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# French and German approaches to Russia

## Convergence yes, EU compatibility no

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# Summary

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- Historically, France and Germany have had different priorities in their relationships with the USSR and the Russian Federation, but they nonetheless adopted similar approaches to the integration of Russia into European and international structures after the collapse of the Soviet Union.
  - As an important military and nuclear power with a seat on the UN Security Council, France views Russia primarily through the lens of security policy. Germany, by contrast, focuses strongly on the business and energy spheres, reflecting not only its economic heft but also its historically based reticence in the realm of ‘hard’ security.
  - The Normandy Format on the Russo-Ukrainian conflict in Donbas has been a pillar of French and German cooperation since 2014, creating an important arena for exchange and joint efforts with regard to part of the Eastern Neighbourhood. Although little progress has been made in ending the conflict, Berlin and Paris share a similar analysis of the obstacles preventing its resolution.
  - Both Germany and France are interested in deepening cooperation with the countries involved in the Eastern Partnership, in particular those with an association agreement with the EU. However, neither views the Eastern Partnership as a route to EU membership.
  - Although French President Emmanuel Macron’s initiatives on Russia have yielded few results, both France and Germany envisage Russia as a necessary actor in future European security arrangements. Both countries are opposed to NATO enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia for now. Convergence in the area of hard and soft security is therefore possible, but joint Franco-German proposals are likely to be met with strong opposition from eastern EU member states wary of Russian actions and intimidation tactics.
  - Berlin and Paris are both determined to confront hybrid threats coming from Russia, especially disinformation and cyberattacks, while advocating for a combination of sanctions against and engagement with Moscow. However, Germany’s strong effort to uphold sanctions against Russia has been undermined by its insistence on completing the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, resulting in a contradictory approach towards Russia.
  - A key sphere that should be addressed in the relationship with Russia concerns illicit financial transactions. Cooperation in this area could not only tap into existing efforts at the EU level, but also involve other EU members, in particular the Baltic states and Poland, thus helping to bridge the wide gap in approaches towards Russia that currently exists within the EU.

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# 01

# Introduction

**The relationship with Russia has been one of the most contentious issues among EU member states, and has become a very visible test of the Union’s political cohesion and foreign policy capacity.**

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It is generally understood that the European Union (EU) has the ambition to establish itself as an effective foreign and security policy actor but has difficulties doing so. In recent years, however, the failures of this ambition have become clearer. The entity called ‘the West’ is now more differentiated, arguably even disintegrating to some extent during the Trump presidency. While the Joe Biden administration may ease trade disputes with Europe, US disengagement from European security is likely to continue in the context of deepening US–China rivalry, the strategic significance of the Indo-Pacific region, and political polarization in Washington. At the same time, China’s intention to play a much greater role in Europe, combined with the increased resources it brings to the table, has created new challenges for an actor such as the EU, which has its basis in economic cooperation yet aspires to promote certain political and social values in its relationships abroad.

Russia presents serious challenges to the EU’s interests and declared values on a variety of fronts, not least in the security realm and due to its actions in the Eastern Neighbourhood. The relationship with Russia has been one of the most contentious issues among EU member states. It has become a very visible test of the EU’s political cohesion and foreign policy capacity, in particular since Moscow disdains Brussels and consistently prioritizes bilateral relations over those with the EU. This was nowhere more obvious than during the visit of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, to Moscow in February 2021.<sup>1</sup> The EU has long struggled to reach consensus on an effective Russia policy, especially since the annexation of Crimea and the ensuing destabilization of Donbas by Russia in 2014. While agreeing on a series of different types of sanctions, member states remain divided in their

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<sup>1</sup> *Financial Times* (2021), ‘Botched Moscow visit is a wake-up call for the EU’, 11 February 2021, <https://www.ft.com/content/c7df006e-93ca-451c-a01b-bc07458e6f7d>.

assessment of the essence of the Russian regime under Vladimir Putin, and in their willingness to cooperate with Moscow. The ‘five guiding principles’ that have constituted the framework of the EU’s Russia policy since their adoption in 2016 have proved too disparate to serve as a consistent and impactful strategy, even after their ‘makeover’ in 2021.<sup>2</sup> The failure of the proposal made by the outgoing German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, and supported by French President Emmanuel Macron at the European Council meeting in June 2021, which would have resulted in an invitation to Russian President Vladimir Putin to participate in a discussion with all EU heads of state and government, clearly indicates that divisions persist on the question of how to deal with Russia.

This paper explores the extent to which the Franco-German ‘motor’, often invoked as a catalyst for ensuring that certain policies gain traction in the EU context, can be mobilized in the sphere of Russia policy.<sup>3</sup> The cornerstone of French and German collaboration on Russia has so far been the ‘Normandy Format’, a mechanism intended to manage and ideally resolve the Russo-Ukrainian conflict in Donbas. However, the two countries’ determined cooperation on that issue has neither brought peace to Ukraine nor translated into a joint approach to Russia overall. During Macron’s presidency, the track record of the Franco-German motor has suffered some disappointments for a variety of reasons, attributable to both sides.<sup>4</sup> There has been reluctance on Germany’s part to embrace Macron’s concept of European ‘strategic autonomy’, and later his initiative to build a new ‘architecture of security and trust’ in Europe together with Russia. France, meanwhile, has remained equivocal about Germany’s insistence on pursuing the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. These projects have stirred controversy and raised concern in Poland and the Baltic states, as well as beyond the EU.

The analysis scrutinizes both German and French approaches to Russia, and attempts to pinpoint similarities and differences that may have been overlooked or, conversely, overstated in the past. It further endeavours to differentiate structural commonalities and divergences – i.e. those likely to outlast the current political constellation – from contingent ones. This is all the more important because of recent and upcoming elections in both countries: the German legislative elections of September 2021, which by all indications have resulted in a three-party coalition government led by the Social Democratic Party (SPD); and the French presidential and parliamentary elections due in 2022. Two main questions are tackled here. What is the potential of harnessing the Franco-German motor to address the relationship with Russia? And what are the implications of this potential for the EU–Russia relationship?

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<sup>2</sup> For a presentation of the five principles, as well as a review of the state of their implementation, see European Commission (2021), ‘EU-Russia relations: Commission and High Representative propose the way forward’, press release, 16 June 2021, [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_21\\_3010](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_3010).

<sup>3</sup> On the difficulties associated with this motor, see Stark, H. (2019), ‘La France et l’Allemagne: Un moteur au ralenti’ [France and Germany: An idling engine], *Annuaire français de relations internationales*, Vol. XX, pp. 403–18. Franco-German relations nonetheless continue to be named as an important factor in shaping EU policy and ensuring the very existence of the EU. See for example Gomart, T. (2020), *L’affolement du monde: 10 enjeux géopolitiques* [Global panic: 10 geopolitical challenges], Paris, Tallandier, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Kempin, R. (ed.) (2021), ‘France’s Foreign and Security Policy under President Macron’, *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, SWP Research Paper 2021/RP04*, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/frances-foreign-and-security-policy-under-president-macron>.

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# 02

# Assessing the post-war legacy

**The post-war division of Germany, and West Germany's overwhelming dependence on the US, created a very different context for relations with the Soviet Union from that of France, which viewed its relationship with the USSR as an opportunity to counterbalance the US and assert its autonomy.**

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Relations between Germany and Russia, and between France and Russia, are deep and extensive, rooted in the history of the three countries. At least in recent decades, however, the German–Russian relationship has been the more complex and developed of the two. This is due both to historical developments connected to the Second World War and the ensuing division of Germany, and to the extensive economic and energy-related ties between the two countries, as well as intensive civil society cooperation. The difficult phase both relationships are currently experiencing represents an exception rather than the rule with regard to the past few decades.

## **The significance of the Cold War**

Since the 1960s, France has not shied away from its reputation as the West's 'troublemaker'. Determined to assert the sovereign independence of France and to carry out 'a policy of grandeur', President Charles de Gaulle (1958–69) rejected the Cold War status quo and the domination of the US. In 1966 he removed France from NATO's integrated military command structure and travelled to the Soviet Union for a momentous two-week visit. The following year, he vetoed the UK's entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) because he doubted Britain's commitment to continental Europe and its independence from the US. From that point, de Gaulle sought to go beyond the concept of two blocs and to put an end

to the division of Europe. To promote East–West dialogue, this right-wing figure – who had absolutely no sympathy for communism – developed relations with the Soviet Union, but also with Poland and Romania.<sup>5</sup>

De Gaulle’s successors continued his policy of independence, albeit in a less intransigent manner, and remained committed to the detente, including during the Euromissile crisis and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.<sup>6</sup> François Mitterrand (1981–95) was more concerned, in his early years in office, about the heightened threat arising from the Soviet Union. No doubt he also wanted to allay the fears that the election of a Socialist French president aroused in Washington. While valuing the Western alliance, Mitterrand nonetheless refused to follow the US sanctions policy and resisted US pressure to prevent the construction of a Soviet gas pipeline. In short, France defined its relationship with Moscow during most of the Cold War on the basis of objectives that went beyond bilateral concerns, trying to ensure a balance in international relations and to preserve its autonomy of action, which was seen as an end in itself, rather than a means.

## **Relations between Germany and Russia, and between France and Russia, are deep and extensive, rooted in the history of the three countries.**

Similarly, the German relationship with today’s Russia did not begin in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Rather, there were important relations not only between the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the USSR, but also between the latter and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) over several decades. At the same time, the FRG was clearly and unquestionably embedded in both Western European and transatlantic structures, being dependent on the US for its economic renewal and its security arrangements.

Two positive developments in the West German–Soviet relationship stand out, and both have had significant consequences for the post-Soviet period. First, the Ostpolitik implemented under the chancellorship of Social Democrat Willy Brandt (1969–74) is considered by many to have been a success in terms of both improving relations between the FRG and the GDR and paving the way for successful negotiations with the Soviet Union on the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 – and even for the eventual collapse of the USSR. This perception explains in part more recent attempts, especially by the SPD, to return to the premises of the earlier Ostpolitik and adapt them to the relationship with Russia.

Second, cooperation in the energy sector – dating from the 1970s, when the Soviet Union and the FRG agreed to exchange natural gas from the USSR for German pipes and steel – has left an equally lasting mark on the relationship. This cooperation was pursued notwithstanding US objections, thus echoing

<sup>5</sup> Bozo, F. (2019), *La politique étrangère de la France depuis 1945* [France’s foreign policy since 1945], Paris: Flammarion, p. 52.

<sup>6</sup> The deployment of Soviet SS-20 missiles in 1977 led to a renewed confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact over medium-range Euromissiles. In this new context, France endeavoured to address this serious threat with NATO allies without undermining the detente and its own position of independence.



the situation with Nord Stream 2 today. Despite being firmly anchored in Western political and security structures, and to some extent under the tutelage of the US, the FRG still managed to develop successful forms of cooperation with the Soviet Union. The latter's reputation as a reliable supplier of natural gas has carried over into the post-Soviet period, and networks of actors established during the 1970s have proved durable and influential even decades later.

The GDR's relationship with the USSR was clearly of a very different nature, since it was a satellite state within the Warsaw Pact and depended politically, economically and for its security on Soviet support. It was thoroughly permeated by communist ideology and Soviet-style methods, and included a strong Soviet military presence. Many personal networks from that period continued to play a role after the reunification of Germany, and a certain form of emotional or psychological attachment to Russia (often linked to an accompanying anti-Americanism) persists among a significant segment of the East German population.<sup>7</sup>

## The European reconciliation

Following the 'velvet' revolutions in 1989, Mitterrand was concerned with the consequences of German reunification for the balance of power in Europe, and eager to promote a new architecture of security on the continent. Although initially suspicious of Mikhail Gorbachev, the French president eventually gave him his full support, launched a project for a 'European Confederation', and actively participated in the conclusion, in November 1990, of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe, which proposed a new kind of relationship for all countries involved. The transition phase between the deterioration of the state structures in the GDR and the formal reunification of the two parts of Germany was also important in shaping the German–Soviet and subsequently the German–Russian relationship. The most significant development resulted from the interactions in the Two Plus Four talks between the two Germanys and the four 'occupying powers' – the US, the USSR, France and the UK.

After initial resistance, the Soviet representatives, first and foremost general secretary and newly elected president Gorbachev and foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze, agreed to a reunified Germany within NATO, as long as no NATO troops were stationed on the territory of the former GDR.<sup>8</sup> Already politically weakened, Gorbachev nonetheless remained faithful to the principles of the 'New Thinking' and the 'Common European Home' that he had successfully promoted in order to alleviate international tensions, and then to help bring an end to the Cold War and the division of Europe. The Soviet concession was extremely welcome

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<sup>7</sup> For a nuanced analysis, see Sasse, G. (2020), 'Russland<sup>2</sup>: Russlandbilder in Ost- und Westdeutschland' [Russia<sup>2</sup>: Images of Russia in East and West Germany], Zentrum für Osteuropa- und internationale Studien, ZOiS Report No. 5, October 2020, <https://www.zois-berlin.de/publikationen/russland2-russlandbilder-in-ost-und-westdeutschland>.

<sup>8</sup> The agreement regarding NATO remains a source of controversy to this day. Among numerous articles on the topic, see Kramer, M. (2009), 'The Myth of a No-NATO-Enlargement Pledge to Russia', *Washington Quarterly*, 32(2), pp. 39–61, [https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/publication/twq09aprilkramer.pdf](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/twq09aprilkramer.pdf).

on the West German side, and gratitude for the gesture remains to this day. This gratitude also extends to the timely and complete process of Soviet withdrawal from the territory of the GDR, in particular the removal of military forces.<sup>9</sup>

After the Maastricht Treaty entered into force, in November 1993, Chancellor Helmut Kohl (1982–98) and President Mitterrand sought to give further momentum to the European project by accelerating European integration. Buoyed by the developments in Germany and the statements of Russian politicians following the collapse of the USSR in 1991, West German political and economic actors embraced the idea of the transformation of the Russian Federation into a democracy and a market economy.<sup>10</sup> These assumptions led to the dismantling of various academic and policy advisory structures related to the (now former) Soviet Union.

Paris and Berlin both supported the entry of Russia into the Council of Europe in 1996 and into the G7/G8 in 1997, among other groupings and institutions. Both France and Germany adopted fairly similar stances on the issues of EU and NATO enlargement, which occurred rapidly and in parallel. Having achieved reunification within NATO, Germany could hardly oppose the aspirations of countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to join the alliance. Traditionally wary of US influence in Europe, France supported EU enlargement to the east but was more cautious about NATO expansion, to which Russian president Boris Yeltsin made known his opposition as early as September 1993. In anticipation of NATO enlargement to include the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, the Founding Act of the NATO–Russia Council was signed in Paris in May 1997 to promote consultation practices.

## A slow disillusionment

In the German context, the Putin era was above all defined by the new Russian president's speech in the Bundestag in September 2001.<sup>11</sup> Combined with his swift response and offer of cooperation to the US after the 9/11 attacks that same month, this speech – delivered mainly in German, and which earned him a standing ovation – convinced many Germans that Putin was not only sincere in his desire to cooperate in fighting terrorism, but also serious about reforming Russia and working together closely with Germany and Europe in both the economic and the security spheres. These assumptions were at the heart of the Russia policy of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder (1999–2004), characterized primarily by the pursuit of economic and energy-related projects, with a lesser but significant emphasis on foreign policy goals and civil society cooperation.

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<sup>9</sup> This removal and the resettlement of these forces in the Soviet Union/Russia was, however, generously financed by the FRG. See for example Bastian, K. (2006), *Die Europäische Union und Russland: Multilaterale und bilaterale Dimensionen in der europäischen Außenpolitik* [The EU and Russia: Multilateral and Bilateral Dimensions in European Foreign Policy], Wiesbaden: Springer.

<sup>10</sup> They were clearly not alone. The phrase 'the end of history', coined at that time by the US political scientist Francis Fukuyama, came to stand for the assumptions of many scholars and policymakers with regard to the post-Soviet space, and Russia in particular.

<sup>11</sup> A video recording of the speech is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cOXThVTGB4g>.

Putin also enjoyed a good and trustful relationship at this time with French president Jacques Chirac (1995–2007). The common position of France, Germany and Russia against the US-instigated war in Iraq in 2003 was a key reason for their belief in the potential for cooperation in foreign policy. At the same time, this policy was highly personalized and conducted in a top-down manner. In the case of Germany, it ended in a morally dubious role for Schröder in the structures of the Nord Stream pipeline that he had politically supported.<sup>12</sup>

Undoubtedly, Putin's speech at the Munich Security Conference in February 2007, in which he forcefully denounced what he perceived as 'American unilateralism', was the first warning shot. However, despite initial expectations that Schröder's successor, Angela Merkel (2005–2021), would pursue a significantly different approach to Russia, her government's goals and assumptions with regard to the economic and energy spheres remained broadly similar, and formed the basis for the 'Modernization Partnership' introduced in May 2008 by the then foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

## **Not until 2013 did awareness grow that Russia and the EU might be working at cross purposes, and that Moscow might be seriously opposed to the EU's Eastern Partnership policy.**

At the NATO summit in Bucharest a month earlier, France and Germany had opposed the attempt to grant a Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Ukraine and Georgia. Point 23 of the summit's final declaration, however, specifies that these countries 'will become members of NATO' and will be granted an MAP at an undefined point in the future.<sup>13</sup> The Russo-Georgian conflict broke out a few months later, in early August 2008. President Nicolas Sarkozy (2007–12) energetically undertook to end hostilities within the framework of the French EU presidency. However, the agreement he reached with Putin was subsequently not adhered to by Russia.<sup>14</sup>

Even in the context of the Russo-Georgian conflict, there was general optimism in Germany about the presidency of Dmitri Medvedev (2008–12) and the possibilities for cooperation on reforms that many German politicians and policymakers thought it offered. Nor did this brief war discourage Germany's foreign policy elite from attempting to cooperate with Russia on questions concerning the 'common neighbourhood'. The prevailing belief was that, while some interests might diverge, both Russia and Germany (as well as the EU) were in favour of stability in the countries located between them. This conviction was also widespread in France.

Not until 2013 did awareness grow that Russia and the EU might be working at cross purposes, and that Moscow might be seriously opposed to the EU's Eastern Partnership policy, launched at the initiative of Poland and Sweden in 2009

<sup>12</sup> Stewart, S. (2013), 'Germany', in Gower, J. et al. (2013), *National Perspectives on Russia: European Foreign Policy in the Making?*, Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 13–29.

<sup>13</sup> Bucharest Summit Declaration, 3 April 2008, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_8443.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm).

<sup>14</sup> Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia (2009), *Report on the Conflict in Georgia*, Vol. II, p. 441, [https://www.mpil.de/files/pdf4/IIFFMCG\\_Volume\\_III.pdf](https://www.mpil.de/files/pdf4/IIFFMCG_Volume_III.pdf).

as a response to Russian military assertiveness and the French political project to establish a Union for the Mediterranean.<sup>15</sup> In 2011–12, the popular protests in Russia connected to the Duma election fraud, as well as Putin’s decision to retake the presidency, led to disillusionment in both France and Germany, and to growing criticism of internal Russian developments, especially as the regime responded to the protests with increasing repression. However, it was only after Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 that German and French policies shifted radically.

In summary, the USSR played a very different role for France and Germany historically. For France it served as a counterbalance to the US; for the FRG it was the key interlocutor concerning the GDR. West Germany’s economic and security dependence on the US led to a much closer transatlantic relationship than was the case for France, and this shaped German perceptions of developments on the European continent. Despite these differences, Germany and France adopted similar approaches to the integration of Russia into European and international structures as well as to the question of EU and NATO enlargement, although for different reasons.

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<sup>15</sup> Marangé, C. (2015), ‘La Russie et l’Europe’ [Russia and Europe], *Commentaire*, No. 152, Winter 2015, pp. 787–94.

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# 03

## Taking stock of structural differences

**France focuses more strongly on security questions in its relations with Russia, while Germany places greater emphasis on economic and energy-related cooperation.**

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Starting from the premise that state behaviour is not only constrained by the international order and defined by the quest for power and security, any analysis of foreign policy must take into account the domestic context of the state in which it is formulated, the perceptions and beliefs of the actors involved in its elaboration, and the distinguishing characteristics of the state's decision-making process. This is all the more important when comparing France and Germany, not only because the two countries are very close in many respects while having very different political systems, but also because the structural factors that determine each country's policy towards Russia diverge significantly.

### **Politics, diplomacy and society**

A first fundamental difference between France and Germany is in the organization of power. Since the proclamation of the Fifth Republic in 1958, the French head of state, who is also commander-in-chief of the armed forces, has enjoyed extensive prerogatives. The president, elected by popular vote, plays a dominant and almost exclusive role in defining the country's foreign and defence policy, generally considered to be the 'reserved domain' of that office. While designing its own agenda on certain issues, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has as its primary responsibility the implementation of the vision expressed by the president.

Neither the constitution nor institutional practice confers on the parliament, be it the National Assembly or the Senate, any particular powers in the foreign policy domain. Even though foreign affairs and defence committees are active within the two assemblies, French deputies and senators are generally not very involved in world affairs and do not benefit from the advice of dedicated research structures, as they do in Germany.

In Germany, by contrast, the head of state plays a primarily symbolic role, representing the country abroad at certain ceremonies and making important contributions to public discourse on controversial topics. The president is not directly elected, and stands above political parties. Real political power rests with the government, which is headed by the federal chancellor. The composition of the government depends on the outcome of parliamentary elections, since the governing party or (more often) coalition generally needs to command a majority of seats in the Bundestag. In the case of a coalition, the chancellor and the foreign minister usually come from different political parties. The former traditionally focuses on a number of subjects of their choosing, which sometimes leads to tension with the relevant ministry, and has the right to define the fundamental principles of German policy (Richtlinienkompetenz). The ministries can, however, shape policy within their own fields of activity (Ressortprinzip).

Germany's federal system has important consequences for policymaking. Many policy fields lie within the competence of the German states, or Bundesländer. They are also represented in the Bundesrat, the second chamber of the German legislature, which has to approve all laws of local significance. This is usually not the case for laws concerning foreign policy and defence, however. The governing parties in the Bundestag play an important role in foreign and security policy discourse and decision-making, including decisions to send members of the German armed forces abroad to take part in multilateral operations. The Constitutional Court has also played a limited role in foreign and security policy, especially on questions of military interventions abroad.

A second difference stems from the respective diplomatic styles of France and Germany within Europe, and the purposes assigned to external action. Germany's approach to Russia is embedded in the strategic culture of the country, which is closely tied to the history of the past century. Its politicians take German responsibility for the Nazi regime and the Holocaust extremely seriously. This has led to a strong inclination towards pacifism that runs through significant parts of society, as well as a clear preference for multilateralism on the part of German elites.<sup>16</sup> These values are anchored in the German constitution (Grundgesetz), which emphasizes the importance of working together with other European states to achieve and preserve peace. Within Europe, Germany is generally perceived as active and serious in caring about the threat assessment of its eastern neighbours, such as Poland and the Baltic states, even if these neighbours often have the sense that their concerns are disregarded.

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<sup>16</sup> Bunde, T. et al. (2020), 'Zeitenwende/Wendezeiten: Special Edition of the Munich Security Report on German Foreign and Security Policy', <https://securityconference.org/en/publications/msr-special-editions/germany-2020>.

While similarly valuing peace and cooperation in Europe, French political elites generally adhere to what Christian Lequesne, in his *Ethnography of the Quai d'Orsay*, terms the 'mental map of independence and rank'.<sup>17</sup> They hold in high regard France's status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and see the country's nuclear deterrent as a guarantee of security and a pledge of independence, but also as a means of maintaining rank. In this respect, French leaders have no difficulty in understanding the drive for recognition and the postcolonial syndrome so characteristic of the present-day Russian authorities, even when they disapprove of the way this is expressed. However, the other 'mental map' identified by Lequesne, the so-called 'Occidental' one, is gaining in importance. Anxious to defend the Western order, its high-ranking adherents are more concerned about Chinese, Russian and Iranian actions, oppose nuclear proliferation, and often believe that the use of force is justified to ensure the prevalence of humanitarian law and liberal democracy.

A third – and less pronounced – difference is in the perception of Russia in public opinion.<sup>18</sup> At the base of Germany's security policy towards Russia lies, among other things, an unwillingness, particularly in the east, to contemplate the idea of Russia as a hostile actor. There are significant differences in support for sanctions and attitudes towards the Russian regime (and Putin in particular) between modern-day east and west Germany, with people in the former GDR tending to see Russia in a more positive light and to desire a closer relationship between the two countries.<sup>19</sup> In Germany there are also up to 3 million 'Russlanddeutsche', emigrants from the former Soviet Union who are of German descent.<sup>20</sup> Even if some of them are susceptible to Russian propaganda, surveys indicate that they are far from being a homogeneous group and that many are well integrated into German society.<sup>21</sup> While unambiguously supporting NATO and advocating a strong transatlantic relationship, German elites and the citizens they govern keenly perceive the risks involved in a European security environment in which Russia is in the role of an adversary. Thus, despite the continuously deteriorating relationship, the inclination to openly designate Russia as an enemy is close to zero.

Germany also places a high value on people-to-people contacts between Russians and Germans, as well as between Russians and EU nationals more broadly. Berlin was thus very active in the dialogue with Russia on visa liberalization prior to 2014. Extensive contacts have been established in the two countries between actors in civil society, and these have strong political backing. The position of 'Coordinator for Intersocietal Cooperation with Russia, the Countries of the

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<sup>17</sup> Lequesne, C. (2017), *Ethnographie du Quai d'Orsay. Les pratiques des diplomates français* [Ethnography of the Quai d'Orsay. The practices of French diplomats], Paris: CNRS Éditions, p. 162; Balzacq, T. (2019), 'France', in Balzacq, T., Dombrowski, P. and Reich, S. (eds) (2019), *Comparative Grand Strategy. A Framework and Cases*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 99–122.

<sup>18</sup> Kunz, B. (2018), 'Beyond 'Pro' and 'Anti' Putin. Debating Russia Policies in France and Germany', *Visions franco-allemandes*, Ifri, No. 28.

<sup>19</sup> Sasse, G. (2020), 'Russland?: Russlandbilder in Ost- und Westdeutschland'.

<sup>20</sup> Lokshin, P. (2020), 'Wie viele Russischsprachige leben in Deutschland?' [How many Russian speakers live in Germany?], *Mediendienst Integration*, <https://mediendienst-integration.de/artikel/wie-viele-russischsprachige-leben-in-deutschland.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Panagiotis, J. (2019), 'Identität und Ethnizität bei Bundesbürgern mit russlanddeutschem Hintergrund' [Identity and ethnicity in Federal citizens with a Russo-German background], *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, <https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/russlanddeutsche/283533/identitaet-und-ethnizitaet-bei-bundesbuergern-mit-russlanddeutschem-migrationshintergrund>.

Eastern Partnership and Central Asia' has existed in its current or a similar form since 2003. The holder is a member of the Bundestag who is also affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for this purpose. In addition, a special programme created in 2014 provides grants for civil society projects between Germany and the Eastern Partnership countries, in which Russian civil society actors can also be involved. Since 2001 the Petersburg Dialogue has been conducting annual meetings, and some of its working groups have over time become very active in between the yearly conferences. The extent to which this is a true civil society dialogue is debatable, and there have been some attempts to reform the format, at least on the German side. However, the Petersburg Dialogue was suspended by Berlin in mid-2021 after three German NGOs, two of which were represented on its governing board, were declared 'undesirable' by Moscow.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the Trianon Dialogue, set up in 2017, is intended to foster exchanges between French and Russian civil society on a given topic chosen annually, and to encourage common projects and knowledge-sharing, especially among young people. While useful, it retains an official character and has little impact on the two societies.<sup>23</sup>

In France, Russia generally enjoys a certain capital of sympathy. Although difficult to quantify, this translates into a keen interest in Russian culture and history, but also, in a less harmless way, into a certain permeability to Russian discourses, even to Russian disinformation, within the political class and some politicized sections of the population.<sup>24</sup> The absence of a well-constituted ideology allows the Kremlin to have an impact on several audiences at the same time:<sup>25</sup> the radical left is seduced by its anti-American and anti-NATO discourse; the Catholic right is sensitive to the 'defence of traditional values'; while the far right is attracted by the model of a strong and independent man as projected by Putin. This broad appeal became evident during the 'gilets jaunes' protests, during which activists and sympathizers shared contents of Russian 'alternative media' on social networks. However, these differences of view have until now been strongly attenuated by the centralization of decision-making in foreign policy, and by the fact that the French mainstream media remain very critical of Russia. The outcome could be different if a far-right candidate were to be elected as president in these troubled times, however. This highlights the importance of contingent factors in the development of the relationship.

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<sup>22</sup> 'Aussetzung der bilateralen Veranstaltungen des Petersburger Dialogs' [Suspension of the bilateral events of the Petersburg Dialogue], press release, 27 July 2021, <https://petersburger-dialog.de/aussetzung-bilaterale-veranstaltungen>.

<sup>23</sup> For more information on the Trianon Dialogue, see <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/dossiers-pays/russie/dialogue-de-trianon-renforcer-les-echanges-entre-les-populations-francaise-et>.

<sup>24</sup> Demesmay, C. (2016), 'There are always two sides to the truth', Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik, DGAPkompakt, No. 4, [https://dgap.org/system/files/article\\_pdfs/2016-04-kompakt\\_demesmay\\_french\\_susceptibility\\_to\\_russian\\_propaganda.pdf](https://dgap.org/system/files/article_pdfs/2016-04-kompakt_demesmay_french_susceptibility_to_russian_propaganda.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> Laruelle, M. (2021), 'Russia's Niche Soft Power: Sources, Targets and Channels of Influence', Ifri, *Russie.Nei. Visions*, No. 122, April 2021, <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/notes-de-lifri/russieneivisions/russias-niche-soft-power-sources-targets-and-channels>.



## Security and strategy

Notwithstanding a gradual trend towards greater involvement in the military and security spheres internationally, and despite flourishing defence exports, Germany's military culture – i.e. the place occupied by, and reputation of, the military in German politics and society – is underdeveloped relative to that of comparable states within Europe such as France and the UK. Much of German strategic debate over the past years has centred around the question of taking on greater responsibility within the EU and internationally, with a prominent focus on the type and extent of participation in foreign military interventions.<sup>26</sup> After many years of decreasing defence spending, Germany has recently been investing more and confronting the inadequate state of some components of its armed forces.<sup>27</sup> Within NATO, it has been central in developing the Framework Nations Concept, and has taken on the leadership of a multinational battalion in the context of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence on its eastern flank.

### After many years of decreasing defence spending, Germany has recently been investing more and confronting the inadequate state of some components of its armed forces.

Prior to 2014, Germany based its approach primarily on cooperation and on the concept of Russia as a potential partner in designing and implementing European security. The idea of helping Russia to modernize and democratize, including in the military sphere, played a key role. Despite negative signals in this respect coming from Russian leaders since at least 2007, Germany pursued several forms of military cooperation. These included annual seminars for German and Russian officers, military education opportunities for a limited number of members of the Russian armed forces, discussions at the level of Inspector General/Chief of General Staff, and high-level meetings of the two defence ministries. Perhaps even more importantly, the German company Rheinmetall was commissioned by a Russian state agency to build a complex for simulating battle situations and training soldiers (Gefechtsübungszenrum) in Mulino, to the east of Moscow.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Kaim, M., Stelzenmüller, C. et al. (2013), *Neue Macht, neue Verantwortung: Elemente einer deutschen Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik für eine Welt im Umbruch* [New Power, New Responsibility: Elements of German Foreign and Security Policy for a World in Upheaval], Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik and the German Marshall Fund of the United States, [https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/projekt\\_papiere/DeutAussenSicherhpol\\_SWP\\_GMF\\_2013.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/projekt_papiere/DeutAussenSicherhpol_SWP_GMF_2013.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> Statista (2021), 'Militärausgaben von Deutschland von 2004 bis 2020' [Germany's military spending from 2004 to 2020], <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/183064/umfrage/militaerausgaben-von-deutschland>; Warwick, J. (2020), 'Von Leistungsgrenzen und Trendwenden: Was soll und kann die Bundeswehr?' [On performance limits and trend reversals: What should and can the Bundeswehr do?], Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, <https://www.bpb.de/apuz/307664/von-leistungsgrenzen-und-trendwenden-was-soll-und-kann-die-bundeswehr>.

<sup>28</sup> Rheinmetall (2011), 'Rheinmetall mit Großauftrag erfolgreich in Russland: Hochmodernes Trainingszentrum für das russische Heer' [Rheinmetall's success in Russia with major order: state-of-the-art training centre for the Russian army], 24 November 2011, <https://www.pressebox.de/pressemitteilung/rheinmetall-ag/Rheinmetall-mit-Grossauftrag-erfolgreich-in-Russland-Hochmodernes-Trainingszentrum-fuer-das-russische-Heer/boxid/465770>.

The final handover was to be made in 2014. However, the project was cancelled by the German government following Russia's annexation of the Crimean peninsula, as were the other types of military cooperation.

France, by contrast, is a military power that has always invested in its defence apparatus and has participated almost continuously in external interventions since the end of the Cold War.<sup>29</sup> According to the 2013 strategic review, or White Paper, France considers the 'threats of force' (coming from military powers) as well as the 'risks of weakness' (coming from failed states).<sup>30</sup> The French army intervened in 2011 alongside the UK in Libya in an operation that Russia had authorized at the UN Security Council and during which it considers itself to have been betrayed.<sup>31</sup> Since 2014 the French army has been fully involved in operations against Islamic State (ISIS) fighters in both Iraq and then Syria with Operation Chammal; and against jihadist militants in the Sahel with Operation Barkhane.

Following the major terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015 and in Nice in 2016, the hierarchy of threats evolved, with priority given to security interests in the Middle East and North Africa, and in sub-Saharan Africa. The dangers posed to the east by Russia and other major military players are far from overlooked, however. The 2017 White Paper, endorsed after Macron's election, took stock 'first of a deteriorating strategic environment with a rise in challenging threats and risks, and second of new forms of conflict and warfare',<sup>32</sup> with a full section devoted to the reassertion of Russian power.<sup>33</sup> France also takes part in NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence. In several theatres, notably in Syria, the Central African Republic and the Sahel, French armed forces have been increasingly constrained in their actions by the direct involvement of the Russian army, by the subversion operations of Russian private military companies (especially Wagner), and/or by attempts at manipulation and disinformation by Russian actors.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Fernandez, J. and Jeangène Vilmer, J.-B. (eds) (2020), *Les opérations extérieures de la France* [France's operations overseas], Paris: CNRS Éditions.

<sup>30</sup> French Ministry of Defence (2013), *French White Paper on Defence and National Security*, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/content/download/215253/2394121/file/White%20paper%20on%20defense%20%202013.pdf>. See also <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/english/dgris/defence-policy/white-paper-2013/white-paper-2013>.

<sup>31</sup> Russia voted for UN Security Council Resolution 1970 on Libya on 26 February 2011, but in March that year abstained (along with Germany and China) on Resolution 1973 that was intended to protect civilians. Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov further sharply criticized some actions undertaken by French troops in Libya, notably the supposed supply of weapons to rebel groups. Putin is said to have been shocked by the execution of Muammar Gaddafi and the video footage showing his dead body.

<sup>32</sup> Lasconjarias, G. and de Saint Victor, F. (2017), 'Chasing Grandeur? What You Need to Know About the 2017 French Strategic Review', *War on the Rocks*, 27 October 2017, <https://warontherocks.com/2017/10/chasing-grandeur-what-you-need-to-know-about-the-2017-french-strategic-review>.

<sup>33</sup> French Ministry of Defence (2017), 'Defence and National Security Strategic Review 2017', <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/layout/set/popup/content/download/520198/8733095/version/2/file/DEFENSE+AND+NATIONAL+SECURITY+STRATEGIC+REVIEW+2017.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> Limonier, K. and Laruelle, M. (2021), 'Russia's African Toolkit: Digital Influence and Entrepreneurs of Influence', *Orbis*, 65(3), pp. 403–419, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0030438721000259?dgcid=author>; Audinet, M. (2021), 'Le lion, l'ours et la hyène: Acteurs, pratiques et récits de l'influence informationnelle russe en Afrique subsaharienne francophone' [The lion, the bear and the hyena: Actors, practices and narratives of Russian informational influence in francophone sub-Saharan Africa], *Étude de l'IRSEM*, June 2021, <https://www.irsem.fr/institut/actualites/etude-de-l-irsem-n-83-2021-audinet.html>; Sukhankin, S. (2020), 'Russian Private Military Contractors in Sub-Saharan Africa: Strengths, Limitations and Implications', *Russie.Nei.Visions*, No. 120, Ifri, September 2020, <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/notes-de-lifri/russieneivisions/russian-private-military-contractors-sub-saharan-africa>.

## Economy and energy

In Germany, an exporting country *par excellence*, Russia was long seen by both political and economic actors as a large emerging market that was attractive to German investors and which presented an opportunity to sell German products. Trade volumes tended to rise continuously, reaching their peak in 2012 at just over €80 billion.<sup>35</sup> After 2014, it became evident that German involvement in the Russian economy was less significant than widely believed. While the German economy was not unaffected by the counter-sanctions imposed by Russia in 2014, their impact was significant on only a few sectors – particularly in east Germany. For some companies, the situation became extremely difficult. Since then, however, most businesses have reoriented their production towards other markets and are much less affected by the sanctions than previously.<sup>36</sup>

### After 2014, it became evident that German involvement in the Russian economy was less significant than widely believed.

Interest in Russia as an economic partner had in fact started to wane shortly before 2014. A combination of lack of structural reforms in the country, inadequate rule-of-law safeguards and growing localization requirements from the Russian government all contributed to a reduction in interest and involvement, which was then only exacerbated by the sanctions and Russian counter-sanctions. Despite the political crisis and the effect of sanctions, the trade relationship began to recover somewhat in 2017, but the coronavirus pandemic led to another significant dip in trade in 2020.<sup>37</sup>

For both France and Russia, bilateral economic relations are less significant. France was Russia's 17th largest customer in 2019, absorbing only 1.5 per cent of its exports; Russia was France's 13th most important supplier in that year. Having chosen nuclear energy for purposes of autonomy, France has no energy dependence on Russia, even if it imports oil and gas. Bilateral trade, with a total value of \$14.2 billion in 2019, is experiencing a structural deficit in Russia's favour because of the weight of natural hydrocarbons and refined products in the mix. However, this trade deficit, at around \$3 billion in 2019, has latterly tended to diminish as a result of increased French exports, the temporary fall in oil prices, and the coronavirus crisis.

<sup>35</sup> Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy (undated), 'Russische Föderation – wirtschaftliche Beziehungen' [The Russian Federation: economic relations], <https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Artikel/Aussenwirtschaft/laendervermerk-russische-foederation.html>; German–Russian Chamber of Foreign Commerce (undated), 'Wirtschaftsdaten Russland – Russland in Zahlen 2016' [Russian economic data – Russia in numbers 2016], p. 7, <https://russland.ahk.de/infothek/wirtschaftsdaten>.

<sup>36</sup> Mitteldeutsche Rundfunk (2020), 'Russland-Sanktionen haben nur noch geringen Effekt auf mitteldeutsche Wirtschaft' [Russia-related sanctions now have only a small effect on the economy in east Germany], 26 November 2020, <https://www.mdr.de/nachrichten/deutschland/wirtschaft/russland-sanktionen-mitteldeutsche-wirtschaft-102.html>.

<sup>37</sup> German–Russian Chamber of Foreign Commerce (undated), 'Wirtschaftsdaten Russland – Russland in Zahlen 2020' [Russian economic data – Russia in numbers 2020], p. 7, <https://russland.ahk.de/infothek/wirtschaftsdaten>.

There was a more or less continual rise in the number of German companies in Russia until 2014, peaking at about 6,200, but the number operating there then fell sharply to the current level below 4,000.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, German investments in Russia reached record highs in 2017–19, although insecurity caused by the pandemic accounted in large part for the collapse of these levels in 2020.<sup>39</sup> The primary beneficiaries of the relationship are large German enterprises, since companies such as Siemens and Deutsche Bahn have direct access to the Russian leadership and enjoy certain other privileges as well. Smaller businesses can profit as ‘satellites’ of the larger ones, but have been confronted with a more difficult political and administrative environment inside Russia. A strong lobby exists in Germany to support companies working in and with Russia, especially via the German Eastern European Economic Committee (Ostausschuss der deutschen Wirtschaft).

Only 500 French companies, including 35 of those listed on the CAC 40 index, are currently operating in Russia. They are well represented in the energy, automobile and agri-food sectors, as well as in transport, finance and aerospace. France is the leading foreign employer in Russia, with Russian subsidiaries of French companies employing some 160,000 people. France’s market share is increasing slightly, while Germany’s is declining and China’s is skyrocketing.<sup>40</sup> French foreign direct investment (FDI) in Russia remains at a high level, thanks to the Total group, which is involved in the Yamal LNG and Arctic LNG projects. Russian FDI in France is insignificant, and only 30 Russian companies are present there. In France, too, the economic interests of French businesses in Russia are promoted by lobbying agencies.

For Germany, in the energy realm, the basis for continuing cooperation was created not only by the positive experience during the Soviet period, but also by existing networks between the GDR and the USSR, as described above. This applied to natural gas in particular, but oil imports also became significant, accounting for up to 40 per cent of all German oil imports in the past decade.<sup>41</sup> Still, it is natural gas that has been the basis for most cooperation as well as the source of most controversy both within Germany and with its neighbours: under very different governments in Berlin, the Nord Stream pipeline has served as the primary symbol of Germany’s willingness to cooperate with the Russian Federation.

In short, as regards policy towards Russia, France is much more concerned with security-related issues, while Germany has been strongly focused on economic cooperation, including in the energy domain. In both France and Germany a certain understanding – even sympathy – for the Russian foreign policy approach can be found in some parts of society, not only among the elite but also within the general population.

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<sup>38</sup> Gutmann, T. (2020), ‘Weniger deutsche Firmen in Russland’ [Fewer German companies in Russia], German–Russian Chamber of Foreign Commerce, 30 December 2020, <https://russland.ahk.de/infothek/news/detail/2020-weniger-deutsche-firmen-in-russland>.

<sup>39</sup> Gutmann, T. (2020), ‘Deutsche Russland-Investitionen: Einbruch nach Boom’ [German investments in Russia: slump after boom], German–Russian Chamber of Foreign Commerce, 31 August 2020, <https://russland.ahk.de/infothek/news/detail/deutsche-russland-investitionen-einbruch-nach-boom>.

<sup>40</sup> General Directorate of the Treasury (2021), ‘Relations économiques France – Russie’ [French–Russian economic relations], 11 March 2021, <https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Pays/RU/les-relations-commerciales-bilaterales-franco-russes-juin-2018>.

<sup>41</sup> Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy (undated), ‘Energiedaten: Gesamtausgabe’ [Energy data: complete edition], <https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Artikel/Energie/energiedaten-gesamtausgabe.html>.

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# 04

## The Eastern Neighbourhood: a likely focus on the medium term

**Neither Berlin nor Paris currently favours EU or NATO membership for the Eastern Partnership countries, although France is more stark than Germany in its opposition.**

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In an attempt to create elements of a policy towards Russia going beyond sanctions, the EU agreed in March 2016 on five principles to guide its relationship with Russia:

1. Insisting on full implementation of the Minsk agreements before corresponding economic sanctions against Russia are revoked;
2. Pursuing closer relations with the countries of the Eastern Partnership and Central Asia;
3. Becoming more resilient to Russian threats such as energy security, hybrid warfare and disinformation;
4. Despite tensions, engaging selectively with Russia on a range of foreign policy issues, among them cooperation on the Middle East, counterterrorism and climate change;
5. Increasing support for Russian civil society and promoting people-to-people contacts, given that sanctions target the regime rather than the Russian population.

The first two of these principles are concerned with the states that lie between Russia and the EU – the first with Ukraine, and the second with all six Eastern Partnership countries. Thus Franco-German cooperation in the EU framework needs to encompass relations with these countries. This is already happening with regard to Ukraine and the implementation of the Minsk agreements. Even if progress has been extremely limited, the Normandy Format and the Franco-German cooperation it entails have made a significant contribution to keeping the situation in Donbas from worsening, notably in 2015. The Eastern Partnership, however, is in danger of disintegrating as a result of the departure of Belarus and the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The more cohesive segment, consisting of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine (all three possessing association agreements with the EU) is attempting to separate itself as clearly as possible from the three other states. While Berlin and Paris have to some extent overlapping agendas regarding the six Eastern Partnership countries, cooperation is a challenge not only because of the fragmentation described, but also because there is a contrasting agenda in the east of the EU.

## The Normandy Format

After the annexation of Crimea, President François Hollande opted for an approach based on both sanctions and engagement. He fully supported the EU policy of sanctions; at the same time, he decided to restore dialogue by inviting Vladimir Putin and the then Ukrainian president, Petro Poroshenko, as well as Chancellor Angela Merkel, to the celebrations marking the 70th anniversary of D-Day. This initiative led to the creation of the Normandy Format, consisting of France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine, intended to work towards a resolution of the conflict in Donbas.

Germany and France thus began to work together in an attempt to end the Donbas war and prevent the further destabilization of Ukraine. In the context of the Normandy Format, they managed to win the support of both Russia and Ukraine for the Minsk agreements of September 2014 and February 2015, which laid out the steps to be taken to resolve the conflict and restore Ukrainian territorial integrity. The Franco-German cooperation in this framework functioned well, even if it was perceived in Germany as being somewhat asymmetrical, with the German side playing the leading role at certain stages of the negotiations, at least until the election of Emmanuel Macron.

However, this cooperation has not yet achieved its goals, and the Ukrainian authorities have at times considered other negotiation formats, thereby potentially impeding one of the drivers of the Franco-German relationship as regards Russia. In particular, there were hopes on the Ukrainian side that Washington would play a more active role with regard to the conflict, and US analysts have called for this as well.<sup>42</sup> But because their foreign policy priorities lie elsewhere, the US and the UK are not currently inclined to join the Normandy Format. In September 2021,

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<sup>42</sup> Åslund, A. (2021), 'Biden and Ukraine: A strategy for the new administration', Atlantic Council Issue Brief, 5 March 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/biden-and-ukraine-a-strategy-for-the-new-administration>.

during Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to Washington, President Biden pledged assistance to Ukraine in a number of fields, but did not meet Zelenskyy's expectation about an extension of the Normandy Format. The final joint statement on the US–Ukraine Strategic Partnership does not go beyond reiterating the US's 'full support for international efforts, including the Normandy format, aimed at negotiating a diplomatic resolution to the Russian-led conflict in Eastern Ukraine ...'.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, Biden's decision to waive sanctions for the primary company responsible for the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, and the US–German agreement in July 2021 permitting the pipeline to be completed, had already led to disillusionment among the Ukrainian elite concerning the potential role of the US and its agenda towards Ukraine.

## **The Normandy Format has constituted the bedrock of the Franco-German relationship as regards Russia and Ukraine in recent years.**

The Normandy Format has constituted the bedrock of the Franco-German relationship as regards Russia and Ukraine in recent years, even though it has not resulted in a workable and sustainable conclusion to the Donbas conflict. Paris and Berlin agree on the reasons why the Minsk agreements failed to gain traction: the problem lies less in the agreements themselves (although they are far from unproblematic) than in the absence of implementation, given the reluctance of the actors involved to see them applied, in particular on the Russian side. Six years after their conclusion, there is still debate about which clauses should come first, with Moscow insisting that political issues be settled before security issues, which is – understandably – unacceptable to Kyiv.<sup>44</sup> Multiple attempts by the Ukrainians to modify the Minsk agreements to make them more fit for purpose have been implicitly or explicitly rejected by the Russian side.<sup>45</sup>

There is concern about what will happen to the Normandy Format in the post-Merkel era. Angela Merkel's departure means a certain loss of expertise at the very top level in dealing with Russia and Ukraine, as well as a probable reduction of interest in this subject in the Chancellery. Despite the political uncertainties and the limits of the format itself, this important dossier tends to bring Paris and Berlin together, and both have expressed scepticism about a possible extension of the Normandy Format to the US. During his visit to Kyiv in August 2021, on the 30th anniversary of Ukraine's independence, France's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian, expressed his intention to revive the Normandy Format and to convene a meeting of the four participating countries' foreign ministers. Despite

<sup>43</sup> The White House (2021), 'Joint Statement on the U.S.-Ukraine Strategic Partnership', 1 September 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/01/joint-statement-on-the-u-s-ukraine-strategic-partnership>.

<sup>44</sup> Marangé, C. (2019), 'A People-Centered Approach to Conflict Resolution in Ukraine', War On The Rocks, 3 July 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/07/a-people-centered-approach-to-conflict-resolution-in-ukraine>.

<sup>45</sup> For an analysis of Russia's stalling techniques, see Giles, K. (2021), *What deters Russia: Enduring principles for responding to Moscow*, Research Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/09/what-deters-russia>.

reports that such a meeting could take place in late 2021, Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov subsequently seemed to dampen such hopes, pointing to steps the Ukrainian side would need to take for the meeting to go ahead.<sup>46</sup>

The danger appears to be that the ongoing hiatus in high-level meetings in the Normandy Format will have two consequences, alongside the continuation of the fighting and the further destabilization of eastern Ukraine. First, it will discourage France and Germany from investing much effort in the initiative, thereby eroding the basis for their cooperation over Russia and Ukraine. Second, their failure in this case could have negative implications for the way the Franco-German motor is perceived in the wider security sphere, within the EU context and beyond. However, the US–German agreement of July 2021 concerning the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, among other issues, commits Berlin to intensifying its efforts in the Normandy Format, and this commitment seems likely to be upheld by Germany’s incoming government.

The Russian military build-up of more than 100,000 troops near the Ukrainian border and on the Crimean peninsula in April 2021, as well as new military deployments the following November, emphasizes that Moscow continues to rely on military instruments for setting red lines, ensuring its interests are taken into account and influencing Ukrainian domestic and foreign policy.<sup>47</sup> Thus, while the Normandy Format has served as proof that France and Germany can cooperate on questions concerning the Eastern Neighbourhood, it is by no means a success story – although it is certainly better than leaving Ukraine to confront Russia alone, without international support.

## The future of the Eastern Partnership and NATO membership

The future of the Eastern Partnership remains a contentious issue within the EU. On the one hand, some partnership countries, such as Ukraine, state openly that they are dissatisfied with this format, which they consider an insufficient and unsuitable status. They continue to advocate for being granted an EU membership perspective. On the other hand, the European Commission has expressed concern about the setbacks observed, particularly in Ukraine, in the fight against corruption, as well as in other areas specified for reform.<sup>48</sup> Simultaneously, European think-tanks such as the European Council on Foreign Relations

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<sup>46</sup> TASS (2021), ‘Russia not shrinking from Normandy Format, Kiev fails to fulfill agreements – top diplomat’, 1 November 2021, <https://tass.com/world/1356597>.

<sup>47</sup> Gressel, G. (2021), ‘War of unreality: Why Russia is threatening to escalate the Ukraine conflict’, European Council on Foreign Relations, 14 April 2021, <https://ecfr.eu/article/war-of-unreality-why-russia-is-threatening-to-escalate-the-ukraine-conflict>; Marangé, C. (2021), ‘Russie-Ukraine, nouvel acte d’un bras de fer mondial’ [Russia–Ukraine, new act in a global showdown], interview, Institut Montaigne, 3 May 2021, <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/blog/russie-ukraine-nouvel-acte-dun-bras-de-fer-mondial>.

<sup>48</sup> On corruption, see for example Lough, J. (2021), *Ukraine’s system of crony capitalism*, Research Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/07/ukraines-system-crony-capitalism>.



argue in favour of adding a security dimension to the Eastern Partnership by establishing ‘security compacts’, particularly in the field of cybersecurity, hybrid threats and intelligence-gathering.<sup>49</sup>

The views of Paris and Berlin converge to a certain extent since both are opposed to changing the ‘finalité’ of the Eastern Partnership – i.e. it is not an EU accession process – and to offering a membership perspective to Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, the three countries that already benefit from an association agreement. Along with some other EU member states, France has so far considered that the Eastern Partnership has no geopolitical purpose. As such, the French position has been to exclude extending the Eastern Partnership’s multilateral dimension to defence and security issues and granting a special status or differentiated formats to countries that have concluded association agreements with the EU. In October 2019, France vetoed the opening of EU accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia, and since then it has tended to resist any discussion about enlargement encompassing the Balkans. Interviewed in early 2021, Clément Beaune, a long-time close adviser to Emmanuel Macron who was appointed Deputy Minister for European Affairs in mid-2020, stated that he did not see any interest in promoting new enlargement except for ‘some Balkan countries’ (and that ‘only in 10 years’ time’). In Beaune’s view, there is a need to define EU boundaries once and for all, because the absence of limits fuels retrenchment behind national borders.<sup>50</sup>

Berlin’s position is less categorical in this regard. While focused on the implementation of the association agreements with Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, Germany is open to suggestions on feasible ways to deepen cooperation with them, as well as with the three other partner states. German officials refrain from making definite statements about the possibility of further enlargement to the east, preferring to emphasize development of relations with the various countries of the Eastern Partnership in the short to medium term. However, while these relations are quite advanced in some areas, it must be stated that currently the geopolitical role of the EU and its Eastern Partnership in these countries is far from impressive. Since the beginning of the protests and the ensuing government repression in Belarus in August 2020, and the war in Nagorny Karabakh in the autumn of the same year, other external actors have played much more significant roles, even though France remains a co-president of the OSCE Minsk Group on the Nagorny Karabakh conflict, alongside the US and Russia.

Thus while largely agreeing on the ‘finalité’ of the Eastern Partnership, Paris and Berlin do not appear to have a common agenda on how to develop it productively. Their reluctance to envision new enlargement in the east (or in the Balkans, in the case of France) stems not only from a belief that such a move would intensify the ongoing security dilemma and reinforce Moscow’s aggressive behaviour. It also results from the realization that the EU is living through very turbulent times in the international arena, while having to deal with one crisis after another,

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<sup>49</sup> Gressel, G. and Popescu, N. (2020), ‘The best defence: Why the EU should forge security compacts with its eastern neighbours’, European Council on Foreign Relations Policy Brief, 3 November 2020, <https://ecfr.eu/publication/the-best-defence-why-the-eu-should-forge-security-compacts-with-its-eastern-neighbours>.

<sup>50</sup> Le Nouvel Esprit Public (2021), ‘Conversation Avec Clément Beaune’ [Conversation with Clément Beaune], podcast, 10 January 2021, <https://www.lenouvelespritpublic.fr/podcasts/244>.

confront illiberal challenges from within and combat foreign malign actions that threaten the EU. Consequently, in their view, there is an urgent need, especially after Brexit, to focus on improving the functioning of the EU and reinforcing the legitimacy of the European project in member states' societies.

There is also convergence between Paris and Berlin on their current refusal to grant NATO membership to more post-Soviet countries. Ukraine resolutely asserts its ambition to join NATO – a prospect enshrined in its constitution. The authorities in Kyiv apparently wished to take advantage of the change of administration in the US at the beginning of 2021 to relaunch the process of joining NATO and obtaining a Membership Action Plan, in line with the commitment made to Ukraine, as well as to Georgia, at the Bucharest NATO summit in April 2008. Neither France nor Germany openly rejects the decision taken in Bucharest. However, this prospect is generally seen by Paris as a potential cause of more insecurity for Alliance members, while Berlin does not believe that the moment for implementation has come, since Ukraine would be more of a security liability than a security asset to NATO in the current environment. Moreover, the implication that a country cannot accede to the Alliance if it is confronted with a conflict on its territory has not remained unnoticed in Moscow: de facto, the protracted conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and the ongoing hostilities in Donbas are serious impediments to accession for Georgia and Ukraine.

## **There is little chance of achieving common action at the European level, since German and French views on cooperation with Russia and the future of the Eastern Partnership hardly elicit unanimity in the broader EU context.**

In sum, France and Germany tend to converge in their vision of the EU Neighbourhood policy, and have similar approaches to the Eastern Partnership. Neither is inclined to contemplate EU membership for the Eastern partners in the foreseeable future; nor is NATO enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia currently on the agenda. This position certainly creates a common basis from which to consider other options within the Eastern Partnership framework. However, this agreement may well become an area of contention with the US and the UK, while already alienating member states in the eastern EU. Paris and Berlin both now focus more on deepening the existing structures of the Eastern Partnership, and widening sectoral cooperation with Eastern partners in order to promote European standards. However, Poland, for instance, continues to support the EU aspirations of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. While considering the Eastern Partnership neither as a stepping stone to EU membership nor as a substitute for membership, Warsaw insists that these countries should be granted the possibility to apply for EU membership in the future provided domestic reforms are carried out and prerequisite conditions are met. Lithuania has adopted a similar position.

There is therefore little chance of achieving common action at the European level, since German and French views on cooperation with Russia and the future of the Eastern Partnership hardly elicit unanimity in the broader EU context. To enhance their role in defining policy towards Russia, the central and eastern member states invest political resources in other EU-related positions. Some of them, in particular Estonia and the Czech Republic, promote a transactional approach – taking part, for instance, in the intergovernmental Takuba Task Force in the Sahel under the command of the French Operation Barkhane in order to show their support to EU countries that have to deal with the security challenges coming from the south. This willingness to participate is greatly appreciated in Paris. Whether such a transactional approach can serve as a model for future EU-wide cooperation remains to be seen, however. With regard to the Eastern Partnership, it seems more likely that commonalities will be found through deepening relationships with some of the countries involved without tackling the question of their potential future membership of the EU and NATO. However, due to more explicit support for potential EU membership for the associated countries from at least one of the parties in the incoming German government (the Greens), the options for Franco-German convergence in this area may decrease.

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# 05 Franco-German cooperation in the security realm: distinctly possible

**Convergence on security questions regarding Russia can be achieved if sufficient consultation takes place and the transatlantic relationship is adequately taken into account.**

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The shock and dismay provoked by the annexation of the Crimean peninsula and the ensuing Russian-supported war in eastern Ukraine led to a fundamental shift in approach to Russia in both Berlin and Paris. Russia's actions raised a series of security-related questions, to which both countries responded by suspending or cancelling former cooperation. Germany halted all forms of military- and security-related interaction with Moscow, at least temporarily. France, which under François Hollande had a more distant relationship with Moscow, renounced delivery of the Mistral-class assault ships sold to Russia under Nicolas Sarkozy, after heated debates about the cancellation, since these could be deployed in the Black Sea and used against Ukraine. This decision cost the French government some €950 million. However, after Emmanuel Macron became president in 2017 he advanced the idea of a security dialogue with Moscow and attempted to establish a functioning bilateral relationship with Vladimir Putin. This initiative was greeted with some scepticism in Berlin, in particular because of its unilateral nature. Despite this, there is sufficient agreement on the fundamental questions in the security realm in France and Germany to make cooperation feasible.

## Macron's strategic autonomy initiative

From the beginning of his mandate, Macron combined harsh criticism of Moscow with an attempt to establish a relationship with Putin. The French president is certainly aware of the nature of the Russian political regime, as well as its hostile intentions and capacity to do harm. The attacks Macron's campaign suffered in the run-up to the 2017 election – with rumours about his private life and the holding of offshore accounts, as well as the hacking and disclosure of thousands of emails from his campaign team members just before election day – all pointed to Russia, as the MacronLeaks investigations later revealed.<sup>51</sup>

Nonetheless, the new French president decided to restore a direct dialogue with the Kremlin, hosting Putin at Versailles in May 2017 for the inauguration of an exhibition on Peter the Great. At the joint press conference, Macron did not spare his counterpart, bluntly stating that the media outlets Russia Today and Sputnik had 'repeatedly produced untruths about [his own] person and [his] campaign' and were no more than 'organs of influence'.<sup>52</sup> As this example demonstrates, Macron's approach to Russia has involved a combination of dialogue and firmness. The approach relies on two premises widely shared in France: that not only Russian actions but also the growing confrontation between Russia and the US imperil European security; and that Russia is part of Europe culturally and historically.

Macron's Russia policy is also embedded in a broader approach towards European security and predicated on his view of key international developments and trends. He has increasingly asserted a bold new vision for a more stable and autonomous Europe, as notably set out in the speech on Europe that he delivered at the Sorbonne in 2017.<sup>53</sup> In August 2018, during the president's annual meeting with all French ambassadors, he asked them to reflect on the definition of European security interests. The same year, he launched the European Intervention Initiative, a joint military project that now brings together 14 Western and Nordic European countries outside the framework of NATO and the EU. On the same occasion, he called for the creation of 'a real European army', arguing that 'in the face of Russia ... which has shown that it can be threatening ... we must have a Europe which defends itself more alone, without depending only on the United States, and in a more sovereign way'.<sup>54</sup>

A few months later, Macron pushed to renew the debate on Europe's so-called 'strategic autonomy', a concept that remains both vague and contentious,<sup>55</sup> but

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<sup>51</sup> Jeangène Vilmer, J. (2019), 'The "#Macron leaks" operation: a post-mortem', Atlantic Council, 20 June 2019, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/the-macron-leaks-operation-a-post-mortem>.

<sup>52</sup> *Le Monde* (2017), 'Au côté de Vladimir Poutine, Emmanuel Macron accuse des médias russes d'avoir été des "organes d'influence"' [Alongside Vladimir Putin, Emmanuel Macron accuses Russian media of having been 'organs of influence'], 29 May 2017, [https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/video/2017/05/29/au-cote-de-vladimir-poutine-emmanuel-macron-accuse-des-medias-russes-d-avoir-ete-des-organes-d-influence\\_5135674\\_823448.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/video/2017/05/29/au-cote-de-vladimir-poutine-emmanuel-macron-accuse-des-medias-russes-d-avoir-ete-des-organes-d-influence_5135674_823448.html).

<sup>53</sup> Élysée (2017), 'President Macron gives speech on new initiative for Europe', 26 September 2017, <https://www.elysee.fr/en/emmanuel-macron/2017/09/26/president-macron-gives-speech-on-new-initiative-for-europe>.

<sup>54</sup> AFP via *Le Point* (2018), 'Macron plaide pour une "armée européenne" capable d'agir' [Macron pleads for a European army capable of action], *Le Point*, 6 November 2018, [https://www.lepoint.fr/monde/macron-plaide-pour-une-armee-europeenne-capable-d-agir-06-11-2018-2268997\\_24.php](https://www.lepoint.fr/monde/macron-plaide-pour-une-armee-europeenne-capable-d-agir-06-11-2018-2268997_24.php).

<sup>55</sup> Franke, U. and Varma, T. (2019), 'Independence play: Europe's pursuit of strategic autonomy', European Council on Foreign Relations, 19 July 2019, [https://ecfr.eu/special/independence\\_play\\_europes\\_pursuit\\_of\\_strategic\\_autonomy](https://ecfr.eu/special/independence_play_europes_pursuit_of_strategic_autonomy).

which goes beyond the EU's relations with the US. This unexpected move irritated German politicians and policymakers, mainly because of the French president's failure to consult with Berlin and other EU capitals, but to some extent concerning its merits as well. In parallel, Macron started to make the case for a 'differentiated Europe', as a response to the realization that it is very difficult to move forward with 27 members that disagree on defence, taxation and monetary policy. Although significant progress can be noted in the field of European defence with two new EU mechanisms, the permanent structured cooperation (PESCO) and the European defence fund (EDF), Macron's efforts have not achieved the success he anticipated. His initiatives and statements have also sparked controversy among EU member states, revealing a growing divergence of views on the US's commitment to Europe and the future of the transatlantic relationship.<sup>56</sup>

## **Macron decided to switch to a bilateral dialogue with Russia and invited Putin to his summer residence at Brégançon on the eve of the French-hosted G7 summit in Biarritz.**

Eager to make his ideas about European strategic autonomy prevail, Macron changed his tactics in the summer of 2019: without waiting for the outcome of the European discussions, he decided to switch to a bilateral dialogue with Russia and invited Putin to his summer residence at Brégançon on the eve of the French-hosted G7 summit in Biarritz. Macron's overtures towards Putin were most likely driven by three factors. First, he certainly thought that this initiative would force Europeans to have a discussion on European autonomy. Second, pragmatic considerations may have played a role, especially the realization that Russian participation was needed to achieve a peace settlement in Syria. Third, as clearly stated in his speech to the French ambassadors later that month, his policy towards Russia derives from his assessment of the evolution of the international system and its consequences for European security.<sup>57</sup> China's extraordinary rise and build-up make the US pivot to Asia ever more inexorable, while the growing erosion of arms control treaties brings new security challenges for the Europeans. The unpredictability of the US administration at the time added an element of confusion that was most probably intentionally used. After Donald Trump's sudden and unilateral decision to withdraw from Syria in late 2019, Macron caused a new stir in many European capitals by claiming that NATO was 'experiencing brain death', to underline what he perceived as the lack of strategic thinking and coordination.<sup>58</sup>

Macron went even further in early 2020, when outlining his vision in his first speech entirely devoted to nuclear deterrence and arms control. Convinced that there could be 'no defence and security project for European citizens without

<sup>56</sup> Kunz, B. (2020), 'Europe's Defense Debate Is All About America', War on the Rocks, 4 March 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2020/03/europes-defense-debate-is-all-about-america>.

<sup>57</sup> Élysée (2019), 'Discours du Président de la République Emmanuel Macron à la Conférence des Ambassadeurs et des Ambassadrices de 2019' [Speech by the President of the Republic Emmanuel Macron at the 2019 Ambassadors' Conference], 27 August 2019, <https://www.elysee.fr/front/pdf/elysee-module-14146-fr.pdf>.

<sup>58</sup> *The Economist* (2019), 'Emmanuel Macron warns Europe: NATO is becoming brain-dead', 7 November 2019, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/11/07/emmanuel-macron-warns-europe-nato-is-becoming-brain-dead>.

a political vision seeking to promote gradual rebuilding of trust with Russia', he aimed at 'improving the conditions of collective security and stability in Europe'. Breaking from past tradition, he asserted the European dimension of French deterrence and called for a 'rebalanced transatlantic relationship', while urging Europeans to agree on an 'international arms control agenda'.<sup>59</sup> At the Munich Security Conference in February 2020, he explained why he believed in the need for a strategic dialogue with Russia that would embrace cyber, space, military relations and external conflicts.<sup>60</sup>

Despite scepticism among an influential number of high-ranking French civil servants, a Franco-Russian bilateral dialogue materialized through regular contacts at both ministerial and much lower levels. A highly experienced and respected diplomat, Pierre Vimont, a former French ambassador to Washington and former executive secretary-general for the European External Action Service, was given the task of conducting and coordinating this dialogue. On the one hand, 13 inter-ministerial working groups were set up, tackling very different issues including human rights, Iran, Libya or civil nuclear power – the idea being to build trust by reconnecting, exchanging views and learning more about mutual positions and red lines. On the other hand, 2+2 meetings between the ministries of foreign affairs and defence were intended to permit the discussion of security issues, in particular arms control – the objective here being to make Russia and the US understand that Europeans must participate in the upcoming negotiations that primarily concern them.

## German positions on security and options for convergence

The reaction in Berlin to Macron's proposals was lukewarm at best. The time was not perceived as ripe for a high-level dialogue on European security as envisaged by the French president. Furthermore, Macron's project seemed in danger of adopting some of the faulty assumptions made by German policymakers in their previous approaches to Russia.<sup>61</sup> Berlin was not completely inactive with regard to security dialogue, however. In November 2018 the German–Russian High-level Working Group on Security Policy renewed consultations after a six-year hiatus. Some of the subgroups of this Working Group had in fact met in Moscow as early as 2017.<sup>62</sup> This indicates that the German government attributes a relatively

<sup>59</sup> Élysée (2020), 'Discours du Président Emmanuel Macron sur la stratégie de défense et de dissuasion devant les stagiaires de la 27<sup>ème</sup> promotion de l'École de guerre' [Speech by President Emmanuel Macron on the defence and deterrence strategy to the officers of the 27th promotion of the Army War College], 7 February 2020, <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/02/07/discours-du-president-emmanuel-macron-sur-la-strategie-de-defense-et-de-dissuasion-devant-les-stagiaires-de-la-27eme-promotion-de-lecole-de-guerre>.

<sup>60</sup> Élysée (2020), 'Conférence sur la sécurité de Munich: faire revivre l'Europe comme une puissance politique stratégique' [Munich Security Conference: Reviving Europe as a strategic political power], 15 February 2020, <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/02/15/conference-sur-la-securite-de-munich-faire-revivre-leurope-comme-une-puissance-politique-strategique>.

<sup>61</sup> Stewart, S. (2021), 'Macron's Russia Policy: Already a Failure?', in Kempin (ed.) (2021), 'France's Foreign and Security Policy under President Macron', <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/macrons-russia-policy-already-a-failure>. See also Adomeit, H. (2020), 'Une politique russe à la française pour l'Europe? Irréaliste et contradictoire' [A French-style Russian policy for Europe? Unrealistic and contradictory], *Politique étrangère*, No. 1, pp. 79–92.

<sup>62</sup> German Bundestag (2019), 'Deutsch-russische Arbeitsgruppe' [German–Russian working group], 29 January 2019, <https://www.bundestag.de/presse/hib/589902-589902>.

high priority to this form of dialogue, although information about it in the German media is scarce. In the NATO framework, Germany continues to support the NATO–Russia Founding Act despite repeated Russian violations of it.<sup>63</sup>

Berlin’s response to Macron’s proposals in the security realm – whether concerning European strategic autonomy or a policy reset with Russia – was tepid primarily because of the failure of the French side to consult with EU counterparts including Germany. But there were also some doubts in Berlin about the logic behind the initiatives, especially regarding the EU’s capacity to influence Russia’s relationship with China. While some senior German officials have embraced the idea of convincing Moscow to abandon or at least weaken its strategic ties to Beijing by proposing closer cooperation with the EU, most German experts consider this position untenable.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, the hidden assumption behind Macron’s initiatives appeared to be a belief that there were enough common interests between Russia and the other European countries to allow a dialogue on security issues to bear fruit eventually.

However, this assumption can be questioned in view of Russian behaviour in the Eastern Neighbourhood, as well as in light of official perceptions in Moscow regarding the very meaning and implications of security and Russia’s role in ensuring it.<sup>65</sup> In Brussels and Washington, the sovereign equality of states – which implies the freedom to choose alliances – is seen as an inviolable principle and a guarantee of long-term stability. This view is contested in Moscow: the most extreme actors continue to believe that support for irredentism is compensation for the collapse of the Soviet Union, whereas experts with a more balanced position refer to the concept of ‘indivisibility of security’ (*nedelimost’ bezopasnosti*), thereby underlining the need to take into account the security of all countries and to revive ‘the culture of mutual consultation’. From the Russian leaders’ perspective, European strategic stability cannot be achieved without addressing political issues, such as the role of NATO in Europe and the future of the other post-Soviet countries.

Yet on the whole there is a certain overlap between French and German thinking on the subject of dialogue with Russia. In both cases there is a strong inclination to pursue such dialogue, as can be seen in Merkel’s proposal, backed by Macron, at the European Council meeting in June 2021. The German chancellor advocated for a discussion between Vladimir Putin and the EU heads of state and government. With regard to the broader security environment, the historically conditioned pacifist streak in German politics and society and the strong German preference for multilateral forums alluded to above imply both a certain resistance to dealing with issues of ‘hard’ security and a potential willingness to play a subordinate role

<sup>63</sup> Biznes Alert (2018), ‘PISM: How Russian Violations of the 1997 Founding Act Influence NATO–Russia Relations’, 11 July 2018, <https://biznesalert.com/pism-how-russian-violations-of-the-1997-founding-act-influence-nato-russia-relations>.

<sup>64</sup> See for example Fix, L. (2020), ‘Europas Chefunruhestifter’ [Europe’s chief troublemaker], *IPG-journal*, 31 January 2020, <https://www.ipg-journal.de/regionen/europa/artikel/detail/europas-chefunruhestifter-4034>; Fischer, S. (2021), ‘Schwieriges Verhältnis zu Moskau. Deutsche Russlandpolitik muss weiter justiert werden’ [Difficult relations with Moscow. German Russia policy must be further adjusted], in Maihold, G. (ed.) (2021), *Deutsche Außenpolitik im Wandel: Unstete Bedingungen, neue Impulse* [German foreign policy in flux: Unstable conditions, new ideas], SWP-Studie 2021/S 15, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin, <https://www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/deutsche-aussenpolitik-im-wandel#hd-d58493e1762>.

<sup>65</sup> See Marangé, C. (2019), ‘Russia’, in Balzacq, T., Dombrowski, P. and Reich, S. (eds) (2019), *Comparative Grand Strategy. A Framework and Cases*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 50–72.



in formats addressing these issues, provided an adequate level of consultation takes place. As the transatlantic relationship remains extremely significant for Berlin, embedding security dialogue in this relationship – or at least ensuring that it is not jeopardized by such dialogue – remains a key interest, especially now that Donald Trump is no longer in the White House. But if these concerns are dealt with, Franco-German cooperation in the security sphere appears eminently possible. Not only is Berlin increasingly worried about the European security environment, but there is also growing acceptance of the need for Germany to make greater contributions in the hard security realm.

## **It is necessary to recognize that the strategic instability that prompted Emmanuel Macron to initiate a security dialogue with Moscow has far from disappeared.**

Finally, it is necessary to recognize that the strategic instability that prompted Emmanuel Macron to initiate a security dialogue with Moscow has far from disappeared. The termination of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 2019 was followed by the US withdrawal from the Open Skies Treaty in November 2020, and by Russia's withdrawal in January 2021. In that respect, the last-minute renewal of the New START Treaty between Moscow and Washington in early February 2021 for five years (and not for one year as initially expected) came as good news, and allows the opening of new negotiations on nuclear arms reduction in which France and the UK could play a role. But the Franco-German motor could also become active in this area in the future, not least on account of the role Germany plays with regard to nuclear sharing.

However, Russia's growing engagement and destabilizing actions in sub-Saharan Africa cast doubt on Moscow's commitment to negotiate new security arrangements. In September 2021, only three months after France announced an upcoming reduction of its Barkhane counter-insurgency operations in the Sahel, and the intended withdrawal of more than 2,000 French troops (of 5,000), Mali made known its willingness to recruit 1,000 Wagner Group mercenaries.<sup>66</sup> Although not yet confirmed, this move has already prompted alarm in many European capitals, and has strained French relations with Mali and Russia. The experience of the Wagner presence in the Central African Republic suggests that its involvement in Mali and the Western Sahel could aggravate the security situation in this extremely poor and troubled region and give Moscow an opportunity to instrumentalize a new migration crisis politically.

Furthermore, the degree of opposition in the European Council framework to the discussion with the Russian president, as advocated by Merkel and Macron, should serve as a warning to both Berlin and Paris. In order for proposals on dialogue with Russia to succeed at the EU level, they must be predicated on serious consultations with other EU member states; and the interests of these states must

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<sup>66</sup> AFP via *Guardian* (2021), 'France warns Russia against paramilitary involvement in Mali', 24 September 2021, <https://guardian.ng/news/france-warns-russia-against-paramilitary-involvement-in-mali>.

be not only understood but also clearly reflected in the substance of the proposals. The significant efforts made by both Berlin and Paris to engage with counterparts in Poland and the Baltic states on Russia and security-related topics have not yet led to such a state of affairs. The heightened concern with issues of hard security that has emerged in Germany in recent years makes it likely that the next German government will engage more substantively in this area, although radical changes of position are unlikely, especially due to the compromises required to bring a three-party coalition into being. This is all the more true given that the SPD is slated to head the defence ministry in the new cabinet.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> This analysis was completed in late November 2021, shortly after the text of the coalition agreement between the SPD, the Greens and the FDP was published and the distribution of the ministries among the three parties was announced.

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# 06 Sanctions and engagement: a difficult balancing act

**Both France and Germany push for more engagement with Russia while upholding sanctions against it, but eastern EU member states do not support the balance advocated by Berlin and Paris.**

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It was the behaviour of the Russian leadership that led to a significant change in the EU's Russia policy. From 2014, Moscow's clear breach of international law convinced all EU member states to coalesce around a policy of sanctions. This had three stages: diplomatic sanctions; individual sanctions against particular people and legal entities, such as travel bans and asset freezes; and sectoral economic sanctions. Over time all three types were introduced. Surprisingly, considering the prevailing level of disagreement among the member states before 2014, these sanctions have been preserved up to the present day, with additional ones being implemented in response to the treatment of opposition politician Alexei Navalny by the Russian authorities. Germany was instrumental in advocating for the various levels of sanctions against Russia to be introduced, and has been active in keeping them in place despite opposition from some EU member states. This represented a major departure from Berlin's previous approach to Russia, in which sanctions would have been unthinkable. However, finding an acceptable and effective balance between sanctions and engagement has proved difficult

for the EU. Germany in particular has been condemned for insisting on continuing its cooperation with Russia on the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, thus undermining both its criticism of the Russian regime and the efficacy of certain sanctions.

## **Nord Stream 2: overstepping the boundaries of engagement**

In the energy domain, Germany remained true to form in its overall approach, combining clear criticism of Russia with a continued focus on cooperation. The Nord Stream project originally seemed to fit well with Germany's plans for a new energy mix that included more natural gas, and meshed with its intentions to cooperate more intensively with a reforming Russia. However, the fact that former German chancellor Gerhard Schröder took over the chairmanship of the Nord Stream consortium in 2005 – shortly after leaving the Chancellery, where he had been instrumental in ensuring a state guarantee of €1 billion for the pipeline – has tainted his reputation to this day.<sup>68</sup> The criticism of his personal behaviour has mixed with more general concern about the continued insistence of his party, the SPD, on the relevance of the legacy of Ostpolitik for contemporary relations with Russia, as evidenced by the introduction of the principle of 'rapprochement through linkage' (Annäherung durch Verflechtung) by then foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier after Schröder's departure. This drew on the slogan 'change through rapprochement' (Wandel durch Annäherung) advocated decades earlier by Willy Brandt.<sup>69</sup>

Contrary to initial expectations, the successive governments led by Angela Merkel continued to pursue this focus on energy-related cooperation with Russia, including a second Nord Stream pipeline, which will double the supply capacity from Nord Stream 1 (55 billion cubic metres per year). This project has provoked enormous (and originally underestimated) controversy within Germany, among EU member states, and with the US, as well as in Europe beyond the EU. In particular, Ukraine has made its opposition clear, since it eventually stands to lose its status as a transit country for natural gas.

When push comes to shove, Paris tends to side with Germany on Nord Stream 2, although more criticism has been voiced recently. France has always been interested in the Nord Stream projects while remaining in the background. Notably, Gaz de France Suez (later Engie) entered the Nord Stream 1 project at the last moment, once the controversies surrounding the scheme had largely blown over. Engie is one of the six companies that formed the consortium to build Nord Stream 2. This unusual low-profile approach conceals an ambiguity, if not a contradiction. On the one hand, there is French interest in Russian gas owing to its price and reliability, as well as Engie involvement; on the other, there

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<sup>68</sup> Added to this was the fact that Schröder's involvement in Russian structures continually increased, and his statements over the past years indicate that he has been completely co-opted by Russian political and economic networks.

<sup>69</sup> Wehner, M. (2017), 'Nur keine falschen Signale aus Moskau' [Just no false signals from Moscow], *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 25 October 2017, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/bundespraesident-frank-walter-steinmeier-besucht-russland-15261770.html>.

is some reluctance stemming from awareness that the project contradicts EU policy – notably the third energy package – while giving significant redistribution powers to Germany and weakening Ukraine’s gas transit. Moreover, the energy transition and the increasing importance of LNG and hydrogen gas complicate the market and make EU gas consumption in the medium term difficult to predict, thus casting doubt on the relevance of the whole project.<sup>70</sup>

Berlin and Washington reached an agreement in July 2021 on the completion of Nord Stream 2. They embedded their accord in the framework of their cooperation on climate change. In this context, Germany agreed to set up a ‘Green Fund’ for Ukraine, to help Kyiv advance in the fields of energy efficiency, renewable energy, hydrogen development and carbon neutrality. Germany also reiterated its commitment to energy security and diversity within the EU. Finally, the two sides agreed to strengthen their measures against malign Russian actions and Moscow’s potential weaponization of energy. Berlin in particular pledged to use ‘all available leverage’ to extend the existing Russo-Ukrainian gas contract beyond 2024.<sup>71</sup> However, Moscow’s clear desire to avoid transiting gas through Ukraine in the future, together with the upcoming change of government in Berlin, leave some question marks with regard to the agreement. In fact, Berlin has no reliable sources of leverage that could induce Moscow to continue to route its natural gas via Ukraine in the future, unless Germany is willing to restrict the flow of gas through the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. This is unlikely under an SPD-led government, even if the Greens have come out in favour of stopping the project and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) has advocated a moratorium on it.<sup>72</sup>

## **Despite certain structural differences between the two countries, there seems to be a certain potential for France and Germany to find a common agenda concerning energy issues related to Russia.**

Overall, despite certain structural differences between the two countries, there seems to be a certain potential for France and Germany to find a common agenda concerning energy issues related to Russia. Germany is much more dependent on Russian oil and gas than France, which has managed very well to diversify its gas supplies – thanks notably to Algerian gas – and thus has no critical need to import gas from Russia. French officials have expressed some reservations about the Nord Stream 2 pipeline over time. Nevertheless, the country has an economic interest in maintaining energy cooperation with Russia given Engie’s participation in Nord

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<sup>70</sup> Bayou, C. (2019), ‘L’énergie dans la région baltique – un enjeu primordial de sécurité’ [Energy in the Baltic region – a vital security issue], *Stratégie*, 121–122, pp. 313–327. Also hear Céline Bayou’s contribution to this recent radio discussion: France Culture (2021), ‘Allemagne, Russie, Ukraine : les pièges du gazoduc?’ [Germany, Russia, Ukraine: the pitfalls of the gas pipeline], *Affaires étrangères*, 6 March 2021, <https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/affaires-etrangeres/affaires-etrangeres-emission-du-samedi-06-mars-2021>.

<sup>71</sup> US Department of State (2021), ‘Joint Statement of the United States and Germany on Support for Ukraine, European Energy Security, and our Climate Goals’, 21 July 2021, <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-of-the- united-states-and-germany-on-support-for-ukraine-european-energy-security-and-our-climate-goals>.

<sup>72</sup> Freie Demokraten (2021), ‘Nie gab es mehr zu tun. Wahlprogramm der Freien Demokraten’ [Never has there been more to do: Election Manifesto of the Free Democrats], p. 49, [https://www.fdp.de/sites/default/files/2021-08/FDP\\_BTW2021\\_Wahlprogramm\\_1.pdf](https://www.fdp.de/sites/default/files/2021-08/FDP_BTW2021_Wahlprogramm_1.pdf).

Stream 2, and the significant involvement of Total, another French flagship, in gas liquefaction projects in the Arctic, including its holding of a direct 20 per cent share in Yamal LNG. In the energy sphere, therefore, large French and German enterprises have overlapping interests as well as government support. The same is true for a few other economic sectors as well.

## Engaging while pushing back and constraining

Although the EU member states were able to reach agreement on the five guiding principles in 2016, significant differences remain concerning how to deal with Russia. In February 2021 the Foreign Affairs Council proposed a threefold approach that attempts to keep the principles relevant in the context of a rapidly deteriorating EU–Russia relationship. The three elements involve ‘pushing back on infringements of international law and human rights, containing disinformation and cyberattacks, but also engaging on issues of interest to the EU’.<sup>73</sup> This approach demonstrates that the EU is motivated to focus ever more strongly on countering Russia’s continued problematic behaviour through a form of containment.<sup>74</sup> But within the EU27 there is still an important faction – to which both France and Germany belong – that insists on preserving the idea of engagement with Russia.

All the same, since Alexei Navalny’s poisoning in August 2020, France seems to have partially reversed its previous course. The use of a chemical weapon against the most visible and fearless Russian political opposition figure, two years after the Skripal poisonings in the UK, certainly dampened the hopes nurtured by President Macron of finding common ground with Russia, especially as Putin assured him in a telephone call that Navalny had poisoned himself to gain personal attention. These statements subsequently leaked into the French press, provoking the ire of the pro-government Russian media. After the attempt on Navalny’s life, the Franco-Russian 2+2 dialogue was suspended. It was not, however, officially interrupted, and the dialogue resumed in November 2021 with a meeting in Paris. The 13 working groups have continued to meet, but less regularly owing to the pandemic. The talks had not progressed much meanwhile anyway, as the Russians displayed little effort or enthusiasm. Revelations regarding corruption patterns and the lifestyle attributed to the Russian president released by Navalny’s team after his arrest on his return to Moscow in January 2021, as well as his subsequent prison sentence, were widely publicized and the behaviours harshly criticized in the French media space.

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<sup>73</sup> Council of the EU (2021), ‘Foreign Affairs Council, 22 February 2021’, [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/02/22/?utm\\_source=dsms-auto&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Foreign+Affairs+Council](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/fac/2021/02/22/?utm_source=dsms-auto&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Foreign+Affairs+Council).

<sup>74</sup> Even though Josep Borrell and the Foreign Affairs Council spoke of ‘containing’ Russia in February 2021, in the Joint Communication of the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union on Foreign Affairs and Security Policy that was published in June 2021 the wording had been changed to ‘constraining’ Russia, possibly because ‘containment’ smacks too much of Cold War rhetoric. Be that as it may, the tone and content of the measures envisaged do not appear to have been altered. See European Commission (2021), ‘Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council, and the Council on EU–Russia relations – Push back, constrain and engage’, 16 June 2021, <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/joint-communication-eu-russia-relations.pdf>.

Nevertheless, Berlin and Paris do not seem inclined to give up the idea of selective engagement yet, for three main reasons. First, economic interests and lobbying capacities remain strong. Second, the role that Russia plays in a number of conflicts and in strategic affairs cannot be ignored, and implies the need to maintain some discussion channels. Third, in the case of Germany, part of the political elite still firmly believes that isolation of Russia must be avoided at virtually any cost. The idea of selective engagement goes beyond the current political interaction with Russia on international issues such as the situation in Syria and Libya or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran. It involves cooperating with Russian actors on new topics or intensifying existing cooperation. In Germany, possible areas of discrete engagement that have been discussed include a higher-level dialogue between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union, questions related to 5G development, common issues concerning the Arctic, or cooperation on a transition from the regime under President Aliaksandr Lukashenka in Belarus. Currently the most promising topic in the relationship is believed to be climate change, since it is clear this already has a severely negative impact on Russia. This emphasis is likely to be preserved under the next German government, since all potential coalition parties have clearly pointed to tackling climate change as a major priority. Indeed, the coalition agreement reached by the SPD, the Greens and the FDP mentions four areas in which stronger cooperation with Russia is desired: hydrogen, health issues, climate-related challenges and the environment.

This engagement with Russia goes hand in hand, however, with a clear determination in Paris and Berlin to counter and contain harmful Russian behaviour. A joint Franco-German approach to hybrid threats appears possible, the aim being to make the EU and its member states less susceptible to such threats coming from Russia in a variety of areas, including disinformation and cybersecurity. The EU already has an Action Plan against Disinformation, and NATO is fully engaged in fighting hybrid threats, so there are existing formats to which Berlin and Paris can contribute. As for cybersecurity, awareness of the need to take additional precautions in this domain has risen exponentially in recent years as a result of the large-scale and sophisticated hackings that are believed to come from Russia. On these challenges, which are high on the EU–NATO cooperation agenda, France and Germany can potentially find a common language and agree on a strong joint approach with other EU member states – and possibly with the UK – that will complement and reinforce existing efforts.<sup>75</sup>

Another promising area for such a common agenda would be the field of money laundering and other illicit financial transactions. On both economic and financial issues, French and German businesses are confronted with similar challenges when working with or inside Russia. These are frequently connected to the lack of rule-of-law-based institutions and to the corrupt judicial system in the country. From an EU perspective, dubious financial transactions coming from Russia pose an even greater threat, undermining democratic institutions not only in many EU member states,

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<sup>75</sup> The question of hybrid threats coming from Russia is indeed one that lends itself to cooperation with the UK, which is concerned about and affected by questions of disinformation and illiberal party financing. See Niblett, R. (2021), *Global Britain, Global Broker: A blueprint for the UK's future international role*, Research Paper, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, p. 47, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/01/global-britain-global-broker>.

but also in the Balkans and in the Eastern Partnership countries. The European Commission recently proposed to combat its internal money laundering and corruption problem more effectively by establishing a financial investigative unit.<sup>76</sup> This may put pressure on businesses and institutions inside Russia to alter their practices, thus contributing to a more transparent business environment. France and Germany can provide an important impetus to such a project at the EU level.

Although this is a matter that affects both Germany and France, the primary concerns regarding funds originating in Russia to be laundered in the EU have related to the Baltic countries, and more recently Poland. Thus this sphere could provide a welcome opportunity for practical cooperation with EU member states in the east, and thereby increase interaction in the area of Russia policy. This in turn could potentially prepare the ground for greater trust between the Baltic states and Poland on the one hand, and France and Germany on the other, with regard to acceptable approaches towards Russia. Furthermore, it would offer another chance to work with the UK post-Brexit. Since kleptocratic proceeds emanating from the Eurasian region are clearly a serious problem affecting the City of London, involving the UK would make the fight against this more effective. So far, however, interest in tackling this problem remains limited.

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<sup>76</sup> Rettman, A. (2021), 'EU to create anti-money laundering agency', EU Observer, 8 July 2021, <https://euobserver.com/democracy/152386>.



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# 07

# Conclusions

**Potential for Franco-German convergence on Russia exists, but this impetus is likely to encounter strong opposition within the EU and to be severely diminished by the Kremlin's increasingly destructive behaviour inside and outside Russia.**

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France and Germany have different but potentially complementary agendas with regard to Russia. While Paris is more interested in security-related questions, Berlin has focused more strongly on the realms of business and energy. However, German concerns about issues of European security are growing, and there is overlap in the problems facing economic actors from both countries in the Russian context. Berlin and Paris have acquired experience of close cooperation in an area involving Russia within the Normandy Format, and have thus become more aware of each other's perceptions and goals as regards Russia and the Eastern Neighbourhood. Furthermore, while not always enthusiastic about the Nord Stream 2 project, France has remained relatively neutral compared with many other German allies.

This complementarity makes it possible to envisage Franco-German cooperation in both the security and the economic spheres. The two countries share and claim common values and see the Franco-German partnership as both a historical and a current foundation for the EU's sustainability and development. Both envision relations with Russia as a part of a broader discussion about Europe's essence, future and boundaries. Both are interested in a more conducive business environment for their economic players in Moscow. These similarities could lead not only to further engagement with Russia, but also to forms of pushing back against its malign behaviour, such as in the field of illicit financial transactions. Finally, both sides have reached fairly similar assessments as to the purpose of the EU Neighbourhood policy and currently oppose new EU or NATO enlargements in the east because of political and security concerns. They thus converge in their vision of the future of the Eastern Partnership and in their willingness to pursue some kind of dialogue with Moscow, which could lead to a joint approach to Russia under the next German government.

In this sense, the proposal to the European Council that the Russian president be invited to engage in dialogue may have been a harbinger of things to come, especially under an SPD-led German coalition, as the Social Democrats have traditionally

favoured increased dialogue with Moscow. However, both the Greens and the FDP advocate a tougher approach towards Russia, and since the Greens will take responsibility for the foreign ministry, elements of such an approach will no doubt be implemented. Indeed, the coalition agreement reflects the different stances on Russia present within the incoming government, and only time will reveal which aspects become dominant. On the one hand, the document indicates the three parties' intention to cooperate in order to ensure coherent policies in all domains, and in past years the Chancellery has been deeply involved in conceiving and implementing policy regarding Russia, which suggests that the SPD could play a major role. On the other hand, it emphasizes the importance of human rights in foreign policy, the significance of democracy and the rule of law, and the fundamental nature of the transatlantic relationship, all of which would point to a harsher approach towards Russia. Similarly, the statements concerning Russia specifically show a more mixed picture. While Moscow is severely criticized for its support for Lukashenka in Belarus and its hostile actions *vis-à-vis* Ukraine, a desire for constructive cooperation is clearly articulated. Within the EU context, the coalition partners' expressed willingness to take differing threat perceptions into account represents an important potential first step towards a more unified EU policy as regards Russia.<sup>77</sup>

There are also important differences between Germany and France that have so far impeded the emergence of a common approach to Russia. First of all, the diplomatic style and political aims of the two sides differ greatly. Under Merkel's leadership, Berlin was attentive to preserving unity and acting discreetly and cautiously, without renouncing the highly controversial and lucrative project of Nord Stream 2 with Russia. Under Macron's presidency, Paris has pushed hard for a 'differentiated Europe', while launching a strategic dialogue with Moscow. In addition, each country has different perceptions of the role of the US and NATO. Germany tends to be a more fervent supporter of a strong role for the transatlantic relationship, and sees less urgency in the need for the EU (or even Europe) to achieve strategic autonomy. A third major difference concerns the constraints and opportunities that result from France's status as a nuclear power, and its overseas military operations in countries where the Russian army and/or Russian private military companies are also active.

In summary, both France and Germany prefer a mixed approach to Russia involving elements of pushing back and constraining, but also a strong dose of engagement. In this sense they differ from the EU member states further to the east, several of which are suspicious of engagement and advocate focusing on forms of pushback and containment. Within Russia, the pressure on civil society and opposition forces has risen sharply over the past two years, due to the tightening of legal and regulatory mechanisms and the imprisonment of key figures. Externally, Russia has only become more aggressive, with military intimidation, political subversion and cyberattacks becoming more frequent. As long as this situation persists, the prospects for Franco-German initiatives to productively engage the Kremlin seem doomed to failure. Under these conditions, it is likely not only that there will be limited interest and impetus for such initiatives in Paris and Berlin, but also that the eastern EU member states will thwart any efforts by France or Germany to stimulate convergence on Russia at the EU level.

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<sup>77</sup> For the full text of the coalition agreement, see [https://www.spd.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Koalitionsvertrag/Koalitionsvertrag\\_2021-2025.pdf](https://www.spd.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/Koalitionsvertrag/Koalitionsvertrag_2021-2025.pdf).

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The views expressed in this research paper are the authors' own, and do not reflect any official position.

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