

**PRESIDENT E. MACRON'S "EIGHTEENTH BRUMAIRE"  
IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS: THE SYMBOLISM OF THE PAST  
IN THE REALITIES OF THE PRESENT**

**Volodimir Grubov<sup>1</sup>**

**Igor Khraban<sup>2</sup>**

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**Abstract.** “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte” [“Brummer”] by K. Marx is a work not only about the class struggle in France at the turn of the XVIII-XIX centuries, it is also a work about “symbolic action”. Its content [symbolic action] J. P. Riquelme (French researcher) saw in the inability of the class struggle to materialize into social justice as desired by the majority. The roots of this problem should be sought in the “diseases of the spirit” of humanity (K. Noika). In a person, they [“diseases of the spirit”] are present a priori due to differences in the understanding of the world, opportunities for self-realization, aspirations and interests. That is, we are talking about the peculiarities of the nature of a separate existence in its entire gamut which correlates and competes with other existence. In systems of a more complex order, such as the state, politics, international relations, such diseases manifest themselves through the aspirations of national elites, political forces and financial and industrial groups, which shape national interests through democratic mechanisms of power. Great historical personalities and their cultural and political heritage also play a significant role in this process. The history and present of France is a vivid example of how it happened in the past and is happening today. politics, international relations, such diseases manifest themselves through the aspirations of national elites, political forces and financial and industrial groups which shape national interests through democratic mechanisms of

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<sup>1</sup> Doctor of Political Sciences, Professor of the Chair of National Security, Public Management and Administration, State University "Zhytomyr Polytechnic", Ukraine  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3048-3280>

<sup>2</sup> Doctor of Political Sciences, Professor, Professor of the Chair of National Security, Public Management and Administration, State University "Zhytomyr Polytechnic", Ukraine  
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3319-8538>

power. Great historical personalities and their cultural and political heritage also play a significant role in this process. The history and present of France is a vivid example of how it happened in the past and is happening today.

Since the time of President De Gaulle, the first head of the Fifth Republic, the foreign policy priorities of France have been determined by the head of state and a narrow circle of his advisers. This tradition is supported by all subsequent owners of the Elysee Palace. To preserve and multiply the conquests of De Gaulle means to follow the path of the “greatness of France”, the content of which was determined by the time and its challenges. In the persons of the presidents of the 21st century, it [the path of “greatness” of France] made itself felt in the figures of J. Chirac, N. Sarkozy, F. Hollande and E. Macron, who manifested themselves both in the areas of traditional interests of France – the Middle East and Africa, as well as in the post-Soviet space, where, starting from the 90s of the last century, the processes of formation of new state entities took place. The new space of France’s external interests was defined by economic interests, military conflicts in the Caucasus and the war between Ukraine and Russia. Since the time of President De Gaulle, the first head of the Fifth Republic, the foreign policy priorities of France have been determined by the head of state and a narrow circle of his advisers. This tradition is supported by all subsequent owners of the Elysee Palace. To preserve and multiply the conquests of De Gaulle means to follow the path of the “greatness of France”, the content of which was determined by the time and its challenges. In the persons of the presidents of the 21st century, it [the path of “greatness” of France] made itself felt in the figures of J. Chirac, N. Sarkozy, F. Hollande and E. Macron, who manifested themselves both in the areas of traditional interests of France – the Middle East and Africa, as well as in the post-Soviet space, where, starting from the 90s of the last century, the processes of formation of new state entities took place. The new space of France’s external interests was defined by economic interests, military conflicts in the Caucasus and the war between Ukraine and Russia.

In the foreign policy of France the Caucasus began to gain weight starting with J. Chirac, when the “captains” of French business came to the countries of the region. The merit of N. Sarkozy is the “Sarkozy-Medvedev” peace plan which stopped the Russian-Georgian conflict in 2008. Against

the background of the Caucasian affairs of his predecessors, the policy of President E. Macron, like France as a whole, is in a state of crisis and the greatest criticism. Since 2020 – the time of the Armenian-Azerbaijani war over Karabakh, the relations between France and Azerbaijan have been in a state of “cold war” and there is a risk of breaking diplomatic relations. In addition, President E. Macron’s attempt to put pressure on Baku with the resources of the EU and the USA provoked the rejection of such intervention by Azerbaijan’s allies and partners. The Caucasian trio – Turkey, Russia, Iran, as well as the Organization of Turkic states and the Non-Aligned Movement – expressed their support for Baku.

**The purpose.** The purpose of the study is to reveal the ontological foundations of the unfolding of the “great game” in the South Caucasus around the prospects of a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan following the 2020 war, in which the players of the world front stage, already involved in the conflict, are guided by their interests. Turning to the events of the time of the “brumeriade” in France and the policy of De Gaulle’s greatness made it possible to consider the current policy of France in the South Caucasus in a systematic way. This made it possible to clarify the semantics and modalities of the most controversial events, facts, strategies and slogans of the past and present. The three sections of the study are organically interconnected and reflect the logic of revealing the content of the problem.

**Methodology.** The research was carried out on the basis of the use of comparative, dialectical, historical and systemic methods. This has made it possible to transform the phenomenon of the “brumeriade” and its shitty social and political slogans into a coherent picture of the struggle for interests between large social groups [and states] and to reveal the mechanism of this struggle through the disclosure of the existing diseases of the spirit [K. Noika] of humanity, but already at the national level interests.

**Results.** The mechanism and tools of the strategy of “social security” during the “brumeriade” and the continuation of this line of state policy in the strategy of “greatness” of France by De Gaulle have been revealed. Attention has been paid to the specifics of the implementation of this strategy by subsequent French presidents in the new century. It has been proven that starting from 2020 – the time of the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Karabakh, France’s activity in the region began to be perceived as a

challenge to the interests of Baku and the traditional players of the region which are Turkey, Russia, and Iran.

**Practical implications.** The results of the study can be used in the block of humanitarian disciplines that consider issues of international politics and regional security.

**Value/originality.** The scientific novelty of the research lies in the disclosure of the ontological foundations of the phenomenon of “brummer/brumera” and the related socio-political transformations in France that took place at the beginning of the 19th century. The role of Napoleon Bonaparte in the formation in the consciousness of French society of the phenomenon of “greatness” of France as a special moral and psychological sense of responsibility by the citizen for the fate of the state and everyone’s place in its achievements is revealed. The ideal of such a person was a soldier in the army of the emperor’s great conquests. His moral imperative was “a parcel of land and a marshal’s baton”. In the parallels of time, views on the phenomenon of the “greatness” of France, Napoleon Bonaparte, and presidents De Gaulle and I. Macron are revealed.

**Conclusions.** In French society, the era of the “brumeriade” is positioned with the birth of the “third estate” and the establishment of a fairer order in the sphere of economic relations between the main social groups of the population. The expression that “since that time it has become possible to eat” states the new approach of the French authorities to the problem of social justice as a central issue of “public security”. However, the government’s steps “toward during the “brumeriade” were frank to the extent that they “do not limit the rights of others and the state of public security” and the harmony of individual freedoms. It is symbolic that these slogans and modalities are consonant with the present rules of life in the French society. However, one part of it accepts them, and the other rejects them.

Since the time of Napoleon Bonaparte France has been in the grip of the shadow of the “greatness” of the Roman Empire. Filling this term with a national spirit started with President De Gaulle and continues in the activities of all subsequent presidents. For this purpose, the list of tools and the geography of its use is expanding. Since the 1990s the South Caucasus has become a new region of France’s “greatness” policy. However, the conflict of interests of Paris, Yerevan and Baku and its allies as a result of

the Karabakh war and the terms of the peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan became a “stumbling block” not only for peace in the region, but also a trigger for a new war in the Caucasus.

### 1. Introduction

France’s active development of the South Caucasus began in the 90s of the last century, and Azerbaijan definitely became the center of gravity of its interests. Baku’s place at the forefront of world geopolitics was ensured by oil and gas resources, the volumes of which, by right, can compete with the countries of the Persian Gulf. Considering Azerbaijan in the circle of world oil centers, the author of “The Great Chessboard” Z. Brzezinski not only stated this factor of attention of big politics to the country – the owner of these riches, but also made a forecast of the fate of Baku due to the successes/failures of socio-economic and political transformations in the conditions of the Great Liberal revolution (F. Fukuyama’s expression) of the 90s. That is, it was about the familiar slogan of great geopolitics “who will control this region?”. If we take into account the existing projects of transport corridors of these resources to Europe with the prospect of joining them with the resources of the countries of Central Asia, the picture of colossal benefits for project participants becomes even more expressive. And here the aspirations of France become clear.

But starting from 2020 – the time of the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Karabakh, the logic of the political line of Paris in the region demonstrates that “everything is the opposite”, that is, fueling the conflict and slowing down the peace treaty process between the parties. All subsequent events surrounding the peace treaty generally brought the situation to a standstill and showed the parties’ absolute rejection of the “realities on the ground” [Azerbaijan’s military victory].

Turning to the times of the “brumeriade” of France and the symbolism in the events of that time which [symbolism] J.P. Riquelme saw in the “inability of the class struggle to materialize into social justice” gives us the tools to consider the Caucasian history of France in the light of “the inability of Paris to play its game on the South Caucasus” due to at least two reasons. The first is that Azerbaijan itself rejects the policy of Paris in the region. The second is that Baku is supported by the Caucasian historical troika – Turkey, Russia, Iran, as well as the Organization of Turkic states

and the Non-Aligned Movement, where Azerbaijan is the country – head of the organization. In addition, the policy of “greatness” of France in the Caucasus has showed its internal contradiction, where the main values of liberal democracy, such as freedom and democracy, has ended up in the circle of empty rhetoric and speculations of French politicians.

Considering the specifics of the declared topic it should be noted that there are no targeted and integral studies that would highlight the ontological aspects of the contradictions of the French national policy and the mechanisms of its implementation. The existing discourse is purely fragmentary [in terms of issues] and local-regional in nature. An example of such approaches are editorial and author articles that are regularly published under the auspices of Reuters, Euronews, RFI, Newsfull, Freedom, etc. Articles by individual authors that highlight current problems and events are also fragmentary in content. These are the materials of A. Dudo, B. Wezel, V. Legheido, R. Pasternak, S. Toure, O. Ivshina, A. Azizov and other authors.

## **2. “Eighteenth Brumaire”: from public safety to symbolic action**

The concept of “Brummer”, as well as the date “18th Brumaire” (November 9 according to the Gregorian calendar) of 1799 are associated with the day of the rebellion in France carried out by a group of individuals, as a result of which the Directory and the Parliament of France (Council of Five Hundred and Council elders) were removed from power, and the leadership of the country was taken over by the Consulate headed by the first consul Napoleon Bonaparte. Subsequently, namely from May 1804, he became the emperor and brought to France at that time the “laurels of greatness and glory” of the Roman Empire. In the scientific space, the loudness of the events of this time and their far-reaching historical consequences for France and Europe, on the one hand, turned the concept of “Brummer” into a distinctive and recognizable marker of the history of France at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century and, on the other hand, manifested the birth of a rather specific [forceful] method of removing from power the forces that were in a state of permanent enmity and struggle of interests for a long time, which inevitably led the country to disaster. In both the first and second cases of the French “brumeriade, when its main effective personalities were Napoleon Bonaparte (1799) and his

nephew Napoleon Louis (1851), the main force for stabilizing the country was the army, and the most interested social groups in strong power – parcel peasantry [the basis of the army], financial, commercial and industrial capital [1].

In these historical events the “third estate” also declared itself – a large class of workers who lived by their labor and aspired to a better and more prosperous life. The essence of the new class was quite accurately expressed by Abbot Emanuel Siyesa in the pamphlet “What is the Third Estate?”. “1. What is the third estate? – Everything. 2. What has it been like so far in political terms? – Nothing. 3. What does it require? – To become something” [2].

Within the French internal and external political horizon at that time this meant that in the conditions of the struggle of the interests of large social groups and the growth of social excitement, the “right tilt” became an absolutely necessary step, i.e., the salvation of society “from itself”, when “the circle narrows its leaders and when narrower interests prevail over more general interests” [1]. So, in the historical context of this great period of France, we are talking about a strong leader, strong power and the gradual “politicization/restriction” of the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen” (*Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen*) of the 1789 revolution and the Constitution of 1848 [citizen’s rights and freedoms]. Under such conditions, according to Marx, this meant that the unlimited freedom of the individual, the press, unions, assemblies, teaching, conscience, etc., became legitimate only to the extent that they are not limited by the “rights of others and the state of social security” as a recognized norm, or laws that should mediate this harmony of individual freedoms [1, p. 10].

The “crisis” of rights and freedoms in the first case (revolution of 1789) and in the second (revolution of 1848) was exacerbated by negative factors of the foreign economic climate [economic crisis of 1787-1789; the financial and trade crisis of 1850-1851] and the domestic political situation in France. They manifested themselves “in the panic of the French bourgeois with his brain confused by commerce which is constantly in the circle of rumors about state rebellions and universal suffrage, the struggle between parliament and the executive power, disputes between fronting groups, etc”. [1, p. 64]. Such a polyphony of panicked moods, opinions, warnings,

etc. served as an excellent basis for the rise to power of a “strong leader”. And as Marx writes, “Bonaparte (Louis) understood this uproar” [1, p. 64] and skillfully took advantage of the situation in the country. The same can be said about Napoleon Bonaparte.

From that time on social security was so arranged that in the future the main organic laws [of rights and liberties] were created by the friends of order, and all these liberties were regulated in such a way that the bourgeoisie could enjoy them without encountering any opposition from other classes who claim to the same rights. Social security has become synonymous with “the security of the bourgeoisie as stated by the constitution”. As the classic writes, “each paragraph of the constitution reflects in itself its own contradiction, its own upper and lower chambers: freedom – in the general phrase, denial of freedom – in the upper [1, p. 11]. Such was the constitution of 1848.

Researcher of K. Marx’s work J. P. Riquelme in his work “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Karl Marx as a Symbolic Action” states: “It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that “Brummer” is not a report on the class struggle at all, but on the contrary, it is a report on the inability of the class struggle to materialize” [3]. We should agree with this message of Riquelme, because it is confirmed by the entire subsequent history of France, including our present. From the point of view of the expectations of social justice in the slogans of the revolution of 1789 [equality, fraternity, freedom] in relation to the expectations and demands of the broad masses, this is quite true, just as it is also true that justice has not very good “roots”. Starting with the ancient Greeks it was associated with social status [slave/master; subjugation/dominion] of a human citizen, and since the time of the French “brumeriade” this maxim has been transformed into the modern social norm of liberal democracy – “everyone is not everyone”. In practice, this has come to mean that “happiness is impossible for all and sundry”, and overcoming the risks on the way to it is possible under the conditions of compliance with social security. But at the same time, it should be remembered that the slogan “social security”, as mentioned above, is subject to the unchanging rules of the game, where “all these freedoms” are regulated in favor of the ruling class, and most importantly they satisfy the interests of political, trade, financial and industrial groups.



Thus, the history and politics of the state [France] asserting freedoms only have given a chance to a specific individual of society to achieve their goals. Today, this term [public security] goes hand in hand with the term “way of life” which has individual, group and national dimensions and is considered in the national security system of almost all EU countries. This is characteristic of modern France [4], where its socio-political sound is correlated with the size of financial and material wealth, education, social position, a person’s belonging to a certain circle of the elite or stratum of the population. Therefore, the slogans of the Great French Revolution of 1789 turned into a permanent goal-myth, a phantom of the historical and life horizon which was not really destined to happen in real life.

### **3. Phantoms of the “brumeriade” and the national “greatness” of France in the diseases of the Logos by K. Noika**

In the development of J.P. Riquelme’s thought [Brummer as a symbolic action] it should be noted that in the history of France “Brummer” has laid another brick in the building of symbols of the French state. It is about the phenomenon of the “greatness” of France which was born during the Napoleonic era and the aspirations of modern France based on the national-historical narratives of that time for moral and political leadership in the conduct of European and world affairs. And here, the figure of Napoleon Bonaparte, who is the most prominent and at the same time controversial figure in the pantheon of great Frenchmen, is a remarkable resource for the politics of national dignity of the modern Fifth Republic.

In 2021, outside of the alleged “scandalous official” and the informational attention of major publications, France honored the memory of a great citizen for the first time in many recent years in the person of the country’s president. On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the death [May 5, 1821] of Napoleon Bonaparte President of the country E. Macron and his wife visited Napoleon’s burial place in Paris, thus testifying to the recognition of this man’s merits to France [5]. With this step President E. Macron has taken the side of that part of the French community that is grateful to Napoleon for saving the country during the “turmoil and upheaval” of the 1789 revolution, the assertion of France as a great military power in Europe at the beginning of the 19th century and the fruits of

social and political reforms which France still lives. These are the national currency (franc), the National Bank of France, the Civil Code, colonial territories, etc. [5].

In contrast, representatives of the left wing of the country's political spectrum criticize Napoleon for the return of slavery, sexism (disrespect for women) and brutality during the 1799 rebellion. However, the French community is grateful to Napoleon for the fact that when he came to power the privileges of the nobility and clergy were eliminated, land reform was carried out, and most importantly, the foundations of a society were created in which, as the French say, they "eat". That is, it is about the level and conditions of life of the numerous "third estate" that became "something" and experienced the taste of life. In the 60s and 70s of the 20th century this share of the population formed the so-called "middle class" – the basis of the French society.

Experts and individual politicians suggest analyzing the social and scientific polyphony surrounding Napoleon's possessions not from the standpoints of emotions and political preferences, but from the standpoints of the French statehood and conquests. In this context of the discourse the statement of the press secretary of President E. Macron is symptomatic: "Napoleon is an important figure in our history, who should be looked at from different angles and blindfolded" [5]. As for the French president himself, his commemoration of Napoleon shows his personal respect for the outstanding politician of his time. On his conviction in the era of great upheavals in France and in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries Napoleon managed to declare the place of Paris in European politics and expand the spatial and geographical dimension of national interests and French influence.

Despite all the nuances of criticism of the figure of Napoleon in certain layers of the French society the general spectrum of opinion is dominated by the recognition of the great merits of the emperor to the nation. The betrayal of the "top" and the tragedy of his political assertion on the path of life has not done in any way shake the scale of Napoleon's achievements which manifest to the political class of France, which should be the leader of the nation. Even such a political figure of the recent French history as General De Gaulle, who has done many great things for the "greatness" of France, remains in the "shadow" of the figure of Napoleon.

However, President E. Macron still aspires to be like General De Gaulle, who viewed European affairs as an endless “tangle of competing interests” and an eternal struggle of “each for his own”. The leitmotif of the activities of both politicians is the conviction that “in order to maintain the unity of citizens in a democratic society, they should demonstrate the implementation of grandiose plans” [6] which are the materialization of the ideas of “greatness”. For De Gaulle, they were the creation of the “Common Market” (1959), the creation of the French “strike forces” (nuclear weapons – 1960) and the formation of a European army in opposition to NATO. As historians state in these matters de Gaulle consistently acted “as an outspoken opponent of European supra-nationalism” and throughout his life remained a consistent opponent of US hegemony in European affairs through NATO leadership [6].

As for President E. Macron, he is a supporter of strengthening the Paris-Berlin tandem in the conduct of European affairs and increasing the role of France in Europe, from time to time he insists on the need to create a European army [Europe should conduct an independent military policy] and seeks to declare the “greatness” of France in settlement of various conflicts in the international arena through the mechanisms of the UN Security Council. The traditional areas of interest of Paris are the countries of North and Central Africa and the Middle East. The political and diplomatic decade of today also shows the growing interest of Paris in the South Caucasus, where the sympathies of the latter, thanks to the influence of the Armenian diaspora in France, are on the side of Armenia.

On the agenda, the first two issues are rather related to technical issues – approximation of the political positions of the countries of the “European concert”. According to French politicians, the third group of issues is the most difficult. Today we are talking about the conflicts in the Middle East between Hamas (Palestine) and Israel, in the South Caucasus between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and the failures of France in the countries of Central Africa. The first conflict began in October 2023 and continues to this day despite the position of the UN and the world community regarding its termination. The second one took place in 2020, but it is impossible to achieve peace between the parties due to the position of the parties and the “interest” of influential external players. France is also included in their circle. How contradictory and inconsistent the policy of Paris is in these

matters is evidenced by the public criticism by the country's diplomatic corps of the foreign and political affairs of the Elysee Palace during the presidency of E. Macron. This was shown by the "démarche of diplomats" in 2023 on the pages of influential French publications. According to one of the diplomats quoted by *Le Figaro*, it is about "the loss of authority and influence of France in the international arena, as well as the deterioration of the country's image". The diplomat attributed the responsibility for these changes to President E. Macron and his team which is responsible for foreign policy and ignores the opinions of professional diplomats [7].

However, despite the frank foreign policy failures of recent years Paris strives to remain among the leaders of world politics thanks to the "Francophonie" project, which was announced in the early 70s of the last century. The basis of the new Paris strategy has been chosen to be "soft power" – language, education, science, cultural exchanges, etc., supported by financial, political and informational instruments. At the same time for the French society, the "Francophonie" project served as visual indicators of the world ratings of the French politics and French society's assessment of the nation's leaders' activities both in the conduct of European and world affairs, and in the effective management of the "colonial heritage" [8; 9].

Since the creation of the International Organization of the Francophonie (fr. *Organization Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF/MOF)*), the toolbox of the Francophonie has been significantly expanded. Its list has included strengthening security and preventing conflicts; developing democratic institutions and protecting human rights; ensuring sustainable development in globalization, the expansion of economic and technical cooperation, etc. Subsequently, the force of such a tilt in the politics of Paris has been felt by all the countries of the "colonial heritage" of France. In accordance with the new course, Paris immediately has offered the colonial countries a series of cooperation agreements that has covered the political, economic, military and cultural spheres. Moreover, the cooperation has implied the logic of "hard obligations", namely, the withdrawal of a participating country from one sphere has meant the automatic termination of relations with Paris in others. For the colonial territories this has meant internal destabilization and decline.

The picture of effective management of the "colonial heritage" during the time of De Gaulle was strengthened by the new constitution of France,

where foreign policy issues became the prerogative of president. Since that time documents on foreign policy issues have been prepared by a narrow circle of advisers and specialists of the colonial sector. This practice of relations between Paris and the cranes of the colonial heritage remains to this day. Even in the world of rapid changes brought by the 21st century France at any cost strives to preserve De Gaulle's political testament – to protect remote territories where the interests of the republic are present and resist the attempts of superpowers to gain a foothold in them. First of all we are talking about the USA, Russia and China. From now the danger of the new reality has begun to be positioned as a constant struggle for “power” and the ability to create a new political reality. In the introductory speech of President E. Macron to the “Strategic Review” of 2017 it is said that “the threat of major upheavals remains real”, and the existing peace order “yields to the law of the stronger” [10].

In political practice the content of this slogan [yields to the law of the stronger], on the one hand, means the loss of control over the colonial empire, and on the other hand, that the course of Paris to protect the vestiges of classical colonialism, where the life of the people of the controlled territories looks like an endless game of the will of foreigners and dangers the living conditions of the local population are reaching their limits. The fact that the overseas territories of France have “strategic and economic significance, because they contain reserves of mineral and energy resources that are necessary for the country's economy” [10], and it is understood not only in Paris. This is also understood by the inhabitants of dependent territories, who seek to use national resources for the benefit of their own development. This applies to African countries and such overseas possessions of France as the Antilles, Caledonia, Polynesia and other territories. In France their total number is 13. It should be noted here that the demands of the peoples of these countries and territories are consistently supported by the Non-Aligned Movement which clearly irritates Paris and spoils its image in the eyes of the world community as a fighter for justice and human rights and freedoms. This reaction is especially negative for Paris, when the issues of the consequences of its colonial policy become issues of discussion at the UN.

The peculiarity of France is that starting with Napoleon Bonaparte the majority of the French society and its political and economic elite consider

the ideas of freedom, justice, equality and security from the standpoint of the key slogan of liberal democracy – “*veati possidentes*” (blessed are those who own property; blessed are who has). This is the existing existence of the French society, the historical steps of its history, moral guidelines and its nature which was discussed by G. Hegel in “*Philosophy of Law*” [11, p. 315]. And in the implementation of the social attitude regarding personal enrichment through “ownership”, the colonial heritage of France has a significant place. Moreover, as history shows its fruits are used by a limited circle of the French society today.

In the history of the “*brumeriade*” of France one should not overlook something special – it is the dissatisfaction of the French themselves with the embodiment of the ideals of democratic freedoms as certain social aspirations. In our present this was especially clearly manifested in 2024 during the elections to the French and European parliaments, when it became finally clear that market democracy does not guarantee anyone and anything, and the words of French and European politicians are only a “sweet captivity” for the mass consciousness. The picture of the “social ills” of France and the EU is periodically eloquently demonstrated by annual European statistics on poverty and unemployment.

As for France, according to 2020 statistics poverty was 8% [12] which is considered a fairly acceptable indicator compared to other EU countries. But in 2022, its level already reached 14% [13]. The main reason for this shameful phenomenon was the price of energy carriers, the bankruptcy of small and medium-sized companies, the reduction of people employed in production by gender and qualification, unemployment among young people. According to statistics, every fifth child under the age of 18 lives in a poor family which is 21% of the total number of children [13].

So, we are dealing with a case where the value matrix as a certain worldview model cannot objectively act as a universal and unifying principle due to the fact that each side of the socio-political process sees the world not through the eyes of the dialogue party, but based on its own interests, evaluations and understanding. For the French society which shares market morality, such a maxim is quite inherent.

This national and world reality was formulated by the representative of the school of English liberalism, F. Hayek, as follows: “the difficulty is

not so much that modern political terms are known to be ambiguous, and not even that for different groups the same term means something more opposite, the fact that the same concepts sometimes unite people, who actually believe in opposite and incompatible ideals is even more serious” [14, p. 391]. Conventionally speaking, we are observing the phenomenon of value disorientation of the mass consciousness of the French [and European] community, when it reacts to key concepts, as the most sensual irritants of the human psychics which, as an existing being, remain an unwritten page of history. In the era of liberty [quoted by I. Wallernstein] they are freedom, democracy and justice.

The question arises why this happened and what are the reasons that lead to the existence of constant phantoms of the French society which have not been destined to come true since the time of the “brumeriade” ? One of the ways to diagnose this ancestral disease of mankind [the French too] is proposed by the Romanian philosopher K. Noika in the work “Six Diseases of the Modern Spirit” (1978) [15]. He derives the vicissitudes of the relationship of will, freedom and self-awareness from the “sick Logos” and connects it with three ontological situations catholia, todetia and choretia which are related to the formation of the human “I” [16, p. 116-117]. For our research, choretia, which K. Noika defines as a certain “certainty”, is of greatest interest. It is about a situation when things happened in principle, but even in this state they do not exist in reality. According to Noika, “this is a process of blurring the certainties that things and people set for themselves. This is the destruction of certainties which is capable of intensifying, as well as inhibiting their natural movement until complete exhaustion” [16, p. 117]. So, we are talking about the ontological and epistemological aspect of the activity of the “sick Logos” regarding the search for the universal in the individual represented by a person. Such features of the circulation of certain ideas in the mind in the form of blurred concepts as guidelines for rational human behavior give reason to consider choretia as a disease of the human spirit. This disease is associated with the peculiarities of the functioning of the irrational sphere of man, where socio-political ideas, teachings and slogans as certain social constructions are positioned in isolation from the spiritual-cultural and worldview foundations of large and small social groups that pursue distinctive values and life orientations.

It is impossible not to agree with K. Noika that within the limits of the non-immanence of the ideal material diseases of the human spirit were accompanied by the drama of theoretical reflections in those circumstances when such occurred. In addition, in his opinion “the majority of humanity is a victim of irrationalism and stupid egoism” [16, p. 156], and for them freedom became the ether of enchantment which as many people as possible aspired to. It became the goal of history and the criterion of civilizational development, as G. Hegel showed in “Philosophy of History”, but at the same time it became a specific cultural phenomenon of the state of development of society, as he showed in “Philosophy of Law” [11]. Such an ontological disorientation of consciousness reflects the formation of the main ideals of European democracy as existing existence through the “collective fascination” to which large social groups are subjected. Unrealized “collective fascination” fascinates and keeps human consciousness within certain axiological boundaries and dictates a certain image of thoughts and life. As Noika claims, “such a fascination can fall on whole peoples, especially when they go through turns of history that have elements of order, but do not achieve such order and continue to remain chaotic” [16, p. 125].

It is worth noting that Noika has connected the diseases of the human spirit with historical methods of production, where freedom and necessity become iconic moments of human existence. Therefore, freedom as the goal of history can acquire its subjectivity if it reaches a certain basis that makes it a social reality. If for K. Marx, this basis should be the elimination of the contradiction between labor and capital, as he explained in the “Critique of Political Economy”, then in liberal democracy, on the contrary, sanctifying private property through the slogan “*veati possidentes*” (blessed are those who own property; blessed, who has) we observe a situation where this basis is dependent on the selfish aspirations of the person himself and his right to moral choice. Therefore, the individual “I” due to natural selfishness, being in a state of choice between freedom and necessity (as an organic part of freedom), will always stop its choice on individual freedom, rejecting its social sound. This reality, on the one hand, makes all the slogans of the liberal ideology amorphous forms of being which are not destined to come true, and on the other hand, requires a critical look at some slogans of European and French democracy, depriving them of the aura of charm.



### **4. The South Caucasus as a resource of France’s “greatness” strategy?**

Paradoxically, the country with which France had the closest political and economic ties in the Caucasus until 2020 and with which it broke them so easily was Azerbaijan. In an interview with the French publication Report, the Ambassador of Azerbaijan to France Rahman Mustafayev gave the following figures of this cooperation. During 1995-2019 French companies invested 2.2 billion dollars in the economy of Azerbaijan. USA, of which 2 billion US dollars were sent to the oil sector. In addition, French companies participate in 42 projects with a total volume of 22.1 billion US dollars. It is indicative that such well-known companies as Total, Alstom, Suez, Thales, Danone, Airbus, Bouygues, Iveco, Sanofi, Rothschild and others take an active part in economic activity. According to the diplomat, in the South Caucasus Azerbaijan is a priority partner for France in economic relations. Azerbaijan accounts for 60 % of all economic ties in the region [17].

The political and military ties of the parties were also at a high level. According to the former representative of the diplomatic corps of Azerbaijan, Arif Mamedov, a whole “France-Azerbaijan” friendship group worked in the French Parliament, the Heydar Aliyev Center was opened in Paris, and the first lady of the country, Mehriban Aliyeva, was awarded the Legion of Honor by the French President N. Sarkozy in 2010. The diplomat claims that before the beginning of the Karabakh Patriotic War (2020), France was one of the main supplier countries and certain types of military weapons. For example, we are talking about satellites as the central element of the “drone war” which played one of the key roles in Azerbaijan’s victory over Armenia.

It was also about France’s aspiration to become a co-chairman of the Minsk Group for the settlement of the conflict in Karabakh as a condition for it to maintain “neutrality” in the conflict between the parties. But at that time, Ilkham Aliyev left this proposal to Paris “out of consideration” which according to many experts influenced the behavior of the French leadership in the war of 2020 [18].

Judging by the Riga U-turn in France’s policy in the South Caucasus which occurred in 2020 as a result of the “44-day war” between Azerbaijan and Armenia for control of Karabakh, this was exactly the case. But such a step presented Paris with a very difficult task – to combine the existing

preferences of economic, political and military ties with Baku with the risks of intervention in the most painful issue for Baku and its political mythology regarding the “special status of “Artsakh” in Karabakh. It is clear that Azerbaijan immediately rejected such a position of France. The fact that Paris crossed the dangerous “RUBICON” familiar to all politicians in the relations between the parties became the rhetoric of Baku and its subsequent actions in the international information space regarding the evaluation of the anti-Azerbaijani policy of the owner of the Elysee Palace.

E. Macron’s desire to become the main arbiter in the conflicts of the parties with an undisguised attachment to one of them [Armenia] turned the strategy of Paris into a “permanent game” of phantoms and counter-arguments of “everyone and everything” which ignores “realities on the ground”. And they are the military victory of Azerbaijan in the long conflict, full control over the historical territory and the recognition of this fact by the regional players – Turkey, Russia and Iran. The final point in the conflict was the anti-terrorist operation on September 19, 2023 in Nagorno-Karabakh which the armed forces of Azerbaijan conducted with the aim of destroying the remnants of separatist groups. The hostilities lasted a little less than a day and ended with the full restoration of constitutional order throughout the region. This decisive action by Baku was a response to Yerevan’s failure to implement the declaration of the parties dated November 10, 2020 which provided for the withdrawal of all armed forces of Armenia from Karabakh, as well as Yerevan’s agreement to open communication between the main part of Azerbaijan and Nakhchivan in the Zangezur corridor. And if Baku solved the first task independently by using military force, then the second was proposed to be carried out peacefully.

Its content should be transport corridors. We are talking about cars and railways – roads, oil and gas pipelines. They should connect the Asian Five, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Turkey with the EU countries. As experts state, the benefit of this project is “absolute and long-term” for all its participants. However, in the "3+2" format only Armenia demonstrates a policy of “wobble and look back at France” which makes it impossible to implement in the near future for political reasons. On this occasion, the President of Azerbaijan I. Aliyev stated the following: “Our neighbors share our opinion regarding the future development of the region and regarding

the implementation of integration projects... Armenia expresses solidarity only in words. In such resistance Armenia will lose a historical chance as in the 90s, but we will still carry out everything we plan” [19].

In reconciling the relations between Yerevan and Baku on a new basis [“reality on the ground”], the big Caucasian three also carried out a number of political measures in a peaceful manner. Today we are talking about the demilitarization of the region, demining, demarcation of borders, the return of the population to the cities of permanent residence, the work of international monitoring groups, etc. Neighboring countries also support such initiatives. It is about Georgia and Kazakhstan. They have good relations with both sides of the conflict and are ready to provide platforms for negotiations. However, as eloquently demonstrated by the real politics of the parties to the Caucasian peace-war process, a shaky peace has a rather old enemy – it is distrust of one’s “vis-à-vis” and the interests of the circle of so-called interested parties. It is based on quite simple things – “words and deeds”.

For Baku which today declared itself among the players of “big politics” in the position of France in the South Caucasus, there are several existing issues that are of a fundamental nature for it. Judging that France has still superficially understood the “Caucasian character and code of honor”, and the issues of “phrases and content” in its policy are dissolved in the familiar rhetoric about the “democracy, rights and freedoms” of the peoples, the political leadership of Azerbaijan began to evaluate the policy of Paris with “content above phrase” positions. Baku rejects France’s position of acting as a “teacher” and a great “civilizer” in Caucasian affairs.

So, the first issue of concern for Baku is the excessive military activity of Paris in the region. It is about pumping up the military power of Armenia and providing Yerevan with a lot of military and technical assistance. In February 2024, for the first time in the history of relations between France and Armenia, the Minister of Defense of France arrived in Yerevan accompanied by a large group of representatives of the French military industry. According to previous agreements, Armenia should receive light armored vehicles, radar stations, night vision devices, anti-aircraft missile systems, small arms and other types of weapons. Agreements were also reached on the training of military specialists of the armed forces of Armenia in France [20]. Baku is also concerned that NATO countries

have joined military activity in the region. The position of India, which is ready to provide certain weapons systems that it produces using French technologies, became a challenge for Baku. It is about artillery systems. It is clear that in France's "tangle of peace and war rhetoric" all this is positioned as an attempt to restrain the aggressive policy of Azerbaijan and protect the population of Armenia. Here, Paris appeals to the well-known statement of the President of Azerbaijan I. Aliyev about the Zangezur Corridor and the possibility of Baku "cutting the corridor" in Nakhchivan with its own hands which it made during the war. Subsequently, the president refused such rhetoric and offered a peaceful solution to the problem.

The second issue is Baku's concern about the position of the USA and the EU regarding the assessment of the situation in the South Caucasus. The fact that during the end of the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia it gradually "degrades" is evidenced by the statements of the President of Azerbaijan and other officials. At a meeting with German business representatives in February 2024 he stated that "the republic has no intentions and no plans to attack Armenia" and called on the leadership of the United States and France to "accept the realities of today as a final fact and start actively working with Azerbaijan". At the same time he emphasized "that Azerbaijan is a leading country in the South Caucasus" [21]. This diplomatic tone of the president's address, on the one hand, conveyed a certain negativity of the Azerbaijani leadership's assessment of the results of the meeting between the US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and the head of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen with the Prime Minister of Armenia N. Pashinyan which took place in April 2024, and on the second, reminded to the US leadership about the weight of Azerbaijan in the "oil storehouse of the world" and their own interests in the region. From the perspective of the big game and the subtleties of geopolitics Z. Brzezinskii convincingly proved this in the famous "Great Chessboard" in the mid-90s of the last century.

According to the president's assessment the "political short-sightedness" regarding giving the US and EU relations with Armenia a "new agenda" is aimed "against Azerbaijan and cooperation in the South Caucasus. It pursues the goal of creating dividing lines of spheres of influence and isolation of Azerbaijan" [22].

The critical phase of interstate relations between France and Azerbaijan reached in April 2024, when France recalled its ambassador from Azerbaijan for “consultations” [20]. The demarche of Paris, most likely, has a political and demonstrative nature. Judging by everything, the Elysee Palace decided to take a “pause” in relations with Baku and cool the “degree of relations”. And it is quite high today: on the one hand, it is French weapons in Armenia, anti-Azerbaijani resolutions in the French Senate and accusations of Baku of preparing a new war against Armenia, and on the other, accusations of France for the escalation of the military situation in the Caucasus, criticism of the shameful legacy of French colonialism in colonial countries and territories (policy of ethnocide) and Azerbaijan’s mobilization of the Non-Aligned Movement (120 member countries and 17 observer countries) against Paris, where Baku is the presiding country of this influential international association for the second time [23].

Therefore, the modern dimension of the “brumeriade” of President E. Macron in the South Caucasus repeats in time the already familiar struggle of “interests” of social groups [classes] of the past times of French history, where the rhetoric of “intricacy” of politicians’ political statements hides the real goals and interests. The crisis of French policy in Africa and the prospect of running out of raw materials – uranium, gold, oil, gas and other minerals – prompts Paris to act in the South Caucasus as it is doing now. Aggressively – if possible and restrained – if efforts with allies (USA, EU) can be more effective.

Transferring the main messages of the “brumeriade” of France to the present makes it possible to draw several important conclusions.

### 5. Conclusions

1. “Brummer” by K. Marx gives the key to understanding the picture of “happiness and prosperous life” of the modern France. As history shows its [happiness] level depended and depends not only on economic indicators, social policy, peace and crises in the economy, but also on the political activity of the main social groups [classes] in obtaining their share of socio-economic benefits. The eternity of this activity [struggle] is laid down by human nature – to live better and more prosperously. However, the entire era of classical capitalism and the realities of the modern economic model of the age of liberal democracy convincingly prove one simple thing – “happiness

for all and sundry” is impossible. The picture of internal peace (including in France) in the countries of the golden billion is managed to be preserved due to the robbery of the “third world” countries in relations with which “price scissors” (raw materials/finished products), control of production chains, loans, control of technologies are used etc. The consequences of this world reality are constantly being discussed at the UN platforms.

2. France’s foreign policy ambitions in the Caucasus are dictated not only by the political ambitions of the President E. Macron, to which for the sake of France’s “greatness” he is ready to demonstrate “spectacular” steps”, but also by Paris’s efforts to gain a foothold in the region, where France is not a very desirable partner. The oil and gas prospects of this area have long been materialized in the policy of the presence of companies and capital from the USA and Great Britain [24] and the influence of these countries on Baku. Armenia is the only country that welcomes France in the South Caucasus in the hope of a quick advance to Europe. In return, Yerevan is ready to buy French weapons and grant France permission to mine uranium, gold and other minerals. In cooperation with Yerevan, the prospects of the trans-Zangezur projects, for which, apparently, it is trying to get the “keys” from Yerevan, are becoming important for France. And this is reminiscent of the willow project that the Suez Canal once became, but with one difference: it will be more expensive.

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