

French Political Parties and Russia: The Politics of Power and Influence

[Jean-Yves Camus](#)

In 2018, what relationship do French political parties have with the Russian Federation, its government, and its political parties, including but not limited to its most prominent party, United Russia? In recent years, this issue has often been discussed in relation to two preconceived notions. The first is that financial relationships are the primary—if not the only—explanation: anything “funded by Russia” is supposed to support Russia’s positions, specifically the ideology of President Putin and United Russia. The second is that the goal of Russia’s financial relationships with political personalities or entities is to meddle in France’s internal affairs, either by influencing the electoral process or by spreading fake news and thereby shifting public opinion.

In this study, we propose a different approach. We begin from the standpoint that both Russia and France are major political, economic, and military powers. Both pursue strategies to secure power and influence. As such, they are obliged to have trade relations, to cooperate, and to engage in dialogue, even in the current strained international context. Despite the war in South Ossetia and Abkhazia in 2008, then the annexation of Crimea and the Donbas war in 2014, followed by then-President François Hollande’s decision not to deliver Mistral warships to Russia, and finally President Macron’s “cold shoulder” due to Russia’s supposed interference in the French presidential campaign, the relationship has never broken down. The two states have an objective interest in forecasting the political situation in their countries, and—while cooperating with the current administrations—diversifying their political contacts as much as possible to ensure that any turnover or change in the government does not risk the loss of their contacts.

Thus, while France maintains relationships with the Russian government, it has also directed its embassy in Moscow to stay in contact with civil society organizations and NGOs that are critical of the current power structures.¹ For its part, Russia is confronted by France’s parliamentary liberal democracy, where leadership turnover is frequent and the president and prime minister may be from different parties. Russia has thus diversified its relationships, developing contacts with individuals and organizations across the entire political spectrum, from the radical left (La France insoumise) and the social democrats (Socialist Party) to the two main parties on the right (Les Républicains and the Union des démocrates indépendants, UDI), as well as the Front National (FN).²

Anyone who seeks to understand Russia’s influence on France must understand what leads Moscow to have a consultative—even close—relationship with the Front National that is justified neither by that party’s influence on French political life nor by its anti-establishment status. To date, the Front National has never participated in a coalition government nor held a parliamentary majority. Why, then, should Russia symbolically invest so much in its relationship with the Front National, especially given that mainstream political parties—particularly the conservative ones, which have a chance of returning to power—have always listened to, and even been close to, Russia? Our hypothesis is that the Russian political authorities have analyzed the power dynamics within the broad spectrum of political parties on the right. This has caused them to doubt that the right-leaning elements within the government will continue to favor Russia’s interests and to nurture the relationship that General de Gaulle established during his visit to then-Soviet Moscow on June 30, 1966, when he stated: “My visit to your country is a visit from eternal France to eternal Russia....In addition, by coming to see you, it seemed to me that my initiative and your welcome were inspired by mutual consideration and cordiality, which have not been broken, over the course of centuries, by certain battles in the past, nor by different

regimes, nor by the recent conflicts caused by the division of the world.”³ An analysis of the relationship between the right and Russia may shed some light on the reasons for this doubt.

Russia and the Right: After de Gaulle, Disillusionment

General de Gaulle governed France from the summer of 1944 to January 1946, and then from 1958 to 1969. In his speech in Strasbourg on November 23, 1959, he made his now-famous statement: “Yes, it is Europe, from the Atlantic to the Urals, it is Europe, it is the whole of Europe that will decide the fate of the world!”⁴ It was under his government that the alliance treaty between France and the Soviet Union was signed on December 10, 1944 in Moscow. Two decades later, in 1964, France and the Soviet Union signed a bilateral trade agreement. While condemning the “hegemonies” of the United States and the Soviet Union, de Gaulle maintained—even during the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968—that the USSR was an “essential pillar” of Europe. And on September 9, 1965, in the context of the European right’s alignment with the United States during the Cold War, he announced that France would withdraw from NATO.

The policy of distancing France from the US’s diplomatic and military influence began to be reversed by François Mitterrand, who became president in 1981. Jacques Chirac, who served as president from 1995 to 2007, continued this approach. In 2009, Nicholas Sarkozy—whose term ended in 2012—put the finishing touches on restoring France’s ties to NATO, bringing Paris back into the integrated military command. Its membership aimed at transcending national boundaries seemed to suggest that France had abandoned its Gaullist philosophy of independent power.

Relations between Russia and France improved dramatically during Chirac’s second term, a period Russia Today termed “the golden age”⁵ of the relationship. This was exemplified by—although certainly not limited to—the excellent personal relationship between the two heads of state; then-Foreign Minister and future Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin’s condemnation of the Iraq war before the UN in 2003; and President Putin’s June 2004 visit to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Normandy landing.⁶

Among the Gaullist “old guard” are conservative players who are currently attempting to promote a positive image of Russia in France, invoking common geopolitical, cultural, and historical interests that should, they claim, transcend the difficult but temporary phase of Putin’s tenure in office. Dominique de Villepin, who returned to practicing law after his political career ended, is still quoted in the media. On November 8, 2016, he stated on BMF-TV: “We dismiss Russia while the vast majority of Russians support their president. We dismiss Russia because we don’t understand Russia, and because we are afraid of Russia’s strategy.”⁷ On March 18, 2018, de Villepin made a similar point, this time on RTL radio: “We mustn’t forget that our destiny is entwined with Russia’s and certainly not in opposition to it. If we inject into this the idea that we must sever ties with Russia, that Russia is evil, we completely dismiss the path that Russia has forged since the fall of the Berlin wall and the breakup of the Soviet Union.”⁸ De Villepin continues to predict a multipolar world. While lumping Russia in with Turkey, Iran, and China as part of the “authoritarian bloc,” he expresses concern about the weakness of liberal democracies, which, unlike Russia, seem to be unable to “decide for their people” or “exercise influence on the world stage.”⁹

Like de Villepin, many other high-profile personalities on the Gaullist right continue to quietly use their influence to promote the idea that a dialogue with Russia must be maintained. Chief among these is former minister Jean de Boishue (born 1943), who is fluent in Russian and the grandson of Vera Mestchersky, former director of La Maison Russe in the city of Sainte-Geneviève des Bois. De Boishue’s mother took over as director of La Maison Russe in 1949, so he grew up surrounded by “White Russian” émigrés who lived out their days in this Russian retirement home. De Boishue, who served as the specialist on defense issues for the political party Rassemblement pour la République (RPR),¹⁰ was close to former minister Philippe Séguin as well as to François Fillon during the latter’s tenure as prime minister (2007-2012).

Second among these proponents is Igor Mitrofanoff (born 1963). He was François Fillon’s “right-hand man” during both his time in Matignon (the Prime Minister’s residence) and the

2017 presidential campaign. Mitrofanoff comes from a family of White Russians. The son of architect Vladimir Mitrofanoff, he worked as the former prime minister's parliamentary aide for two decades.

The third person deserving of mention is a high-level civil servant, finance inspector Alexandre Jevakhoff (born 1952), who comes from a family of naval officers who left Crimea with General Wrangel in 1920. Jevakhoff served as President of the Circle of the Imperial Russian Navy, was a member of the Russian Nobility Union, and held the post of church warden of the Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Alexander Nevsky, associated with the Constantinople patriarchy. He worked with Michèle Alliot-Marie from 2002-2012, a period that encompassed all her ministerial roles, including her term at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Jevakhoff has written several well-received historical volumes: *Les Russes Blancs*, published by Tallandier in 2007; *Le Roman des Russes à Paris*, published by Editions du Rocher in 2014; and *La Guerre civile russe*, published by Perrin in 2017. He has held high-profile roles in the private sector, specifically in the industrial metallurgy sector, likely allowing him to influence the economic rapprochement between the two countries' private sectors.

Alexandre Jevakhoff is particularly interesting, due to his nuanced analysis of the Putin regime. In an interview in the self-proclaimed "anti-modern" publication *Philitt*, he explained his irritation with the fact that "a school of nationalist historians wishes to interpret 1917 through a contemporary lens, focusing on an anti-Russian plot organized from outside,"¹¹ admitting that "the White Russians basically committed acts of terror." He criticized the lack of formal condemnation of communism, which allowed the regime to highlight its commitment to defending "Eternal Russia," saying, "Although Russia has verbally condemned the excesses of the Soviet regime, there was never any Germany-style trial of national socialism." His criticism focused on the fact that "The official political discourse endeavors to promote an "inclusive" dialogue in which the civil war was a tragedy for the Russian people as a whole, regardless of sides. We must get beyond these divisions and defend the principle of reconciliation. While understandable from a strictly political point of view, this discourse does not convince everyone. For example, a majority of White Russian immigrants to France see some act of contrition as absolutely critical."¹² That being said, Jevakhoff's version of history remains faithful to the White Russians, whose diverse ideologies he emphasizes.

Having elaborated on the public figures mentioned above and their ties to what remains of Social Gaullism, we now turn to mapping the relationships between the major figures in the UMP (now known as Les Républicains) and Russia. By all accounts, these members of the Post-Gaullist right have diverse opinions on Russia and its rulers. François Fillon, considered to be closest to the Russian leadership, is first and foremost a proponent of French sovereignty and a Euro-skeptic who campaigned against the Maastricht Treaty with Philippe Séguin and Charles Pasqua in 1992. Once Fillon rose to the top of the government, then-President Sarkozy relegated him to the rank of associate. Fillon was happy to cement a relationship of equals with Vladimir Putin in 2008-2012, when Putin put Dimitry Medvedev in charge of the country.

While Fillon's center-right victory in the November 2016 primaries was viewed with great satisfaction in Moscow, his support for the lifting of EU sanctions after the March 2014 annexation of Crimea—a stance shared by the majority of Les Républicains in the National Assembly—no doubt enhanced these strong personal relationships. An unabashed Catholic, Fillon is very aware of the situation for Eastern Christians in the Middle East, and of France and Russia's common strategic interests there. After Fillon left the government, he spoke out against France's involvement in Syria, first at the Valdai Discussion Club in 2013 and later as part of a campaign strategy to mobilize his supporter base. In an article in the weekly *Marianne*, he wrote that Russia was "the only power that faced up to reality" in Syria.¹³

To emerge victorious in the right's presidential primary (held November 20 and 27, 2016), however, Fillon had to align himself more closely with the mainstream view on Russia among party members, so as to take the edge off his "conservatism" and his perceived lack of consideration of humanitarian issues. Fellow primary candidate Alain Juppé made a direct dig at Fillon between the two rounds of elections, saying, "Talking to Russia doesn't mean acting as a yes-man."¹⁴ That same day, Fillon spoke to Europe 1 radio, describing Russia as "a dangerous

country because it's chock-full of nuclear weapons and has never been a democracy." This was not, however, enough to satisfy his adversaries, who attempted to find financial ties between Fillon's consulting company and Russia. Fillon responded, "My list of clients doesn't include any Russian businesses, or the Russian government, or any Russian entity (...). All of the speeches I've given in Russia were unpaid."¹⁵

Are there significant differences between Fillon's attitude and that of former President Nicholas Sarkozy? Fillon is no longer active in politics, and currently works for the asset management company Tikehau Capital. Meanwhile, Sarkozy, now the chair of AccorHotels Group's international strategy committee, has discreetly maintained his network—and his popularity—among Les Républicains. To answer the question, we must distinguish between the different periods of Sarkozy's 2007-2012 presidential term. The first involves Sarkozy's intransigence toward Moscow, as a conservative candidate and then as President, specifically regarding human rights violations and the war in Chechnya. During a September 2006 trip to the US, Sarkozy gave the impression of wanting to solidify France's relationship with America. Above all, this was the result of Sarkozy's desire to differentiate himself from Jacques Chirac. During the campaign, Sarkozy had said that the changes in Russia were "concerning"¹⁶ and heavily criticized those who faulted him for meeting with then-President George W. Bush, stating that they were "under Putin's thumb." According to Arnaud Dubien,¹⁷ Moscow had even warned Sarkozy against nominating Pierre Lellouche—an UMP bigwig seen as very pro-US and in favor of Georgia joining NATO—as Minister of Foreign Affairs or Defense.

At the Bucharest summit in April 2008, although Sarkozy announced France's return to NATO, he also announced his opposition to Georgia and Ukraine's inclusion in the integrated military command. As Dubien notes, this change can be primarily attributed to economic pragmatism. Sarkozy was very concerned with ensuring a healthy business climate, and that meant doing business with Russia, which had, in July 2007, allowed France's Total to purchase 25% of the Shtockman natural gas project in the Barents Sea. Putin also gave Sarkozy a very strong signal during the G8 summit in Heiligendamm, Germany, in June 2008. During their meeting, Sarkozy brought up human rights, Chechnya, and Anna Polikovskaya's death; Putin reportedly responded dryly that the bilateral power dynamic was very unfavorable to France and advised Sarkozy to change his tone or face the consequences. Sarkozy's former diplomatic adviser, Jean-David Levitte, denied this version of the story, originally reported by journalist Nicolas Hénin. However, Hénin stuck to his version, which has some credibility. If this scenario is true, it might explain why French diplomacy presented the cease-fire that France negotiated between Tbilisi and Moscow following Russia's actions on August 8, 2008 as a diplomatic victory, even though Russia's decision not to invade Georgia's capital had undoubtedly been made before that. In allowing Sarkozy and his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bernard Kouchner, to claim credit for this success, Russia allowed them to craft their images as "peacemakers" without the French team doing anything but standing by its decision not to press a previously-gained political advantage too far.

Without analyzing this too deeply, we can see that 2008 was a turning-point for Sarkozy. He was subsequently able to get a handle on France's relationship with Russia, as evidenced by the December 2010 inking of a contract to sell two Mistral amphibious assault ships, the much-touted celebration of 2010 as the year of cultural exchange between France and Russia, and the Russian Orthodox spiritual and cultural center project, which began in 2007 at the urging of Patriarch Alexy II. This project, which resulted in the sale of an inholding that had been coveted by Saudi Arabia, was strongly supported by the French president, despite the controversy surrounding the project, its architecture, and its clear significance as a political "mark" of the Russian government's presence in Paris.¹⁸

To the end of his term, Sarkozy maintained the difficult balance between solidarity with Brussels and NATO and safeguarding France's economic interests. For reasons specific to the neo-Gaullist party, Sarkozy needed to appear committed to a certain level of French autonomy. One example of this balancing act was June 16, 2016, when, speaking at the St. Petersburg Economic Forum, he implored Russia to lift its 2014 embargo on European food products. In exchange, he offered to lift European sanctions. After leaving public life, Sarkozy reaffirmed his

support for engaging with Russia, saying, during a speech at the Abu Dhabi Ideas Weekend conference on March 3, 2018, “Russia is the world’s largest country in terms of area. Who could tell us not to talk to them? It’s crazy! We need Russia. We must talk to Putin, especially when we don’t agree.”¹⁹

Russian influence on the French right is just as apparent at lower levels of the political pyramid. It was particularly visible in Moscow’s relationships with MPs from Les Républicains’ base during the June 2017 legislative elections. These MPs are province-level elected officials who are critical to conveying a positive image of Russia to the vast majority of French citizens, who live outside the Paris bubble and outside major decision-making centers. The potential for Russia to develop good relationships with second-tier politicians has been strengthened by the schism that has existed among conservatives, especially Les Républicains, since at least Sarkozy’s election in 2007. At the national level, Les Républicains must manage an alliance with the UDI and attract a good chunk of the moderates who backed François Bayrou, while simultaneously maintaining the local-level support of their militant “base,” 32% of whom wanted alliances with the Front National in 2010.²⁰ That percentage increased to 48% after the June 2012 presidential and legislative elections, won decisively by the social democrat François Hollande and the Socialist Party.²¹

The most right-leaning of Les Républicains—both politicians and supporters—are skeptical of, or even hostile toward, what they see as their side’s ideological impasse. They believe that the party has been won over by the liberal ideas of cultural relativism and multiculturalism, and has failed to respond aggressively enough to Islamist terrorism and the progress of political Islam to ensure French security and protect national identity. They also feel that their party has been too lax when it comes to societal issues such as same-sex marriage, abortion and the end of life, bioethics, and the defense of family values more broadly. As the right clamors for the return of authority and the end of the cultural hegemony of liberal-libertarian values that they consider has prevailed since the uprisings of May 1968, the Russian model—like the model of President Trump and the wing of the Republican party that supports him—offers political and cultural responses to the identity crises in France and in Europe. A specific example of this trend is the repeated mentions of General de Gaulle in foreign policy debates, both by left-wing sovereignists and by those on the right who opposed the April 2018 US-coordinated response to Syria and the “pro-Atlanticist” trend more generally.

Chief among the Les Républicains politicians who support Russia through their words and actions is Thierry Mariani, former Minister of Transportation (2010-2012). Mariani has a longstanding interest in Russia and began to learn Russian while in high school in the 1970s. He started his political career as a deputy in a district in the southeastern department of Vaucluse, where he beat out a representative of the entrenched Front National. From 2012 until 2017, he represented the 11th district of French expatriates, which includes Asia, Australia and New Zealand, as well as all the countries of the former Soviet Union. In 2017, Mariani was defeated by a candidate from Macron’s party, La République en Marche (LREM) candidate,²² despite Mariani’s strong local presence and the significant attention he paid not only to Russia, but also to other countries within his electoral district such as Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan (specifically the Association of Friends of Azerbaijan (AAA), primarily funded by the Heydar-Aliyev Foundation).

Mariani is a man of convictions. In 2010, he founded a movement called La Droite Populaire within the UMP. This brought together some 40 MPs, many of whom shared Mariani’s pro-Russia sentiments. Members included former Aube deputy Nicolas Dhuicq; his former colleague from Yvelines, Jacques Myard; and former Rhone deputy Philippe Meunier. La Droite Populaire favored a broad conservative coalition including the Front National, and was more sovereignist than the class right, in the sense of a “Europe of Nations.” Its members advocated tirelessly for tougher immigration and asylum policies, as well as for a narrower definition of French identity. They also defended a political program that intersected with Russia’s major political strategies. Mariani became obsessed with ISIS’ progress and was one of the few MPs to wholly support the Syrian government against the rebels, going so far as to travel to Damascus in January²³ and November of 2017.

In July 2015, he was the key figure in a 10-MP delegation that traveled to Crimea. After meeting with Sergei Naryshin in Moscow, they traveled to Yalta and Sevastopol to meet with local authorities. The French Minister of Foreign Affairs and the President of the National Assembly (at that time, socialist Claude Bartolone) disapproved of this initiative, which included seven members of Les Républicains: Nicolas Dhuicq, Claude Goasguen, Jacques Myard, Rhone deputy Patrice Verchère (re-elected in 2017), Corsica deputy Sauveur Gandolfi-Scheit, Marie-Christine Dalloz (still a Jura deputy today), the UDI senator from Paris Yves Pozzo di Borgo,²⁴ and the radical Charente deputy Jérôme Lambert.²⁵ Mariani traveled to Russia once again in July 2016, with Nicolas Dhuicq and Jacques Myard, meeting with the Black Sea fleet commander in Sevastopol and with Russia-allied representatives of the Tatar minority. The outcome for Tatars in Crimea was one of the salient points of Mariani's argument: he told the *Courrier de Russie* that the Tatars had been treated better than the Lithuanian Russians,²⁶ and in general made no secret of his skepticism about the expansion of the European Union, stating that the true mistake was allowing into the European Union countries "that in no way share our history or desires. Romania, Poland and the Baltic states haven't faced their past, unlike France or Germany."²⁷ This thinly-veiled reference to France's collaboration with Nazi Germany (the subtext of which is to glorify Soviet support for the Allies) went on to suggest that the countries in the 2004 EU expansion were primarily concerned with security—which, according to Mariani, meant that, "to them, NATO is much more important than the European Union."²⁸

Mariani's ideological musings—including his thought that he might rejoin the Front National for the 2019²⁹ European elections—leave one question: his motivation for supporting the most controversial elements of Russia's foreign policy. Some point to his significant stake in the associations that seek to enhance economic ties with Russia (his chairmanship of the Association Dialogue Franco-Russe, for example).³⁰ This aspect should not be dismissed but is less significant than Mariani's commitment to the sovereignist right. First of all, this commitment ties him to Russia because the remaining defenders of the traditional Gaullist nonaligned foreign policy still emphasize the long-term nature of the France-Russia relationship, versus what they see as short-term ups and downs. Secondly, sovereignists' vision of the country's higher interests leads them to downplay the issue of human rights. Finally, the societal model to which they as conservatives refer sees in modern-day Russia what they criticize the UMP and Les Républicains for having abandoned or lost: a taste for a clear chain of command and the expression of traditional values, including patriotism, family, and a united nation with a common destiny.³¹

The "Non-Mainstream" Right: An Influential Group That Is Coalescing

We can define the non-mainstream right as an informal group; it is not structured into political parties but includes individuals, associations, and newspapers. The goal is to eventually create a unified group including all "flavors" of the right, without excluding the Front National, particularly if its next leader is Marion Maréchal Le Pen. The non-mainstream right is personified by a diverse range of supporters: Patrick Buisson, former advisor to Nicolas Sarkozy and former director of the right-wing newspaper *Minute*; former presidential candidate Philippe de Villiers; Béziers mayor Robert Ménard; and Ménard's wife, Emmanuelle Duverger-Ménard, who is also now a deputy. This group recently made its thoughts known via a manifesto published in and supported by the weekly news magazine *Valeurs actuelles*. Entitled "A Call from Angers," many of its signatories took pro-Russia positions.³² The text sets forth the strategic lines for a renewal of the right in France.

First and foremost, it is a reaffirmation of the fundamental values of the right—a right that does not sit back and give in to the cultural domination of liberal-libertarian values. With an eye toward "turning the page on May 1968," the title of a symposium that marked Marion Maréchal's return to politics on May 31, 2018,³³ the "non-mainstream right" stands against immigration aimed at increasing the population and against multiculturalism; against Islamism and aggressive secularism which aims to erase France's Christian roots; against "globalism that

denies the reality of nations;” and for the power of European civilization in the context of a realist—not idealist—outlook on international relations.”³⁴

These views, which are the exact opposite of Jacques Chirac and Alain Juppé’s center-right policies, explain the Putin model’s appeal for most people on this end of the political spectrum. Within the non-mainstream right, we see novel attempts to build bridges with Russia. For example, Philippe de Villiers and Jean-Frédéric Poisson both created links with Russia around Christian-inspired civilization issues.

Philippe de Villiers is the former director of Mouvement pour la France (MPF). In the summer of 2014, following Russia’s annexation of Crimea, de Villiers gained approval to build two “historic and patriotic” theme parks devoted to Russian history, one in the Moscow area and one in Crimea. This concept was funded by the Tsargrad Group, led by Konstantin Malofeev. In August 2014, De Villiers met with Putin in Yalta and received confirmation of this contract, which was intended to bring the concept of theme parks to Russia.³⁵

De Villiers created the historic theme park concept in 1989 for the bicentennial of the French Revolution, to glorify the memory of the War in the Vendée. During the last decade of the 18th century, this war was fought between the revolutionary army and the Catholic royalist army, resulting in mass killings of the royalists by the revolutionaries on ideological, anti-religious grounds. Hence de Villiers’ infatuation with Russia: even if the projects have not led to anything concrete—both have been on hold since 2017—they are rooted in anti-Communism and in the deep Christian faith that led de Villiers to ask Alexander Solzhenitsyn to inaugurate the Vendée Memorial in Lucs sur Boulogne on September 25, 1993. Reading Solzhenitsyn’s speech,³⁶ we understand the link between de Villiers and Russia; it is based on counter-revolutionary, anti-constructivist, Christian, and organicist ideas. In using a memorial that was intended to represent all totalitarian regimes to pay homage to the victims of the hell that was the War in Vendée, and in particular to the 564 victims of the massacre in Lucs-sur-Boulogne, Villiers, like Solzhenitsyn, placed the victims of communism on the continuum of ideas seen as detrimental to freedom and potentially instigating genocide. These ideas were seen as coming out of the 1789 Revolution, and thus out of the philosophy of Enlightenment.

How, then, could parallels not be drawn between the anti-communism of Villiers—a graduate of the prestigious civil service university ENA, who then became a sub-prefect and left the civil service in 1983 to avoid serving under a leftist government—and historian Reynald Sécher’s assessment of the War in Vendée: “In fact, this war was above all a crusade for individual liberty, personal safety, and property. In the face of ‘oppressive tyrants,’ the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, along with Saint Thomas Aquinas, provides moral justification for insubordination”?³⁷

Philippe de Villiers is not the only “friend of Russia” to feel that societal regeneration requires re-Christianization, meaning that the church’s social doctrine should be enshrined in law. This is also the case of the small Christian Democrats Party, chaired by former Yvelines deputy Jean-Frédéric Poisson. On a visit to Moscow in February 2018, Poisson met with Metropolitan Hilarion and discussed the situation of Christians in Russia. He then met with Oleg Stepanov, director of the Department of Foreign Policy in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and finally with Denis Davydov, head of the Young Guard, United Russia’s youth movement. When questioned by RT France about having congratulated President Putin on his re-election, Poisson invoked the Russian president’s support for the traditional family, arguing that after being “destroyed by Communism,” the traditional family was now under threat in the West due to “market forces.”³⁸ This was a reference to ongoing debates about medically-assisted reproduction and gestational surrogacy in France, both of which the Christian Democrats vehemently oppose. Poisson was far from the first to state that Russia and France “have the same enemies.” Yet another religious conviction motivated Poisson to state that “propaganda against Russia and its president” originates with the fact that “Vladimir Putin is not in favor with international financial powers.” This references a form of anti-capitalism that is specific to Christian-Socialist circles and papal teachings, which began with the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*—published in 1891—and its criticism of the concentration of capital. It continued with

the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, published by Pope Francis on November 26, 2013, which condemned “the dictatorship of an impersonal economy.”³⁹

Such societal issues also appear in the writings of Xavier Moreau, a very active blogger on France-Russia relations and founder of the strategic analysis center Stratpol⁴⁰ and the LinkIT Vostok corporation. Moreau is a graduate of the prestigious Saint-Cyr military academy and has lived in Russia for 18 years. He acquired Russian citizenship by marriage, and is also the international affairs advisor to the chair of the Christian Democrats. He has expressed six international affairs priorities: “France’s complete diplomatic sovereignty, which presumes an immediate exit from NATO; the primacy of French law over all international courts of justice; respect for international law without exception; respect for UN Security Council resolutions; non-interference; creation of strong and balanced bilateral relationships with the great world powers: the US, Russia, China, India, UK, Brazil, Germany, etc.”⁴¹ Beyond his geopolitical analyses, which primarily focus on Crimea and Ukraine, and his thoughts on Putin’s largely-positive exercise of power,⁴² Moreau’s personality and role can be understood through the words “always Catholic and French,” which appear on his Twitter profile, and his positions on the 2013 issue of marriage for all.

A controversy arose during demonstrations by the anti-gay marriage association La Manif pour Tous (LMPT), chaired by Ludovine de La Rochère. The movement clashed with United Russia, and with Russian associations that defend the traditional family, when the Moscow branch of Les Républicains (LR) used the LMPT flag. This led the association⁴³ to protest against United Russia using this as “the heterosexual flag,” thus opening itself to accusations of collusion between the LMPT, the Russian government, and—especially—Russian circles with which opponents of the Taubira [pro-same-sex marriage] law absolutely did not want to be associated, as they were allegedly homophobic. The second conflict resulted from the first: the Nastoishchaia Sem’ia (“Real Family”) association, seemingly the LMPT’s natural Russian counterpart, refused to sign a partnership agreement with them.

It fell to Xavier Moreau to explain these tensions.⁴⁴ According to him, this collaboration fell through because, “The Russian pro-family movement does not use the language of the adversary—the LGBT lobby. Hence their inability to understand the accusations of homophobia by Manif pour Tous.” Moreau went on to explain that La Manif pour Tous differs from Russian organizations because “the pro-family movement in Russia is not areligious as is true in France; it is multi-religious.”⁴⁵ This prompted the opposition between the LMPT and its base-building strategy of political normalization, on the one hand, and the World Congress of Families (WCF), which is firmer in its Christian convictions and its support for Russia—where it has partnered with The Endowment for St. Andrew the First-Called Foundation, chaired by Natalia Yakunina—on the other. In France, the WCF made a name for itself with a symposium held on April 1, 2017 at the Maison de la Chimie and organized by the French Demographic Society, directed by Fabrice Sorlin. French speakers invoked both the “methods of the gay lobby with respect to the European Union” and Russia-focused topics such as “the rise of Russia in the 21st century.” They included Guillaume de Thieulloy, a key figure in conservative Catholic circles and owner of the influential website *Le Salon Beige*; John Laughland of the pro-Russian Institute for Democracy and Cooperation; Colonel Jacques Hogard; Yannick Jaffré, a philosopher and former member of the *Rassemblement Bleu Marine* (a pro-Marine Le Pen movement);⁴⁶ Philippe Migault, President of the Centre for European Strategic Analysis; Xavier Moreau; and Fabrice Sorlin.

We may not be able to give a complete accounting of the actions of the “non-mainstream right” with regard to Russia, but it is worth mentioning another specific aspect. It was the non-mainstream right that promoted the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic in France. Hubert Fayard opened an “embassy” for it—in the form of an association not recognized by the French government⁴⁷—in Marseille in September 2017.⁴⁸ Fayard is a former Front National regional counselor from Haute-Loire, who subsequently served as Bruno Mégret’s deputy mayor in Vitrolles (1995). Fayard is currently the president of the federation of Bouches-du-Rhône for CNIP, the National Center of Independents and Peasants, a small conservative party that often serves as a transitional party for Front National politicians who want to join right-leaning governments. It was also Fayard who, in June 2017, led a delegation to Donetsk that included

Christiane Pujol, a counselor representing Debout la France (a Front National spinoff); Christian Borelli, a Les Républicains deputy from Vitrolle; Emmanuel Leroy, former advisor to Marine Le Pen; and Kris Roman, formerly of the Belgian Vlaams Blok and President of the EuroRus association.

Hubert Fayard further played a major role in a sister city initiative which forced the French Minister of Foreign Affairs to issue a public clarification, namely the agreement signed by the Mayor of Marignane (Bouches du Rhône) and the city of Yevpatoria, Crimea. Eric Le Dissès (an unaffiliated conservative and former UMP member) traveled to Yevpatoria in November 2017, after a stop in Moscow where he visited the Duma. He was joined in Crimea by Jacques Clostermann,⁴⁹ former Front National coordinator in Marignane and subsequently a candidate in the 2017 legislature elections, in which Jean-Marie Le Pen supported him instead of the official Front National candidate. Fayard claimed to have had the idea for this sister city project in 2016, during the reception at the Russian embassy for Victory Day. The project amplified Eric Le Dissès' support for the opening of the "Republic of Donetsk's mission in Marseille." He stated: "I don't have a negative view of this presence in Marseille. We look kindly on the United States. Why not on Russia? The Russians have been our allies. As a people, they are particularly fond of France and the French. I'm aware of that. I know Hubert Fayard well. I know that he is on top of the Russia-Ukraine issue, and he's the ideal person to spearhead this project in Marseille."⁵⁰

Another pro-Donbas initiative supported by high-profile figures close to the "non-mainstream right" has been the publication of the substantial and luxurious magazine *Méthode*. The first issue was published in May-June 2017 under the joint patronage of the Franco-Russian institute of Donetsk and the French department of the Donetsk National Technical University.⁵¹ This publication saw collaboration between Xavier Moreau, former deputy to Christian Venneste; political scientist Guillaume Bernard; blogger Alexandre Latsa, who feels that "Putinism may become Gaullism" and that the future of Russian soft power is "that Russian elites will succeed in reconciling a party with a Tsarist and Communist heritage with today's new Russia";⁵² the journalist Françoise Compoint;⁵³ and former officer Erwan Castel, a key figure in the French volunteers' engagement in Donbas.⁵⁴ The magazine is, along with the French version of the official media outlet Novorossiia Today (<http://nrt24.ru/fr>), the primary method for disseminating pro-Donbas information in French-speaking circles.⁵⁵

Another important figure of this non-mainstream right has been Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, a Gaullist-Sovereignist who left the UMP to found Debout la France (DLF). He was DLF's presidential candidate in 2017, winning 4.7% of the vote before supporting Marine Le Pen in the second round on the understanding that he would become her Prime Minister if she were elected. This agreement was not maintained for the June 2017 legislative elections, and Dupont-Aignan is currently planning to submit an independent list of candidates. Current surveys show DLF winning 6% of votes, which would allow it to enter the European Parliament.⁵⁶ In his presidential platform, Dupont-Aignan suggested "unilaterally abandoning the regime of sanctions against Russia."⁵⁷ This gave him sufficient credibility to be invited to speak before the Duma's Foreign Affairs Commission on March 16, 2015. In this speech, he made the usual references to Gaullist foreign policy, as well as positioning himself as the spokesperson for "the vast and silent majority of French people, who believe in a harmonious relationship between France and Russia." He attacked the European Union for "snatching defeat from the jaws of victory: failing to reconcile East and West, dividing the continent into a standoff between neighbors and cousins, and solidifying Europe's total powerlessness in world affairs." He was one of the few French politicians to push for "a neutral (absolutely not in NATO) and federal Ukraine," and for the transformation of the European Union into "a European cooperative project, extending from the Atlantic to the Urals."⁵⁸ His position as a bridge between Les Républicains—whose disappointed sovereignist supporters he hoped to attract—and the Front National made him an important player in holding the conservative movement together, in that he had access to a well-oiled partisan structure that had been in place since 1999.

The Radical Left in Parliament: When La France insoumise Joins with Russia against NATO and the German-Controlled EU

La France insoumise (LFI) is a radical leftist party, founded in 2016 and directed by Marseille deputy and former Socialist minister Jean-Luc Mélenchon. He came in fourth in the first round of the 2017 presidential elections with 19.58% of the vote. In the 2017 legislative elections, LFI solidified its position with 11.03% of the vote, sending 17 deputies to the National Assembly. LFI is in the same radical left, anti-liberal category as Spain's Podemos, Germany's Die Linke, and Portugal's *Bloco de Esquerda* (Left Bloc). It seems to have been influenced by the concepts of radical, antagonistic, and multi-faceted democracy, as defined by Chantal Mouffe. This includes playing to voters' emotions by opposing humanism and liberal rationalism.⁵⁹

LFI is strongly in favor of leaving NATO and is sovereignist, in the sense that it would like France's foreign policy not to be aligned with the US or with the current version of the EU. The party has shown sympathy for Hugo Chavez's "Bolivar revolution" and a "new alter-globalist alliance,"⁶⁰ whose objective is a multipolar world, more broadly. The principles of international action defended by LFI have been assembled into a brochure entitled *Une France indépendante au service de la paix* (An Independent France in the Service of Peace),⁶¹ which was first distributed on March 31, 2017, the same day that Jean-Luc Mélenchon presented his defense and geopolitical platform. The brochure was prepared by a working group coordinated by France Paul (pseudonym), a high-level civil servant in the Ministry of Defense, and Djordje Kuzmanovic, a geopolitical analyst and former French army officer in Afghanistan, who played a central advisory role and represents the tradition of the "patriotic left" in a party that has little awareness of the army's value or of defense issues.

The first point in LFI's international relations platform is that US hegemony has given way to a "multipolar globalization" and that the US is attempting to regain its lost influence through ongoing increases in defense spending—"more than double the combined military spending of China and Russia"—which has caused an increasing number of regional conflicts that LFI sees as a threat to peace. In France's decision to rejoin NATO, LFI saw the country going blindly along with the US' positions, as exemplified by "François Hollande's approval of the US's planned missile shield directed against Russia." Jean-Luc Mélenchon's followers cast this decision in the larger context of "treachery" by the French elite: going along with the US' views on the crisis in Ukraine, Israel-Palestine, Syria, and the oil monarchies in the Gulf.

This type of criticism, heard from both left-wing sovereignists like Jean-Pierre Chevènement and traditional Gaullists such as Dominique de Villepin and Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, does not signify alignment with Russia but a vision of Russia as a counterbalance to America's excessive power and a potential diplomatic and strategic ally. The party's recommendation is thus to "redeploy France's international activities in three main directions: the Mediterranean, French-speaking countries outside Europe, and (re)-emerging powers such as the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa)." It is also true that LFI's opposition to the European Union's current focus on Germany, and France's alignment with Berlin as the source of austerity policies, is a good match for Russia's concerns—namely weakening the European Union by weakening France's relationship with Germany.⁶² However, we do not follow journalist Nicolas Hénin in considering Mélenchon "the most extreme advocate" of the Putin regime.⁶³ The factors that motivated Mélenchon to express his belief that Russia's intervention in Syria would "eliminate ISIS"⁶⁴—and the fact that he opposed sanctions against Moscow—reflect a tradition that predates Putin's time in office, one that existed within the left wing of the Socialist Party that Mélenchon left in 2008. This tradition includes uncompromising secularism, which currently sees the eradication of Islamism as a priority (and therefore offers tactical assistance to those who are fighting it with weapons); an instinctive distrust of the rules of international law (supposedly directed by the United States) and of the United Nations (allegedly founded on the false idea that human rights trump reality, to better conceal a rejection of the multipolar world); and extreme patriotic republicanism, which leads to an emphasis on external policies that reflect the timelessness and superiority of the French definition of citizenship.

As an example, when Mélenchon traveled to Russia for Victory Day on May 9, 2018, he marched in a parade with Russian citizens from the Immortal Regiment and carried a

photograph of a pilot from the Normandy-Niemen Squadron. He calls for the “normalization” of France’s relations with Russia⁶⁵ while meeting with Sergei Udaltsov, leader of the leftist movement,⁶⁶ and writer Sergei Shargunov, a former close associate of Eduard Limonov’s National Bolshevik Party and now a member of Zakhar Prilepin party,⁶⁷ but his conversations with those close to the leadership have been limited to Alexei Pushkov, former chair of the Duma’s commission on foreign affairs and an excellent French-speaker.

Compared to the energy surrounding the LFI, the French Communist Party, led by Pierre Laurent, is on the decline. It chose not to nominate its own candidate in the last presidential election, instead supporting Jean-Luc Mélenchon. The party did not continue this support during the legislative elections, in which it garnered 2.72% of the vote—the lowest share in its history—but returned 10 deputies, thanks to its remaining strongholds in various municipalities. The French Communist Party is unique in still having high-level personnel who grew up before the fall of the Soviet Union, and who may thus have studied in Soviet universities or attended trainings offered in the Soviet Union.⁶⁸ The Party was one of very few to commemorate the October 1917 revolution, questioning whether this was appropriate in light of its longstanding condemnation of Stalinism but reinterpreting the Bolshevik message as a starting-point for a “progressive” outlook.⁶⁹ *L’Humanité*, the French Communist Party’s daily publication, expresses a critical attitude toward Putin, despite its hostility to any alignment with NATO and the US. During the Russian presidential election campaign in 2018, *L’Humanité* reported rather favorably on the candidacy of the Communist Pavel Grudinin⁷⁰ and portrayed Putin as a leader who was far removed from socialist ideology but likely—during his next term—to launch economic reforms in opposition to his “succession of liberal turns” and to take advantage of his international status to bring back a sense of national pride, for which Russians are very grateful to Putin.

The Social-Democrat Left and LREM

The Socialist Party and the Radical Left Party, along with the European greens—Ecologie Les Verts—comprise the French political structures least affected by Russia’s soft power. Only a handful of individuals defend a vision of international relations in which Russia is not seen as an adversary. Former government minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement left the Socialist Party in 1993 to found the Mouvement des Citoyens (Citizens’ Movement), which in 2003 became the Mouvement Républicain et Citoyen (Republican and Citizen Movement). Since his appointment as the President’s special representative for Russia in November 2012, he has worked to develop ties between the two countries, especially as part of France’s “economic diplomacy.” In September 2014, then-President François Hollande sent him to Moscow to repair the bilateral relationship that had been harmed by the conflict in Ukraine. Chevènement is a sovereigntist (he condemned the Treaty of Maastricht) opposed to external French military actions, in which he feels that France is in a “subordinate situation” compared to the US or NATO (he resigned his ministry position due to disagreement with sending troops during the First Gulf War). He defends a form of leftist patriotism rooted in the memory of the 1789 Revolution and the Commune of Paris. He is aware of the historic depth of the France-Russia alliance during both the First and—especially—the Second World Wars, making him receptive to the need to safeguard ties between the two nations. In November 2017, Putin bestowed on him the Order of Friendship during a ceremony at the Kremlin.

During the presidency of François Mitterrand, Chevènement was in the minority fighting for a multipolar world. He was supported by the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hubert Védrine (1997-2002), who, although he blamed Russia and the West equally for the breakdown in their relationship, is one of the rare leftists to emphasize that the mistake lay in uselessly denigrating Russia or taking it lightly, while Mitterrand’s attitude was also a response to the humiliation endured during the Yeltsin years.⁷¹ His predecessor in the job, Roland Dumas (1986-1993), likewise supports a multipolarity in which Paris would ally with Moscow. His mindset shift has led him to state, “Today, the United States and Israel are the leaders. Today, we are in an alliance where France has nothing more to say. We have no independent foreign policy (...).

France must re-establish a preferential relationship with Russia. We treat the Russians poorly, contrary to what is said around the world!"⁷²

This attitude is highly representative of the socialist sensibility that remains associated with the third-worldism and anti-Americanism that molded the French left in the 1970s and 1980s. With the exception of these voices, the rest of the socialist left has followed Mitterrand's trajectory: a rapprochement with the United States, favoring a Europe based on a French-German alliance, and distrust of Russia. François Hollande's position on Ukraine and Syria undoubtedly marked the lowest point in French-Russian bilateral diplomatic relations since the fall of the USSR, although it can be said that a sort of neo-conservative shift within French diplomacy began with the arrival of former socialist Bernard Kouchner at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2007 and continued throughout Sarkozy's term. Hollande continues to believe that the West's refusal to intervene against the Syrian regime in 2013 opened the door to Russia's sense of impunity, which led it to annex Crimea. In opposition to Emmanuel Macron, he stated in March 2018: "We can exert pressure, impose sanctions, trade rules, raise the issue of oil and gas. The West must see danger for what it is. We must talk to Putin; we can raise the issue of the historic relationship between France and Russia. But this is not a reason to allow him to advance his pawns while we do nothing. Donald Trump's position is neither clear nor predictable. So it is up to France, Europe, and NATO to act. Russia has been rearming itself for years. If it is a threat, it must also be threatened."⁷³

This vision is based on a perception dominant among the new Socialist Party leadership under Olivier Faure, which has been in place since April 7, 2018: Russia is not only dangerous on the international scale, but it is not democratic, due to its suppression of NGOs, civil society, and the opposition.⁷⁴ Reacting to the March 2017 demonstrations in Belarus, and those in Russia following the arrest of Alexei Navalny, Socialist Party national secretary Maurice Braud, one of the primary architects of the party's external relationships, stated: "Two great European countries—Belarus and Russia—will see the vitality, energy, and prosperity of their respective peoples increase considerably when they commit more firmly to a true democratic process."⁷⁵

The attitude of President Emmanuel Macron and his party, LREM, by contrast, shows a pragmatism that was confirmed during his participation in the St. Petersburg forum but was not obvious at the beginning of his term. The first meeting between Putin and Macron—in France on May 28, 2017, in the Gallery of Great Battles in Versailles—marked the 300th anniversary of Peter the Great's 1717 visit to France. During this meeting, Macron made a statement that was very unusual in diplomatic terms, harshly criticizing the misinformation about him during the presidential campaign: "In reality, Russia Today and Sputnik did not act as press outlets and journalists, but as peddlers of influence, propaganda, and lies. Nothing more and nothing less."⁷⁶

But soon afterwards, despite periodic negative signs such as Macron's refusal to visit the Russian booth at the Salon du Livre in Paris⁷⁷ due to the Skrypal affair, Macron adopted a more realistic approach, and not only because of the 50 business contracts signed during the St. Petersburg Summit. One reason for this is his historic opportunity to lead Europe in its negotiations with Russia, while the UK is out of the picture and Chancellor Merkel is in a weakened position. A second is Macron's governing style: it is more Gaullist than expected, with a certain taste for hierarchy and a difficult-to-pin-down mix of justifying globalization and worrying about France's greatness. That Putin was among the first presidents to meet with Macron was no accident, because even if there is the potential for the two countries to come into conflict in Syria, Macron still hopes he can create an opening for France to be respected and listened to. Diplomatic ground has truly been broken, starting with the lifting of France's veto of humanitarian cooperation with Russia and Syria, and reinforced by the end of Bashar al-Assad's exclusion from negotiations on Syria's future. These factors, along with a desire to preserve the Iran nuclear deal, keep the hope of an improved bilateral relationship alive. Despite all the limitations that the two presidents have acknowledged, not to mention their insurmountable differences of opinion—particularly with regard to human rights—it is clear that they must continue to collaborate.

The Radical Left Outside Parliament: With the Russians, Against Putin

In France, the radical left includes myriad small Communist groups, both traditional and Trotskyite. Among the traditional groups is the Parti Communiste Révolutionnaire de France (PCRF),⁷⁸ a small Marxist-Leninist organization founded in October 2016, which brings together militant Communists who first organized as a special interest group within the French Communist Party (founded in 1991) but are now independent (organized as an association: Les amis d'Oulianov). The group, which includes blue-collar workers and teachers, is visible in all left-wing trade unions and political demonstrations. The PCRF has criticized the Communist Party for abandoning the Communist perspective and working-class interests, as well as for continuing to emphasize Stalin and North Korea.⁷⁹ It maintains relationships with the Russian Communist Workers' Party (PCOR) and criticized the 2017 presidential candidacies of both Pavel Grudinin (a KPRF candidate associated with the "Putin system" and with capitalism) and of Maxim Sorokin (Communists of Russia, KPKR, presented as a divisive force in the Communist movement). Due to the absence of Red Front/Rot Front candidate Natalia Lisitsina, the PCRF did not support a candidate, instead focusing on denouncing Putin, labeling him the one "who best represents the interests of the monopolistic Russian bourgeoisie, who benefits especially from the resource extraction industry and specifically from gas and oil."

The loose conglomeration of French Trotskyites, for its part, is divided into two main factions: the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (New Anticapitalist Party, NPA), a section of the 4th International, formerly known as the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (Revolutionary Communist League), and Lutte Ouvrière (Workers' Fight), a section of the International Communist Union. Founded in April 2009 and comprising some 2,000 activists, NPA has been losing steam at the polls (its candidate won 1.09% of the vote in the 2017 presidential elections after the party won 4.88% of the vote in the European Parliament elections), but it remains highly visible in union demonstrations.

The NPA has ties to the Russian Socialist Movement and was present at its founding congress on March 7, 2011. It is a harsh critic of the Russian regime. The NPA has adopted the analysis of the situation in Russia made by historian Jean-Jacques Marie in his work *La Russie sous Poutine* (Payot, 2016):⁸⁰ "This private property is unsteady: it is the spoils of pillage, it rests on no social foundation, nor does the State nor Putin's regime. Putin imposes his autocratic power by resolving conflicts within Russia and between Russia and the oligarchs, taking advantage of the indifference of the vast majority of the population, who are not organized and who are busy fighting to live or survive. Patriotism and elegies to the glories of Russia's past, including under Stalin; his agreement with the Orthodox church; and the powerlessness of the so-called democratic—but in fact liberal—opposition, because it is wholly dependent on the state and thus on Putin, are the sole seats of power (...). Jean-Jacques Marie shatters the West's propagandistic myth of an imperialist Russia that has regained power through its economy and its aggressive diplomacy; its military action in Ukraine and Syria; and its pillars, such as the Orthodox church, oligarchs, and the military-industrial complex. This very simplistic portrayal of Russian power serves to justify the NATO offensive, but it conceals the reality of a country ruined by the politics of its ruling classes. The Russian state is a huge, Mafia-like, repressive machine. And the Church is a grotesque tool of moral repression. Unions are puppets of the regime, so any true and independent union presence is hunted down. The economy is completely disorganized and subject to the financial needs of the oligarchs, whose coffers are filled by petroleum income with absolutely no useful investment in the country. Corruption is ubiquitous and inequality keeps increasing. Police patriotism and racism are suffocating the population."⁸¹

The two groups have identical analyses of the Russian regime, and they are among those who have sounded the alert against high-profile figures in the liberal opposition, specifically Alexei Navalny, who are aligned with the "millions of petty business bureaucrats" and whose ideal remains a liberal economy without corruption and favoritism. The Lutte Ouvrière newspaper refers to Navalny as an "ultra-nationalist business lawyer."⁸²

The Enigma of the Union Républicaine Populaire

The People's Republican Union (UPR) is a minor political party, but one whose visibility increased through the 2017 French presidential candidacy of its chair and founder, François Asselineau. Although Asselineau garnered only 0.92% of the vote (still 333,000 votes), he gained traction⁸³ with his plan to immediately exit the Eurozone, the EU (Frexit), and NATO—a sovereignist mindset that is strongly anti-US and profoundly pro-Russia. Asselineau graduated from the ENA and then served as Inspector General for Finance. He was a high-level ministry civil servant when the right was in power (1993-1997), and served in cabinet positions as an international advisor and as official representative for the office of Hervé de Charrette, Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1996 to 1997. In 2004, he was appointed general representative for economic intelligence in the Ministry of the Economy and Finance, then led by Nicolas Sarkozy. In this role, however, he appears to have suffered first from his colleagues' lack of interest in this issue and then from his role being minimized by Thierry Breton, who took over as Minister in 2006. Starting in 1999, Asselineau worked in politics alongside the Gaullist-sovereignists (Rassemblement pour la France et l'indépendance de l'Europe—the Movement for France and Independence from Europe) led by Charles Pasqua; he subsequently distanced himself from them. Asselineau is brilliant, cultured, and an expert on Japan—and for ten years he led an entity that had absolutely no media visibility.

His party's participation in various elections brought only minimal support (0.41% in the 2014 European Parliament elections). Regional elections in December 2015 produced similar results (0.87%) but showed that the UPR, even without public funding, succeeded in mobilizing nearly 2,000 candidates. The same paradox can be seen in the subsequent presidential and legislative elections: the UPR had the funds to campaign, and to obtain 500 sponsorships by elected officials, as required to run a presidential candidate (which calls for considerable funding). It then ran 570 candidates, or nearly one per district, in the legislative elections and garnered 0.67% of the vote. UPR reportedly had 30,000 activists in 2018, a number that is clearly overstated but which does not take into account the party's growth online, where it has found its true audience. This party is a true political "alien" and is very focused on denouncing the US intelligence services as the cause of the ideology of Europe's founding fathers, or the growth of radical Islam. The party is interested in Russia on various levels. François Asselineau traveled to Crimea for Victory Day in 2015 along with Karim Sehrane, a member of the party's Board. A report of this trip, which also included a visit to the Alliance française, a French language and cultural organization, in Sevastopol and to the city Duma. It resulted in the release of a communiqué supporting "cooperation in the viticulture sector, the creation of a French-style chamber of trade, the creation of a high school, and maintenance of the now-defunct French military cemetery dating from the Crimean war (1854-55)."⁸⁴ The question is, what was Russia's motivation for receiving this marginal political player? Undoubtedly, the only answer is UPR's inclusion in the array of political movements that—due to anti-Americanism, anti-Atlanticism, and opposition to the European Union—find virtue in Russia's foreign policy, in its steadfastness compared to France's waffling (notably on the Syrian crisis), and in its desire for power, in contrast to France's apparent abandonment of it.⁸⁵

Conclusion

Russia's influence on French political life has been the subject of much prognostication, focused on alleged funding for various political entities and on the impact of cyber-attacks on political life and elections. It is an emotional subject that must be brought back to the realities that bridge ideological divides and divergent conceptions of international order. Without a doubt, there is an ideological divide within both the right and left. This divide is basic but fundamental. It pits those who see France as a great power that must embrace its historic mission, based on the continuity of its alliances and its geopolitical situation, against those who think that France must orient its foreign policy according to its ideas—ideas that will serve as its calling card in the world: the philosophy of the Lumières, national identity, and thus human rights.

The right, in all its gradations, is very strongly Gaullist on the one hand and realist on the other: it conceives of politics according to interests rooted in France's geographic situation and historic relationships solidified over the long term. The left is even more idealist in the sense that it argues for the universal dissemination of the values of the Lumières, of progressivism, and of a modern mindset that would render the nation-state framework obsolete. One of its problems is that it thinks that it will find the best possible alliance for this outcome with partners (NATO, the US, the EU) who have always provoked distrust within France.

This distrust remains strong, and the source is perhaps found in a perennial sentiment: "French exceptionalism," which is at once cultural, historical, and political, and which may be seen as representing an old-fashioned form of nationalism, but also as conferring, if not sympathy, then at least a bit of understanding upon Russia's desire for affirmation as a country, and the current regime's status within a very long history that transcends the vicissitudes of regime change. In sum, we must look to ideology to understand the impact of Russian soft power. We must use simple contrasts: anti-Americanism versus Atlanticism; a powerful Europe versus a federal Europe; a multipolar world versus what Russia's supporters refer to as US—and, more broadly, Anglo-Saxon—"hegemony"; multiculturalism versus organic national identity in the context of the nation-state.

¹On November 8, 2016, Ambassador Jean-Maurice Ripert invited Souhayr Belhassen, the honorary president of the International Federation for Human Rights, to a forum entitled "Protecting NGOs" that brought together more than 100 high-profile civil society figures from across Russia.

²For more on relationships with the Front National and the rest of the far right, see Pervenche Berès, Jean-Yves Camus, and Alexis Lacroix, "La politique étrangère du Front national," Fondation Jean Jaurès, October 7, 2016, <https://jean-jaures.org/nos-productions/la-politique-etrangere-du-front-national>.

³See : <http://www.charles-de-gaulle.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Discours-%C3%A0-Moscou.pdf>

⁴See : <http://fresques.ina.fr/de-gaulle/fiche-media/Gaule00045/voyage-dans-l-est-discours-a-l-universite-de-strasbourg.html>

⁵See "Vladimir Poutine et Jacques Chirac: quand la France et la Russie s'entendaient parfaitement," *RT-France*, May 27, 2017, <https://francais.rt.com/international/38934-vladimir-poutine-jacques-chirac-entente>.

⁶Of particular importance was President Chirac's interest in the Russian language and culture, which he highlighted in his speech at St. Petersburg State University on September 27, 1997. See "Allocution prononcée par M. Jacques CHIRAC Président de la République à l'université d'Etat de Saint-Pétersbourg," Présidence de la République, September 27, 1997, http://www.jacqueschirac-asso.fr/archives-elysee.fr/elysee/elysee.fr/francais/interventions/discours_et_declarations/1997/septembre/fi003385.html.

⁷See : <https://www.bfmtv.com/mediaplayer/video/dominique-de-villepin-face-a-jean-jacques-bourdin-en-direct-883121.html>

⁸See : <http://www.rtl.fr/actu/politique/macron-aurait-du-rendre-visite-aux-auteurs-russes-au-salon-du-livre-estime-villepin-7792677534>

⁹See Marie-Pierre Haddad, "Macron aurait dû rendre visite aux auteurs russes au Salon du Livre," *estime Villepin*, *RTL*, March 18, 2018, <http://www.rtl.fr/actu/politique/macron-aurait-du-rendre-visite-aux-auteurs-russes-au-salon-du-livre-estime-villepin-7792677534>.

¹⁰Igor Mitrofanov holds a DEA (French graduate degree) in defense studies. He is the author of *Pour connaître Jacques Bainville*, published by Éditions Royaliste in 1989, related to the Nouvelle Action Royaliste (New Royalist Action—NAR), a movement inspired by the ideology of Charles Maurras. The NAR is not a far-right movement, but found common ground with the left during the Mitterrand years and subsequently with the Gaullist right around issues of French national sovereignty and foreign policy autonomy.

¹¹See ; <https://philitt.fr/tag/alexandre-jevakhoff/>

¹² See Benjamin Fayet, “Alexandre Jevakhoff : ‘La guerre civile est une composante génétique de la vision politique de Lénine,’” *Philitt*, March 30, 2017, <https://philitt.fr/2017/03/30/alexandre-jevakhoff-la-guerre-civile-est-une-composante-genetique-de-la-vision-politique-de-lenine/>.

¹³ See François Fillon, “François Fillon: face à Daesh, ‘une seule puissance a fait preuve de réalisme: la Russie,’” *Marianne*, April 1, 2016, <https://www.marianne.net/debattons/tribunes/francois-fillon-face-daesh-une-seule-puissance-fait-preuve-de-realisme-la-russie>.

¹⁴ Meeting in Bordeaux, November 23, 2016. Fillon’s victory in the first round of voting on November 20 was greeted as a “fabulous development” by the then-chair of the Duma’s foreign affairs commission, Aleksey Pushkov.

¹⁵ Margaux Baralon, “La société de conseil de François Fillon ciblée par ses adversaires politiques,” *Europe1*, February 7, 2017, <http://www.europe1.fr/politique/la-societe-de-conseil-de-francois-fillon-ciblee-par-ses-adversaires-politiques-2971856>.

¹⁶ Statement in February 2007: “Poutine prend son temps pour féliciter Sarkozy,” *Europe1*, May 9, 2007, <http://www.europe1.fr/politique/poutine-prend-son-temps-pour-feliciter-sarkozy-26308>.

¹⁷ See Arnaud Dubien, “Nicolas Sarkozy et la Russie, ou le triomphe de la Realpolitik,” *Revue internationale et stratégique* 77, no. 1 (2010): 129-131. The author is the director of the Franco-Russian Observatory (<http://obsfr.ru/fr/lobservatoire.html>), a think tank created by the France-Russia Chamber of Commerce.

¹⁸ Although not the primary focus of our work, we must emphasize the major role played—from 2008 to 2017—by Russia’s then-Ambassador to France, Alexander Orlov. Orlov, a very high-level diplomat, was extremely familiar with the realities of dealing with France, which had been his father’s job during the Soviet era, before taking up his duties in France in 1993. Orlov did not hesitate to state, before the 2017 presidential election, that were he French, he would vote for the “Republican party,” a veiled allusion to François Fillon’s Les Républicains. Orlov quickly added that he “also liked” Jean-Luc Mélenchon. See Olivier Tallès, “Faut-il craindre une ingérence étrangère dans la présidentielle?” *La Croix*, February 22, 2017, <https://www.la-croix.com/Journal/Faut-craindre-ingerence-etrangere-dans-presidentielle-2017-02-21-1100826564>.

¹⁹ As reported on BuzzFeed: Paul Aveline, “‘Si on ne développe pas l’Afrique, l’Europe explosera’: nous nous sommes procuré la bande audio de la conférence de Sarkozy à Abu Dhabi,” BuzzFeed, March 5, 2018, https://www.buzzfeed.com/paulaveline/si-on-ne-developpe-pas-lafrique-leurope-explosera-nous-nous?utm_term=.ojV12Qx9j#.dIGPy2xpjine.

²⁰ According to an IFOP survey for the *Nouvel Observateur* published in late October 2010.

²¹ An IFOP survey for the daily newspaper *Sud-Ouest*. In 2015, the percentage of UMP supporters who wanted this type of agreement fell to 30%. In May 2018, only 15% of France’s European Parliament voters planned to vote for Les Républicains, behind the Front National (17%), and La République en marche (LREM) (27%). Their current weakness offers a glimpse of the public’s desire for a single conservative party capable of defeating “the left” (LREM, in the minds of a majority of voters on the right).

²² In the first round, he won only 18.28%, compared to his opponent’s 52.72%, and he was beaten in all of the consular districts, including Russia.

²³ This mission officially aimed at supporting Christians in the region. He was accompanied by Nicolas Dhuicq and by the former MoDem member Jean Lassalle, a deputy from Pyrénées-Atlantiques. In December 2016, another—this time multi-party—delegation was prevented from traveling to Aleppo to attract attention to humanitarian conditions there. Among the delegation was the Drôme deputy Hervé Mariton, a conservative, rather pro-American deputy who also spoke Russian. Mariton continued as mayor of Crest, near Valence, and is currently at work on a book about Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

²⁴ Pozzo di Borgo’s family comes originally from Corsica. Notably, Charles-André Pozzo di Borgo, who was granted the title of Count by the Emperor in 1826, served as Russia’s ambassador to France from 1814-1830. In that role, he was one of Napoleon I’s main enemies and a key figure in the restoration of the monarchy. Tsar Alexander I initially supported this, but he disapproved of the counter-revolutionary and “extreme” elements. See Vera Milcina, “Nicolas Ier et la politique intérieure de la France à l’époque de la Restauration : deux épisodes,” *Cahiers du monde russe* 43, no. 2-3 (2002).

²⁵ As the sole liberal deputy to vote against the 2013 “marriage for all” initiative, and having been called upon to speak against it, he left the socialist group to join the Radicaux, who were associated with the majority-linked Parti Radical de Gauche (PRG).

²⁶ See Rusina Shikhatova and Inna Doulkina, “Trois jours en Crimée avec les députés français,” *Le Courrier de Russie*, September 1, 2016, <https://www.lecourrierderussie.com/international/2016/09/crimee-deputes-francais/>.

²⁷ Thierry Mariani, *idem*

²⁸ *Idem*

²⁹ See Jim Jarassé, “Mariani (LR) candidat aux européennes sous les couleurs du FN? L'hypothèse prend de l'ampleur,” *Le Figaro*, April 1, 2018, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/le-scan/2018/04/01/25001-20180401ARTFIG00073-mariani-lr-candidat-aux-europeennes-sous-les-couleurs-du-fn-l-hypothese-prend-de-l-ampleur.php>.

³⁰Nicolas Dhuicq and Senator Yves Pozzo di Borgo are still on the Board of this association (see “Composition of the Board,” Association Dialogue Franco-Russe, <http://dialoguefrancorusse.com/en/association-uk/board.html>). However, the Association’s former executive president, Alexander Trubetskoy, left to found the Franco-Russian Alliance. Its first public presentation, on February 22, 2018, at the cultural and spiritual center on Quai Branly in Paris, featured Russian Ambassador Alexei Meshkov, invited to speak on “Russia’s view of the world.”

³¹ We should note that although Thierry Mariani protested against marriage for all, he came around to a fairly conciliatory attitude that it would be impossible to repeal this law if the right were to return to power. In general, he spoke out in 2013 against La Droite Forte—a rival faction of his own—and in favor of reasonable and achievable proposals, accusing the “all or nothing” faction in his camp of contributing to the rise of the Front National. See Arnaud Focraud et Vivien Vergnaud, “Mariani: ‘Dimanche est le dernier acte de l’opposition sur le mariage pour tous,’” *Europe 1—leJDD*, May 24, 2013, <https://www.lejdd.fr/Politique/Mariani-Dimanche-est-le-dernier-acte-de-l-opposition-sur-le-mariage-pour-tous-609262-3139655>.

³² The document and the list of signers appear here: “L’appel d’Angers pour l’unité de la droite,” *Valeurs Actuelles*, April 12, 2018, <https://www.valeursactuelles.com/politique/lappel-dangers-pour-lunite-de-la-droite-94697>.

³³ See “Débranchons mai 68!” *Eveilleurs d’espérance*, <https://www.eveilleursdesperance.fr/grande-soiree-debranchons-mai-68/>

³⁴ *Idem*.

³⁵ In 2017, the Puy du Fou park saw a record 2.26 million visitors, second (in France) only to Disneyland Paris.

³⁶ See “Discours sur la Révolution, par Alexandre Soljenitsyne aux Lucs-sur-Boulogne (1993),” *Vive Le Roy*, March 28, 2010, <http://www.viveleroy.fr/Discours-sur-la-Revolution-par,89>.

³⁷ See Reynald Secher, *La génocide franco-français: la vendée-vengé* (Paris: Editions PUF, 1986), 295.

³⁸ “Pour Poisson, Poutine irrite en Occident car il n'est ‘pas à la solde des pouvoirs financiers,’” *RT-France*, March 19, 2018, <https://francais.rt.com/entretiens/48915-pour-poisson-poutine-irrite-occident-solde-pouvoirs-financiers>.

³⁹ See: Pope Francis, “Evangelii Gaudium,” The Vatican, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

⁴⁰ Stratpol, <https://stratpol.com/>.

⁴¹ See Xavier Moreau, “Vladimir Poutine va être réélu parce que son bilan, en 19 ans, est exceptionnel,” *Résistance Républicaine*, March 17, 2018, <http://resistancerepublicaine.eu/2018/03/17/vladimir-poutine-va-etre-reelu-parce-que-son-bilan-en-19-ans-est-exceptionnel/>.

⁴² “Vladimir Putin’s 19-year ‘reign’ (he began as Prime Minister in 1999) has led to a uniquely prosperous, secure, and stable situation when compared to the last 800 years of Russian history”—see interview with *Résistance républicaine*. See : <http://resistancerepublicaine.eu/2018/03/17/vladimir-poutine-va-etre-reelu-parce-que-son-bilan-en-19-ans-est-exceptionnel/>

⁴³ “Mise au point de Ludovine de la Rochère, à propos du drapeau ‘Russie unie,’ le parti de Vladimir Poutine...,” LMPT Collectif—Oise, <https://www.lmptcollectif-oise.fr/mise-au-point-de-ludovine-de-la-rochere-a-propos-du-drapeau-russie-unie-le-parti-de-vladimir-poutine/>.

⁴⁴ See Eric Martin, “Xavier Moreau revient sur la polémique entre la Manif pour Tous et des mouvements pro-famille russes,” *Nouvelles de France*, September 4, 2015, <https://www.ndf.fr/nos-brevets/04-09-2015/xavier-moreau-revient-sur-la-polemique-entre-la-manif-pour-tous-et-des-mouvements-pro-famille-russes/>.

⁴⁵ Factually, although the LMPT was founded by Catholics, who are still the vast majority of its supporters, the LMPT attempts to present the appearance of a united front of monotheistic religions by having a Jewish and a Muslim spokesperson. Criticism from Russian pro-family associations focused on the LMPT’s strategy of obscuring its Catholic origins and accusations of fundamentalism from secular organizations due to the “areligious” label.

⁴⁶ French publisher Jaffré published an elegy to Putin in 2014, comparing him to Napoleon: *Vladimir Bonaparte Poutine* (Paris: Editions Perspectives Libres, 2014).

⁴⁷ The French embassy in Kiev released a memo in which the French government stated that it “did not give any official recognition to this association, which does not have diplomatic status and cannot take advantage of the associated privileges and immunities...The Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs feels that the association’s purpose is illicit. Therefore he has informed the government prosecutor.” See Leo Purguette, “Marseille: une vraie-fausse ambassade de Donetsk ouverte par l’ex-FN Hubert Fayard,” *La Marseillaise*, September 26, 2017, <http://www.lamarseillaise.fr/marseille/politique/63803-marseille-une-vraie-fausse-ambassade-de-donetsk-ouverte-par-l-ex-fn-hubert-fayard>.

⁴⁸ See Elena Sydorova, “Entrevue avec Hubert Fayard, Président du Centre de Représentation de la République Populaire de Donetsk en France,” *Revue Methode*, September 2017, <http://www.revuemethode.org/sf091702.html>. In this interview, he details the association’s legal structure and describes the “mission launch,” specifically mentioning that Xavier Moreau was there.

⁴⁹ Jacques Clostermann’s presence carries a great deal of symbolic importance. He is the son of the celebrated France Libre (Free France) fighter pilot Pierre Clostermann, who was a Companion of the Liberation and a Gaullist deputy from 1946-1969.

⁵⁰ See “Eric Le Dissès tient bon la barre,” *Marignane.info*, October 3, 2017, <https://www.marignane.info/index.php/fr/actualite/presse/163-revue-de-presse-marignane-2017/octobre-2017/2763-eric-le-disses-tient-bon-la-barre>.

⁵¹ All issues can be downloaded here: <http://www.revuemethode.org/numeros.html>.

⁵² See Alexandre Latsa, “Le poutinisme peut devenir un nouveau gaullisme,” *Polemia*, June 2, 2016, <https://www.polemia.com/le-poutinisme-peut-devenir-un-nouveau-gaullisme/>. Alexandre Latsa (a pseudonym) has lived in Moscow since 2008 and manages the human resources and staffing consultancy ATSA. He writes the blog *Dissonance*, available at <http://alexandrelatsa.ru/>.

⁵³ Find her biography at “Notre Equipe—Françoise Compoin,” *Sans Frontières*, <http://sf.donntu.org/compoin.html>.

⁵⁴ Castel’s blog can be found at alawata-rebellion.blogspot.fr/.

⁵⁵ One angle that is regularly used to defend Russian and separatist positions involves emphasizing the presence of an extreme right-wing element in the Ukrainian armed forces and in Ukrainian politics. This includes Nazi supporters and anti-Semites, whose visibility has reached Maidan, and was strengthened by the inclusion of the Azov Battalion in the Ukrainian National Guard. For the sake of argument, we note that there a study of the relationship between the Ukrainian far right and its European counterparts has still not been conducted.

⁵⁶ “Européennes 2019: un sondage place la liste LREM-MoDem largement en tête,” *Agence France Presse*, May 16, 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.fr/2018/05/15/europeennes-2019-un-sondage-place-la-liste-lrem-modem-largement-en-tete_a_23435562/.

⁵⁷ See <http://www.nda-2017.fr/themes/nda/file/projet-nda-20170324.pdf>, p.21

⁵⁸ Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, “Discours de Nicolas Dupont-Aignan devant le Parlement russe,” *Debout la France!*, March 16, 2015, <http://www.debout-la-france.fr/actualite/article/discours-de-nicolas-dupont-aignan-devant-le-parlement-russe>.

⁵⁹ We refer to his works Chantal Mouffe, *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community* (London and New York: Verso, 1992) and Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (London: Verso, 2013).

⁶⁰ See the LFI’s publication, *L’avenir en commun* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2016), ch. 54.

⁶¹ See “Une France indépendante au service de la paix,” *L’Avenir en Commun*, <https://avenirencommun.fr/livret-garde-nationale-defense/>.

⁶² Jean-Luc Mélenchon published an indictment of the Paris-Berlin alliance in his pamphlet *Le hareng de Bismarck* (Paris: Editions Plon, 2015), in which he defines the French-German divide as dating back to the year 2000 and dividing two worlds: the city and the citizen, the tribe and the ethnicity.

⁶³ See Nicolas Hénin, *La France russe* (Paris : Editions Fayard, 2016), p. 122.

⁶⁴ Stated on the TV station France 2 on February 2, 2016.

⁶⁵ He specifically stated: “We cannot demonize: there is good and bad, and everything that is against Putin is good.” Before the French community in Moscow, with whom he met in a closed-door session, “There is no logic in confronting the Russians, nor in distancing ourselves from them geopolitically.” See Isabelle Mandraud, “A Moscou, Mélenchon milite pour un réchauffement avec la Russie,” *Le Monde*, May 11, 2018,

http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2018/05/11/a-moscou-melenchon-milite-pour-un-rechauffement-avec-la-russie_5297262_823448.html#SY40YqoFgmZZzWDF.99.

⁶⁶ During the 2018 presidential election, Udaltsov supported the communist candidate Pavel Grudinin.

⁶⁷ Both authors were invited to the Paris Book Fair held March 16-19, 2018. The guest of honor was Russia.

⁶⁸ In Moscow, there is also an association called Friends of Humanity.

⁶⁹ See the June 2017 special issue of *L'Humanité*, devoted to the October Revolution: Jean-Paul Pierot, "Hors-série. Il était une fois la révolution d'Octobre," *Humanite.fr*, June 19, 2017, <https://www.humanite.fr/hors-serie-il-etait-une-fois-la-revolution-doctobre-637543>.

⁷⁰ Vadim Kamenka, "Russie. La continuité, seul grand vainqueur du scrutin présidentiel," *Humanite.fr*, March 19, 2018, <https://www.humanite.fr/russie-la-continuite-seul-grand-vainqueur-du-scrutin-presidentiel-652225>.

⁷¹ On this topic, see his interview with the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, "Poutine est-il notre ennemi?," in September 2015: <http://www.hubertvedrine.net/article-679.html>.

⁷² Sihem Souid, "Roland Dumas: 'Nous n'avons plus de politique étrangère,'" *Le Point*, December 3, 2014, http://www.lepoint.fr/invites-du-point/sihem-souid/roland-dumas-nous-n-avons-plus-de-politique-etrangere-03-12-2014-1886452_421.php.

⁷³ See Marc Semo and Allan Kaval, François Hollande: "Quel est cet allié turc qui frappe nos propres alliés?" *Le Monde*, March 12, 2018, https://abonnes.lemonde.fr/international/article/2018/03/12/hollande-quel-est-cet-allie-turc-qui-frappe-nos-propres-allies-avec-le-soutien-de-groupes-djihadistes_5269351_3210.html.

⁷⁴ The European Parliament deputies from Europe Ecology Les Verts proposed—more radically—pressuring Russia by boycotting the 2018 soccer World Cup. They support a joint European military, so they feel that France's position on Ukraine should be "international supervision of disarmament of militias, and eventually an independent investigation of war crimes," in addition to "the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukrainian territory, the Eastern part of the country, and Crimea." See their communique of February 12, 2015: "Accord Ukraine-Russie: l'Europe doit rester mobilisée," Europe Ecology Les Verts, https://eelv.fr/newsletter_archive/accord-ukraine-russie-leurope-doit-rester-mobilisee-2/.

⁷⁵ Maurice Braud, "Bélarus et Russie: le Parti socialiste appelle les autorités gouvernementales au respect des engagements internationaux et européens pour les droits humains, la liberté d'opinion et de manifestation," PS Social-Ecologique, March 27, 2017, <http://www.parti-socialiste.fr/belarus-russie-parti-socialiste-appelle-autorites-gouvernementales-respect-engagements-internationaux-europeens-droits-humains-liberte-dopinion-de-manife/>.

⁷⁶ See "VIDÉO. Devant Poutine, Macron fustige RT et Sputnik, organes de 'propagande,'" *L'Express*, May 29, 2017, https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/macron-fustige-russia-today-et-sputnik-des-organes-de-propagande_1912727.html.

⁷⁷ Russia was the guest of honor there.

⁷⁸ Secretary General Maurice Cukierman, retired professor of History. The PCRF maintains ties to some mainstream communist parties, such as the KKE in Greece and the PCP in Portugal.

⁷⁹ See a guide for new activists, "*Connaitre et rejoindre le PCRF*."

⁸⁰ The author, born in 1937 and a humanities graduate of INALCO, specializes in Soviet history and is a leader in the competing Trotskyite organization, Le Parti des Travailleurs (The Workers' Party).

⁸¹ Jean-Jacques Marie, "La Russie sous Poutine," <https://npa2009.org/idees/culture/la-russie-sous-poutine>.

⁸² "Russie: comment Poutine prépare sa réélection," *Lutte ouvrière* n°2583 (February 1, 2018), https://journal.lutte-ouvriere.org/2018/01/31/russie-comment-poutine-prepare-sa-reelection_103184.html.

⁸³ His anti-Euro video on YouTube has more than 155,000 views.

⁸⁴ The first project, which seems a bit far-fetched, appears to have been motivated by the presence of major French vineyard owners in the UPR.

⁸⁵ For example, one can read this analysis on the Astana negotiations related to the Syrian crisis: "Après la conférence d'Astana, quels enseignements peut-on tirer de la politique étrangère russe?" UPI, February 2, 2017, <https://www.upr.fr/actualite/apres-conference-dastana-enseignements-on-tirer-de-politique-etrangere-russe>.