

Brexit, Macron and Russia: Will 2020 be as Difficult for EU as 2019 Was?

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Region: [Europe](#)

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2019 has been a difficult year for the European Union (EU) and it appears 2020 will be no different with many challenges and issues remaining unresolved after a turbulent year. The most obvious issue is the lingering Brexit saga that was not achieved and questions remain whether it is likely to be achieved by UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson with the looming January 31 deadline.

The modality of divorce between the UK and its 27 ex-partners will be discussed for months as there still needs to be the discussion of trade agreements, which effectively has become a secondary issue. There are the issues of fishing quotas, tariffs and other economic issues. These will likely go to the background as the British have not considered these questions yet, and of course there are issues on the preservation of the “United” Kingdom with Scotland pushing for a second independence referendum and a United Ireland free of British colonialism becoming a real prospect.

Of course, there are also the issues of borders and security, something that must be a serious consideration during this ugly divorce. The EU loses vital intelligence if the financial and commercial separation does not also consider these areas. EU technocrats in Brussels may be suffering from the loss of the British market, but it would be more dangerous to weaken military and security ties.

Another worrisome issue for the EU would be the inevitable strengthening of commercial and diplomatic ties between the UK and their former colony, the United States. It is expected the British and Americans will intensify their relations against Russia and China.

In this context, only French President Emmanuel Macron seems to want to move forward with a New European Order. Macron has become a revitaliser in empowering the EU and restoring relations with Moscow, going so far as to say [that Europe reaches all the way](#) to the Russian Asian-Pacific port of Vladivostok. It is for this reason that Macron was not afraid to go against NATO and endorses a pan-European security alliance independent of the U.S.

“Brain Dead” NATO was a complaint made by Macron. This comment saw the wrath of many members of the anti-Russian alliance against the French leader. Macron also told NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, that Russia is not a threat as part of the French leader’s vision is to bring Russia ‘back to Europe.’ Although Macron has some critical opinions towards Russia, his overall policy has been one of improving relations with Moscow, more so than any other major European power. Macron himself explained that although he has a clear vision for improving ties with Russia, this is being resisted by the so-called French “deep state,” as he calls it. Macron has unapologetically called for finding a resolution for Donbass and said that resolution of Syrian crisis needs Russian participation.

Macron will continue into 2020 with efforts to improve relations with Moscow, despite domestic and foreign pressures.

It cannot be overlooked that Macron seeks to prevent Moscow from strengthening its ties with Beijing. This very issue demonstrates that the EU are not consistent with their China policy. There is little doubt that China has become a technological, diplomatic and military power. Beijing does not need permission from Brussels to sign commercial and strategic agreements with different EU members. EU members will need a more consistent policy towards China as it is currently divided. This needs to be achieved before the next EU-China Beijing summit in June 2020.

However, the roadblocks with Russia and China are clear for the EU. What they expect with the U.S., especially in a post-Brexit Europe, remains uncertain. This is coupled with the unpredictability of Donald Trump. With Russia and China, the EU maintains deep disagreements, but at least they are clear and each party knows what to expect. With the U.S., Europeans will have a harder time. It is expected that many EU leaders will be secretly hoping for Trump not to be re-elected next year so they can more easily pursue their own independent policies. Whether this is true or not remains to be seen. All attempts by the EU to understand Trump's foreign and commercial policy only left them confused as he changes his ideas at a whim. Washington's incoherence misleads the leaders of the EU and even Emmanuel Macron's friendly or aggressive diplomacy has not succeeded in deciphering the intentions of the American president.

Make no mistake, for the EU, its unresolved and difficult issues of 2019 will just be carried over into 2020. Will Brexit happen? Will Macron successfully push European sovereignty away from Washington's dominance? How will relations with Russia and China unfold?

2020 is just around the corner and we can only wait and see.

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