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## CIPRUS-FRANCE RELATIONS AND PROBLEMS OF REGION SECURITY

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After gaining independence in 1960, Cyprus began to establish relations with other countries. However, the ethnic conflict between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots in 1974 led to the actual division of the island into two state entities and to various forms of intervention by foreign states, including Greece, Turkey, France and also Great Britain and the United States. The purpose of the article is to analyze the history and current state of Cypriot-French relations, to study the whole range of French interests in Cyprus after gaining independence to the present. Methods used to achieve the goals of the study: historical and comparative analysis, systematization and generalization, retrospective method. The article emphasizes that from the very beginning of the Cypriot ethnic conflict, France has consistently advocated the territorial integrity of Cyprus and condemned the creation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. In subsequent years, France contributed to the fact that Cyprus in 2004 became a member of the EU. But bilateral relations became most intense during the presidency of E. Macron in 2017–2022. The economic interests of France in Cyprus are primarily associated with the discovery of large gas reserves on the Cyprus shelf, for which several states are fighting in the Eastern Mediterranean region, among which Turkey is the most active. This struggle stimulates the establishment of military cooperation between France and Cyprus. The related 2017 bilateral treaty, which came into force in 2020, aims to contain Turkey. This treaty, the French-Cypriot military exercises and French efforts to resolve the Cyprus conflict aggravate French-Turkish relations and the political situation in the region. The analysis presented in this article, the study of the experience of these bilateral relations will be important for the development of appropriate strategies for international interactions for post-Soviet states, in particular, Ukraine.

**Key words:** Cyprus, France, international relations, foreign policy, diplomacy, conflict, region.

**Problem statement.** The island of Cyprus has a favorable geographical position in the Eastern Mediterranean. This position for centuries significantly influenced the political interests of the states that included it in their possessions. During the independence since 1960, Cyprus has gone through a difficult path of its development from unity to split along the ethno-confessional principle, which gives rise to some states, primarily Turkey and Greece, to exert great influence on the northern and southern parts of the island, respectively. Among the states that have shown an increased interest in Cyprus in recent years is France. Her political and economic interests are making significant adjustments to the balance of power not only in Cyprus, but throughout the Eastern Mediterranean,

leading to an aggravation of relations between the Fifth Republic and the EU as a whole with a growing Turkey.

### **Analysis of recent research and publications.**

In modern scientific literature, only certain historical aspects of Cypriot-French relations have been considered. Most of the authors of such publications were French scientists. Among them is P. Devedjian [1], but his publication was published back in 2008 and, a priori, it does not reflect the current state of the subject. Another French publicist and politician D. Billion, in an article of 2020, considered French-Cypriot relations only in the context of the escalating conflict between France and Turkey [2]. The geopolitics of Cyprus became the subject of research by the French author J.-F. Drevet. Its fourth part is devoted to relations between

Cyprus and Europe, including France [3]. In foreign historiography there are a number of publications devoted to the problems of Cyprus in relations between Turkey and the European Union. However, in them, as, for example, in the article by N. M. Mikheeva [4], French-Cypriot relations are not considered separately. Among the Turkish publications traditionally critical of the French policy in Cyprus, the article of M. Sofuoglu [5], who considers the French policy pursued in Cyprus, not only anti-Turkish, but also very aggressive at all, especially attracts attention. In Ukrainian science, there are still no special references to this issue, both in the format of scientific articles and in educational literature.

**The sources** for writing the article are the texts of bilateral agreements, resolutions of the UN Security Council, declarations of the first persons of France and Cyprus, official ministerial messages.

**The purpose** of the article is to analyze the history and current state of French-Cypriot relations, to study the whole range of French interests in Cyprus after gaining independence to the present. The study of the positive and negative experience of these bilateral relations will be important for the development of appropriate strategies for international interactions for other states that defend their right to territorial integrity, in particular, Ukraine.

**The statement of basic materials.** The French left their first noticeable mark on Cyprus as a result of the Third Crusade (1189-1192). Then the island, which previously belonged to the Byzantine Empire, was captured by the English king of French origin, Richard I the Lionheart. After that, he sold the island to the Order of the Templars, which consisted mainly of French knights, and the famous French crusader, former King of Jerusalem Guy de Lusignan bought it from the Templars in 1192 [6]. The Lusignan family ruled the Kingdom of Cyprus until 1267, their descendants for more than two centuries [1]. Old French was the most widely spoken language on the island until the annexation of the island in 1489 by the Republic of Venice. However, Venice was not able to resist the expansion of the Ottoman Turks for a long time, whose state was constantly expanding at that time.

In 1571-1878 Cyprus was owned by the Ottoman Empire, which led to a noticeable ethnic change on the island. It was then that a large and influential Turkish community appeared here, many of whose representatives remained here during the years of British rule. This dominion, in fact, began with the Anglo-Turkish Cyprus Convention, aimed against the winner of the Ottomans in the war of 1877-1878, which was Russia, and ended with the declaration of independence of Cyprus in 1960. However, these years were filled with the struggle of the Greek Cypriots for joining Greece (enosis), the creation of their radical representatives of the Union of Fighters for the Liberation of the Nation (EOKA). Supporters of EOKA in 1955 raised an uprising

and carried out armed attacks on representatives of the British administration and the army – we shouldn't forget that British interests for a very long time have been having a place on the island. Only after that, on August 16, 1960, Great Britain, Greece, Turkey and Cyprus concluded the Guarantee Agreement and the Treaty establishing the Republic of Cyprus [7]. At the legislative level, the proportions of the representation of ethnic communities in government bodies were clearly defined. At the same time, the quotas were uneven. There were more places reserved for the Turks than this people actually lived on the island (82% of the inhabitants were Greek Cypriots, 18% were Turkish Cypriots). This was the kind of time bomb that the British left behind in many their former colonial possessions.

France did not participate in the conclusion of the Guarantee Treaty and the Treaty establishing the Republic of Cyprus. We'll recall that among the countries-guarantors of the Cypriot independence were the UK, Greece, Turkey. That is why, after the overthrow of the legitimate president, Bishop Makarios, in 1974 and the outbreak of clashes between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, Turkey justified its invasion on the island with the text of these treaties. The island was divided into two parts: the Greek Cypriots retained control mainly over the southern and central part of Cyprus. In the north of the island, with the support of Turkey, the Turkish Cypriots formed their military-state structures. In 1983, they announced the creation of an independent state - the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

On the whole, France's policy towards the Cyprus problem was consistent. In 1974, France condemned the Turkish intervention in Cyprus, voted in the Security Council for Resolution 353, which states that the conflict led to «a serious threat to international peace and security», created «a highly explosive situation in the entire region of the Eastern Mediterranean» [8]. France also supported all resolutions on the presence of UN troops on the island, which stabilized the situation, and in 1983 voted for Resolution 541, which considered the proclamation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus invalid, since this proclamation was «incompatible with the 1960 Treaty establishing the Republic of Cyprus and the Treaty on guarantees of 1960» «and will contribute to the deterioration of the situation in Cyprus» [9].

France supported the decision of the European Parliament in 1996, which accused Turkey of state terrorism, and called for a return to resolving the Cyprus conflict in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions. Official Paris in every possible way supported the entry of Cyprus into the EU in 2004. We can agree with the opinion of the author of the publication about the problems of Cyprus in its relations with the European Union, N. M. Mikheeva, that since the

2000s to the present, a period has come when the EU uses the «problem of Cyprus» as a factor of pressure on Turkey [4]. France, which along with Germany is a recognized locomotive of Europe, should a priori play a leading role in this process.

We can also agree with the opinion of the French publicist and politician P. Devedjian that «the French-Turkish rapprochement during the presidency of Francois Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac somewhat overshadowed the Cypriot policy of France», and France's interest in Cyprus intensified after Nicolas Sarkozy came to power in 2007 [1]. Since this article by P. Devedjian was published in 2008 and 14 years have passed since that time, we have every reason to assert that bilateral French-Cypriot relations have risen to an all-time high level in the past five years (2017-2022), that are the years of the first presidential term of E. Macron. The volume of French investments has increased significantly and, in general, the French economic presence on the island has expanded, although according to official data from the website of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs of France for 2021, this country ranks eleventh in value of investment in Cyprus [10].

French publicist and politician, former official of the European rank J.-F. Drevet in 2021 made a pessimistic conclusion in the press: the EU is showing «powerlessness in Cyprus» and «it is not able to resist regional imperialism, especially Turkey» [3]. However, what official Paris has been doing in the last 5 years indicates the activity, if not of European, then at least of France's national policy in this region.

Indeed, in recent years, relations between France and Cyprus have become especially intense, especially in the military-political and energy spheres. At the same time, both of these areas are inextricably intertwined due to the discovery of large hydrocarbon reserves on the shelf of Cyprus and the interest of large oil and gas companies of the world. Against this background, in 2019-2020. in the Eastern Mediterranean, relations between France, Cyprus, Greece on the one hand, and Turkey on the other have become unprecedentedly tense. Turkey is actively exploring for gas off the coast of Cyprus [11]. These huge gas reserves in the Mediterranean Sea, including in the economic zone of Cyprus, make the Cyprus problem particularly acute [12].

France does not want to lag behind competitors. The economic component of French-Cypriot relations is mainly energy. The French oil and gas company TOTAL is actively developing in the exclusive economic zone of Cyprus.

Against this background, E. Macron, elected in 2017 for the first term as President of France, brought French-Cypriot relations to an all-time high level. On August 4, 2017, France and Cyprus signed an important defense cooperation agreement. It entered into force on August 1, 2020 and provided for the provision

of defense technologies to Cyprus, the joint training of military personnel and the conduct of exercises, including the ones to counter piracy and terrorism [11]. This agreement, in fact, is aimed at curbing Turkey's ambitions in the region. Moreover, the signing and personal meeting in Paris of the presidents of the two countries was followed by E. Macron's calls to the EU countries to increase pressure on Turkey in connection with its activity in the Eastern Mediterranean [13].

France has previously (until 2020) been one of the main suppliers of weapons for the National Guard of Cyprus, the countries participated in joint military exercises, and in the interests of bilateral cooperation, the modernization of the naval base in Mari began. In addition to the use of this base by the naval forces of France, Cyprus also provided its air base for combat French aircraft [14].

In his official «Statement on relations between France and Cyprus» made in Paris on July 23, 2020, during the stay of the President of Cyprus, N. Anastasiadis, E. Macron said: «I would like to declare once again the full solidarity of France with Cyprus, and also with Greece in the face of Turkey's violations of their sovereignty. Violation or threat to the maritime space of a member state of our Union is unacceptable» [15]. In this statement, E. Macron called the Eastern Mediterranean region «vital for our countries» in terms of both security and energy and criticized Turkey, which is trying to establish its control here [15]. The fact that France should play a key role in the Eastern Mediterranean was repeatedly said by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus in 2018-2022 Nikos Christodoulidis [13].

One of the evidence of close relations between France and Cyprus is the regular visits to the island by French warships, among which is the flagship of the French Navy, the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle [14]. He has visited Cyprus three times over the past four years, the last time he arrived in Limassol in February 2021 as part of Operation Clemenceau 21, during which French warships to fight terrorism, primarily the Islamic State (IS), patrolled the Mediterranean and Red Seas, as well as the Indian Ocean. E. Macron spoke frankly about the intensity of the French military presence in Cyprus. He admitted that in the first half of 2020 only, French warships had a stop more than 20 times in the ports of the island [15].

In February 2022, France and Cyprus held a joint air defense exercise codenamed «Talos 2022». During the exercise, French aircraft «The Rafale» simulated an attack on Cyprus. As it stated in a press release from the Cypriot Ministry of Defense, these exercises «send a very positive signal about the willingness of both countries for cooperation in order to strengthen even more the bilateral ties in the domain of security and defense» [16]. Let's assume that these French-Cypriot exercises were a kind of warning to the leadership of Turkey.

Such actions of France in Cyprus provoke criticism of official Ankara and Turkish mass media. Thus, according to the Turkish publicist M. Sofuoglu, France, with its military presence on the island, violates the Cyprus Treaty of 1960. According to him, Paris behaves aggressively, and «the unprecedented French intrusion into Cyprus complicates the politics of the disputed island since only Greece, Turkey and Britain could have a military presence there» [5].

We are forced to admit that the hydrocarbon irritant of the Eastern Mediterranean aggravates relations between Paris and Ankara even more than the official recognition by the French Parliament in 2001 of the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire or the recent phrase of E. Macron that R. Erdogan's foreign policy is a pan-Islamic anti-European project [2]. France actively opposes Turkey's full membership in the EU and will certainly continue this line in the future. That is why the correspondence discussions between the leaders of France and Turkey are so acute. Two years ago, in one of these discussions, R. Erdogan even advised E. Macron to «check out the psyche», after which the French ambassador was recalled from Ankara [17].

In turn, Turkey is stepping up its presence both in Cyprus and in the region as a whole, primarily in its former imperial possessions, despite the attempts of France, Greece and official Nicosia to counteract this [12]. Turkey makes it clear that in the diplomatic resolution of conflicts, including the Cypriot one, its role has not yet been properly assessed by France and other EU countries.

France regularly issues loud warnings against Turkey. However, an unbiased researcher will easily find a trace of oil and gas in most of the high-profile anti-Turkish statements of official Paris. For example, Turkey's drilling of wells on the Cyprus shelf in 2019 was immediately followed by meetings between the Foreign Ministers of France and Cyprus, as a result of which French Minister J.-Y. Le Drian said: «France urges the Turkish authorities to avoid engaging in a provocative act that is clearly counter to international law and which can only increase tensions in a region that is in need of stability. The Republic of Cyprus can count on France and the EU's solidarity and support» [18]. In the same spirit, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of France, Cyprus, Egypt and Greece spoke in their Final Communiqué in 2020 [29].

France's position regarding the non-recognition of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus by Paris remains traditional during the first presidential term of E. Macron. Thus, J.-I. Le Drian called R. Erdogan's visit to Northern Cyprus in 2021 a «provocation» that «undermines the restoration of trust necessary for negotiations to be urgently resumed with a view to a fair, lasting settlement of the Cyprus issue» [20]. At the

same time, official Paris strongly supports the meetings of representatives of the leaders of the two Cypriot communities with the UN Secretary General, as was the case in Berlin on November 25, 2019. France stands for the continuation of negotiations and for a diplomatic solution to the Cyprus problem. For example, the Quai d'Orsay circulated a statement that France fully supports the decision of the UN Secretary General to hold an informal meeting in the 5 + 1 format on April 27-29, 2021 in Geneva «to create the necessary conditions for resuming formal negotiations to resolve the Cyprus issue» [21].

On April 24, 2022, the current President of France, E. Macron, won the second round of the presidential elections and remained in the Elysee Palace for a second term. There is every reason to believe that previous European course, and hence the development of relations with Cyprus, will remain unchanged.

**Conclusions.** Thus, in the dialogue between Paris and Nicosia, a whole range of problems of regional security and intercivilizational confrontation is focused in the light of the unresolved Cyprus problem. During the time after the proclamation of the independence of Cyprus in 1960, this country experienced an ethnic conflict, which led to the actual division of the island into two state entities and the active intervention of foreign states, including Greece, Turkey and France. Since the outbreak of the Cypriot ethnic conflict, France has consistently advocated for the territorial integrity of Cyprus. The position of France largely contributed to the fact that in 2004 Cyprus became a full member of the EU. In 2017–2022 during the presidency of E. Macron, French-Cypriot relations reached a qualitatively new level. Active bilateral cooperation, on the one hand, is a continuation of the traditional foreign policy line of official Paris on the non-recognition of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. And, on the other hand, it is the vigorous interaction between France and Cyprus in the military-political sphere. So it can be considered their response to Turkey's attempts to aggravate the situation in the region due to the struggle states through the discovery of large hydrocarbon reserves on the Cyprus shelf. The economic interests of France in Cyprus are mainly related to the development of gas fields, and this stimulates both countries to even greater political rapprochement. The 2017 French-Cypriot military cooperation agreement entered into force in 2020 and provides for the provision of defense technologies to Cyprus, joint military training and exercises. This agreement, in fact, is aimed at curbing Turkey's ambitions in the region, which inevitably leads to an aggravation of French-Turkish relations. The military-political and economic activity of France in Cyprus can significantly affect the balance of power throughout the Eastern Mediterranean.

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## КІПРСЬКО-ФРАНЦУЗЬКІ ВІДНОСИНИ: ІСТОРІЯ І СУЧАСНИЙ СТАН

Після здобуття у 1960 р. незалежності Кіпр розпочав налагодження відносин з іншими країнами. Проте етнічний конфлікт між греками-кіпріотами та турками-кіпріотами призвів у 1974 році до фактичного поділу острова на два державних утворення та до різних форм втручання іноземних держав, серед яких – Греція, Туреччина, Франція. Метою статті є аналіз історії та сучасного стану кіпрсько-французьких відносин, дослідження всього комплексу інтересів Франції на Кіпрі після здобуття ним незалежності до сучасності. Методи, що застосовувалися для досягнення цілей дослідження: історико-порівняльний аналіз, систематизація та узагальнення, ретроспективний метод. У статті наголошується, що від початку Кіпрського етнічного конфлікту Франція послідовно виступала за територіальну цілісність Кіпру та засуджувала створення Турецької республіки Північного Кіпру. У наступні роки Франція сприяла тому, що Кіпр у 2004 році став членом ЄС. Але найінтенсивнішими двосторонні відносини стали під час президентства Е. Макрона у 2017–2022 роках. Економічні інтереси Франції на Кіпрі пов'язані насамперед із відкриттям на кіпрському шельфі великих запасів газу. За них у регіоні Східного Середземномор'я спалахнула боротьба кількох держав, серед яких найактивнішою є Туреччина. Ця боротьба стимулює налагодження Францією та Кіпром військової співпраці. Відповідний двосторонній Договір 2017 року, який набув чинності у 2020 році, спрямований на стримування Туреччини. Цей договір, французько-кіпрські військові навчання та зусилля Франції щодо вирішення Кіпрського конфлікту загострюють французько-турецькі відносини та політичну ситуацію в регіоні. Аналіз, викладений у статті, вивчення досвіду цих двосторонніх відносин матиме значення для вироблення відповідних стратегій міжнародних взаємодій для інших пострадянських держав, зокрема України.

**Ключові слова:** Кіпр, Франція, міжнародні відносини, зовнішня політика, дипломатія, конфлікт, регіон.

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