

Russia's "Pivot to Africa" Encroaches upon France's Traditional "Sphere of Influence"

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The quiet success of Russia's "Pivot to Africa" over the past few years has seen Moscow begin to encroach on France's traditional "sphere of influence" in the continent, which in turn piqued Paris' interest in negotiating a "New Detente" with its Great Power counterpart in order to rebalance relations between them in the New Cold War.

French President Macron surprised the world earlier this week when he unexpectedly told the Swiss television channel RTS that he wants to restore relations with Russia. [RT](#) quoted him as saying such bold statements as

"Europe... must build new rules of trust and security with Russia, and should not only agree with NATO"

and that

"We need to have a strategic debate, so this week I will have another, long and intense conversation with Vladimir Putin, as the president of France and the G7."

Other highlights of his interview included his warning that "It would not be good to leave Russia to China" as well as a pleasant recognition of the Soviet Union's sacrifices in World War II after the UK's recent D-Day commemorative event [completely airbrushed](#) its notional ally's enormous contribution to the defeat of fascism out of history.

Macron is clearly trying to get on President Putin's good side, and with good reason too, because the Russian leader has presided over his country's quietly successful "Pivot to Africa" over the past few years that's seen Moscow begin to encroach on France's traditional "sphere of influence" in the continent. The author elaborated on this more in depth in his recent piece about how "[Russia's Military Deal With The Congo Completes Its African Transversal](#)", which asserts that Moscow's deft application of "military diplomacy" has seen it establish a bi-coastal belt of influence from the Atlantic to the Red Sea via the Congo Republic, the Central African Republic, and Sudan, which therefore places it in a prime position to "[balance](#)" continental affairs and provide countries there with a "third choice" between the West (US/France) and China.

France feels threatened by this development because it naturally reduces its influence in this part of the world that it had hitherto taken for granted through its extremely profitable post-colonial policy of "Françafrique", which in turn has piqued Paris' interest in negotiating

a “[New Detente](#)” with Moscow in parallel with the larger one that might achieve some degree of progress during this month’s [Jerusalem Summit](#) between the Russian, Israeli, and American National Security Advisors. With the US signaling serious interest about restoring relations with Russia, it only makes sense that the EU begins probing the opportunities to do so too, and France believes that it should take the lead in this respect due to the political uncertainty in the continent’s traditional German and British leaders due to the Greens’ unexpected European Parliamentary success and Brexit, respectively.

By comparison, and recognizing that the ongoing Yellow Vest protests haven’t had much of a tangible effect on French domestic and especially foreign policy like the aforementioned developments have for Germany and the UK, France is actually the most politically stable Western European Great Power. This makes it extremely attractive from a Russian perspective too because of the certainty with which Moscow expects Macron to remain President Putin’s main negotiating partner for the next couple of years unlike the unpredictable situation with his German and British counterparts. Despite the speculative behind-the-scenes progress on a clinching a “New Detente” between the US and Russia, Europe (taken as a collective whole) probably wouldn’t have gotten on board with this initiative in as independent of a way as it’s presently trying had it not been for the African impetus that forced France to act.

Bereft of a confident leader after the Greens’ impressive European Parliamentary showing and the seemingly never-ending chaos of Brexit destabilized the continent’s traditional Great Power leaders, France saw the once-in-a-century opportunity to fill this void and finally have the chance to once again position itself as the most important European country, with its significance rising by the day as the odds of the US and Russia eventually reaching a “New Detente” increase as well. Russia’s been looking for a stable partner to deal with in negotiating the European dimension of this possible geopolitical thaw in the [New Cold War](#), and its “Pivot to Africa” greatly assisted it in piquing France’s attention and helping Paris play this long-sought-after role, with it being possible to more accurately assess the prospects for success after the [upcoming but yet unscheduled meeting](#) between Macron and President Putin.

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