

Far-Right Victory in Europe Aids the Kremlin

By [Peter Kreko](#)

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On May 25, anti-European forces made a historical gain in the European Parliament elections. This heterogeneous block of political forces, whose hostility to the idea of the European Union has made them natural allies of the Kremlin, won nearly 25 percent of the seats.

Of course, by inverting this figure we can see the results are not catastrophic: close to 70 percent of European parliament members are committed to the idea of the European Union, with the remaining 5 to 6 percent part of British Prime Minister David Cameron's soft eurosceptic block. Doomsday forecasts about the end of the EU seem to be exaggerated.

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Still, the country-specific results are shocking. Anti-EU right-wing forces won first place

in three countries. Both UKIP in Britain and the Danish Peoples Party gained 27 percent, while Front National in France gained 25 percent.

Most of these radical, EU-hostile forces have a friendly attitude towards Russia, and are especially sympathetic towards Russia on the issue of Ukraine. Part of this is ideological. Russia's EU-skepticism pairs well with the downright anti-EU attitude of Europe's far-right. Far-right parties also gain valuable professional, organizational and media assistance by allying with Russia.

Greek radical left leader Alexis Tsipras in a press release in March, harshly criticized the EU for supporting the Ukrainian government's "far-right and fascist elements," writing that the new government "violates the Constitution" of Ukraine and "goes into a malformed cold war with Russia."

Nigel Farage, leader of UKIP, is a suspiciously frequent and welcomed guest at state-owned media outlet Russia Today. Farage recently expressed his admiration for President Vladimir Putin on his diplomatic performance, and said the EU has "blood on its hands" for supporting rebels in Ukraine, Syria and Libya.

Marine Le Pen, the leader of the French far-right party Front National, visited high level officials in Moscow before the European parliament elections, and blamed EU leaders for the escalation of the Ukrainian conflict. She has previously talked about the possibility of creating a sovereign Pan-European Union with the participation of Russia — instead of the EU her party wants to abolish.

Members of the Hungarian party Jobbik go even further. In addition to declaring the Donetsk referendum on independence from Ukraine legitimate, Jobbik has talked about the possibility of Hungary joining the Eurasian Union, thus becoming the fourth member alongside Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan.

The Russian government is also not shy about praising Europe's radical forces: Putin for example, in an interview with RIA Novosti, praised Le Pen as one of Europe's most promising new leaders.

Furthermore, the relationship between radical forces and the Kremlin seems to go beyond mere empty smile diplomacy. Many far-right parties — e.g. the Austrian Freedom Party, Bulgaria's Ataka, Belgium's Vlaams Belang, the Italian Northern League and Hungary's Jobbik — have sent "independent observers" to the Crimean referendum in order to legitimize the process.

Far-right representatives in the European Parliament have also openly joined forces with some of the far left parties to reject a resolution condemning the annexation of Crimea and the "destabilization of eastern Ukraine." Representatives of the far-right, including Hungarian Jobbik and far-left parties like Germany's Die Linke, also voted against the suspension of Russia's voting rights in the European Council in April.

As Filip Dewinter from Vlaams Belang recently said to Der Spiegel: "I think we can be a good partner for Russia in the European Parliament, and Russia sees us as a potential partner."

Russia is clearly present on all fronts though, and continues to maintain its regular inter-governmental contacts with Europe. But as diplomatic channels have narrowed due to the Ukrainian conflict, it seems that Russia is investing more politically in radical forces, seeking to build party families in Europe.

Anti-EU forces may be able to form three groups. It seems sure that the radical left GUE-NGL with the leadership of the Greek Alexis Tsipras will be formed. It also seems quite likely that the anti-EU populist right EFD, spearheaded by Nigel Farage and Beppe Grillo will be formed as well. Following the meeting of the latter two last week in Brussels, Nigel Farage said: "If we can come to an agreement, we could have fun causing a lot of trouble for Brussels."

The fate of Marine Le Pen's far-right caucus, the Alliance of Freedom, though is more uncertain. And even if all of these political forces will be able to form a groups, there will be a plethora of extreme-right forces that nobody wants to ally with — including Jobbik, Greece's Golden Dawn and German neo-Nazi party NPD.

Of course, if Marine Le Pen is able to form a voting bloc, Russian interests will be represented on the highest level of the European Parliament. Even if they are unable to do so, the representation of pro-Russian radical forces in the European Parliament is still much bigger than before — and Nigel Farage seems to show more and more openness towards Russia.

Political and economic crisis has put the EU in a vulnerable state, and weakened its immune system significantly. The Kremlin's EU allies may very well take advantage of that, giving Moscow strong partners in Europe.

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