

# **Facing International Chaos, the Left in France Seems Unable to Form a United Front**

Thursday 13 March 2025, by [DEJEAN Mathieu](#), [ESCALONA Fabien](#), [GRAULLE Pauline](#) (Date first published: 8 March 2025).

**In the face of the social and ecological implications of the impending war effort, left-wing parties would benefit from developing a common doctrine to address the major global upheaval, but they refuse to open discussions.**

The vertigo produced by the alignment between Trump's United States and Putin's Russia could have brought left-wing positions on international issues closer together. During the formation of the New Popular, Ecological and Social Union (Nupes) and then the New Popular Front (NFP), these issues had been prudently excluded from the common programme and referred to "the wisdom of the National Assembly."

For good reason: even outside the common programme, these issues still triggered classic accusations - "warmongers" and "Atlanticists" on one side; "campists" and "Putin lovers" on the other.

Last year, the left was divided during the vote on the bilateral security agreement between France and Ukraine - the French Communist Party (PCF) and La France Insoumise (LFI) voting against, whilst the Socialist Party (PS) and the Greens voted in favour.

Since the beginning of the conflict in 2022, the self-styled anti-war left has also maintained a critical position on arms deliveries to Ukraine under the pretext of anti-Atlanticism. Even on memorial subjects such as the Ukrainian Great Famine of 1933, the left was divided in the National Assembly - the Insoumis along with two communists refusing to vote on a resolution describing the Holodomor as a "genocide."

The disagreements therefore come from deep down. But everything suggested that the new geopolitical landscape would reshuffle the cards. No one could reasonably consider that the changing alliances, the abandonment of Europe, and the imperialist escalation by Trump and Putin would be without effect on these pre-established frameworks of thought.

"Historically, we had a disagreement about NATO, but since last week, both campism and Atlanticism are dead," says MP Clémentine Autain, former LFI member and co-founder of L'Après.

For her, the conditions are right for a left-wing reassessment to be possible: "We can imagine having a common doctrine on the left that is neither imbued with a Munich spirit nor caught in a war spiral, provided we look at what we have in common, namely support for Ukrainians, international law and democracy, but also the fact that we cannot rebuild our independence at the expense of social and environmental issues," she explains.

## **Absence of a collective framework**

All left-wing parties, including the New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA) which denounces "Macron's

neoliberal militarism in the face of Trump-Putin," agree on these last points: the defence and military effort being proposed should not be a pretext for unpicking social and ecological policies.

The liberals do not hide their desire for such cuts. Former economy minister Antoine Armand proposes taking from social spending, health spending, and the salaries of teachers and local government officials to increase defence spending.

The substantive effort required to develop a common security doctrine on the left would be all the more welcome as it would remove a considerable thorn in the side of left-wing parties in moving towards a common candidacy for France's presidential elections in 2027. "We need to push the discussion on the European framework and go into detail: do we need a European defence minister, what coordination? What about nuclear power?" urges Clémentine Autain.

But in the absence of a collective framework and with tense inter-party relations, the left is very far from having started a discussion or even a debate between parties.

If the left parties do not show an overwhelming desire to work towards developing a common roadmap, it is also because their diagnosis and their proposed solutions remain, in some cases, poles apart. The idea of European solidarity, justifying spending together on security and making mutual commitments in this regard, is still a bone of contention between forces that not so long ago claimed to want to govern together.

For example: when the Green Jérémie Jordanoff believes that "we must get out of denial and understand that Putin will not stop [in Ukraine], but will attack Moldova, the Baltic countries, etc.," the LFI MP Arnaud Le Gall believes that "excessive alarmism" should be avoided.

"We are witnessing the organisation of a panic that we have already experienced at a time when we were told that Russian tanks would be here in 48 hours. Macron's supporters are trying to impose national unity by stunning people. As a result, public debate is complicated and any nuance is pointed out by Macronists as coming from the enemy," complains the LFI MP, member of the foreign affairs committee in the Assembly. According to him, there can only be a diplomatic, not a military, solution to the current chaos.

### **"Militaristic shift"**

PCF National Secretary Fabien Roussel says much the same in a statement that also advocates for a "diplomatic solution": "Our country cannot engage in a booted and nuclearised European federalism as proposed by Emmanuel Macron, nor by declaring 'opening the strategic debate' on the European-scale extension of the coverage of the French nuclear force." This divide between socialists and ecologists on one side, and LFI and communists on the other, had already appeared earlier this week in the Assembly. And it refers to two historically constructed left-wing cultures, one rather federalist, the other rather sovereignist.

The disagreement on the current situation extends to the avenues to be explored for the future. Starting with the establishment of a European defence, which divides the left bloc, and is currently translated into the objective of 800 billion euros in funding to "rearm," validated by the 27 EU member states on 6 March. LFI leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon has stood against this idea by denouncing a "shift" since the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine "from a Europe of peace to a Europe of defence, before arriving at the Europe of war."

"There is certainly a stated willingness to regain independence from the United States. But as soon as it comes to implementing this concretely, it is clear that there is no consensus among the 27

Member States on the relationship with the United States, which many continue to consider an ally," comments Arnaud Le Gall, MP for LFI. "Moreover, the announced 800 billion euros EU rearmament programme will primarily benefit the US arms industry, thus increasing dependence on the United States, in line with the underlying idea behind Trump's request that Europeans devote 5% of their GDP to defence. Because most European countries have not created conditions to be able to produce themselves. And there is no consensus among the 27 Member States for arms expenditure to go to European suppliers."

In other words, buying weapons for billions of dollars from the United States "will not only replenish Trump's coffers, it's also a matter of independence. The vassal would remain the vassal," adds Arnaud Le Gall, who still thinks possible "the option of a non-aligned France ensuring the means of national defence outside the American umbrella" - particularly by taxing the wealthiest.

Conversely, the Greens believe that the only viable scale for French defence is that of the European Union (EU). "France alone cannot manage, we must abandon the illusion that we are a great military power," says Jérémie Jordanoff, pointing to the morass of diplomacy since Macron's arrival at the Élysée and the weakness of the French army given the current challenges. "That said, we are still far from integrated European defence," he acknowledges.

"We must therefore seek coalitions on specific objectives guided by common principles such as the self-determination of peoples," proposes Clémentine Autain, ex LFI MP member of the Green group.

### **The national level alone will not be enough**

The same line emerges from the Socialists, who prefer to anticipate the worst-case scenario rather than ward it off with pacifist slogans. "Some have criticised the President of the Republic for being too gloomy in his address, but war is already here in Europe," declared Martine Aubry from Lille (North), where she announced her resignation as mayor on 6 March. "Europe, by definition, cannot break with the United States and their presence in NATO, but we must act as if Trump decided to leave it, we must prepare for it, and therefore have a European defence force," warned the former number 2 in Lionel Jospin's government.

The leader of the PS, Olivier Faure, had also stated that he found himself "perfectly in agreement with what was stated by the head of state" on European defence and deterrence in the face of the new situation in Europe.

Taking a middle position, Clémentine Autain says she is against integrated defence at the European level, but in favour of coordinating actions on a European scale. "To put pressure on Russia and China and emancipate ourselves from American tutelage, we will need allies. We must therefore seek coalitions on specific objectives guided by common principles such as the self-determination of peoples," she says.

But for these slogans to be heard in the general state of shock created by Donald Trump's attitude towards Volodymyr Zelensky, and for them to weigh on the very militaristic turn things are taking, the left-wing forces still need to take a step towards each other.

"One of the strong points of disagreement we had about the relationship with the United States is suspended: we agree on the reading of the Trump presidency. The situation, however, highlights our divergences on the European question. But I continue to believe that they can be overcome," hopes the president of the Green group, Cyrielle Chatelain. "Putin's vision of the world and Trump's conservatism have ideological affinities," she concludes. "It's an attack on what we believe in on the left, values that we deeply defend. It's up to us to respond."

**P.S.**

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