

30 Nov, 2025 20:16 / Home / World News

Western Europe isn't leading the world anymore, so it's threatening it instead

The region's insecurity is driving global instability

By **Timofey Bordachev**, Program Director of the Valdai Club



Few serious observers of international politics doubt that Western Europe has once again become one of the world's most dangerous sources of instability. It's a bitter conclusion, given that the entire post-1945 order was built to stop the continent from dragging humanity into

Top stories



Putin and Witkoff end 'constructive and substantial' Ukraine conflict peace talks after five hours: As it happened

Trump gave Maduro exit ultimatum – Reuters

Putin blasts EU 'fantasy' of Russian defeat

Ukrainian teens turn Polish park into fight club zone – media

NATO leaders attend 2025 summit in the Hague © Getty Images / Ben Stansall - WPA Pool/Getty Images

catastrophe a third time. Yet here we are: the loudest calls for confrontation come from west of the Bug River, and

nowhere else do governments prepare for war with such nervous energy.

The hostility is directed above all at Russia, Western Europe's neighbor and main trading partner for decades. Increasingly though, it spills toward China as well, despite the absence of any genuine political or economic conflict between the sub-continent and Beijing. That tells us something important. The source of today's aggressive Western European posture isn't external at all. It lies in the region's own political structures, its confused sense of itself, and the growing panic of elites who no longer understand the world that has taken shape around them.

It would be deeply irresponsible to assume that American supervision of Western Europe will be enough to prevent disastrous miscalculations. After all, this part of the world has already given humanity two world wars. And we should never forget that the sub-continent contains two nuclear-armed states, Britain and France. Western Europe may no longer be the center of world politics, but it remains undeniably a place where a conflict could start that would engulf everyone.

The roots of its behavior run deep. The first cause is internal. Since the mid-twentieth century, Western European societies have become unusually consolidated. Their elites have mastered the art of preventing domestic upheaval; social unrest, ideological revolt and large-scale political renewal have all faded away. Revolutions once shaped the region's history. Now their very possibility has disappeared.

This creates a paradox. A political system that cannot change itself begins to project instability outward. Western Europe's elites are tightly entrenched, even when they are painfully incompetent. Its societies are



Putin reveals new plans with China and India

US tells EU to hand back frozen Russian assets – Politico

Russian economy holding strong under external pressure – Putin

US needs travel ban on 'killer' migrants – Homeland Security

Subscribe to RT newsletter to get news highlights of the day right in your mailbox

E-mail

We offer you the possibility to receive RT's news highlights every Monday, Wednesday and Friday by email.

Subscribe

apathetic, convinced they have little influence over their own fate. Across the EU, individual governments may quarrel, but on the big questions, especially the approach to the outside world, they are strikingly unanimous. Mechanisms of conformity work so effectively that even the most reckless foreign-policy decisions attract little dissent. Western Europe has reached a point where individual thinking gives way to collective instinct.

In other words, the sub-continent has lost the ability to reinvent itself peacefully. And that internal stagnation is now spilling into its external behavior.

The second major cause is Western Europe's declining global position. For decades the region's powers could afford a more measured diplomacy because its economic weight guaranteed respect. When these Europeans lectured the world, others listened. Not always happily, but they listened. Those days are gone. China's meteoric rise, India's emergence as a global player, Russia's recovery and insistence on defending its interests, and the political awakening of the Global South have pushed the EU down the hierarchy of world powers.

The world has changed; Western Europe has not.

Suddenly, this bloc faces a landscape in which it is no longer the central actor, yet it knows no other way to behave. Throughout its history, Western Europe has never experienced being a peripheral region. Today it is edging dangerously close to that status, and its elites simply cannot process the shift. Hence the frantic attempts to attract attention by escalating military rhetoric and painting Russia and China as existential threats. If Western Europe can no longer command influence through economic or diplomatic power, it will try to do so through alarmism and the language of war.



Read more: EU's humiliation in Geneva: No influence, no voice, no plan

RT Features



Banned at home, welcomed on Moscow's streets, and a voice of freedom worldwide FEATURE



What Kiev hopes you won't notice: The hidden anatomy of Russia's push forward on all fronts FEATURE



Read more: Britain needs war: Why London can't afford peace in Ukraine

The rise of groups like BRICS only strengthens the region's anxiety. These Europeans once imagined the G7 as a vehicle for preserving their centrality by hitching themselves to Washington. BRICS demonstrates that the world can organize itself without the EU, and even against its preferences. No wonder these European leaders feel cornered.

Western Europe remains part of what Russians call the collective West, and its ties to the United States are strong. But these ties no longer deliver what the locals have come to expect: a guaranteed place at the top. The entire debate about the American "*security umbrella*" is really about something else. It is about Western Europe's fear of losing status, and its desperate hope that the United States will keep treating it as a co-equal power. Washington, however, sees the world differently, and increasingly has its own priorities.

Taken together, these internal and external forces make Western Europe the most combustible player on the global stage as we enter the second quarter of the 21st century. This is not a problem created by one or two inept leaders, nor is it a passing mood linked to temporary economic pains. It is structural. That makes it far more dangerous.







What is the cure? At the moment, no one knows. History offers no comforting examples. When a formerly central power loses influence and cannot adapt, the outcomes have rarely been peaceful. Western Europe today is replaying this old script: locked into outdated assumptions, unable to reform itself, and convinced that the only way to stay relevant is to shout louder and brandish threats.







For Russia, China, and the United States, this situation creates a difficult challenge.

Pyongyang's missile revolution: The most dangerous program you're not paying attention to FEATURE

Podcasts

[All podcasts](#)

 Diplomatic dance
0:00  24:53    

 'Trump wants to re-establish economic ties with Moscow. Period. So no dissonance in these talks' – Lawrence Wilkerson
0:00  33:11    

Their choices will shape whether Western Europe's new instability becomes manageable or erupts into something far worse. Ordinary citizens across the world have every reason to hope these decisions will be wise. But hope is not certainty.

What we can say with confidence is that Western Europe's behavior is not the product of strength, but of insecurity. A sub-continent that once dominated world affairs now sees others overtaking it. And instead of adapting to a multipolar order, it lashes out, insisting on a global role it can no longer sustain.

This is what makes Western Europe, tragically but unmistakably, an enemy of peace today.

This article was first published by [Valdai Discussion Club](#), translated and edited by the RT team.

ANALYSIS

You can share this story on social media:



Follow RT on



Telegram

Dear readers! Thank you for your vibrant engagement with our content and for sharing your points of view. Please note that we have switched to a new commenting system. To leave comments, you will need to register. We are working on some adjustments so if you have questions or suggestions feel free to send them to feedback@rttv.ru. Please check our [commenting policy](#)