



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on April 20, 2023

## Macron Hopes to Engage China in Russia-Ukraine Negotiation Plan

SINGAPORE — French President Emmanuel Macron wants to obtain China’s help to expedite a blueprint that could result in negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, according to media reports on Tuesday.

The French president has allegedly assigned his foreign policy advisor, Emmanuel Bonne, to work with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to lay the ground for “a framework that could be used as a basis for future negotiations” between Moscow and Kyiv, premised on long-term security guarantees for the latter, Bloomberg reported.

In February, Beijing had published a [12-point document](#), titled “China’s Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis,” claiming that China respects the sovereignty of all countries, supports an end to hostilities, and backs restarting peace talks between Russia and Ukraine. Moreover, Beijing slammed the use of unilateral sanctions, positing that they did not improve prospects for solving the crisis.

In response to the Bloomberg report, other French sources from the Elysée [told](#) *The Daily Telegraph* that “Macron said publicly during his trip [to China in early April] that he wanted to get China to commit to playing a constructive role. Naturally, diplomatic discussions took place and there was a follow-up.”

The Elysée confirmed on April 15 that Macron had “discussed the next steps in the organization of a peace summit” with Ukraine’s leader Volodymyr Zelensky. The latter also confirmed that the pair had had a chat in a phone call about “the results of the president’s recent visit to China.”

When Bloomberg questioned China’s foreign ministry about Macron’s plans, the ministry claimed that it was “difficult to verify the authenticity” of its claims as it was not privy to the source. Nonetheless, an official from Macron’s office [confirmed](#) that Bonne would engage with China’s Wang to possibly end the Ukraine conflict.

Brussels is likely to feel even more frustrated at the news of new Sino-French plans, as various pro-EU politicians and diplomats have already lambasted [Macron’s statements](#) that Europe should not become a “vassal” or “follower” of the United States in Sino-American tensions, but rather should attempt to maintain a balanced position amid geopolitical rivalries.

Across the English Channel, U.K. officials rebuffed Macron’s attempt to engage with the Chinese in



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Emmanuel Macron



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talks over the Ukraine conflict. For example, Tory politician Tobias Ellwood, who chairs the Defense Select Committee, said in an interview with the *Telegraph* that Macron “may think he’s pursuing a noble cause but he is in fact falling into China’s playbook, bypassing common international practices and the recognised machinery to resolve international disputes.”

MEP Manfred Weber, leader of the EPP (European People’s Party) grouping in the European Parliament, is one of the latest voices to decry Macron’s vision, which he described as a “disaster.”

During [an interview](#) with the Italian newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera* on April 17, Weber explained his criticisms of Macron. Prior to the interview, Weber had responded on social media to Macron’s statement by expressing his views that “no middle ground between international law and the pursuit of empire by autocrats” could exist.

He stated that Macron’s contentious remarks had “weakened the European Union,” elaborating that after Macron articulated his stance, Eastern European countries vulnerable to the risk of Russian aggression could boost their ties with Washington as they would think that Paris and Berlin could not be trusted to defend their security.

Whatever Macron’s true motivations are, his declaration is proof that the EU is divided as to how to approach relations with China while remaining an American ally. In Weber’s view, the upcoming European Council, scheduled to convene in June, must prioritize defining a common European strategy toward Beijing.

Meanwhile, Marine Le Pen, the parliamentary leader of France’s National Rally (Rassemblement National), voiced her agreement with Macron’s recent controversial remarks but also criticized the French president.

“Macron’s problem is ... on one hand, he makes such statements, but on the other hand, he subordinates himself to the EU’s diplomatic agenda, which we all know is heavily influenced by the USA. He contradicts himself because he has Commission President Ursula von der Leyen with him, who does not represent anyone diplomatically,” Le Pen said.

She told news outlet *Die Welt* that she is not persuaded by Macron’s notion of European sovereignty:

Macron has been selling us for years on European sovereignty, but there is none. In order to be able to speak of sovereignty, you need a people. There are no European people. The EU does have a large market, but that alone doesn’t do diplomacy. Europe has no mandate and no voice vis-à-vis major powers like the US and China.

Le Pen also hinted that she may run for president in 2027, stating, “Today I am the natural candidate of my political family, but not a candidate for life.” She has run unsuccessfully for the French presidency three times — in 2012, 2017, and 2022.

Since the onset of the full-blown military conflict between Russia and Ukraine in February 2022, both sides have participated in various rounds of peace talks, albeit unsuccessfully. Although Russia has maintained its openness for talks with Ukraine, Kyiv broke off peace talks with Moscow in April 2022 while under pressure from the then-U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Zelensky reportedly issued a decree banning talks with Moscow in October 2022. Instead, the Ukrainian leader has been [persecuting his own people](#), such as Christians in Ukraine, as well as campaigning for more military arms from his Western allies on the pretext of fending off Russia.



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Nicolai Petro, professor of political science at the University of Rhode Island, maintained that Zelensky should take popular opinion into consideration and reboot talks instead of asking NATO states for more arms:

I personally see this as 90 percent lobbying the West to provide more weapons and more resources to carry on the fight. If Zelensky were interested in the opinion of Ukrainian society, then there would be negotiations going on.

Every observer agrees that there must be negotiations to end the war and the objective is to end the war on terms that are favorable to Ukraine. So it's rather strange for him to appeal to the need to appease Ukrainian society today when the obvious way to do that is just to start negotiations.

Indicating that Zelensky's fears of his Western allies losing interest in backing his military pursuits were not unfounded, Petro added, "It is clear that if Western support in the magnitude that it has been given were to end, Ukraine could literally not fight," he said. "So the West, and primarily the United States is propping up the current regime and encouraging it to do what the West wants it to do."

He also opined that Kyiv must disagree with Washington's policy of "pursuing this war to the bitter end, to the last Ukrainian," because "it cannot be in the interests of Ukraine for everybody to die."



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