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France's Le Pen, in Moscow, Blames EU for New 'Cold War'

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Marine Le Pen, leader of France's far-right National Front, blamed the European Union for declaring a new Cold War on Russia that would hurt all concerned, Russian media reported Saturday as she paid an official visit to Moscow.

Europe-Russia relations are at their lowest ebb in decades after President Vladimir Putin's annexation of Crimea prompted the EU to impose sanctions on dozens of prominent Russian officials and lawmakers.

However Le Pen, along with other Eurosceptic leaders of the far left and nationalist right, believe the original fault lies with Brussels for offering closer ties with Ukraine, a move Russia opposes.

"I am surprised a Cold War on Russia has been declared in the EU," French National Front leader Le Pen said at a meeting with State Duma Speaker Sergei Naryshkin.

"It is not in line with traditional, friendly relations nor with the economic interests of our

country or EU countries and harms future relations," she said, Interfax reported.

Her comments echo those of Austrian far-right leader Heinz-Christian Strache who has openly sided with Putin, condemning the EU sanctions as a farce. Le Pen's Dutch political partner Geert Wilders has also said the EU made the first mistake.

At the meeting with Le Pen, Naryshkin, who is one of the officials hit by the EU's asset freezes and travel bans, stressed the importance of Russia's ties with France, but said relations had been strained by "Russophobic, anti-Russia campaigns" instigated by several European countries.

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