

On the integration of France into the wake of British politics

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On March 27, 2025 during the Paris Summit, also named the “*coalition of the willing*”, the French President E. Macron stated: “*Europe needs Turkey, and Turkey needs Europe*”. The French President’s formula captures the emerging process of rapprochement between the EU and Turkey, a phenomenon that analysts explain by D. Trump’s intentions to abandon the financially costly and politically inexpedient military defense of Europe. Thus, against the background of the “*looming Russian threat*” Europe is looking for military-political support from Turkey, which currently has the second-largest army in NATO (after the United States) and a dynamically developing military-industrial complex.

According to experts, Europe itself has advanced technological capabilities and the necessary base to expand its own military-industrial capabilities, and also does not lack human resources to increase the personnel of European armies. But it will take at least 10-15 years for the EU countries to achieve military-political self-sufficiency. It is precisely in view of this period of time that Ankara’s role has increased for the leading European capitals, which have taken upon themselves the mission of containing the Russian Federation and maintaining the parity of forces in the Old World. This balance will be disrupted with the U.S. withdrawal from the stage.

There is an opinion that the idea of Turkey’s closer involvement into the European security architecture belongs to Great Britain, and it will lobby Ankara’s interests in Brussels, up to the possibility of Turkey’s accession to the EU in exchange for the guarantees provided by the EU to exert military-political pressure on the Russian Federation. And, apparently, France along with Germany, Poland and a number of other leading EU member states, has readily taken up this initiative.

Given these new circumstances, the question arises about the future of the French initiatives in the Great Middle East and, in particular, in the South Caucasus, where until recently Paris was demonstrating (or trying to take) steps to contain the growing Turkish-Azerbaijani factor. Paris, in fact, initiated the creation of an anti-Turkish alliance in the Eastern Mediterranean together with Greece and Cyprus, and also promoted the idea of expanding this informal coalition to include India, Armenia and, possibly, even Iran.

A number of experts are inclined to believe that such an activation of France in these regions was associated with the need to compensate for the loss of Paris’s positions in Africa and an attempt to gain a foothold in Asian regions, which to one degree or another have historically been subject to the French influence. This course implied the emergence of a certain tension in relations with Turkey, which also considers the Middle East as a zone of its interests and seeks to “quote”, if possible, the interference of the world powers in the internal affairs of this region.

France’s attempts to integrate its interests into the geopolitical landscape of the region under consideration could not but collide with the interests of Great Britain, which has its own vision and plans for the future configuration of the geopolitical space from the Eastern

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Mediterranean to Central Asia. The so-called project “*Big Turan*”, attributed by analysts mainly to London and not to Ankara, did not allow Paris’s attempts to exert unnecessary pressure on Turkey on international platforms and to discredit Azerbaijan in the context of the Karabakh problem and Baku’s aggressive policy towards Yerevan. Therefore, it is not surprising that London unpretentiously provided and continues to provide support to Turkey and Azerbaijan in order to level out French interference in Anglo-Turkish plans. It can be assumed that without the support of a strong European and global player in the person of Great Britain, R. Erdogan, even taking into account his eccentric temperament, would hardly have allowed himself to make anti-French *demarches*, coupled with insults against France and E. Macron personally. And I. Aliyev, would hardly have been able to initiate an ambitious political and propaganda campaign against the “*global French colonialism*” without British support. These and other circumstances suggest that French initiatives to increase its role in Middle Eastern and South Caucasian affairs met with fierce local resistance, and also revealed signs of the centuries-old Franco-British competition for spheres of influence in different regions of the world.

However, it should be borne in mind that this competition can often lead to the closest of interactions, where mutual interests caused by suddenly changed circumstances allow it. Recent events should be considered precisely such an experience. President D. Trump’s initiative for dialogue with the Russian Federation and renunciation of military support from the EU shifted Paris’s attention to the situation in Eastern Europe and led to a noticeable thaw in Franco-Turkish relations. In fact, we can talk about France recognizing its defeat on the Turkish and Azerbaijani tracks and integrating them into the wake of the British strategy, which includes increasing Turkey’s importance for Europe and handing it *carte blanche* in the Central Asian direction. Reliance on Turkey in the confrontation with the Russian Federation, as well as access to the resources of Central Asia, including Kazakh uranium, which is vital for French energy after the losses in Africa, should compensate for Paris’ concessions to London and the deactivation of the French policy, including in the South Caucasus.

Taking into account these circumstances, the hopes of some political circles and the Armenian public for significant military-political support from France in containing Turkish-Azerbaijani pressure are doubtful. It is necessary to understand that despite the sympathies and cultural and historical ties with Armenia, France’s limited international influence as well as foreign policy pragmatism, do not allow Paris to take steps contrary to the global interests of the Fifth Republic. It is also important to be able to differentiate the verbal component of French foreign policy from its applied actions, which are often diametrically contradictory to each other. In this regard, it is worth recalling the resolution of the French Senate dated November 25, 2020 on the recognition of the Republic of Artsakh, which was immediately rejected by the Foreign Ministry, the Government and the President of France with the wording “*It is inappropriate to complicate the conflict with unilateral confessions*”. You can also recall the appeal of the Senate dated June 21, 2024 to the Government of the Republic “*to stop new projects or new stages of ongoing projects with the participation of French companies in the hydrocarbon sector of Azerbaijan*”. In particular, it was about the French oil and gas giant *Total*, which has its shares in the development of the Azerbaijani fields

“*Shah Deniz*” and “*Apsheeron*”, as well as in energy and logistics consortia for the delivery of Azerbaijani hydrocarbons to the European markets. However, after this call was announced *Total (TotalEnergies SE)* has only increased its presence in the energy sector of Azerbaijan. At the same time, according to the Central Bank of Azerbaijan, in 2024 alone, direct French investment in the Azerbaijani economy increased 25 times. It should be especially noted that such an unprecedented investment increase was recorded at the peak of the Franco-Azerbaijani political and diplomatic confrontation accompanied with the “*anti-colonial*” campaign of Baku, the diplomatic notes, recall of the ambassadors and arrests of the French citizens in Azerbaijan on charges of espionage.

Such inconsistency is quite natural, given that the declared pro-Armenian position gives France the opportunity to maneuver and bargain with foreign policy opponents on a wide range of problems and interests.