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**STRATEGIES OF ECONOMIC AGREEMENTS
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND CHINA: THE IMPACT OF THE
RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR**

The President of France and the President of the European Commission arrived in China for visits that lasted until April 7, 2023 and held talks with the President of the Republic of China. The purpose of the visit of the French president was to negotiate bilateral French-Chinese relations, which are characterized by stability and gradual development of trade. E. Macron was accompanied by a delegation of French businessmen. According to the National Institute for Strategic Studies [1], the General Director of the Airbus company announced the expansion of the Final Assembly Line China (FALC) assembly plant in Tianjin. FALC has been operating since 2008, since then more than 600 aircraft of the Airbus A320 family have been produced. Currently, the company operates only one assembly line, the second is planned to be launched in the second half of 2025. The French energy company EDF has extended its agreement with the Chinese nuclear power plant operator CGN, signed in 2007. The renewed contract will allow EDF to build new nuclear power plants in China.

In February 2023, at the Munich Security Conference, after a meeting between the French President and the Chairman of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, a member of the Politburo, it was announced that France and China intend to make joint efforts to achieve peace in Ukraine. On the eve of E. Macron's visit, it was reported that the topic of the Russian-Ukrainian war would be a leading topic during the talks between the French and Chinese leaders, but the priority in the talks was bilateral relations.

However, the large-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine became the subject of attention of E. Macron and Xi Jinping during their meeting. Since both countries, France and China, are nuclear powers with powerful economies, have great political ambitions, and are permanent members of the UN Security Council, their leaders could not help but discuss the biggest conflict in Europe since World War II.

The parties emphasized the commitment of their countries "to the common goal of achieving peace while observing the norms of international law". In addition, both politicians see themselves as potential peacemakers and mediators in conflict resolution, despite the lack of significant progress in this area.

At the same time, it should be noted that France does not have enough powerful tools to influence China in order to change the country's attitude

towards the Russian-Ukrainian war, as well as to convince the PRC to influence the Russian Federation in some way, to “bring it to its senses”, as he put it the French president.

E. Macron’s visit to China ended with an informal meeting with Xi Jinping, which took place in a friendly atmosphere in the south of the country – in the city of Guangdong. During the dinner, the leaders discussed the issue of Russian aggression against Ukraine. Xi Jinping noted that “the causes of the Ukrainian crisis are complex, its prolongation is disadvantageous for all parties, a ceasefire as soon as possible is in the interests of all interested parties and the whole world, political settlement is the only right way out”. The Chinese leader said that his country welcomes France’s concrete proposals for a “political settlement of the crisis”, is ready to support them, and also play a constructive role in their implementation. According to E. Macron, the French side attaches great importance to the international influence of the PRC and is ready to communicate closely and cooperate in order to make joint efforts to promote the earliest possible political settlement of the conflict.

China hoped to revive the investment agreement with the EU, which was never signed due to the fact that in 2021 the EU imposed sanctions on China for human rights violations for the first time in 30 years. Beijing has retaliated with sanctions, leaving the prospect of a deal murky, and understandably no progress has been made in the talks.

Despite everything, the meeting of the president of the European Commission with the Chinese leader can generally be regarded as the first step towards finding a mutually acceptable format for European-Chinese relations, which have undergone a noticeable degradation in recent years.

Despite the lack of strategic decisions and agreements, the negotiations that took place can be called successful. China has demonstrated its readiness to communicate with the EU and launched an active information campaign aimed at the states of the Global South. One of the important topics raised during the negotiations concerned the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on these countries. It can be assumed that the main goal of this campaign was to position China as a responsible global leader who cares about the interests of developing countries. Macron got an opportunity to change the focus of the French public’s attention from internal problems in the country (protests over the pension reform) to positive results in foreign policy. The visit of the president of the European Commission in China was treated rather discreetly. Despite the expectation of a number of experts, it passed without harsh statements and demarches.

References

1. The National Institute for Strategic Studies. Retrieved from: https://niss.gov.ua/sites/default/files/2023-04/az_100323_es_knr.pdf.