of the developing world, where there is currently a critically high deficit investment in key social and economic Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Under these conditions of comparative analysis, research on the topic of regulation and leadership seems relevant in terms of identifying recent trends in the South Caucasus. A comparative study of the issues of stability and instability in international relations is of paramount importance, since they play a world-system role and influence the ability of international relations to adapt to constantly changing conditions. Therefore, the main attention in the articles of this volume was paid, first of all, to the theoretical and methodological dimensions of regulation and leadership in modern international and regional relations.

In 'The History of Imperial Politics and the Politics of Imperial History', Gerard Libaridian analyzes one of the main trends in modern political history and historiography, mentally relying on certain ideas and concepts of the empire and often correcting or even rethinking them. As a result, a mosaic, but at the same time a completely integral portrait of the empire is formed throughout its historical existence. The imperial paradigm made significant adjustments to the views of historians, which primarily meant a shift in the focus of attention from the center to the periphery of the empire, to the problems of national identity, as well as to the peculiarities of state-building in the imperial situation. The author focuses on the contradictions in the common history of the Turks and Armenians in the context of the geopolitical past of the Ottoman Empire, primarily the factors of stability that allowed it to successfully manage its numerous peoples over the centuries. At the same time, the geopolitical approach of imperial research plays an important role in this article, allowing the history of the Ottoman Empire to be placed in a global context.

In his article 'The US, Strategic Environment in the South Caucasus and Armenia: A sight on the future', Ruben Elamiryan analyzes the current directions of US foreign policy in the South Caucasus in the context of the ongoing transformation of the balance of power in this region. According to the author, an essential feature of American politics is the integration of regional strategic mechanisms in various geopolitical contexts. At

the same time, understanding the mechanisms for developing an American strategy towards Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia is impossible without taking into account a number of domestic political factors and understanding the doctrinal guidelines of the United States. The main US foreign policy concepts in the South Caucasus are focused on the implementation of national interests through global dominance through the developed strategic environment in the region. The author emphasizes that a number of internal political factors have a significant impact on the foreign policy of the countries of the South Caucasus, which does not always correspond to the national interests of these countries. The political analysis of these is a promising direction in the study of US foreign policy towards Armenia, where the main focus is shifted from the analysis of the results of foreign policy activities to the consideration of internal processes to develop decisions that determine this activity.

In 'US policy in the South Caucasus prior to and after the 2020 Karabakh war in the context of the evolving regional and international geopolitics', Benyamin Poghosyan analyzes the transformation of US policy in the South Caucasus, pointing to the strategic position of this region on the border between European and Asian space. The author comparatively analyzes the main US geopolitical changes in the South Caucasus before and after the 2020 Karabakh war. The strategic interests of many countries are concentrated in the South Caucasus, and in addition, this region is a geopolitical space for expanding the influence of leading powers in the Near and Middle East, as well as in the Caspian and Black Seas. The author pays attention to the fact that the South Caucasus can act as an important link between the West and the East, being traditionally linked by close ties with European countries and the states of the East. However, after the 2020 Karabakh war, this region became a zone of armed conflicts, turning it into one of the centers of the clash of global international interests. The article attempts to explore the geopolitical role of the United States in the transformation of Armenia's relationship with its neighbor countries, as well as regional powers. The challenges facing Armenia due to the Azerbaijani and Turkish blockade, the Karabakh war of 2020, as well as the revision of the implementation of foreign policy tasks in the South Caucasus and beyond, all this makes it important to study the US regional policy towards Armenia.

In the article 'An Alternative to the Dissident Paradigm and Intersecting Civil Protests in Soviet Armenia: Equal but Different?', Armenak Manukyan examines the main areas of emergence of dissent, civil protests and political groups in Soviet Armenia from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s. The author pays attention to the ideology of dissidents, despite the common criticism of the socialist system, it did not have a well-defined single doctrinal concept, since it included several different ideological currents. At their core, representatives of various dissident ideologies did not directly raise the question of the advisability of changing the political system of the Soviet Union, believing it possible to achieve the declared changes within its framework. According to the author, this position was largely due to the fact that the most influential dissidents interacted with the Soviet government for quite a long time, receiving from it favorable working conditions, awards, etc. In addition, the status of the Soviet Union as a state in the international arena was quite significant, being a member of the UN Security Council, one of the largest world powers, and individual violations of human rights could not change the international status of the Soviet Union in the UN, and even more so if these

appeals came from civilian groups that were in an illegal position in the USSR. The author draws attention to the main mechanisms of dissident activity in Soviet Armenia, which were: 1) the collection and dissemination of information prohibited by the authorities; 2) preparation and distribution of open letters in defense of illegally convicted or devoted to topical problems of the social and political life of the country; 3) creation of dissident organizations; 4) demonstrations; 5) production and distribution of leaflets and prohibited literature; 6) moral and financial assistance to persons subjected to repressions and their families; 7) hunger strikes.

In 'Drivers of Fiscal Resources at the Local Level in Russia: Role of Institutions Reflected in Regional Debt', Evgeny Timushev analyzes the implications of fiscal institutions and the centralization of intergovernmental fiscal relations in Russia, focusing on issues of regional debt sustainability and intra-regional fiscal decentralization. In the context of increasing instability in the post-Soviet space, both in the economic and political spheres, the issue of ensuring economic security deserves special attention. The emerging destabilizing tendencies of the national economy of the Russian Federation, which deepened against the backdrop of the transition to a multipolar world, accompanied by an increase in structural imbalances in the world economy, necessitated the development and adoption of effective measures to prevent and minimize the consequences of crisis phenomena, the search for new methods and levers of influence in the field of sustainable development management, appropriate changing environment. According to the author, a characteristic feature of the regions of modern Russia is a high level of differentiation in development, which exacerbates the impact of adverse factors on the regional economy. The largest share is occupied by subsidized regions, whose economy is more prone to destabilizing trends, which increases the burden on the federal budget. Many of them have significant resources, which, with effective management levers, can increase their share in the development of the domestic economy. The analysis showed that the current administrative, economic, social instruments of regional management often do not take into account the specifics of the territory, are non-systemic and unrelated, and do not have sufficient scientific validity.

In his article 'Gender-sensitive approaches in confidence- and security-building measures', Hakob Gabrielyan offers a new perspective on solutions to include gender-sensitive approaches in arms control and confidence- and security-building measures. The effective use of the potential of citizens of post-Soviet countries in public policy and management is hampered by the double standards that exist in post-Soviet society, when equality of rights and opportunities for people of both sexes is officially recognized, but rejected in everyday practices based on traditional ideas about the roles of men and women in the family and society. This is especially evident when pursuing a policy of human resource management in organizations of all types and forms of ownership, including government agencies, when, other things being equal, preference in promotion is given to men. Both at the level of ordinary mass consciousness and in the social sciences, there is an underestimation of the significance of the positive effects of the policy of equalizing the opportunities of gender groups and their access to all types of resources.

This volume of the journal includes three book reviews focusing on the resilience and sustainable development of the EU, security transformation and the new balance of power doctrine, as well as issues related to reconciliation, heritage and social inclusion in the Middle East and North Africa.

In the context of the transformation of the world-system, the EU is a new center of power, influencing regional and geopolitical political processes. Therefore, the EU, its institutions and processes are of interest to most researchers who care about the future. At the same time, it should be taken into account that these integration processes within the EU are the only ones of their kind, and, therefore, unique in terms of the practical implementation of ideas that have worried great minds for many centuries. The global scale of the transformation of security and the radical nature of the ongoing changes allow many researchers to put forward an assumption about the formation of a new system of international relations, as well as a new doctrine of the balance of power. In parallel with these processes, many provisions and phenomena that characterize the very system of international relations are being revised. Including one of the basic principles, foundations of this system is the sovereignty of the modern state, as one of the key actors in international relations. The relevance of a comparative analysis of the Middle East and African vectors becomes even more significant if we take into account the growing involvement of geopolitical actors in the processes of reconciliation, heritage and social integration in the Middle East and North Africa.

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