

CHANGES IN FRANCE'S STRATEGIC CULTURE AFTER THE COLD WAR

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ABSTRACT:

The author of the article attempted to examine the main conditions and characteristics of the French strategic culture, a country with huge arms traditions and the high social authority of the armed forces in society. All this means that France has made a huge contribution to the development of theory and practice in the field of military art and strategy, as well as in shaping the order of international security. The main strategic documents of France and its activity in the international arena confirm the traditional line of French security policy and strategic culture. It is a political culture of a superpower conscious of its great past which still radiates into current and global relations of France.

KEY WORDS:

strategic culture, strategy, V Republic, White Paper, European Union

INTRODUCTION

When studying the country's strategic culture, it is difficult to have a more interesting case study than France. There are few countries in the world that have been pursuing an ambitious foreign and security policy for several hundred years, and certainly since Cardinal de Richelieu, aimed at gaining a powerful position in international relations. It should be noted that

in Anglo-Saxon countries, at no stage of their history, however, feelings did not determine the directions of the state's external policy to the same extent as in France, which makes it particularly interesting.

Over the centuries, the country on the Seine has been a catalyst for great social and political change, which have also transformed other countries. It is enough to mention the Great French Revolution or the wars waged by the French Emperor Napoleon, and what is interesting, France never managed to dominate the world politically. The real power was during the reign of Louis XIV and Napoleon I. The irremediable loss of the privileged position on the international arena occurred after the defeat with Prussia in 1870 and the devastating war with Hitler's Germany (although the last victorious one).

It was in such a situation that General Charles de Gaulle took over power in France, who first built the Fourth Republic, and several years later led to a change of political order, creating the Fifth Republic based on the semi-presidential system. According to de Gaulle, it was first and foremost necessary to rebuild the moral prestige of France after the defeat of the Second World War and prolonged colonial wars, which led to the restoration of France's position in the world and to the creation of the foundations for a new foreign policy strategy. and safety. Its main assumption was independence from the USA and partly NATO (military exit from the North Atlantic Alliance in 1965).

After the Cold War there were significant revaluations in all these areas. France has returned to the integrated structures of NATO, fundamentally changing its attitude in allied politics, making the army more competitive and strengthening the interventionist profile of its security policy (missions in the context UN, NATO and EU). All these changes, which translate into the strategic culture of contemporary France, do not allow us to state unequivocally that cultural factors play a determining role in the implementation of the national strategy, but undoubtedly in this country they have a greater influence on the choices made than in other European countries.

ATTEMPTS TO DEFINE A STRATEGIC CULTURE

France's role in today's international environment is seriously affected by its attachment to historical tradition. History is treated as an asset, and the achievements of past generations, counted from 2000 years, to a large

extent determines the current position of the Fifth Republic in Europe and worldwide. In terms of security, historical tradition is identified with a strategic culture. This concept is one that is difficult to define and even more difficult to define precisely its scope. It is also closely related to other concepts that are difficult to define, such as national culture, national character, *raison d'être* of state, etc.¹. Yet the concept of strategic culture functions and is on an equal footing with other categories, such as political, legal or historical culture.

Although the term has recently appeared in the dictionary of safety scientists, it has been used in science for hundreds of years under different names. Undoubtedly, the ancient thinker Thucydides should be regarded as a pioneer of the development of the cultural mainstream, as a complement to purely military strategic studies, and the assumption that culture influences the way the war is conducted was reflected in the *Peloponnesian War*, as well as in the *Art of War* Sun Tzu. It is thanks to his great work that Thucydides is considered a forerunner of the cultural approach to international relations science. This is also due to the attention he pays to the issue, which can be described as the *national character* of the warring parties. Introducing this term Thucydides pointed to the importance of cultural distinctiveness of antagonistic social groups, which translates into a completely different way of conducting politics despite similar potentials of Athens and Sparta. His arguments are treated today as the first in history analysis of armed conflict considered through the prism of strategic culture.

Another important step in the process of crystallization of the notion of strategic culture was the work of Carl von Clausewitz *On War*. He claimed that victory is achieved not only by occupying the territory of the opponent, but it is equally important to break his morale when the aim is to impose his will on the enemy². In this way, he emphasized the importance of cultural domination on the way to achieving state policy objectives. Liddell Hart used Carl von Clausewitz's deliberations and focused on the practical side of the culture of the subject (state). That is why he saw the reason for England's defeat in World War II as a departure from the "Bri-

¹ K. Łastawski, *Racja stanu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, Warszawa 2000, p. 12-43; K. Gołosz, *Racja stanu Francji. Wybrane problemy nauk politycznych*, Katowice 1991, p. 64-77.

² C. von Clausewitz, *O wojnie*, Kraków 2007, p. 15.

tish way of conducting war”, which assumed actions focused on maritime blockades against the enemy and financial support for allied states³.

In the forties and fifties of the twentieth century in anthropology and sociology there appeared a current of studies on the national character – a concept introduced by Thucydides. This led researchers of strategic culture to find a link between culture, and national behaviour based on anthropological models⁴. One of the best known and influential works of this trend was the book *Chryzantema i miecz. Patterns of Japanese culture*. Its author, Ruth Benedict, was an anthropologist employed by the United States government during World War II and tried to understand the culture of the enemy, namely Japan, as part of a research project. On the basis of her research, she concluded that war conventions, which Western nations accepted as human facts, apparently did not exist for the Japanese. This created an important problem in the enemy’s nature. According to Prof. Benedict, it was necessary to understand their behaviour in order to deal with it. The result of her research was the conclusion that in Japanese culture two trends can be distinguished: “**militaristic and aggressive**” (“**sword**”) and “**peaceful and open**” (“**chrysanthemum**”). Ruth Benedict’s work has become a classic of American anthropological literature, it has also found a wide range of readers in Japan alone.

George Kennan⁵, an American diplomat, was the first to speak publicly about the problem of national character. He believed that the policy of the United States towards the Soviet Union after the end of the Second World War turned 180 degrees. During a lecture for American diplomats in 1950, he argued that Washington’s attitude to international affairs has its deep roots in American culture and tradition. According to him, it makes the USA a **crusader who fights evil in the name of high moral values**. In 1946 he became famous as the author of a documentary called *Long Telegram* (in-depth analysis of Stalin’s speech at the Bolshoi Theatre). This is

³ R. Wiśniewski, *Kultura strategiczna, czyli o kulturowych uwarunkowania polityki zagranicznej i bezpieczeństwa*, „Przegląd Strategiczny” 2012, nr 1, <http://studiastrategiczne.amu.edu.pl/wpcontent/uploads/2013/03/13.WISNIEWSKI.pdf> (access 25.07.2018).

⁴ J.S. Lantis, *Strategic Culture and National Security Policy*, “International Studies Review” 2002, vol. 4, no. 3, p. 91–92.

⁵ George Frost Kennan – American diplomat, sovietologist, considered an architect of Cold War policy in the 1940s and 1950s. He was the great-nephew of traveller George Kennan. He attended a military school and then Princeton University. After graduation he started working in the American diplomatic service.

the first post-war analysis of the international politics of the Soviet Union and its system. Kennan's main conclusion was that the US attitude towards the USSR should be reviewed and replaced by the doctrine of suppression, which proclaimed the necessity of stopping the growth of Soviet influence and further expansion of communism in the world. The way to do this was to create a system of military alliances. It should be noted that Kennan's policy of deterrence has become the basis of the Truman doctrine, and, in the long term, the emergence of NATO.

A more contemporary issue, which largely influenced the science of strategic culture, was the "Cold War" and the bipolar balance of power in the world. The fact that the USA and the USSR had similar military potentials proved to be a factor that made scientists and commanders aware of the unreliability of classical currents of international relations analysis. Politicians dealing with strategic culture associate its development mainly with the tensions that took place in political and military relations between the Soviet Union and the United States in the 1970s. They analysed the Soviet deterrence policy and concluded that US analysts made mistakes in mispredicting the opponent's behaviour, claiming that the USSR would respond to threats in the same way as the United States would do. As it turned out, the paradigm of behaviour of both countries was different⁶.

Unfortunately, there is no single definition of strategic culture, and the first Americans introduced it to literature. At the end of the seventies (1977), Jack Snyder, an American researcher of international security problems, proposed a concept of political culture at the level of military strategy and security studies, creating a **theory of strategic culture**. According to J. Snyder, "strategic culture is the sum of ideas, conditioned emotional answers and patterns of habitual behaviour, that members of the national security community have acquired through instructions or imitation and agree with regard to the nuclear strategy"⁷.

A broader definition was proposed by Thomas Mahnken, according to whom "strategic culture is a set of beliefs and behaviours resulting from shared experiences, a sense of identification, separation from other groups that determine the directions of actions and ways of achieving goals".

⁶ J. Gryz, *Strategia bezpieczeństwa narodowego Polski*, Warszawa 2013, p. 22.

⁷ J.L. Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*, RAND Corporation, 1977, p. 4–7, <http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/reports/2005/R2154.pdf> (access 12.10.2018).

American political scientist Michel Johnston defined “strategic culture as an ideological environment that limits the choice of behaviour and believed that, by referring to a given strategic culture, solutions in the field of strategy can be predicted”. According to the American strategist Colin S. Gray “strategic culture is a way of thinking about strength and how to deal with it resulting from national feelings, historical experience, aspirations for preservation, responsible lifestyle”. The definition of the strategic culture of Prof. Isaac Klein, who considered it as “a set of attitudes and beliefs professed in the military apparatus in relation to the political objective of war and on the most effective strategic and operational methods leading to its achievement”⁸ cannot be omitted. Klein’s conceptual proposal can be related to the formula *American way of war*⁹. The disadvantage of this definition is that it is limited to the military apparatus and to war.

A slightly different, more general term was introduced by Carnes Lord, who regarded strategic culture as “a set of traditional practices and habits of thinking that in society govern the organisation and use of military forces in the service of political ends”¹⁰. Admittedly, the author does not limit the strategic culture to war only, at least verbally, but his definition has a clear Clausewitz pedigree and also treats military forces.

One cannot fail to mention Professor L’École de Guerre in Paris, Hervé Coutau-Bégarie. He believes that “in the decision-making process, a strategic culture can play a major role, but it is not a determining factor and many examples of borrowing and mutual interpenetration can be identified”¹¹. The strategic culture is also connected with the set of features known as military culture (*culture militaire*) or defence culture (*culture de défense*)¹². Guy Labouërie writes about three levels of culture related to the functioning of national defence:

– basic culture, i.e. the ability to function with a specialization in a kind of army;

⁸ J. Klein, *A theory of strategic culture*, “Comparative Strategy” 1985, vol. V, p. 3.

⁹ R.T. Weigley, *The American Way of War. The history of United States Military Strategy and Policy*, New York 1973.

¹⁰ C. Lord, *American Strategic Culture*, “Comparative Strategy” 1985, vol. 5, no. 3, p. 271.

¹¹ M. Coutau-Bégarie, *Traité de stratégie*, Paris 1999, p. 264–269.

¹² Mr. Lang, *La notion de défense aujourd’hui. Esprit et culture de défense*, Actes du colloque, 29 mars 1994, Ministère de Défense, LDF, 1994, p. 57–66.

- military culture, i.e. the ability to act with one's weapon in an armed forces unit;
- general culture as a strategic ability to “find oneself” with the armed forces in the state and with the state in an international environment¹³.

Also on the Polish scientific ground we find proposals for the definition of strategic culture. And so according to Łukasz Smalec: “Strategic culture is a country-specific creation, may be subject to changes under the influence of external shocks, allows for partial clarification of strategies and decisions in the field of state security policy, because it has been shaped under the influence of individual historical experiences and conditions, affects the perception of threats, as well as limits the scope of accepted actions with the use of armed force”¹⁴. This definition highlights the importance of a strategic culture, emphasising in particular its individual character and its susceptibility to change due to both internal and external factors.

Among the definitions of strategic culture worked out on the Polish ground, it is worth quoting the one proposed by Prof. Jan Czaja. For this author, “strategic culture is a culture of national security, referring to the perception of security threats, preventing and combating them, including by force”¹⁵. According to Olaf Osica, strategic culture is a conglomerate of three elements. The first are ideas, values, thoughts, doctrines resulting from the sum of historical experiences. The second set of factors includes so-called “political signposts” understood as political values. The last element is the way of formulating thoughts, legitimizing decisions regarding widely understood security¹⁶.

It should be noted that the 1990s was a great return of culture to international relations, manifested by a renaissance of research on its impact on the foreign and security policy of states and on armed conflicts. This cultural turn was the result of the end of the Cold War and the acceleration of globalisation. The euphoria of that time, caused by apparent unity, was first cooled down by the Balkan conflict, then by the terrorist attack

¹³ G. Labou erie, *D efense et oc eans*, Paris 1994, p. 14–19.

¹⁴  . Smalec, *Kultura strategiczna Stan ow Zjednoczonych po zako czeniu zimnej wojny*, Warszawa 2015, p. 25.

¹⁵ J. Czaja, *Kulturowe czynniki bezpiecze stwa*, Warszawa 2008, p. 223, 227.

¹⁶ O. Osica, *Polska wobec operacji NATO i polityki bezpiecze stwa i obronnej UE*, [in:] *Kultura bezpiecze stwa narodowego w Polsce i w Niemczech*, K. Malinowski (ed.), Pozna  2003, p. 103.

of 11 September 2001, and then by military interventions in Afghanistan (October 2001) and Iraq (March 2003).

In conclusion, it should be noted that, according to analysts, strategic culture is a kind of response to the need to take into account long-term factors that shape foreign policy and national security. It is sometimes considered to be an independent variable that explains the country's specific actions in international relations¹⁷. Its research is both cognitive and practical, with the main aim of "deciphering" the particularly interesting actors from the external political scene, who carry out effective actions in the area of security at the level of international relations. Such knowledge becomes at the same time a strategic resource of a given country, and in the case of analysing the strategic culture of our own country, we aim to improve our own security policy.

The idea that gives more weight to cultural aspects in relations between countries has been present since antiquity, but it did not have the status that allows it to compete with the classic currents of analysis of international relations. The transformation of the geopolitical map of the world has forced researchers to take an increasingly detailed but complex approach to such analyses, making the term "strategic culture" more and more popular today.

WHAT IS THE PHENOMENON OF FRENCH STRATEGIC CULTURE?

France is a country with a great tradition of arms and a high social authority of the armed forces in society. These traditions include, above all, the great victories of Napoleon's troops in almost two decades of struggle across almost the whole of Europe, as well as the defeat and humiliation of Germany during World War I. Unfortunately, it was also less glorious war and political actions from the Second World War, and yet General Charles de Gaulle, despite the difficulties and humiliation, was able to turn them into victory and leave France among the great powers. These traditions are also exotic experiences and traditions of the French Foreign Legion and French colonial troops and the bitter experience of the parting with Algeria.

All this makes up France's enormous contribution to the development of theory and practice in the field of military art and strategy, as well as to the shaping of the international security order. This contribution is all the more important as France is a permanent member of the UN Security

¹⁷ S. Jarmoszko, *Ścieżki konceptualizacji strategii bezpieczeństwa*, Siedlce 2015, p. 87.

Council, an important member of the European Union and the cradle of integration of the continent. It is its policy together with Germany that shapes the development of integration processes in Europe. By always demonstrating superpowerful ambitions and at the same time experiencing increasing difficulties in their implementation, the 5th Republic seeks to compensate by promoting the Common Security and Defence Policy and in this respect also has historical achievements as a promoter of, among others, the European Defence Community (EDC)¹⁸.

When talking about the specificity of strategic culture, it should be noted that more than the specificity, we should talk about certain phenomena of this culture, which cannot be followed too faithfully by French authors, because one of the phenomena of this culture is so-called "official patriotism". The state devotes significant resources to the functioning of hundreds of institutions dealing with strategic studies and publications disseminating them. One of the priorities of external activities is to promote the desired image of France in the world.

Studies of strategic culture were undertaken in France in the 70s of the 20th century, using such terms as *military culture* or *defense culture*. The strategic culture, on the other hand, was connected with the behaviour and actions of a military nature and the possibility of foreseeing them. Bruno Colson was the first French researcher to define strategic culture. He described strategic culture as "sets of attitudes and beliefs in the military sphere regarding the political objectives of war and the most effective strategic operational methods for achieving them"¹⁹.

What is important is that few authors have tried to catalogue the features of French strategic culture, while there are numerous works devoted to particular phenomena. Bruno Colson, who mentioned above, made an attempt at a comprehensive approach. He mentioned a few distinguishing features: **Europeanness, independence, world rank, universalism, the necessity of allies, defensive character, rationalism**²⁰.

Indeed, French strategic culture is thoroughly European, drawing on from the rich Mediterranean cultural heritage. But these are also the stra-

¹⁸ J. Czaja, *Kulturowy wymiar bezpieczeństwa*, Kraków 2013, p. 264.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 264.

²⁰ B. Colson, *La Culture stratégique américaine L'influence de Jomini*, Paris 1998, cyt. za: A. Ciupiński, *Rola Francji w kształtowaniu europejskiej autonomii strategicznej*, Warszawa 2001, p. 32.

tegic traditions of other countries, and not only of its partners, even if their strategic heritage is an imitation. This distinguishing feature can be seen in relation to the Chinese, American, perhaps Soviet strategy. However, it should be noted that ‘Europeanism’ cannot be a criterion in relation to German, Polish or even British strategic tradition.

Emphasising the European character or “European choice” clearly serves the objectives of France’s external policy and is interesting from a motive point of view. What characterizes French Strategic culture is above all independence. In France, the canon of *liberté d’action* (*freedom of action*) has naturally merged with the desire for **national independence** and the need for greatness, and consequently resulted in a phenomenon called strategic consensus. It was the independence of national defence that was the main source of consensus among the French, which was at the same time an expression of national pride, associated with the sense of greatness, that is to say, the image of the state as its citizens would like to see it.

Due to France’s special position in its continental environment, it is difficult to compare the phenomenon of consensus on defence issues with other countries. The most legitimate is a comparison of the attitudes of French and British citizens. Both states are former colonial powers with similar international status (permanent members of the UN Security Council with national nuclear forces). Unlike France, where national defence policy has enjoyed broad public support for decades, British government policy in the same sphere has been severely criticised by political parties and public protests. Great Britain has repeatedly been the scene of numerous antimilitary demonstrations, mainly against the deployment of American mid-range missiles, neutron weapons and nuclear testing. Meanwhile, France was one of the few European countries through which the wave of pacifist demonstrations did not pass²¹.

The French strategic consensus is characterised by intergenerational continuity and its cross-party character. Since the French Revolution, there has been a phenomenon in French political culture called the ‘Republican Pact’, which mainly refers to the need to defend the homeland. In the 19th and 20th centuries this pact was based on three fundamental pillars:

²¹ *Pacifisme et dissuasion*, P. Lellouche (sous la direction de), Paris 1983; F.A. Genin, M. Turraine, *Société, Etat et Défense. Les politiques étrangères de la France et Grande Bretagne*, p. 73–87; A. Ciupiński, *Próby nuklearne na Pacyfiku*, “Wojsko i Wychowanie”, nr 8/1996, p. 79–83.

the education system, public service and military service²². Rare in other European countries, a consensus on the collection obligation in France has been identified. with the notion of “Nation in the army”, emphasizing the educational values of military service²³.

In the twentieth century there was a great national consolidation during the legendary patriotic uprising during the First World War 1914–1918, and after the Second World War around the programme proposed by General Charl de Gaulle. In recent decades, a number of sociological and cultural phenomena have taken place, which have been very conducive to the consolidation of a unified lifestyle, as well as a similar system of thinking and evaluation.

Rare in other countries, the consensus on defence included two fundamental elements: acceptance of the doctrine of nuclear deterrence as a condition for the functioning of an independent defence system, and social acceptance of the universal obligation of military service called national service – *service nationale*, which was treated as an element of civil equality with high educational value.

Mandatory military service was forced by the need to defend revolutionary France against coalition intervention and a change in the way wars were conducted, which, as a result of technical progress, took place in the 19th century. After the Vienna Congress, the compulsory service was abolished and was not reintroduced until 21 March 1905. Since then, its essential elements have been preserved. Only the duration of the service changed and the system of non-military civic service was developed. In France, national service was treated as an essential element of shaping civic attitudes and consolidation of society. As a result, in discussions about the model of the army, the supporters of maintaining general conscription prevailed. The White Paper on Defence of 1994 maintained the system of a mixed, professional and civic army.

The abolition of the compulsory service has caused much controversy. A well-trained professional army has always had supporters, including

²² J.M. Domenach, *Regarder la France*, Paris 1997, s. 118; F. Braudel, *L'identité de la France*, t. 1: *Espace et histoire*, Paris 1986, p. 185–200, t. 2 et 3: *Les Hommes et les Choses*, Paris 1986–1987, p. 109–139.

²³ Mr. Quinet, *Égalité des citoyens et défense de le nation. Un nouveau débat stratégique*, p. 124–129.

General de Gaulle²⁴. Opponents stress the negative social and political consequences of such a solution, claiming that the relationship between citizens and the state will be violated and, secondly, social control over the armed forces will be weakened. Opponents pointed out that in the past the officer cadre exerted an excessive influence on the political shape of the state. It was the main strength of Brumaire Napoleon Bonaparte's 18-year attack. Thanks to the army, Louis Bonaparte overthrew the Second Republic and restored the Empire. In May 1958 the army attacked the Fourth Republic and restored Gen. de Gaulle to power. Finally, in April 1961, the generals rebelled against the general's policy in Algeria. The reform of the armed forces completed in 2010 largely differs from the models accepted in French strategic culture and is closer to Anglo-Saxon solutions²⁵.

It should be stressed that not only the opponents of the professionalization of the armed forces found arguments in the history of the Republic, but also its supporters. The Minister of National Defence referred to the example of Valma (a village in Estonia), pointing out that the army that fought there did not come from conscription. At Valmy, the professional army of the previous regime was particularly merged with a large group of civic volunteers. Similarly, in a new type of army there is a combination of professionals and volunteers²⁶.

The second category of French strategic culture is its **defensive character**. As Prof. A. Ciupiński says, this kind of categorisation is "subjective, not to say euphemistic"²⁷. When talking about the defensive character of French strategic culture, one should refer to some historical facts.

In the period of the Fourth Republic, French defence policy is a series of failures. France wanted to use the United States' nuclear resources, which, however, did not agree.

As a result, France started to generate its own nuclear potential and Charles de Gaulle withdrew France from the military structures of the North Atlantic Alliance in 1965²⁸. Today, France traditionally strives to

²⁴ C. de Gaulle, *L'armée de métier*, Paris 1934.

²⁵ P. Buffotot, *Les réformes du service national*, "Problèmes politiques et sociaux" 1996, nr 769, Paris 1996.

²⁶ *Intervention du ministre de la défense lors de sa visite du Lycée professionnel du bâtiment de l'Île de France*, "Propos sur la Défense", November 1998, no. 74, p. 116–117.

²⁷ A. Ciupiński, *Rola Francji...*, op. cit., p. 33.

²⁸ T. Hofmann, *Francuska polityka bezpieczeństwa i obrony*, „Wrocławskie Studia Politologiczne”, no. 19/2015, p. 163.

shape a new balance in European security without undermining its foundations within NATO and acting for the benefit of European autonomy, which would be in line with the Alliance's assumptions.

From the point of view of military strategy, the defence option explains the functioning of the state in a hostile international environment, among the eternal enemies. It refers to distant history and symbols: the defense of the Gauls against the Roman legions, the epic of the Centennial War against the English invasion, and in modern times – to the heroic and effective defense of Valma against the predominant counter-revolutionary coalition.

The defensive option also contains didactic and moral messages, therefore it is consciously exposed by the educational system of the state and historical journalism. Analysing the defence option from the point of view of the role that France wanted to play in the world, it should be stated that it was to a large extent forced and limited expansion.

In the interwar period, the concept of building strong defensive fortifications prevailed. That is why the Maginot Line was created with a huge financial outlay, the pinnacle of fortification technology, which, however, did not protect France from the defeat in the war with Germany.

The next category of French strategic culture is the **Le range mondiale (world-class)**, which continues to be one of the objectives of the French national strategy, marking its international position. French analysts admit that after the collapse of the USSR, the only power able to conduct world politics on its own are the United States of America. They do not accept France's classification as a medium-sized country and are trying to find an option that meets its political aspirations. This is why the proposal to consider France as an 'average world power' is becoming more and more frequent (*une puissance moyenne*)²⁹. It should be noted that the Anglo-Saxon classification does not include the category of an average world superpower, as there are: superpowers, great powers and smaller powers. From the point of view of military potential, France should be counted among the 'great powers'³⁰.

Bearing in mind the traditional sources of strategic potential, France cannot be attributed the role of a continental power. Nowadays, its geo-

²⁹ A. Dulphy, *La politique extérieure de la France depuis 1945*, Paris 1994, p. 112.

³⁰ E. Luard, *The Blunted Sword. The Erosion of Military Power in Modern World Politics*, London 1988, p. 7–9.

geographical location seems to be favourable, but in the past all migrations and invasions from the East, West, North and South have arrived here. One of the creators of the geopolitical theory, Nicholas Spykman, pointed this out, considering that France meets the conditions characteristic for “Rimland”. At the same time emphasizing the fact that it can develop into both a maritime power and a continental³¹.

Thanks to its homogeneous location and natural borders, France has gained a major advantage over other countries and avoided such experiences as the Republic of Poland, the German Reich or the Habsburg Monarchy, where border shifts occurred many times and concerned hundreds of thousands of square kilometres. A geographical asset implies the continuity of a historical tradition dating back almost 2000 years. France’s world aspirations also have their roots in post-colonial remains (Overseas Departments and Territories (DOM-TOMY)³².

Owning a DOM-TOMS is not only prestigious, but also this aspect is not insignificant. They provide France with the ideal opportunity to patrol the oceans through nuclear-powered submarines, supply bases, nuclear testing centres and space conquest centres. From the point of view of national consolidation, the overseas territories influence the national mentality of the French.

If we take into account the level of national income and the level of industrialisation, France ranks sixth in the world. It is the fourth exporter worldwide and the fifth importer. Therefore, it is one of the most economically developed countries in the world and, as a consequence, one of the richest – it has a well-deserved place in the G8.

The third category of French strategic culture is the **Idea of Greatness (La Grandeur)**, which played an important role during the Cold War. Since France, unable to compare its strategic potential with its potential opponent, i.e. the USSR, and its potential ally, the USA, tried to make the most of its political attributes (a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, having an independent national defence based on national nuclear forces, special ties with the African continent, etc.), and to make the most of its

³¹ N.J. Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace*, New York 1944; G. Chaliand, *Antologie mondiale de la stratégie*, Paris 1990; P. Claval, *Géopolitique et géostratégie*, Nathan Université, 2nd ed., Paris 1996, p. 41, 45–46.

³² The acronym DOM-TOM means the overseas departments (*d’outre-mer* – DOM) and the overseas territories (*territoire d’outre-mer* – TOM).

political attributes (a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, having an independent national defence based on national nuclear forces, and possession of overseas territories, or links with the circle of culture and the French language, i.e., the so-called francophony).

Since the objective components of France's superpower are currently being questioned, there remains a subjective factor, namely the willingness to be a superpower. Inspirator, and also to a large extent, General Charles de Gaulle was the originator of this idea. The "certain idea of France" expressed by him was identified with its size³³. Gaullist's concept of France was expressed in three adjectives: "vital, sovereign and victorious"³⁴. The size of France was a type of religion which should have been served in all areas and by all means³⁵. Nowadays, the dream of greatness seems to be shared by an increasingly smaller number of French people, although the rhetoric of the superpower often appears in speeches by the president, prime minister and ministers.

Today, the positions of French specialists are divided. Even in expert reports drawn up for internal use, one can read that: "Thanks to its history and geopolitical position, France is a great power"³⁶. It should be stressed that the new conditions are forcing France to review its strategic attitude towards the world and, above all, Europe. Jean Dufourcq recommends a careful manoeuvre to move from a model of "national power" of an earlier type, to which France is instinctively attached, to a model of cooperative power³⁷. "The »greatness« of France as a highly subjective category has a political and moral, not to say propaganda value. Through the educational system and the mass media, the state consciously shapes the image of the homeland of the »State-Nation«. The society is reminded that for several centuries, this State-Nation was the first power of the world, and in the nineteenth century the second power"³⁸.

Moreover, the need for *La Grandeur* is connected with responsibility for the fate of the world. It has a deep historical background because

³³ P.G. Cerny, *Une politique de grandeur*, Paris 1986.

³⁴ C. de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre*, t. 1, 1954, p. 1, *Mémoires d'Espoir*, t. 1, 1970, p. 7, 174.

³⁵ *De Gaulle in his century*, t. 4, p. 221.

³⁶ *Compatibilité des politiques et des systèmes nationaux avec les organisations internationales*, Comités 29^{ème} session, DGA, Paris 1994, p. 7.

³⁷ J. Dufourcq, *La puissance européenne. Les enjeux de taille*, Défense Nationale, 1997, p. 64.

³⁸ L. Armand, M. Dancourt, *Le pari européen*, Paris 1968, p. 149.

French national identity was shaped by two cultures – Catholic culture, which for the fifteenth century was a unifying factor, and republican culture that drew its nourishment from humanistic rationalism, as a result of which France became a symbol of freedom, equality and fraternity.

In France's foreign policy, one can find accents of the mission, a peculiar civilisational messianism based on universal values (hence the category of **universalism**). These values are a conglomerate presented as a European heritage. It covers political and moral aspects. The slogans of the Great French Revolution of 1789 continue to inspire and legitimise contemporary French universalism. Cultivating the image of the homeland of freedom, the French leaders have repeatedly defended the disadvantaged and the weak. Nowadays, elements such as humanitarian activity, like “doctors without borders”, are highlighted and involvement in the UN peacekeeping forces. The fact that France made the largest contribution to the UN peacekeeping force in the former Yugoslavia is particularly highlighted³⁹.

In the 1990s, France ranked first in terms of the provision of military troops in peacekeeping missions. According to French estimates, the United States has fallen far behind, occupying fourteenth place⁴⁰. On a European level, universalism is expressed in the promotion of the idea of the fathers of European integration, Robert Schuman and Jean Monet, who were at the basis of an equal partnership of democratic European countries.

In the cultural dimension, universalism is expressed in the promotion of European values opposing the tendencies of globalisation, mainly Americanisation. Paris aspires to play the role of a cultural capital, radiating throughout Europe and beyond. Of all the countries in the world, the French led the most active “cultural diplomacy”, distancing the British and Germans both in terms of financial resources, cultural institutions outside France and the number of people affected by cultural influence. This cultural diplomacy of France has manifested itself and manifests itself in opposing, among other things, the domination and further expansion of the English language in the world, and the French-speaking countries have priority in the field of economic aid and investment, they are also supported in the pursuit of political objectives.

³⁹ <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/ema/interview>.

⁴⁰ *Interview du conseiller diplomatique du chef d'état major des armées*, Ministère de la Défense, January 1998, p. 1.

Another important category of French strategic culture is **coabitation**, which boils down to the attitude of the leaders of the state, and thus to political consensus. According to Anne Dulphy, “four presidents, the same politics” is no doubt about the first two presidents (Charles de Gaulle and Georges Pompidou). The first one generated the basic foundations of modern strategy, the second one was a faithful collaborator of de Gaulle, which determined the choice of Pompidou as President of the Fifth Republic. But elected in 1976 Valéry Giscard d’Estaing represented a completely different ideological and political formation than its two predecessors. Yes, in the sixties he was a minister, but he was considered the only “Atlantic” in the Gaullian company. On the other hand, the president of two terms, François Mitterrand as chairman of the Socialist Party, criticized the political foundations of the Fifth Republic, which he expressed in the political essay entitled “Permanent coup d’état”⁴¹. Being in opposition, Mitterrand had a different opinion on national defence, and mainly on nuclear deterrence, but as President he faithfully implemented the programme of the creator of the 5th Republic.

There is no doubt that the Strategic Consensus plays a major role in France’s political life, mainly due to the many shortcomings of the French political system, particularly in the area of the division of powers between Parliament, the President and the Government⁴². In a sense, the strategic consensus was sanctioned by law, and in March 1994 the Criminal Code defined the “basic interests of the nation”. They are: “independence, territorial integrity, security, the republican form of institutions, defence and diplomacy, the protection of the population in France and its citizens beyond its borders, the sustainability of the environment and its surroundings, essential elements of scientific, economic and cultural heritage”⁴³.

Maybe it orders the political elites to implement a strategy based on recognised national values. If this custom had not existed, conducting a foreign and security policy would be very difficult. With some jealousy, it should be stressed that the harmony between the president, the government and the parliamentary majority has become the political canon of France,

⁴¹ F. Mitterrand, *Le coup d’état permanent. Histoire de la France. Des origines à nos jours sous la direction de Georges Duby*, Larousse 1995, p. 1035–1055.

⁴² S. Konieczny, *Systemy polityczne w wybranych demokracjach zachodnich*, Gdańsk 1996, p. 83–119.

⁴³ *Code Penale*, Livre IV, *La défense...*, t. 1, Paris 1994, p. 35.

which is not violated by changes in government teams and situations called cohabitation⁴⁴. The term ‘cohabitation’ means the co-existence of the President and the Prime Minister from two opposing camps. In everyday language, cohabitation is the common life of a couple who are not bound by legal ties, but simply want to be together. Political cohabitation, on the contrary, results from the legal and constitutional necessity and unites the couple, the President and the Prime minister.

COMPLETION

The strategic culture of the 5th Republic cannot be clearly defined. As you can see in the mirror, there are reflections of the great victories of Napoleon’s troops in almost two decades of struggle throughout almost Europe and the defeat and humiliation of Germany during the First World War. But you can also see the less glorious wars and political acts of World War II, which by General Charles de Gaulle were turned into victory and leaving France among the great powers. This mirror of French history also reflects the exotic experiences and traditions of the French Foreign Legion and French colonial troops, as well as the bitter experience of parting with Algeria.

Shaping its strategic culture, France, unable to compare its strategic potential with its ally the United States, tries to make the most of its political attributes, i.e. a permanent seat on the UN Security Council or having an independent national defence based on national nuclear forces.

French strategic culture is the culture of a medium-sized country that remembers its glory times and draws optimism from the rather “good” traditions of the French weapons, while the military ethos and military axiology is a permanent element of the identity of the 5th Republic. It is the culture of a country that encodes in the genes of political independence and superpowers, while at the same time entering into alliances with world powers, and this becomes a value in itself.

In addition, it should be stressed that France has also made a major contribution both to the development of military strategy theory and practice. On the basis of this work, contemporary theoreticians, politicians and military are trying to continue the specific traditions of the French school of strategy, a particularly prominent element of French strategic culture is the

⁴⁴ S. Konieczny, *Systemy...*, op. cit., p. 83–119.

aforementioned principle of freedom of action (*liberté d'action*), translated into political language into independence.

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CITE THIS ARTICLE AS:

S. Zarobny, *Changes in France's Strategic Culture after the Cold War*, „Kultura Bezpieczeństwa Nauka Praktyka Refleksje”, 2018, no 32, p. 273–292, DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0012.8105.

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