

France “chose” Armenia

ARVAK center's comment, 21.01.2024

On 19 Jan.2024, during the traditional annual address of the French President to the army, Emmanuel Macron stated that the French Republic had made a historic choice, especially with regard to Armenia. He noted in particular: *“In 2024, we will tirelessly protect our overseas territories and face the responsibilities that lie with the great nation that we are. At this point, I shall refrain from listing in detail. I could mention the Balkans, Armenia, which attract our attention and lead to strengthening our position and making historical decisions, especially regarding Armenia, which I’ve just mentioned”*.

Apparently, the reference only to Armenia and the Balkans within the context of Paris’ world strategic objectives in 2024 seems to indicate the priority given to these two areas. It is noticeable that Armenia and the Balkans are the main target of Paris. As far as Armenia is concerned, it is obvious that the FR doesn’t want to miss the situation that is successfully developing for it, when Yerevan, due to the recent years’ events, found itself in the face of the Azerbaijani - Turkish threat, but at the same time, it clearly signals its distrust of Moscow’s proposed security architecture in the South Caucasus. In the current conditions, French diplomacy managed, without much expense or effort, to ensure a significant increase of the Armenian government and public sympathy for France and its regional policy. This success should be consolidated, so Paris will consistently do by expanding ties with Yerevan, especially emphasizing the defense sector.

In the case of the Balkans, Macron most likely underlined France’s intention to further deepen alliances with Greece and Cyprus, the results of which, over the past couple of years, have tangibly balanced the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean, by curbing Turkey’s appetites and aggressive behavior.

In a broad sense, Macron’s announcement of *the “Armenian-Balkan military-political priority”* can be interpreted as an attempt by Paris to regain elements of influence in the Middle East as a whole, which France consistently lost from the second half of the 20th century until the results of the “Arab Spring”, which put an end to the Fifth Republic’s widespread presence in the political life of Lebanon and Syria. Thus, France is seeking to re-establish itself in the zone of its age-old interests by using the most promising areas of its foreign policy in the Greater Middle East region.

It should also be noted that such a clear message of Macron was made immediately after the general public in the country and the world became aware of the French fighters perished in Kharkov. In the face of the scandal, the President made it clear that it would not affect the Republic’s intention to remain somehow actively involved in the world’s conflict zones if they were of military-political significance for Paris.