



Le Pen's Vision of Foreign Policy

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A Marine Le Pen victory in this month's presidential election would bring a definite shift in French foreign policy. The vision of the National Rally (RN) candidate assumes revising European integration and the development of the European Union (EU) towards the idea of a Europe of nations and revision of EU treaties. Le Pen aims to reconstruct relations with the U.S. and NATO, limit cooperation with Germany, and seek closer ties with the UK and Russia. A Le Pen presidency could threaten European unity, undermine France's allied credibility, and lead to its gradual isolation in the international arena.

Le Pen's concept of foreign policy would challenge multilateralism in international relations and privilege bilateral alliances within a multipolar international order. Analysis of the RN candidate's electoral programme shows that her position has evolved since the 2017 presidential election, especially towards the EU. On the one hand, Le Pen still wants it to correspond to the views of the Eurosceptic part of her electorate, while, on the other, she does not want to discourage the larger part of French society that is opposed to leaving the EU. Considering the clear negative consequences of Brexit for the UK, Le Pen now rejects the possibility of France leaving the EU or the Eurozone outright but seeks profound reform of EU institutions. In her opinion, tightening relations with Russia would prevent the deepening of the Russian-Chinese alliance.

Europe of Free and Sovereign Nations. Le Pen sees herself as a continuator of Gaullist thought, and so seeks a slowdown in integration, opposition to further EU enlargement, and a change in the EU model towards an alliance of sovereign states with a strong national identity. Le Pen says she intends to defend the interests of France, which she views as threatened by EU policy, by putting pressure on other EU members. She is not openly anti-EU, but emphasises the primacy of French law over EU law and has already announced her government would not back legal acts deemed contrary to provisions in the French constitution. This reform approach to EU institutions is intended to *de facto* weaken them, especially the European Commission, oft criticized by Le Pen. The assumptions of Gaullist thought do not imply either the closure of borders

or isolation in the international arena, but the election declarations of the RN candidate focus on a thorough reform of the Schengen area that would lead to a restriction of freedom of movement and the possibility of the reintroduction of border controls, albeit with simplified procedures for EU citizens. The position towards non-EU Schengen states, such as Switzerland and Norway, remains unclear. Border controls are also intended to cover goods imported to France from other EU countries, which would undermine the customs union and the principles of the single market.

Le Pen's vision of foreign policy assumes a change in the balance of power in the EU. France would, above all, strive for rapprochement with Hungary and deeper dialogue with the Visegrad Group. A significant change may come from the announced decisive limitation of cooperation within the Franco-German tandem. The RN leader perceives Germany as a threat to the interests of French industry and technological sovereignty, and calls for the end of military cooperation between the two countries and the strengthening of France's independent defence capabilities. According to Le Pen, the divergence in interests results from Germany perceiving NATO as a pillar of its security. The way she understands sovereignty runs counter to Emmanuel Macron's concept of strategic autonomy and translates into her vision of the EU's future relations with third countries. Far-right policy ideals are based primarily on increasing France's independence in shaping relations with China, Africa, and the Middle East. Le Pen emphasises the role of the Maghreb states and the special cultural and historical

closeness to Lebanon, seen as a priority in her future French foreign policy.

Le Pen wants to build alliances based on pragmatism and flexibility. Her criticism of Macron's policy is based what she views as the erroneous embedding of French sovereignty within the framework of European sovereignty. She argues that France should not shape its policy based on global problems defined at the multilateral level. Therefore, if France conducts its own foreign policy, as emphasised by Le Pen, it would also affect the commitments France has made to date, for example, in climate and environmental protection. The RN leader has declared that she will not withdraw France from the Paris Agreement but claims that cooperation in this area should be undertaken on a bilateral basis, and that France itself is to decide on the pace of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, decarbonising its agriculture and industry, and further investments in the energy sector. Le Pen claims that, unlike the incumbent president, her foreign policy goal is to protect the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, even if it means introducing new trade barriers and border controls. Le Pen is therefore opposed to EU free trade agreements that she views as threats to French agriculture and will seek to include mirror clauses in trade agreements so that imported products comply with French and European standards.

Reconstruction and Rapprochement. A consequence of Le Pen's assumptions regarding France's position as a superpower is also the reconstruction of relations with the United States, perceived as a threat to French interests. Her declaration that as president she will withdraw France from NATO's military structures would have far-reaching consequences for the European security architecture, especially for the Eastern Flank. Although Le Pen emphasises France's fidelity to the Alliance and respect for its obligations under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, this withdrawal from NATO's military structures would destroy the policy precedents of previous presidents and hinder the implementation of Alliance tasks, especially its deterrence and defence missions. According to Le Pen, it is in France's interest to develop cooperation with the UK as a key partner in defence. She points the fisheries agreement and revision of the Le Touquet agreement on migration signed in 2003 between France and the UK as important to their future bilateral relations.

Le Pen, like the other candidates in the presidential election, condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine and stressed that these actions upset the balance of peace in Europe. However, this has did not dissuaded the RN candidate from her pro-Russia attitude nor from her willingness to continue cooperation with Russia. She consistently emphasises that after the end of the war, France should strive for rapprochement between NATO and Russia and for building a common vision of European security and a joint fight against terrorism. She argues that it is in the interest of France to integrate Russia more with Western European countries in order to prevent Russia from tightening economic and military ties with China. Le Pen also warns against imposing economic sanctions on Russia, stressing that the sanctions policy affects the interests of France, and in this case some similarities can be found with Macron's position.

Conclusions and Perspectives. The feasibility of Le Pen's foreign policy after winning the elections is questionable. A limitation and a challenge for Le Pen's government will be the parliamentary elections in June and need for a stable majority in the National Assembly. In the case of cohabitation and the lack of support from the prime minister and members of government, it will be much more difficult to shape an independent foreign policy. Undoubtedly, Le Pen's decisions would have a strong impact on the future of the European Union, including the activity of France during its presidency of the Council of the EU. A Le Pen victory would disrupt the decision-making process in the EU and allow France to become the main brake on EU policy. A decisive break with Macron's European policy would have a negative impact on the entire European community, weakening the EU's economic and defence potential and focusing on disputes over compliance with EU law. As president, Le Pen may successfully veto further sanctions against Russia and oppose further military support for Ukraine.

The Russian aggression against Ukraine has not significantly changed Le Pen's approach to Russia or to the European security architecture. Tightening relations with Russia and leaving NATO military structures may lead to a reduction in confidence of existing allies in France's credibility, along with its gradual isolation and weakening of the Alliance's Eastern Flank and security in the region, which also would be detrimental to Poland.