



“PUTIN HOLDS OUT OLIVE BRANCH TO FRANCE'S MACRON”

THE NEWLY ELECTED PRESIDENT DROPS IT, EYES OF EUROPE IS PICKING IT UP.

BY MARC GUIOT

Russian President Vladimir Putin told France's President-elect Emmanuel Macron he wanted to put mistrust aside and work with him, in a change of tack after the Kremlin expressed support for Macron's rivals in the presidential race.

"The citizens of France have trusted you with leading the country at a difficult time for Europe and the whole world community," Putin told Macron, whose staff had accused Russia during the campaign of trying to damage their candidate.

The Kremlin said Putin told Macron in a congratulatory telegram: *"The growth in threats of terrorism and militant extremism is accompanied by an escalation of local conflicts and the destabilization of whole regions."*

"In these conditions it is especially important to overcome mutual mistrust and unite efforts to ensure international stability and security."

Mutual mistrust? One and a half days before polls opened, Macron's campaign leader said they had been the target of a massive computer hack that dumped internal campaign emails online...

Putin has repeatedly denied interfering in the elections of any foreign countries, and rejected previous allegations about Kremlin-backed hacking operations.

The fact remains that, *Putin had spoken favorably about Macron's conservative rival Francois Fillon, who had said he wanted a reset of frayed relations with Russia. Later on, after Fillon's prospects faded under the weight of a nepotism scandal, Putin took the unusual step of granting a Kremlin audience to far-right candidate Marine Le Pen, who was Macron's opponent in Sunday's run-off.*

She told reporters after meeting Putin that if victorious, her first act would be to think about lifting the sanctions that the European Union imposed on Russia after it annexed Ukraine's Crimea peninsula three years ago.

Macron's victory extends a losing run for Putin, who had banked on political upheaval in Western capitals bringing in new leaders better disposed toward Russia.

He is expected to run for re-election next year, and a lifting or easing of Western sanctions would help him secure a strong mandate from Russian voters, who are feeling the pain from an economic slowdown made worse by the sanctions. (The Guardian-Reuter)



MACRON, PUTIN AND THE BOOMERANG EFFECT

What Macron's victory means for France and the European Union, we are soon to find out. But we already know what it means for Russia - all hope is lost that Moscow can have good relations with Paris, a key EU player. And the Kremlin has only itself to blame for this.

Russian state TV, just a day before the elections aired a report on the leaks, claiming that they reveal that Macron is addicted to cocaine and that he has money in offshore companies. All that despite the fact that the claims about Macron's offshore activities had been disproved as fake news long before the leaks and in fact had nothing to do with them.

In any case, it is difficult to imagine that the new French government will be up for a close partnership with Russia. Even Macron if for some reason wanted it, his voters would not forgive him for it.

Presidential elections are coming soon in Russia. Internal stability is more important for Putin than international popularity. Domestically, in a state of economic crisis, nothing can mobilize the electorate better than the public perception that Russia is surrounded by enemies. (Roman Dobrokhotoev is a Moscow-based journalist and civil activist. He is the editor-in-chief of The Insider.)

VLADIMIR PUTIN REACHES OUT TO FRANCE'S EMMANUEL MACRON DURING 'DIFFICULT TIME FOR EUROPE' (ABC)

Mr Putin has now strongly denied interfering in elections of any foreign countries. The Kremlin said Mr Putin told Mr Macron in a congratulatory telegram: "*It is especially important to overcome mutual mistrust and unite efforts to ensure international stability and security.*"

Putin is expected to run for re-election next year, and a lifting or easing of Western sanctions would help him secure a strong mandate from Russian voters, who are feeling the pain from an economic slowdown made worse by the sanctions.

Therefore, Putin is extending a brotherly hand to the newly elected French President Emmanuel Macron in the hope he may be in favor of the end of the sanctions. *Emmanuel Macron's victory extends a losing run for Mr Putin, who had banked on political upheaval in Western capitals bringing in new leaders better disposed towards Russia. (ABC) Macron hatte Russland dagegen in seinem Programm eine „gefährliche Außenpolitik“ vorgeworfen und die westlichen Sanktionen gegen Moskau unterstützt. (Epoch Times)*

It just happens that diplomatic ties between the two countries are very ancient despite a huge geographical separation between the two countries. They actually go back at least to 1702.

Imperial Russia's foreign policy was hostile to republican France in the 19th century and very pro-German but Russia cautiously began a policy of *rapprochement* with France starting in 1891 when neither France nor Russia could hope to defeat Germany on their own, but their combined power might, which in turn was meant to deter Berlin from going to war with either Paris or St. Petersburg.¹

Further linking France and Russia together were common economic interests. Russia wished to industrialize, but lacked the capital to do so while the French were more than prepared to lend the necessary money to finance Russia's industrialization. The industrialization of the Russian Empire was largely the result of a massive influx of French capital into Russia.

After the breakup of the USSR, bilateral relations between France and Russia were initially warm and they have remained relatively strong to this day.

It just happens that both France and Russia were attacked by the Middle-Eastern Islamist group ISIS. As a response, François Hollande and Vladimir Putin agreed on ordering their respective armed forces to "cooperate" with one another in the fight against the terrorist organization. It was also recalled by a Russian newspaper that "*WWII had forced the Western World and the Soviet Union to overcome their ideological differences*", wondering whether ISIS would be the "new Hitler".

WHY IS EUROPE SUCH A BURNING ISSUE FOR MOSCOW?

In her fascinating essay *Russia between two worlds*, French historian (she is a world authority on Russian affairs) and *perpetual* Secretary of the respected *Académie Française*, Hélène Carrère d'Encausse is insisting that Russia has always wanted to be thought of as a European country although it was forced to realize after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early nineties that it was also an Asian nation. As a result, *Russia is torn between its European vocation and the many Asian opportunities of the day*. The actual and deep Russian identity has been haunting the Russian soul for generations.

In Encausse's view, the Russians are not exactly wondering who they are but which path they are to follow next. Should they imitate Europe or stick to their own social model? Russia was an empire for five centuries, including during the soviet era. Suddenly, in 1990, the Empire imploded. Overnight Russia leaders had to make up their minds whether to come over as genuinely Asians or to play the Asian card while remaining still basically European.

The so called Asian option has never really appealed to the Russians. Their present orientation is purely opportunistic.

ASIAN ATTRACTION OR WESTERN REJECTION?

It is six of one and half a dozen of the other.

Putin is a realist who happens to be fully aware that the empirical era is definitely over. When he described the collapse of the USSR as the greatest disaster in the XXth century he swiftly added : «Those who don't regret the Soviet Union have no heart, yet those who do regret it have no brains» His present policy is determined to restore respect for Russia in the present international context. Furthermore and still more importantly he was shocked that all the nations of the former Soviet glacis rushed into the arms of its former enemies and joined NATO and the UE after 1989. The Ukraine's determination to do the same made Putin particularly angry.

Hélène d'Encausse reminds us of the fact that *Saint Russia* was born in Kiev. Today many Russians still live in Ukraine whereas a Ukrainian identity is in renaissance with the full support of the West. The enthusiastic European Union backing a brand new Ukrainian Nation has deeply irritated Moscow. What we now refer to as *New Europe*, (the former Soviet European satellites from beyond the Iron Curtain, that have promptly joined both NATO and the EU) have become an homogenous and close bloc fiercely committed against Russia that they still regard as a potential threat. The new cold war frontier has actually shifted to the Russian Polish border. As a result, the Russians have felt both rejected and confined which triggered the violent Ukrainian crisis with Moscow *annexing* Crimea and Sebastopol the harbor of the Russian fleet and its gate to the warm seas.

Never has Russia contemplated joining the European Union although they do claim deep civilizational links with Europe.



Mais ils ont eu l'impression que l'Europe ne jouait pas le jeu. Aujourd'hui, ils voient une Union divisée entre, d'une part, une Europe occidentale lointaine, et, de l'autre, une Europe centrale sous influence allemande, avec la Pologne comme tête de pont.

C'est cette dernière carte qu'ils ont décidé de jouer. Du coup, la France s'est retrouvée isolée aux confins du continent. Ce dont notre diplomatie a mis du temps à se rendre compte.

That is precisely what Putin means to change now with his appealing message to President Macron.

On the whole, Moscow considers that US world domination is in sharp decline and Putin wants to find new allies to put an end to the economic sanctions that undermine Russian prosperity and could prove a serious hurdle in the coming elections as well as a menace for peace in Europe. He is therefore desperately looking for allies in the West to put an end to those heavy economic sanctions.

Putin's Russia doesn't feel vulnerable any longer, it has restored its military power and feels serene. The fact remains that Russia fails to find the right direction (ne trouve pas son chemin) and keeps questioning its fate. La transition d'avec l'Union soviétique est achevée. Sa transformation, pas encore. ("La Russie entre deux mondes" .)

In his congratulation telegram to Macron, Putin was discreetly advocating a kind of *agreement* with Europe hoping that Macron may advise Merkel at least to relieve and eventually an abolish these sanctions.

In terms of security both in the middle East and at home , and regarding the fight against Islamic terrorism there seems to be no solution except on a European basis and in any case *with* Russia, certainly not *without* it.

The present sanctions imposed by the United States and their pressure on Europe to back them are an economic disaster both for Russia and Europe, by no means for Washington. The sanctions cause especially Germany severe commercial deficits. For Russia they are an absolute disaster.

Initially, in the early fifties, the founding fathers dreamed of the European Union as of a bulwark against a new world- war and a possible soviet invasion. Their concern was about peace in the very first place.

Eyes of Europe, a self-educating pan European platform, an international forum as well as a democratic agora is willing to create permanent interactions between teenagers across Europe and beyond its borders as far as Russia in order to diminish tensions by facilitating a permanent dialogue and cooperation in the spirit of the multilateral *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe* (OSCE), the world's largest security oriented intergovernmental organization.

Originally, the 1975 Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) was held in Helsinki, Finland (then the perfect link between East and West) as a multilateral extension of the brilliant bilateral German *Ostpolitik* (Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt).

The OSCE is today concerned with peace and therefore with early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation. It was created during the Cold War era as an East–West forum. Eyes of Europe is primarily concerned with peace, transparency and open dialogue including one between East and West: *with* Russia, *not against* Russia.

Emmanuel Macron is a Gaullist at heart. General De Gaulle was not really a friend of the Americans who didn't exactly like him.

He was dreaming of a peaceful Europe *de l'Atlantique à l'Oural* .

His international political philosophy was based on ***Entente détente et coopération***.

The EU may be wishing to alleviate sanctions but cannot do so without the green light of national states. Hence Putin's strong signal to Macron.

It may be the right moment for Europe to take its distances towards Uncle Sam or shall we say a totally unpredictable Uncle Donald.



Macron is seen by many as a full-blood Gaullist. Gaullists are known to be very tepid towards the United States. It just happens that *New Europe* is far more attached to the States than *Old Europe* and especially France.

There is a definite need for a link, a bridge, to develop contacts and initiate a dialogue between Europe *old and new* in order to overcome cultural and other differences, with a view to creating peaceful interactions between culturally interested people in all these countries including the Russian Federation. Such bridgework is a job that would suit Eyes of Europe perfectly.

Whether we like it or not, the present tension between Putin and the West may soon or later trigger a conflict on European soil.

Every sane politician in the West must realize that Russia will not accept sanctions forever.

What is at stake here is a clear choice, between conflict and cooperation, between war and peace, between security and tension.

Arrogance, contempt and sanctions can only lead to war, not peace. Arrogance is a short-time strategy for dummies.

But war can also take the shape of a civil conflict triggered by terrorism and the so called Islamic state.

Eyes of Europe is willing to be the peace dove that picks up Putin's *olive branch* and use its experience and expertise to build such bridges even beyond the present borders of Europe

Young Europeans stand for a peaceful future fewer tensions and more prosperity.

MARC GUIOT | Brussels, 13/05/2017

Professor, Essayist, Journalist

[Eyes of Europe Co-Founder](#)