



## Solidarity for Ukraine – 01/11/2022- issue 9 - From Russia with Love (1)

### IN THIS ISSUE

Aux origines du mal

Principe des vases communicants

Riposte russe

Contre-offensive européenne

Useful Contacts

The Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv) is associated to the international solidarity for Ukraine attacked by Russia on 24th February 2022. After a pandemic that has weakened democratic countries with the disturbing rise of conspiracy theories and hate speech on social networks, we do hope this war in Europe will be an opportunity to reflect on a new solidarity, among European and international allies. This newsletter is the eighth issue since March 1, 2022. In his book “*Making a Movie*,” Sidney Lumet writes, “We know what we’re doing. We just don’t seem to know.” (2) Art and manner are sometimes so discreet that they give the impression of being perfectly natural, as if fallen from heaven, the fruit of chance. In the war in Ukraine, we cannot say that

things were done with discretion by Russia- everything was carefully thought out, repeated without delicacy by the Russian president who was able to go around his «friends» before attacking Ukraine and the West. Several “scenarios” may have inspired him before things got out of hand. A new Western “narrative” could break Russian disinformation if it fights together, in the same direction, with mutual trust.

- 1- Vladimir’s friends (3)
- 2- The Syrian clan (4)
- 3- Out of Africa (5)
- 4- Le cave se rebiffe (The idiot reacts) (6)

\* the logo was designed by Caritas Canada in February 2022

### Vladimir's friends (3)

Several analysts have stressed the rhetoric and attitude of Vladimir Putin as a godfather, a band leader (7). Elements of his biography confirms this. He had a “rough” childhood and adolescence on the streets of St. Petersburg where he has been “learning by doing” the manners and mindset of a “big shot”. As an adult, he did not lose reflexes and the *modus operandi*- he rolled muscles. One remembers the propaganda films in which one could admire the strong man of the Kremlin- shirtless, riding barefoot proud steeds, swimming in a water that one imagines freezing without even a chill, or running without ever being breathless in the mountains or steppe. An accomplished man, a perfect triathlon man. In meetings filmed with his counterparts around the world, we observed Vladimir Putin applying the «manspreading» approach (8) which embarrasses both well-behaved and civilized men and women (the concept is not only feminist), before holding his interlocutors at an Olympic-length table during the Covid pandemic. The strong man fears viruses.

On the international scene, we have often had an impression of a weightlifting championship where every leader of authoritarian regimes, “Friends of Russia”, had their chests bulged and worked their engines to impress their allies as much as the leaders of the Western democracies, who, according to them, were no match for the weak, so faint-hearted and superficial. Before attacking Ukraine, the Russian president had to go around his «gang» as the mafia leaders count their allies or opponents before launching a «gang war». Vladimir Putin has a prime forum, the Russian Federation is a member of the United Nations Security Council with the People's Republic of China, the United States of America, the French Republic, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. He knew he wouldn't be let down by his Chinese ally.

One source of concern for Western democracies was the vote at the United Nations General Assembly, not all countries voted against Russian aggression on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2022. While 141 United Nation members condemned Russia and called on Moscow to immediately stop using force, 5 countries voted against (Russia, Belarus, Syria, North Korea and Eritrea), 35 abstained and 12 did not vote (9). Indecision and difficult economic or political situations have reduced membership in the Western camp as the conflict unfolds. Many countries in the South have put the aggressor and the aggresse on the same level to show their distrust of the «western world» (10). Latin America, but also many African countries such as Senegal, Mali, the Central African Republic, Sudan, Uganda, and Madagascar, as well as all Southern Africa from Tanzania to Angola and South Africa, have also chosen neutrality (11). Among the new «non-aligned» are India whose military equipment (like Brazil or South Africa) comes mainly from Russia. Anxious not to alienate Russia, Gulf countries (United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia), yet allies of the United States, have also adopted an ambiguous attitude (12).

## The Syrians' clan (4)

A parliamentary report published in February 2022 called the French army “bonsai” (13). The term could have been used for Russia after the implosion of the USSR to describe its role on the international stage. Although its economy is equivalent to that of Spain (14), its nuisance capacity has remained intact. It has even increased gradually since 2001 when the western bloc was attacked on several fronts- Islamist terrorism since 2001 (15); the global financial crisis in 2008; and the Arab Spring of 2011 that destabilized a very sensitive region and caused the migration crisis of 2015 in Europe. It has opened an internal front in European countries - a destabilization of public opinion with a very clear rise of right-wing populist extremism (confirmed in France and Italy, developed in previously more preserved countries such as Germany, Spain or Portugal)..

After local wars in Chechnya (1999-2009), Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014), Vladimir Putin played his game in the Middle East by supporting Syrian dictator Bashar Al-Assad. He is in good company with Syria, Iran, China, and Turkey. All united by a spirit of revenge, and a declared hatred against western democracies. Bashar El Assad is the worthy successor of his father who had brutalized his population and waged internal wars against his neighbours, allies of the western bloc, notably Israel. According to French researcher Roland Lombardi, the Israeli experts, who know their neighbour well, analysed the Syrian conflict very carefully – with particular emphasis on communitarianism, and the geostrategic issues of the Syrian Arab Republic, led by the Assad with an iron hand since 1970 (16). Since the fall of the Shah in 1979, the hatred of the Mullah regime against the United States, Israel and the Western world in general has become public knowledge. When the Iranian regime does not support terrorist movements in Lebanon (Hezbollah since 1982), the Palestinian territories (Islamic Jihad) or Iraq (guerrilla based on Shiite minorities) (17), Iran blackmails hostages in the United Kingdom or France - researchers of dual nationality are imprisoned and released for ransom or launches fatwas against British author Salman Rushdie for his novel “Satanic Verses” (18)

According to French researcher Jean-Vincent Brisset (19), the reasons for China’s support to the Assad’s regime, or rather its refusal to condemn it, are multiple and complex. They can be explained both by bilateral considerations and by the “broad principles”, displayed or not, that govern China’s foreign policy, in particular the obsidional refusal of the “duty of interference” It is based on the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and has been recognized in international texts since 1988. The risk is that the international community will condemn the persecution of the Uighurs. Turkey has given its support to the Syrian clan to continue to persecute with impunity the Kurdish militias, the first supporters of the West against ISIS - a UN report revealed systematic abuses in the Kurdish areas occupied by the Turks in Syria, a military occupation marked by organised human rights violations that continue in August 2022 (20).

## Out of Africa (5)

Syria has been a laboratory of exclusive experimentation for the Russian President - to display with internationally recognized “democrats”, to speak openly anti-Western with such “friends”, and to present oneself as “saviour” While the Russian army was razing Syrian cities, as it had done in Grozny (Chechnya) and as it is doing in Ukraine. The Russian military has a habit of brutalizing the war by leaving a devastated field behind, to terrorize the civilian population and dissuade them from having the bad idea to resist.

The Russian president has also experimented with a well-known approach since antiquity- to create an army of mercenaries “war dogs” without faith or law, and without legal connection with Russia (legally they do not exist). Their name was not chosen by chance - the Wagner’s, a legacy to a musician who openly supported the Nazi regime as the leader of this occult organization is an admirer of the Third Reich (21). This private company linked to the Kremlin (which disputes it) is very active in Sudan, Mali and the Central African Republic. This informal Russian presence in Africa could explain the fear that Russia instils in African countries but this is not the reason according to a French diplomat who evokes a Russian disinformation offensive among African opinions, especially in the French-speaking countries, heated to white and raised against the former colonizing country. The legacy of memory is heavy between France and French-speaking Africa even if independence has been acquired for more than sixty years. French President Emmanuel Macron was born after decolonization and quickly distinguished himself from the discourse and bad habits of the so-called «*Françafrique*», especially from a famous French network, very active after African independence (22). We have been able to compare the «Wagner» to the mercenaries who supported French intelligence in Africa; the difference is significant when one is employed by a democracy (France) or an authoritarian regime (Russia) even if excesses were also observed.

The main argument used to destabilize African opinions is to accuse Western democracies of willing to economically recolonize Africa. The refusal to denounce Russian aggression is therefore an “ideological position on an anti-colonial and non-aligned basis” (10). It is strong enough to say this when the most threatening power for African economies is China, which buys the most fertile land, brings in its own employees and makes the most of African resources as in Kenya, where China accounts for 21% of external debt, just behind the World Bank with 25% (23). The French presence in Africa, notably the Barkhane force launched by French President François Hollande at Mali’s request in 2013, is intended to fight Islamist terrorism (ISIS in Africa) – a threat not only to the country, but also to the African continent and all of Europe. After the double military “coup” in Mali, supported by the Wagner’s, France retreated to Niger as a new bridgehead.

## Le cave se rebiffe (The idiot reacts) (6)

In the midst of war in Ukraine, with intense misinformation from the Kremlin among its implicit allies, countries remaining neutral and holding an ambiguous discourse (placing the Russian aggressor on the same plane as the NATO-backed aggression that would be at the manoeuvre), Africa is a main focus of attention. The head of Russian diplomacy Sergei Lavrov began an African tour in July 2022, a «charm offensive» (24) while Russia is at the origin of the most serious food crisis for the African continent - cereals are blocked in Ukraine, after the Russian bombing of Ukrainian ports (such as Odessa). In early June, Senegalese Head of State Macky Sall and President of the African Union Moussa Faki Mahamat met with the Russian President to plead the cause of the African continent. The European Union has a very important role to play in this area. Serguei Lavrov's goal in his African tour is to capitalize on a so-called "diplomatic victory" in the Republic of Congo, but also in Mali and the Central African Republic, already won by the Russian cause, then in Uganda and Ethiopia, historic allies.

A speech in June by the Ukrainian president with the African Union, tried to spread Russian misinformation, proposing a much more relevant explanation of the conflict - a colonial war led by Russia, an argument that should have touched an African anti-war sensitivity against Western imperialism. But the message received little response from African countries. The Western counter-offensive continued in July 2022 with the visit of the French President to Cameroon, Benin, countries that were also not randomly chosen – “two authoritarian regimes, one at dusk, the other under construction, at a time when democratic principles are being challenged throughout the continent” (25). A third country, Guinea Bissau, is Portuguese-speaking to show that the French influence does not only intend to be exercised in its French-speaking sphere, which has hitherto been privileged, but all over the continent. American Secretary of State for foreign affairs Antony Blinken continued the Western response with an African tour in August 2022, in South Africa and then in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and finally Rwanda, to counteract the Russian influence on the African continent and to bring these countries closer to the Western camp.

These initiatives by the Western bloc can thwart the plans of the Kremlin, that has lost credibility by pretending to be invulnerable - an invincible army that would quickly bite poor Ukraine, which was supposed to fall in three weeks. Vladimir Putin's strongman speech, as well as his muscular image in the media, were scorned.

In the face of increasingly fluid public opinion in an international environment of anxiety- where pandemics are lurking, where latent conflicts threaten to break out and slide into global conflict, where hate speech is increasingly listened to, the greatest strength of the Western world is to stay together, to speak with one voice, not to flinch, not to seek useless quarrels of self-esteem and to know how to make the most of all the skills, and all the good will.

All the Western countries need is a commitment to them. The Union is strength, not only in Europe.

- (1) Terence Young, "From Russia with Love", USA, 1963 , based on the novel by Ian Fleming
- (2) Sidney Lumet « Making a movie » , 1995 for the USA : Vintage books (Random House) ; 2016 for French editing : Paris : Capricci
- (3) Kenneth Branagh's movie 'Peter's friends', 1992 (UK)
- (4) Henri Verneuil's movie, « Le clan des Siciliens » (The Sicilian clan), 1969, Les Films du Siècle (France)
- (5) Sydney Pollack's movie « Out of Africa », Universal: 1985, USA
- (6) Gilles Grangier's movie, « Le Cave se rebiffe », France, 1961
- (7) Former issues of our Newsletter - issues 6 & 7 (August & September 2022)
- (8) concept developed by American feminists to designate a posture adopted by some men in public transport, consisting of sitting with thighs apart and occupying then more than the width of a seat
- (9) Carrie Nooten « L'isolement historique de Moscou à L'OTAN », Le Monde, vendredi 4 mars 2022
- (10) Gilles Paris « Le rétrécissement du camp occidental », Le Monde, jeudi 11 mai 2022
- (11) Christophe Châtelot « L'abstention calculée de nombreux pays africains à l'Onu », Le Monde, 5 mars 2022
- (12) Madjid Zerrouky « Soucieux de ne pas s'aliéner la Russie, les pays du Golfe refusent de prendre parti », Le Monde, 6 & 7 mars 2022
- (13) Parliamentary Information Report from the NATIONAL DEFENCE AND ARMED FORCES COMMITTEE on the Conclusion of a High Intensity Readiness Fact Finding Mission, February 17, 2022
- (14) Thierry Breton, European Commissioner for the Internal Market, March 2022
- (15) attacks against the United States, in New York in September 2001, in Madrid, Spain in 2004, in London and the United Kingdom in 2005, but especially in France from 2012 with the climax of 2015 and 2016
- (16) Roland Lombardi, « LES ÉVOLUTIONS DU CONFLIT SYRIEN : LA VISION ISRAËLIENNE », L'Harmattan | « Confluences Méditerranée » 2014/2 N° 89 | pages 119 à 131 ; DOI 10.3917/come.089.0119 - <https://www.cairn.info/revue-confluences-mediterranee-2014-2-page-119.htm>
- (17) strategy organized by Iranian General Ghassem Soleimani, killed by an American drone in January 2020 – « [Général Soleimani, le stratège de l'Iran](#) », documentary by Magali Serre (France, 2021, 52mn), released on Arte in May 2021
- (18) on this basis, the British author, naturalized American in 2019, was violently assaulted in August 2022 by a young American of Lebanese origin, admirer of the Iranian regime
- (19) Jean-Vincent Brisset, « Chine -Syrie : une politique de la cohérence », Centre d'études et de recherches sur le Proche-Orient | « Les Cahiers de l'Orient », 2014/4 N° 116 | pages 59 à 66, DOI 10.3917/lcdlo.116.0059 - <https://www.cairn.info/revue-les-cahiers-de-l-orient-2014-4-page-59.htm>
- (20) Article by Bernard Kouchner and Patrice Franceschi « Kurdistan syrien : l'Occident doit adopter une position ferme pour arrêter Erdogan », Le Monde, 17 août 2022

- (21) Russian oligarch Evguéni Prigojine, source : documentary by Alexandra Jousset and Ksenia Bolchakova, « Wagner, l'armée de l'ombre de Poutine », Le monde en face , documentary 80 min 2022 (France) released on 20.02.22 <https://www.france.tv/documentaires/politique/3140025-wagner-l-armee-de-l-ombre-de-poutine.html>
- (22) Jacques Foccart, a special councillor of the General de Gaulle for Africa, was famous for having implemented a special and exclusive relationship with African countries as suggested in a radio program on decolonisation coordinated by Pierre Haski, a French journalist, also president of the NGO “Reporters without frontiers”, France Inter (French public radio), July & August 2022- <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceinter/podcasts/les-decolonisations-africaines>
- (23) « Kenya, cette dette qui hypothèque l'avenir », Le point – 03/02/ 2021- [https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/kenya-cette-dette-qui-hypotheque-l-avenir-03-02-2021-2412545\\_3826.php](https://www.lepoint.fr/afrique/kenya-cette-dette-qui-hypotheque-l-avenir-03-02-2021-2412545_3826.php)
- (24) Coumba Kane « En tournée en Afrique, Sergueï Lavrov pousse l'influence de Moscou », Le Monde, 27 juillet 2022
- (25) Cyril Bensimon et Philippe Ricard « En Afrique, Macron au chevet de l'influence française », Le Monde, 26 juillet 2022



## Useful Contacts

To help Ukraine, here is a list of associations & NGOs published on the site [Support Ukraine](#)

**Croix-Rouge Française** - [Croix-Rouge française](#) pour des dons financiers, en soutien de la Croix-Rouge ukrainienne, au Comité International de la Croix-Rouge

**Médecins sans frontières** - [fonds d'urgence](#) dans les pays limitrophes de l'Ukraine et cherchent à faire entrer du matériel médical et du personnel.

**Secours populaire** - lance un appel aux [dons d'urgence à l'Ukraine](#) .

**Protection civile** - un appel aux dons pour financer d'autres besoins (défibrillateurs, respirateurs, groupes électrogènes, etc.) : <https://don.protection-civile.org/soutenir>

**Fondation de France** - lance un [appel à la générosité](#) pour soutenir les centaines de milliers de personnes affectées par le conflit en Pologne et en Roumanie

**Agence des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés** - situation d'urgence de niveau 3 pour la crise en Ukraine, le plus élevé. L'UNHCR a renforcé ses opérations en Ukraine et dans les pays voisins, pour la soutenir, vous pouvez faire un don : site [Donner.unhcr.org](#)

**Unicef** - un besoin urgent de financement pour répondre aux besoins essentiels des enfants Pour faire un [don sur le site Unicef.fr](#) .

**ONG Care International** - un [formulaire en ligne de dons d'urgence à l'Ukraine](#) pour apporter une aide d'urgence aux populations et aux réfugiés.

**L'ONG française ACTED** organise des convois humanitaires pour l'Ukraine

**association Solidarités International** – une [collecte des fonds](#) pour envoyer des convois de vivres et biens de première nécessité, distribuer de l'eau et des repas aux réfugiés

**Plan International**, en Pologne, Roumanie et Moldavie, pour apporter aide matérielle et psychosociale aux jeunes ukrainiens et à leur famille, et [sollicite des dons](#) pour ce faire.

**L'Aide médicale et caritative France-Ukraine** - envoi de convois d'aide humanitaire, des soins aux blessés, des échanges de savoir-faire médical, une aide psychologique et organise des colonies de vacances pour les enfants orphelins - [HelloAsso](#) ;

**Le Comité d'aide médicale Ukraine** - réfugiés en transit dans l'ouest du pays, et collecte fonds, médicaments et équipements pour l'hébergement et les soins [via ses partenaires français, l'association SAFE et l'organisation FONDEMOS.](#)



**JeVeuxAider.gouv.fr** est la plateforme publique du bénévolat, - une page dédiée [Mobilisons-nous pour l'Ukraine](#) .

**Les Banques alimentaires** - une [aide d'urgence à apporter aux frontières de l'Ukraine](#), dans les pays frontaliers accueillant des réfugiés.

**La Protection Civile et l'Association des maires de France** ont établi une [liste](#) (lits de camps, sacs de couchage, lingettes, conserves, pansements hémostatiques, solutions antiseptiques ...).

**L'Association des maires de France** a dressé les [lieux de collecte](#) à travers toute la France. Les Maires de France appellent à la [solidarité avec l'Ukraine](#) . De nombreuses villes de France organisent des collectes de produits de première nécessité

**La plateforme officielle** « [Je m'engage pour l'Ukraine](#) » lancée le 8 mars 2022 par le gouvernement pour accompagner les Français souhaitant héberger chez eux des Ukrainiens réfugiés et accueillis en France.

Les associations, fondations, entreprises et collectivités territoriales peuvent utiliser ce [formulaire en ligne](#) pour renseigner leur capacité d'hébergement.

**Source** : <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/actualites/A15542>

The Catholic mission of the Polish Church in France also suggests the following link:

<https://mission-catholique-polonaise.pl/polska-we-francji/pere-brzys-la-mcp-lance-une-initiative-nationale-pour-aider-lukraine/>

**Source** : French catholic conference of the archbishops