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Multilateralism as a tool of French foreign policy

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Abstract
The aim of this article is to analyse the role of multilateralism as one of the general lines of French foreign policy in face of the growing erosion of multilateral diplomacy, growing geopolitical tensions and the fragmentation of the world order. From France's perspective, the idea of multilateral cooperation is not only an effective model for managing global challenges, but also an instrument for preserving the attributes of great power status in the future world order. Multilateralism is not viewed as an abstract normative preference, but as a structured instrument of French foreign policy, rooted in the Gaullist legacy and implemented by President Emmanuel Macron's administration. It has become a diplomatic tool for building France's influence and leadership legitimacy through active participation in international structures and creating an image of a country capable of being a leader in key global issues. At the same time, this is an expression of a deeper political philosophy, which assumes that only in a multipolar world France can maintain its position as a significant actor in a post-hegemonic system.
Keywords: France, foreign policy, multilateralism, "balancing power", Emmanuel Macron, European strategic autonomy

Multilateralizm jako instrument polityki zagranicznej Francji

Streszczenie
Celem artykułu jest zbadanie roli multilateralizmu jako jednej z głównych osi polityki zagranicznej Francji w obliczu narastającej erozji dyplomacji wielostronnej, napięć geopolitycznych oraz fragmentaryzacji porządku światowego. Z perspektywy Francji, idea współpracy wielostronnej jest nie tylko skutecznym modelem zarządzania globalnymi wyzwaniami, ale także instrumentem zachowania atrybutów mocarstwowości w przyszłym ładzie światowym. Multilateralizm nie jest traktowany jako abstrakcyjna preferencja normatywna, lecz jako ustrukturyzowane narzędzie tożsamości

francuskiej polityki zagranicznej, zakorzenione w dziedzictwie gaullistowskim i wdrażane przez administrację prezydenta Emmanuela Macrona. Stało się to narzędziem dyplomatycznym budowania wpływów i legitymizacji przywódczej Francji, poprzez aktywne uczestnictwo w strukturach międzynarodowych i tworzenie wizerunku państwa zdolnego do przewodzenia w kluczowych kwestiach globalnych. Jednocześnie, multilateralizm jest wyrazem głębszej filozofii politycznej, zakładającej, że tylko w wielobiegunowym świecie Francja może zachować pozycję istotnego aktora w systemie post-hegemonicznym.
Słowa kluczowe: Francja, polityka zagraniczna, multilateralizm, „mocarstwo równowagi", Emmanuel Macron, europejska autonomia strategiczna

France advocated strengthening international institutions as a manifestation of multipolarity in international relations, while using multilateral forums to pursue its interests and promote its vision of a world based on a balance of power. The concept of multipolarity – since the time of Charles de Gaulle's presidency (1959-1969) – enhanced France's role in international relations, and emphasised its independence from the American superpower (Parzymies 2017: p. 376). French authorities recognised that only in a multipolar world France can maintain its status, thus, multilateralism based on permanent membership of the UN Security Council and strategic autonomy (an independent nuclear arsenal) became one of the main pillars of its foreign policy. This understanding was deeply rooted in Gaullist heritage, based on which France sought to pursue a superpower policy despite the relative loss of many attributes of superpower status.

"The French school of thought on multilateralism must be seen as part of a broader view of international order, which is still strongly shaped by the concept of the balance of power and the notion of France's exceptional status" (Krause 2004: p. 50). The ambition to exert international influence is a part of French foreign policy, but France's weakness in relation to the United States, and also to China, forces it to rely on multilateral institutions. France continues to act as the leading diplomatic power in Europe and sees itself as the main actor in balancing the rivalry between world powers. The French see multilateralism as an instrument for dealing with international problems, and also as a tool for constraining hyperpowers (fr. *hyperpuissance*) such as the United States and China (Krause 2004: p. 50). In practice, this involves promoting European "strategic autonomy" as a way of counterbalancing American power and partnering with China and Russia in the new, emerging world order (Irondelle, Mérand 2010: p. 30).

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the bipolar system created completely new global geopolitical conditions for French diplomacy. Faced with dynamic changes in the international order, French diplomacy had to redefine its goals, methods and tools. Multilateralism became a guiding principle of French foreign policy. This was expressed by President Jacques Chirac, who stated in 1995 that "the goal of French foreign policy is to contribute to the gradual restoration of a multipolar world order. The new 'poles' will be created by emerging powers such as China and India, but also by regional groupings such as Mercosur, ASEAN and the League of Arab States" (Chirac 1995). In these circumstances, the French authorities decided that multilateralism could not only play

a regulatory role *vis-à-vis* the superpowers, but also become a "power multiplier" for countries with global ambitions (Barbé 2009: p. 197–198). The promotion of a multipolar world reduced France to the role of the main opponent of American power, gathering around it all those who rejected American unilateralism (Frank 2000). While for Americans, multilateralism meant a process of global decision-making based on the "diffusion of US power through a network of hegemonic relations with other states", the French model was based on the assumption of defending one's own interests against the hegemony of superpowers through multilateral cooperation (Homolar 2012: p. 121).

After a period of „French neoconservatism" during the presidencies of N. Sarkozy and F. Hollande, E. Macron's foreign policy assumptions were based on a return to the „Gaulle-Mitterrand" concept (emphasising the role of France's strategic independence in international relations, willingness to engage in dialogue with all partners, attaching great importance to relations with Africa and the Middle East, and striving to strengthen its leading role in European cooperation with Germany).

The aim of the research, and methodology

The aim of this research is to examine the role of multilateralism as a key tool for enhancing the legitimacy of French foreign policy based on the concept of multipolarity, which provides the structural framework for its implementation. The first part refers to the role that France assigns to multilateral cooperation in its foreign policy, explaining that multilateralism is a tool of France's strategy of balance at the global and regional levels, ensuring a position relevant to the country's ambitions. The second part discusses Macron's efforts to strengthen multilateral ties as an expression of France's ambition to play an international leadership role. It then refers to the President Trump administration's policy *America First,* and the Chinese-Russian attempt to establish an alternative world order, presenting multilateralism from a French perspective as a way to counter these trends and maintain balance in an increasingly polarised world.

The purpose of this study is significant, because it provides insight into France's strategy with regard to geopolitical rivalry between major powers. The analysis is intended to answer the following **research questions:**

1) How does multilateralism support France's concept of being a "balancing power" in international politics?
2) How has France, under the leadership of Emmanuel Macron, actively promoted multilateralism?
3) Is multilateralism an instrument of French diplomacy that enables attempts to balance the influence of the major powers (the United States, China, Russia)?

In relation to the above-mentioned questions, **two research hypotheses** were formulated: the first is based on the assumption that the promotion of multilateralism ensures that France maintains its status as a "balancing power" and a counterweight to the dominance of powers such as the United States, China and Russia [H1]. France consistently promotes multilateralism as a tool for strengthening its international posi-

tion, which is based on the historical legacy of Gaullism, i.e. France's independence and balance in the international system, and a multipolar world is a natural environment for its implementation. The second hypothesis assumes that France is striving for the European Union – which is supposed to express France's vision of the world and its interests – to be one of the "poles" of the future international order, strongly promoting the concept of European "strategic autonomy" [H2], in which it sees a multiplier of its power.

The adopted **research method** is based on the assumptions of neorealism and constructivism, which offer complementary perspectives on France's motivations. Neorealism is a perspective for the theoretical explanation of France's aspirations to maintain its position as a "balancing power" ensuring the strengthening of its position in the global balance of power, while constructivism allows to understand the importance of idea, identity and narrative that shape France's self-perception as a mediator and architect of cooperation, and a promoter of universal values. Constructivism also demonstrates that "strategic autonomy" is not only a political project, but also a part of the symbolic restoration of France's role as the leader of the European order.

The research in this area focuses on highlighting the historical determinants of French foreign policy as a promoter of multipolarity (e.g. Parzymies 2017). Other authors examine the importance of multilateralism for French diplomacy (Barbé 2009; Krause 2004; Irondelle, Mérand 2010; Smith 2018) and in the context of transatlantic relations (Cronberg 2017; De Montbrial, David 2019; Homolar 2012; Gillies, Narine 2020; Sullivan De Estrada 2023) or in a regional sense (Recchia 2020; Tardy 2020; Erforth 2020; Chafer et al. 2020). However, they did not analyse a broader geostrategic context. This article contributes to the academic literature by exploring how France, through the promotion of multilateralism, seeks to protect its interests and secure a relevant place in the future balance of power.

Multilateralism as a tool of France's strategy of balance in shaping the world order

Multilateralism is one of the key components of French foreign policy, enabling the pursuit of French political and economic interests, in particular:

1) involvement in international structures such as the UN, NATO, the EU and the G7 in order to actively shape the new order;
2) playing the role of a "balancing actor" in the global power game;
3) at the regional level, promoting France's interests as the leader of the Western world, including the concept of the EU's "strategic autonomy";
4) in Africa, as a way of maintaining influence and increasing its own legitimacy (by engaging the EU and European countries), and in the Middle East as a way of maintaining its position as an attractive partner that does not take any sides.

Shaping the world order. France is actively involved in shaping the world order based on the values of multilateralism. It includes the value of membership in the UN Security

Council and the need to strengthen „key institutions" such as the WTO and WHO. According to President Macron, multilateralism, understood as a system based on the principle of compliance with common rules, is a key for reducing the risk of rivalry between powers and a tool for strengthening the global order based on the principles of international law. France's active participation in structures such as the UN, NATO, the EU and the G7 enables it not only to pursue its own strategic interests, but also to promote universal values such as democracy, peace and human rights. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, France has a significant instrument of influence on decisions concerning international security, which confirms its ambition to be a global actor.

Also, France perceives the increasingly aggressive policies of authoritarian (Russia, China) and theocratic (Iran) regional powers seeking to destroy the "old" order as a threat to multilateralism. Macron contrasted multilateralism with the growing rivalry between "several clubs" of states with conflicting goals, which are trying to advance their geopolitical interests, as well as economic and industrial standards that are beneficial to them (China, Russia, North Korea, Türkiye). French president has repeatedly called for dialogue between different powers to enable joint decision-making and consensus-building on key issues for global stability (climate change, migration, regional conflicts, internet regulation and health protection).

"Balancing power" in the multilateral system. Based on Gaullist roots, Macron's policy creates a role for France – legitimised by its status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and one of the nuclear powers – as a "balancing force" (fr. *puissance d'équilibre*) in the world order. During the annual ambassadors' meeting on 27 August 2019, President E. Macron argued that the international system is in turmoil, and that geopolitical and strategic changes are resulting in "the end of Western hegemony in the world" and the emergence of new powers (Macron 2019). He mentioned China, Russia and India first. Macron outlined five priority objectives, on which France should focus its actions, including playing the role of a "balancing power". He called for a strong international multilateral approach to avoid China creating an alternative multilateral framework. He also pointed out that France's presence and firm stance in multilateral forums and the UN forum, increased engagement and an innovative approach to multilateral forums in crisis (WTO) are crucial**.**

France has all the credentials it needs to play the role of a "balancing power". It is an economic, industrial, military and diplomatic power. According to Macron, France is not a power that aligns its position with others (fr. *puissance alignée*), but must have its own strategy, and its strength lies in its ability to engage in dialogue with all partners (Macron 2019). In fact, France is trying to balance the influence of other powers (the USA, China, Russia) and play the role of mediator in international conflicts. During his speech to ambassadors on 1 September 2022, Macron referred to France's role as a "balancing power" in the division of the world caused by the situation in Ukraine (Macron 2022). The use of the slogan about France as a "balancing power" is also intended to encourage countries outside Europe to strengthen relations with Paris and find common ground for political agreement. The French president called for the renewal of geographical partnerships in

Africa, the Indo-Pacific region, the Maghreb and the Mediterranean basin, and with the Gulf countries, India, Brazil and South Africa (Macron 2023a).

Creating an image of France as a "balancing power" is reflected in Macron's statements questioning the need for a decisive EU response to the Taiwan Strait Crisis, which were poorly received by France's allies, but met with much greater understanding from its important strategic and economic partners, such as India (Maślanka 2023). On the other hand, France's criticism of U.S. policy in the Indo-Pacific region in the name of the "balance of power" concept has a negative influence on its relations with the United States, but creates a convergence of objectives with Japan, Australia and other countries in the region.

France as a promoter of the EU's "strategic autonomy". France perceives itself as a European power with global ambitions, pursuing its interests through the EU. The pursuit of making the EU a "third pole" in world politics is to increase France's influence. Unlike its political opponents, who emphasise national sovereignty, E. Macron wants the entire EU to act as a "balancing power" in its external actions: „Our strategies for the Arctic, Indo-Pacific, Latin America and with Africa show that Europe is not simply part of the West, but a global continent which is considering its universality and the major balances of the planet, which is rejecting continental confrontation and wants to build balanced partnerships" (Macron 2024). These aspirations are reflected in the concept of European "strategic autonomy" (which is, in fact, an expression of French political ambitions, as well as economic and arms industry interests). In the opinion of French planners, in the emerging Sino-American order, increasing Europe's "strategic autonomy" is a prerequisite for its future position in the new world order. Macron emphasises that, in view of the ongoing restructuring of the international order, taking into account the policies of China and the US, a strong and independent Europe is needed, capable of consistently pursuing its agenda in a multilateral balance of power**.**

Multilateralism in African and Middle Eastern politics. Since the 1990s, multilateralism has become a tool for legitimising French military operations in Africa (Recchia 2020: p. 529–530) and a means of burden sharing, such as Operation *Barkhane* in the Sahel, which is the largest operation of French forces outside the country with over 4,000 soldiers (Tardy 2020: p. 536, 547). By involving the EU in France's African security policy, which has repeatedly intervened in Africa to defend its interests under the banner of regional stabilisation (Erforth 2020: p. 569; Chafer et al. 2020: p. 493–498), France is drawing on its historical ties to the Maghreb region and its broader relations with Francophone Africa and a part of the Middle East. In the Levant, France has been trying for decades to play the role of a "balancing power", which in practice means rejecting participation in bloc logic and promoting multilateralism (Première Ministre: p. 15). Macron was the author of numerous initiatives related to the crises in Libya, Syria, Iran and Lebanon. France has not supported either Sunni or Shiite hegemony in the region, and dialogue with all parties. The mediating role of a "connector" has become a tradition of French Middle East policy, which France is trying to maintain despite the weakening of its geopolitical position in the region.

Strengthening multilateral relations as an expression of France's ambition for international „leadership"

Since the beginning of his presidency in 2017, Emmanuel Macron has strongly promoted strengthening France's role in global structures and enhancing international cooperation, especially within the UN system. Macron's policy was an attempt to give France a greater role in the multilateral international system as a "leading power" that shapes international order and is ready to take on greater responsibility, as the French president expressed during his speech at the UN General Assembly session on 19 September 2017 (Macron 2017). In December 2017, at the request of the French president, the *One Planet Summit* was held under the slogan: *Make our planet great again.* Its participants (representatives of countries from around the world, representatives of financial sector, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations) criticised President Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate agreement.

During his speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos (24 October 2018), Macron defended a multilateral approach, in opposition to Trump's unilateralism. A month later, as part of the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I (11 November 2018), France organised the *Paris Peace Forum*, which was an attempt to strengthen France's global role and an expression of Macron's ambition to promote multilateralism. The organisers intended the forum to become an annual international conference devoted to global governance in key areas (peace and security, environment, development, economy, digitalisation and new technologies).

An important global initiative was the *Alliance for Multilateralism* proposed by France and Germany in April 2019. This initiative was supported by countries which, like the initiators, expressed concern about the United States' turning away from multilateralism and the defence of democratic values. The initiative, which brought together more than 70 countries (including Canada, Japan and South Korea), aimed to define priority areas on the multilateral agenda that required joint action in the field of communication and public diplomacy based on common rules and values. France's goal was to develop a collective approach to global issues (climate and security, international humanitarian law, education, disarmament, digital security and democracy) at the stage of their definition and prevention methods.

On 24–27 August 2019, during the G7 summit chaired by France, President Macron, in the spirit of strong multilateralism, invited representatives of non-G7 countries to Biarritz, including the "four great democracies" (South Africa, Chile, Australia and India), leaders of African countries (Burkina Faso, Egypt, Senegal, Rwanda), representatives of international organisations (including the UN, World Bank, WTO, OECD, IMF), and representatives of non-governmental organisations and civil society. In response to the protectionist policy pursued by the United States under Trump's presidency, France defended the principles of the WTO and emphasised the need to maintain an international trading system based on rules rather than bilateral relations. Expressing the need to reform the WTO after 25 years of its existence, French government called for a response to the "Chinese problem"

(state subsidies to industry) and the "American problem" (including the tightening of trade policy by raising tariffs on several key groups of goods, including steel and aluminium, agricultural products and the aviation industry).

On 7 February 2020, President Macron gave a speech on France's defence and deterrence strategy. He emphasised that competition between superpowers (particularly the United States and China) is changing the global power balance and that the driving force behind this change is "the multilateralism crisis and the regression of law" (Macron 2020). The response to these threats is to promote multilateral cooperation, because international relations should be governed by law. Macron also called for creating of strategic partnerships (in particular, a coalition to counter threats to its interests in the Sahel).

Another important initiative of the French president was a joint article with the leaders of Germany, the EU, the UN and Senegal as representative of Africa and the Global South, published in February 2021 in *Le Monde* and *Project Syndicate*, calling for the reconstruction of international order based on multilateralism and the rule of law (Le Monde 2021; Élysée 2021). This matter has become a permanent and deeply rooted direction of President Macron's foreign policy. During the GLOBSEC summit in Bratislava held on 31 May 2023, the French president called for credible, multilateral security guarantees for Ukraine, seeing support for multilateralism in Europe's "strategic autonomy" (Macron 2023b).

On 22–23 June 2023, at the initiative of the French President, an international summit was held in Paris on common challenges facing the planet, attended by over 300 high-level representatives, including heads of state and government, international organisations, as well as representatives of civil society and the private sector (Ministère… 2023a). During the summit, the *Pact for Prosperity, People and the Planet* (4P) was signed, bringing together 72 countries and intended to become a roadmap for a more lawful, sustainable and solidarity-based global order, particularly in the context of the fight against climate change and financial, health and social crises undertaken within international forums such as the UN, COP and G20 (Ministère… 2023b).

Another opportunity to present the contribution of French strategic thinking to the global debate on key security and defence issues was the *Paris Defence and Strategy Forum* held in March 2025, to which Macron invited the chiefs of staff of 34 NATO and EU countries (and, among others, the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, Australia and Turkey, but without the participation of the United States). In this context, not to unconditionally follow US policy and to emphasise the role of the EU as an independent entity and a "balancing power" in a multipolar world was expressed in an official statement from the Presidential Council in April 2025, which declared France's support – together with its European partners – for multilateral cooperation within the framework of international partnerships (Élysée 2025).

President Macron also actively pursued a policy of multilateral dialogue in the Indo-Pacific, emphasising the importance of cooperation with regional partners and promotion of independence from the United States and China. At one of the most important Asian forums dedicated to promoting multilateralism in security matters in Singapore (30 May 2025), he called for the establishment of a new alliance between the EU and

Asian countries, based on common norms and principles. He emphasised that Asia and Europe, faced with the aspirations of superpowers (mainly China and Russia) to create spheres of influence ("spheres of coercion"), they have a common interest in preventing the collapse of a balanced world order (Le Monde 2025).

France and the challenges of Trump's unilateralism and the Chinese-Russian attempt to create an alternative order

During his first term, President Donald Trump challenged the multilateral order, and his rejection of the liberal and institutional view of world politics led to the United States withdrawing from the *2015 Paris Agreement on climate changes*, a campaign to marginalise the International Criminal Court, withdrawal from the World Health Organisation and UNESCO, and attempts to paralyse the World Trade Organisation (Gillies, Narine 2020: p. 269). Trump also terminated the multilateral agreement with Iran on its nuclear programme (*Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action* – JCPoA), which was a European (French) success story of "effective multilateralism" (Cronberg 2017: p. 243–244). His policy had a central assumption that the United States could freely abandon multilateral commitments if they did not meet American needs. This message was primarily directed at the domestic audience, which perceived the United States as a victim of globalisation and, consequently, of the multilateral system (Smith 2018: p. 544). Trump prioritised national sovereignty, identifying the multilateral world as a "straitjacket" imposing unnecessary restrictions on American power (de Montbrial, David 2019: p. 172, 202; Sullivan de Estrada 2023: p. 141–142).

In "response" to Donald Trump's policy *America First*, President Macron has consistently promoted international cooperation as the foundation for solving global challenges such as climate change, security and social inequality. During his first visit to the United States (23–25 April 2018), in his speech to Congress, he distanced from the main objectives of Trump's policy, criticising isolationism and nationalism, and advocated the maintenance of multilateralism, pointing to the key role of the United States in establishing a post-war world order based on multilateral relations. Macron believed that American policy weakens multilateralism and may lead to the emergence of alternative models that are more hegemonic and do not respect common values (Macron 2018). He stated that China and Russia are seeking to revise the current international order and that their actions, both in Europe (Ukraine) and Asia (Taiwan), are aimed at diverting U.S. resources and weakening Western dominance. At the same time, Macron argued that Europe should follow neither the United States nor China (including the issue of Taiwan), but instead build a "third pole" of international politics, which was consistent with the logic of seeking a balance and an autonomous space between the main poles of the international system. In turn, France's sharp reaction to AUKUS (2021) confirmed its readiness to defend its own strategic autonomy. Flexible responding to various crises in the role of a "balancing power" expressed France's ambition to influence the shaping of a new international order, whilst maintaining freedom of strategic manoeuvre and consistently supporting multilateralism as the basis for international cooperation.

By defending multilateralism, Macron appears to be on a collision course with Donald Trump, for whom a unilateral approach to foreign policy had become a means of protecting the old order and an instrument for maintaining dominance. Trump's return to power (2025) and the US administration's renewed rejection of the "multilateral first" policy reactivated by President Biden[1], caused new tensions over tariffs on European goods, which would directly affect the French economy. Macron recalled that France had repeatedly expressed the need to defend WTO principles and preserve an international trading system based on rules rather than tariffs (the USA) or subsidy policies (China).

On the other hand, for French foreign policy, the increasing ambitions of China and Russia pose a serious challenge, both from strategic and ideologic points of view. Moscow and Beijing, forming a common "front" in the UN Security Council, perceive multilateralism as part of competition between world powers and reject a system based on respect for human rights as a Western construct, unsuited to the political conditions in Russia and China. These countries are trying to use multilateralism as part of their efforts to change the world order to one more in line with their interests and values. For authoritarian powers such as Russia and China, multilateralism is a tool for pushing through the concept of spheres of influence and a new division of the world. However, while China is trying to control the UN system and impose its own "global" solutions with their selective approach to international law, values and standards, Russia makes no secret of its ambitions based on the use of force.

The withdrawal and bilateralisation of U.S. relations with European countries (favouring selected EU countries such as Hungary, Italy and Poland) and the growing aspirations of China and Russia to shape the future world order (an alternative "axis of turmoil" created by Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping and Kim Jong-un) pose serious strategic challenges for France by weakening its position as a "balancing power" and pressure to choose between strengthening its alliance with the United States and promoting European "strategic autonomy".

Conclusions

Multilateralism is one of the strategic foundations of French foreign policy. This form of international relations is not only a pragmatic choice, but also a part of French foreign policy, which aim is to counteract the rise of global power rivalry and maintain France's position as a major power. In other words, it is an instrument, through which France seeks to increase its influence and reflects the ambition that this country would like to play in international relations. In a multilateral environment, France is becoming a global player, capable of responding quickly and adapting to the changing conditions of global competition. France is also aware of its limited capacity to act independently on the international stage. Thus, the promotion of multilateralism through various forms of international cooperation at both global (UN, WTO, G7) and regional (EU) levels is a tool

[1] The United States' return to the Paris Agreement on climate change; the agreement on Iran's nuclear programme – JCPOA; closer cooperation within the UN system.

of creating an image of France's uniqueness. It does not unconditionally submit to any global power (e.g. the US or China), but acts as a mediator and stabiliser in international relations. This means a clear interest in supporting multilateral institutions, as this allows France, as a medium-sized power, to better consolidate its national preferences[2] and enhance the ability to project influence. The aim of French diplomacy is to influence these formats in such a way that they take France's interests into account as much as possible in their agenda and internalise them as the interests of the international community.

The multilateral international order is a form of cooperation that gives France a global voice. This is a reminder of its former power, expressing Paris's global ambitions, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, where France uses its historical and cultural ties to counterbalance the influence of other global powers. The concept of a "balancing power" is to guarantee French diplomacy a place in the new world order *in statu nascendi* [H1]. To this end, France seeks to maintain dialogue with all major powers and strengthen the EU's role as an independent actor in international politics. Unwilling to submit to bloc divisions, Paris acts as a stabiliser between them. It also promotes European "strategic autonomy" (especially after 2022), which serves as a stimulus for French power [H2]. France is "transferring" its power ambitions to Europe, because it is aware that its importance in the world will largely depend on its ability to influence developments in Europe. Consolidating the EU's international position serves to recreate a multipolar world and provides an alternative to American dominance and the growing ambitions of China and Russia.

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