

Iryna Skichko

Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University

Vinnitsia

Reserch Supervisor: V.V. Kravchenko, PhD in History, Senior Lecturer

Language Supervisor : O. O. Odintsova, Senior Lecturer

FOREIGN POLICY OF FRANCE

Introduction. The relevance of the topic of the study is determined by the need for a comprehensive study of the phenomenon of the French strategy for European security through the use of modern multidimensional methods of political analysis. The onset of a multipolar world was marked by many interesting trends. The most prominent of them is the active attempts of leading world powers to accelerate the process of adapting their political vectors to the complex and unstable circumstances of the present time, which make the need of a significant adjustment of the established concepts of development.

That is, **the objective of the paper** is to discuss the process of transforming foreign policy of France, in particular, within the European context.

The early resignation of French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius in February 2016 began the debate on the results of French foreign policy in recent years and the continuing decline in role of France in world politics. When in the late 1950s, General Charles de Gaulle presented the "holistic" foreign policy doctrine, it seemed that it could not be alternatives to it.

Indeed, the idea of returning an independent role in the world to France and the attempt to make the Fifth Republic to be the bridge between the East and the West were historically approved and emerged from the situation that has been developed in Europe. Moreover, the Gaullism was a universal doctrine that practically did not change over time. Until the end of the Cold War, all presidents of France generally respected the general's course [2: 120].

Among the specialists who are engaged in modern French history, there are different opinions about the realism of the de Gaulle concept. But there is no doubt that certain successes of Paris succeeded. By engaging in a compromise between the United States and the USSR, France has initiated an epoch of detente, played an important role in signing the Four-Point Agreement on West Berlin, the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and the development of other processes in world politics.

The factors that shape French foreign policy have changed since the end of the Cold War. The perspectives of France and the United States have diverged in some cases. More core interests remain similar. Both countries' governments have embraced the opportunity to build stability in Europe through an expanded European Union (EU) and NATO. Each has recognized that terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are the most important threats to their security today.

Several factors change French foreign policy. France has a self-identity that calls for efforts to spread French values and views, rooted in democracy and human rights.

France prefers to engage international issues in a multilateral framework, mostly through the European Union. European efforts to form an EU security policy potentially independent of NATO emerged in this context. However, the policymakers in France, Europe and the United States have agreed about stronger European defense as a complement to rather than a substitution for NATO.

From the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States through the Iraq war of 2003 until today, France has pressed the United States to confront emerging crises within a multilateral framework. France normally wishes to “legitimize” actions ranging from economic sanctions to military action in the United Nations.

Trade and investment ties between the United States and France are extensive, and provide each government a large stake in the vitality and openness of their respective economies. Through trade in goods and services, and, most importantly, through foreign direct investment, the economies of France and the United States have become increasingly integrated.

Other areas of complementarity include the ongoing NATO missions in Afghanistan and Libya, peace operations in the Balkans, the Middle East Peace Process and efforts to counter the Iranian nuclear program, and the fight against terrorism—all challenges where France has played a central role. A major split occurred over Iraq, however, with many countries either supporting or independently sharing French ideas of greater international involvement.

In France, the push for the European integration process has come historically for a large part from the political and administrative elite. Over the past 60 years, they have expressed not only interest but also belief in European integration [4: 68].

Any French government has to cope with the challenge of complying as much as possible with the EU convergence criteria, without abandoning the national policies of the welfare state. This forces any French government to consider both the German discourse on *Sparpolitik* and the domestic discourse on the preservation of generous distributive policies (health-care, retirement). It helps to explain why France has signed treaties like the Fiscal Compact introducing the Golden Rule into its domestic law and asks at the same time regularly for postponements in implementing its obligations.

It puts France somewhere in the middle between the Northern and the Southern member states of the EU. On the Northern front, France has no other choice than to accept compromises with Germany, its primary trade partner, on the rationalization of public finances. On the Southern front, France regularly expresses its solidarity with the Mediterranean countries that have heavy public debts and deficits, and supports the principle of financial transfers towards these countries – directly from the national budgets, or from the European Central Bank and the European Stability Mechanism.

The difficulties of the French economy have worsened the gap with Germany which, ten years ago, was the ‘sick child’ of the EU economies but has recovered, following a series of major domestic reforms (the “Harz Laws”). Co-leading together with Germany has become more difficult. As French politicians have not renounced exercising a form of leadership within the EU, it has had to invest in another dimension: foreign and security policy.

Paris can no longer limit the consolidation of the EU Defence Policy to a privileged partnership with London: alternative scenarios must be explored. The 2013 government White Book on Defence and National Security supports the idea of activating the relationships with Germany and Poland, in the defence field, together with other countries like Italy and Spain in a 'Weimar Plus Triangle'.

France has not hesitated to intervene militarily in various configurations: with the NATO 'coalition of the willing' in Libya (2011), alone against the Jihadi armed groups in Northern Mali (2013), with the US air force against Daesh in Iraq (2014) [1: 80].

Starting with Sarkozy and continuing with Hollande, French governments have abandoned their pretention to distant their diplomacy from the USA in the Middle East. The negotiations on the future of the Iran Nuclear Plan are another example where France has acted as close ally of the USA. This marks a shift compare to the Gaullist paradigm of distancing from Washington.

The main reason for this change is that France's foreign policy, as in many Western democracies, is more and more concerned about the defence of global liberal values and not only national interests. Paradoxically, it is when the power of the West is declining at the international level that France has begun assuming a more explicit Western identity.

Africa has been a strategic place providing a wide range of opportunities for France, which has maintained its strong historical, economic, political and strategic relations with African countries since the end of the colonial period. There are about 240,000 French citizens living in Africa and many international French companies operating on the continent, such as Total, Areva, Accor, Bolloré, Bouygues, and Elf Aquitaine. These French companies have played a significant role in developing French interests on the continent. Africa has rich natural resources and provides raw materials, such as uranium, natural gas, and oil to France. Importantly, France is the largest trading partner for the African countries within the EU members.

French economic interests in Africa have been the most important driving factor influencing France's relations with the continent. The emergence of the new actors in Africa has affected the dynamics of French foreign policy towards Africa and forced France to adopt a new foreign policy towards Africa. The new actors have increased their economic, political and diplomatic relations in Africa.

Conclusion. French-African security relations played a significant role in developing economic and political relations between France and Francophone Africa. It includes defense agreements, military technical assistance agreements, training of African commanders, establishing of French military bases in Francophone countries, and arms sale. After independence, France played a leading role in creating national armies of its former colonial states in Africa. According to defense agreements made between France and its former colonies, France would have to provide their own security in case of internal and external threats. However, these agreements also stated that France could get involved militarily upon the African states' request [3: 245].

In 2016 France contributed to the cause of world peace, but it would like to find more committed allies in the EU. Cooperation is sometimes easier with the USA, and this is why France has been tending to follow more the US foreign policy line, in contradiction to the Gaullist legacy. Regarding the EU, French public opinion has not been vocal about governmental activism on foreign and security issues. Clearly, it is economic and social policies that engage the attention of the French public and nourish the debate about the EU.

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