
RUSSIA'S HACK OF ELECTIONS IN FRANCE REQUIRES COUNTERPUNCH

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On April 25, cybersecurity experts said the same Russian hackers who allegedly targeted Hillary Clintons campaign, and likely torpedoed it, are targeting Frances centrist candidate, Emmanuel Macron. Russias targeting of Macron may sway the election to Putins ally, Marine Le Pen. Macron is pro-EU, pro-NATO and anti-Russia. Le Pen is anti-EU, anti-NATO and pro-Russia. In the U.K., opposition members of parliament believe the government is hiding evidence that Russia influenced the Brexit vote.

This is worse than cyberwar. It is war by other means. Russia is attempting the overthrow of a series of democratic countries and institutions through innovative psychological methods such as social media microtargeting with fake news. Putin apparently hopes to forever alter the political terrain of Europe and the United States, and make their leaders increasingly dependent on him for their election. It could easily happen. Nothing could be more serious than outside autocratic influence with a determining influence on the democratic deliberation of countries like France, Germany, the U.K., and the United States. This is a critical tipping point in world history.

We have already seen U.S. and French candidates pander publicly to Putin in advance of an election. Putin is not their proper constituency. The citizens of the U.S. and France are their respective constituencies. But through his meddling, Putin has made himself the new constituency of all politicians in democratic countries who dont want to be at the business end of his fake news AK-47. This is the overthrow of our democracies by virtual force and it should be taken as seriously as a declaration of war. It will have effects as significant.

If several major democracies fall to pro-Russia candidates, for example, the U.S., France, U.K and Germany, we can expect our political, economic, and defense bulwarks against Russia, most especially NATO, to be in jeopardy. China might try the same tactics to sway South Korean and Japanese elections. They likely already succeeded in the Philippines, and managed to pry that long-standing ally off the U.S. Chinas government-sponsored hackers have turned their sights on U.S. democratic allies in Asia, according to an April 26 report, and they are seeking to hack information on the elite economic networks in those countries that will be influential in economic and political decision-making.

China and Russia are quickly moving to back candidates who seek to dismantle international institutions that are exclusive to democracies, and attempting to dominate all others. They are working to break up NATO in Europe and the U.S. hub-and-spoke alliances in Asia. They are

backing candidates that attack the critical economic underpinning of global democracy like the E.U., NAFTA, and the TPP (in utero). But tellingly, their candidates do not strongly criticize international organizations of which they are a part, for example the World Trade Organization, on which China built its economic rise, and Interpol, which China now leads.

No prescriptions for the problem of cyberwar against democracy are an unadulterated good. But we must think outside the box, and quickly. There is not much time, as our democratic politicians fall under the sway of autocrats like Putin and Xi. There are defensive and offensive measures that must be taken.

Kaynak/Source: