Секция «Внешняя политика России в условиях нового мирового порядка»

The Evolution of relations between the Russian Federation and France: privileged alliance or implicit rivals

Научный руководитель – Зеленская Лариса Лактемировна

Енгибарян Диана Оганесовна

Студент (магистр)

Московский государственный институт международных отношений, Международный институт управления, Москва, Россия

E-mail: dianayengibaryan@gmail.com

Bilateral relations between Russia and France have considerably evolved since the collapse of the USSR and up to the presidency of Francois Holland. The relations between these two countries have always been privileged despite some periods of decline of the activity level due to the complex international situation. However, the very essence of the notion "privileged partnership" changed after the collapse of the USSR and the end of the Cold War. In the 21st century, Russia and France are building a new basis for relations, which are based on some commonality in the field of history, culture, economic and political interests.

In this report the presenter shares the findings of her research as a graduate student. The presenter poses and answers a number of essential questions: the essence of the bilateral relations, the current state of relations, the insight of divergence of views of the countries, the impact of changing international reality, the priorities of the parties, global challenges on the relations as well as the prospects for development of the relations.

Methodological basis of research and preparation of this work involves the fundamental research of Russian and foreign scientists in the field of international relations, in particular foreign policies of Russia and France.

The analysis of bilateral relations proves that the partnership between Russia and France is equally important for both countries. For Russia, France is one of the main partners from the EU countries, however, the relationship between these two countries has always been different from Russia's relations with any other EU country. Undoubtedly, both countries are extremely interested in cooperation and, despite some differences in the solution of international conflicts, they are strengthening the contact base and enhancing the number of cooperation projects. Previously, French policy within the framework of the EU and NATO was built on an independent diplomatic course, which allowed France and Russia to build mutually beneficial relations, but in recent years France has increasingly become a country with a pro-Atlantic orientation, and in light of this position, Franco-Russian relations are deteriorating. France remains faithful to the principles of the EU and NATO and the policy of Hollande clearly has a pro-Atlantic orientation#_ftn1.

After V. Putin came to power, Russia aspired to play the role of one of the world centres of power, the role of a country with global responsibility. Nowadays Russia's foreign policy is becoming more stringent#_ftn2.

Strained relations with the West are detrimental to bilateral contacts between Russia and France. A huge layer of disagreements difficult to eliminate is increasing every year. Crises in the Middle East, the Ukrainian crisis, the global economic crisis - all these events complicate bilateral relations.

The Libyan and Syrian crises had a negative impact on Russian-French relations because the approaches towards crises are completely different. The so-called "Humanitarian intervention" of France in Libya made Russia and France opposing sides, and the Syrian crisis only deepened the differences in the approaches. There has been no full-scale interaction in combating terrorism,

because there are two coalitions: one, led by the USA including France, and the second is a coalition of Russia, Syria and Iran.

Close attention is given to the analysis of the Ukrainian crisis, which has become one of the most vulnerable points of bilateral relations since Moscow and Paris, working in the "Normandy format" (Russia, France, Germany and Ukraine), could not agree on a final settlement of the conflict.

The report highlights the main problems of bilateral relations. Nowadays the French political elite and society are not interested in Russia, because they do not see Russia as a worthy and strong partner. Furthermore, the policy that Putin is now conducting is being criticized by the French mass media, affecting the mindset of the French#_ftn3. Another problem is that some statements made by any representative of the government, which in any way refer to "sensitive" topics for Europeans, for instance, the degree of freedom of speech are perceived negatively and considered as an encroachment on European values.

The research reveals that economic relations between two countries have been exacerbated due to the imposition of sanctions by the EU. The main reason for the introduction of sanctions was the accession of the Crimea to Russia, and the condition for their withdrawal is the implementation of the Minsk agreements, but Russia is not a party to the conflict, which puts Russia in a very uncomfortable position.

Analyzing the relationship of Hollande and Putin, we can conclude that they did not have a relationship of mutual trust, such as, between Putin and Chirac or Putin and Sarkozy#_ftn4, which helped to overcome contradictions between Russia and France. Mutual interest is still being built on the pragmatic goals of the countries, but we cannot speak of a "civilizational community" of the two states. Nevertheless, despite all the disagreements, France and Russia continue to conduct a political dialogue.

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