

# A gift for NATO's 75th anniversary – Support from France's opposition parties

by Pierre Lévy,\* Paris



Pierre Lévy. (Bild <https://ruptures-presse.fr>)

(CH-S) All of France's major parties now seem to agree that NATO's and French President Emmanuel Macron's course of war is heading in the right direction. Opposition parties have aligned their banners with mainstream opinion. There is

now hardly any serious opposition to the war policy in the French parliament. European elections are coming up and there is no longer any major party in France clearly speaking out in favour of peace and against the thriving bellicosity.

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So far, the party "La France insoumise", founded by Jean-Luc Mélenchon and which describes itself as the "radical left", has stood out for its fundamental rejection of the North Atlantic Alliance NATO. Now the tide seems to be turning.

If Russia attacks Poland, "we have a duty to support each other, [...] we will have to help them defend themselves." In the Russophobic climate created by the mainstream media, this 3 April statement seems sadly banal. It faithfully reflects the EU's main argument: military aid to Ukraine is necessary to stop Moscow from devouring its neighbors alive. To the Oder and the Danube. And why not to the Rhine and then, who knows, to the tip of Brittany?

## "La France insoumise"

It's the author of this sentence that should have caught the eye on the French political stage. It is Manon Aubry, incumbent MEP, and top candidate of the "La France insoumise" (LFI) party for the European elections, who is thus joining an already well-filled camp: that of supporters of

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NATO, which is seen as a collective defense instrument of the West threatened by the Kremlin's ambitions. Until now, the movement founded by Jean-Luc Mélenchon, which describes itself as the "radical left", had stood out more for its fundamental rejection of the Atlantic alliance.

Thus, the LFI programme had reiterated its intention to "recommend the immediate withdrawal of France from the integrated command of NATO and then gradually from the organisation itself". Such intentions seem to have been forgotten today. "If a European country is attacked tomorrow, we must of course show solidarity", said the MEP. Armed solidarity, of course.

Under these circumstances, it is difficult not to see a political and ideological U-turn in Ms. Aubry's statement. NATO leaders, as they prepare to celebrate the organisation's 75th anniversary in Washington from 9 to 11 July, will certainly appreciate such support. A nice birthday present, no doubt.

## "Rassemblement National"

All the more so because it doesn't come alone. At the other end of the political spectrum, the *Rassemblement National* (RN) has just announced a very similar development. Marine Le Pen's party is regularly accused by its opponents of being "pro-Russian" and even financed by the Kremlin – much like the AfD, which sits in the same parliamentary group in Strasbourg.

Jordan Bardella, the party's young leader and top candidate in the EU elections in June, declared a few days before Manon Aubry that the RN's proposal to withdraw France from NATO's integrated command was no longer on the agenda as long as "the war is still going on".

The argument is paradoxical: precisely because a war is still going on, it is imperative that we do not allow ourselves to be drawn into it by an alliance whose main characteristic is by no means peace efforts.

## For what reason?

The question can therefore be asked: what has prompted France's last two parliamentary

parties, which had previously cultivated an image of opposition to the warmongering of the “mainstream”, to de facto join it?

Is it opportunism, i.e. the fear that they could lose votes by condemning Russia too softly? That is possible, even if it is in fact a dubious calculation that underestimates the existence of a pacifist sentiment among many citizens who are not subjected to the prevailing ideology.

Or is it a fundamental reversal? This could be facilitated by the slow imprinting that results from the constant immersion of their leaders in the European institutions – in this case the European Parliament. The phenomenon is well known: It would not be the first time that “radical” opponents – or those who call themselves such – have infiltrated an EU institution

and proclaimed their intention to “reshape it from within”, eventually being reshaped themselves.

The two declarations are not mutually exclusive but could even complement each other. This is certainly a reason for the US Secretary of State, recently on a tour of the old continent, to rejoice. During his visit to Paris on 2 April, *Antony Blinken* pleaded for the Europeans to increase their production of weapons, ammunition, and equipment for Ukraine. Because, he emphasised, “these are investments that serve us”.

This argument now seems to be echoed by Ms. Aubry and Mr. Bardella.

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