

The Axis of Europe and the Boundary of Compassion

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By Frank Dumon

When we look at the current situation in Southern Europe, we are confronted with images that resemble an apocalyptic scene more than life in one of the most prosperous and advanced regions in the world. The wildfires in Spain, France, and Sardinia are not merely a natural disaster; they are a devastating revelation of structural failure. At this point, it is necessary to immediately make an important distinction to avoid any misinterpretation. I have no lack of compassion for ordinary European citizens. The everyday people, the families watching their homes being swallowed by flames, the farmers seeing their generational harvests turn to ash: for them, I feel sincere sympathy.

What I do not possess, however, is any form of sympathy for Europe as a political entity. And certainly not for the political and military elites that govern this continent. These elites have repeatedly proven themselves to be incompetent, morally bankrupt, and, in this specific case, criminally negligent.

As we deepen this analysis, we will also examine the specific role of France, a country that has historically liked to present itself as a paragon of civilization and strategic autonomy, but which is now succumbing to its own hubris. I am aware that certain statements will provoke resistance. There are always those who, backed by established narratives, will try to dismiss this analysis as propaganda. I understand that there are certain 'rules' in the Western media world, but the facts cannot be swept aside by rules of propriety. The majority of Europeans feel increasingly alienated from their leaders, and the facts on the ground speak a language that no press conference can drown out.

The Beriev Be-200: A Technological Masterpiece in the Shadow of Geopolitics



To understand the scale of European failure, we must look at what is available in the world, and why Europe no longer has access to it. Let's talk about aircraft and firefighting. A few years ago, when Turkey was ablaze – a country which, due to its location on the Mediterranean and Black Seas, is familiar with extremely hot summers and high fire risk – it was the Russians who came to help. During those missions, a Russian crew member of the aircraft in question tragically lost his life, a tragic testament to the real risk these operations entail.

The aircraft in question is the Beriev Be-200. This is not outdated scrap, but a state-of-the-art machine. It is the only jet-powered amphibious aircraft in the world capable of carrying out heavy water bombing missions on severe fires. The specifications are impressive and relevant: the aircraft can scoop up to 12 tons of water per pass from almost any suitable water surface, whether a lake, river, or sea. This can be combined with the appropriate fire retardants. As long as it has fuel, it can continue delivering immense productivity in the fight against fires, anywhere in the world. The Be-200 has proven its value in countless missions. Until recently, the Russians sent these aircraft to all fire zones: the Greeks should remember, the Spaniards should remember. It was tangible proof of technical prowess and international solidarity, separate from political tensions.



But what does Europe have today to combat this horror? The reality is dire. Looking at European capacity reveals a stark contrast. Apart from the Canadair CL-415 – in itself a good aircraft, but with fundamental limitations – there is little that can withstand the comparison. The point is that the Canadair can only scoop up about six tons of water. Half the capacity of the Be-200. Moreover, it has various other operational limitations, such as a lower cruising speed and greater vulnerability to turbulent airflows above large fire fronts. And that, essentially, is all Europe currently has operationally to fight large-scale fires.



The Concrete Toll of Sanctions: EU-Banned Kamov Ka-32s and the Reality on the Ground



This theoretical discussion of capacity translates painfully into the reality on the ground. EU sanctions against Russia not only hinder abstract geopolitical goals

but directly impede the fight against the raging wildfires devastating Southern Europe. Spain, for example, has been left without some of its most capable firefighting helicopters while blazes ravage the south of the continent.

The sanctions have denied Spain access to advanced firefighting equipment in the midst of an unprecedented emergency. Rapidly advancing fires near Madrid, Bordeaux, and Valencia have forced more than 360,000 people to evacuate in recent days. Over 9,000 firefighters, soldiers, police officers, and other emergency personnel have been mobilized to fight the flames, supported by dozens of aircraft and hundreds of vehicles. However, dry conditions and an approaching heatwave have further complicated their efforts. Authorities emphasize that this year's wildfires rank among the worst in recorded history.

Spain's response is further hampered by its inability to deploy its former fleet of Russian-built Kamov Ka-32 helicopters. These helicopters are considered particularly effective for firefighting missions due to their large water capacity, agility, and ability to operate in extreme heat and difficult terrain. Previously deployed under contracts with national and regional authorities, this fleet is now grounded under the **EU sanctions regime against Russia** imposed following the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine.

Prominent French eurosceptic **Florian Philippot** noted that Brussels' restrictions had effectively deprived Spain of nearly a dozen of its "best helicopters" at the height of the emergency. He accused Brussels of sacrificing Europeans to a "stupid Russophobic ideology" and wrote on X: "These idiotic sanctions are absolutely a real problem, not for Russia, but for the European countries themselves," while demanding an end to these restrictions.

The Spanish government has acknowledged that the Ka-32 fleet has suffered damage due to sanctions, which prohibit operators from purchasing spare parts or bringing Russian engineers to Spain for maintenance and inspections. Although Spain has deployed replacement helicopters, water bombers, and drones, these substitutes reportedly carry less water and perform less effectively under prevailing, difficult conditions. Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez recently warned that the area lost this summer was six times larger than at the same point in 2025, speaking of "difficult and complex hours" still to come.

France does not escape this reality either. The country has evacuated approximately 250,000 people, while more than 13,500 fires and hotspots have scorched over 116,000 hectares nationwide this season. Interior Minister Laurent Nuñez described the situation as "completely unprecedented" and "far from over." The fire in the Gironde near Bordeaux alone has destroyed about 42,000 hectares and has become

so intense that it generated a rare 'fire cloud' (pyrocumulonimbus). Such a phenomenon can generate its own wind and lightning, leading to sudden and unpredictable changes in fire behavior. Nuñez noted that the fire "had taken on a life of its own" and spread erratically, making it exceptionally difficult to bring under control.

According to the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service, Western Europe recorded its hottest June ever this year. France experienced its warmest June and its hottest day ever recorded, while Spain recorded its hottest June days. This extreme heat and dry conditions have exponentially increased the risk of wildfires, while political choices in Brussels have deliberately eroded the means to combat them.

The European Illusion: Between Aging Canadiars and Digital Dreamscapes



If you then look at the European "plans," you are confronted with a world of fiction. These plans are presented as if they already exist, as if the aircraft are already waiting in the hangars for their crews. But they do not exist. It is difficult to take some of these projects even seriously. Take, for example, the project supported by the BPI (Banque Publique d'Investissement) in France and the southern regions. If you go to their websites, you see this aircraft flying everywhere, in beautiful, glossy images. But it is a "neural network swamp" – a morass of artificial intelligence and marketing language. That thing does not exist in any functional form. Maybe they have a prototype somewhere in a hangar, or maybe it is just a digital render. It could theoretically scoop 10 tons of water and somewhat approach what the Be-200 can do, but in practice, at the moment the flames rage, it is absent.

This is where the crux of the problem lies, the elephant in the room, or rather the gorilla that cannot be ignored. This must be emphasized in the real news, not just in alternative channels. It comes up in all major Russian media, and it is no coincidence. It is an accusation, but it is also a bitter, irrefutable indication of how dramatically everything has changed in Russia, not only towards European states, but towards

Europeans themselves. Russian public opinion essentially says: "**We understand that you citizens can't help it. We can't change it. Blame yourselves, because you chose this.**"

I want to emphasize this again before we delve deeper into the situation in France. Whenever people claim: "We don't choose anyone, we are completely manipulated, we are victims of the system," it is an untenable excuse. You can watch the French time and again vote by overwhelming majorities for the same globalists, the same neoliberal technocrats, and the same morally questionable figures. Apart from the fact that their behavior is open and brazen, some think that a new election, or the return of certain political figures like Marine Le Pen, will change anything. No. The French will go to the polls and again vote for people who work in the service of foreign interests or undermine their own country.

Of course, we must understand that there is another aspect rarely discussed openly: demographic shifts and immigration issues. The people living in the **banlieues**, or born there and now eligible to vote, but who do not identify with the French nation, constitute a structural challenge. But that is, in the words of the French themselves, **c'est comme ça**. It is the consequence of decades of failed policies.

France in a Tight Spot: Burning Forests and Burning Billions

Let's return to the data and the reality of the fires. This is real news, and the conclusion drawn from it is harsh, but true: **Friendship with Kiev has reduced Europe to ashes**. Just yesterday, Ukraine became the 'U' in the general devastation, with France and Spain particularly being the biggest victims. The costs are astronomical. We are talking hundreds of millions of euros, just for the initial evacuation of 300,000 citizens. We are talking tens of thousands of hectares lost, luxurious estates where centuries-old vineyards and olive groves grew. The damage is gruesome and visible to anyone not looking through an ideological haze.

This is an apocalypse happening because there is no more money in the treasury. There are no more funds for such progressive, preventative measures. Even a small country like Ukraine, or the administration in Kiev, does not have these resources, but they received them from Europe. President Macron, to cover the sensitive political ground with a layer of rhetoric, states that these fires are unprecedented, that they have not occurred in the last 80 years. He places himself at the center. A fire broke out in the region near Paris, in the Fontainebleau forest, a park laid out in the 16th century and a national heritage site. Macron rushed there for a photo-op with the soldiers and firefighters, swearing they would defend the famous royal castle against the flames.

But let's be honest: it is not difficult for these French politicians, because they have essentially already sold their country. They don't care. Their "friends" abroad have priority. Politically speaking, they have no honor, no integrity, no detachment, and no courage. They are, at the core of their administrative actions, cowards. And so, Mr. President, your information is inaccurate. While you explained to various weary, fine firefighters that you had absolutely nothing to do with it and that climate change is to blame for everything, you forget a crucial detail: there is no money to eliminate these emergencies, or rather, to prevent them. No extra money is coming. Because your friends in Kiev have been constantly swimming in French billions over the past four years. Paris literally sent tons of money there. This is the direct result.

The Strategic Irony: Fire at the Gates of the Defense Industry

For those observing these fires up close, there is another, almost surreal layer of irony. These fires are raging near facilities of Dassault and other strategic industrial complexes. These are the locations where, for example, solid-propellant motors are made for French ballistic missile submarines (SNLE), and where other crucial defense components, including air defense systems, are produced or stored. The fire is literally at the gates of France's so-called "strategic autonomy."

They may try to control it, but reality is stubborn. And I want to repeat this for those who will again cry out: "Oh, we are not like that, we are the good Europeans." Perhaps you personally are not. But we are talking about large numbers, about statistics, and about systemic errors. Feelings or sentiments only enter the statistics when they begin to grow or decline in number. And at this moment, the realization in Russia is growing exponentially: Europe has become an existential enemy of the Russian people. Not because of Russian imperialism, as Western propaganda likes to claim, but because of the actions of the European administration that sacrifices its own population to a geopolitical adventure doomed to fail.

The End of Romance: An Existential Shift in Russian Consciousness

This brings us to the most important shift, the core of contemporary Russian perception. The romance is over. The time when Russians looked to Europe as a beacon of culture, reason, and prosperity is gone forever. The Russian people now see Europe and Europeans, in the majority, as existential enemies, or at least as a hostile administration holding the European population hostage. This is not incitement to hatred; it is a sober observation of the facts. Europe is currently buying three to five times more energy from the United States, at exorbitant prices, purely because it has blown up the bridge to affordable Russian energy.

This is economic self-mutilation, supported by a political elite watching its own industry disappear.

The irony is complete. While the European elites speak of "values" and "democracy," their continent is literally burning, for lack of basic resources that Russia offered for years for free or at cost in times of need. The Beriev Be-200 stands as a symbol of what is possible when engineering and willpower combine. The empty European skies above the burning forests stand as a symbol of what remains when ideology replaces reality. The bill is presented, and it is paid in ash, ruined lives, and an irretrievable loss of trust.

Postscript: Personal Reworking and Reflection

Europe burns, Paris debates: Wildfires, political choices, and the illusion of strategic autonomy - A wildfire asks no ideological questions. It asks only one thing: are you prepared?

While France likes to present itself as a global power, the increasingly severe wildfires reveal a much less heroic reality. Behind the rhetoric of strategic autonomy and international influence lies a state that frees up billions for geopolitical ambitions but struggles to fund sufficient firefighters, modern equipment, firefighting aircraft, and preventive forest care. It is not nature alone that exposes the weak spots, but especially political choices that for years prioritized other issues over the safety of its own population.

The summer of 2026 provides a painful illustration of this. Around Bordeaux and elsewhere in southern France, fires developed on a scale that seemed hardly imaginable a few years ago. Hundreds of thousands of residents had to be evacuated, thousands of firefighters were deployed, and France again called on the help of other European countries. While television cameras continuously broadcast spectacular images of fire fronts, a less photogenic problem became visible: Europe simply lacks sufficient aerial capacity to simultaneously fight multiple megafires.

This is not just a natural disaster. This is a policy disaster.

Nature is not surprised

Wildfires are not a new phenomenon. Southern France has known hot, dry summers for decades. The combination of drying vegetation, powerful mistral winds, and human carelessness makes the area vulnerable. What has changed, however, is the scale. Longer drought periods, consecutive heatwaves, and extensive monocultures

of coniferous forests mean that small fire starts develop into firestorms that create their own weather systems. Such "megafires" no longer behave like classic wildfires; they become atmospheric phenomena that even experienced firefighters can only partially control.

No one can forbid a heatwave. But a government can prepare for it. And that is precisely where the shoe pinches.

The political reflex

Every crisis has its rituals. First, the ministers appear in fluorescent safety vests. Then, the firefighters are praised. Then comes the statement that nature is "unprecedented." And finally, they promise to do "everything possible" to prevent a recurrence. What is remarkable is not that these words are spoken. What is remarkable is that they are repeated every summer. Apparently, there is a persistent belief in modern European politics that a press conference constitutes a form of crisis management.

When the cameras disappear, structural investments often disappear too.

The Air Force against the Fire

Those watching the television images mainly see the heroic Canadair aircraft skimming over lakes and rivers to release thousands of liters of water over a fire front seconds later. They are impressive aircraft. But at the same time, they show the limits of current European capacity. The Canadair CL-415, and its successor the DHC-515, remain among the best amphibious firefighting aircraft in the world. They can scoop up about six tons of water during a glide over a lake or sea and then quickly redeploy. Their reliability has been proven for decades.

But reliability is not the same as sufficient numbers. France has a limited fleet. During the July 2026 fires, it also became apparent that not all aircraft were operationally available, making foreign assistance necessary. Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece were also simultaneously facing severe fires, meaning the same aircraft were needed in multiple places at once. And aircraft, no matter how much politicians might wish it, still do not have the ability to be simultaneously above Bordeaux and above Madrid.

Europe discovers arithmetic

Europe's response to the growing wildfire problem sounds ambitious. New aircraft. More cooperation. Joint European capacity. That sounds excellent. Until you read the

fine print. The first new DHC-515 aircraft are not expected until 2028 at the earliest. Meanwhile, the number of severe fires is growing faster than the fleet intended to combat them. The shortage of specialized pilots is also becoming a structural problem. Companies performing aerial firefighting warn that traditional fire seasons are now lasting almost all year round, making it difficult to reposition aircraft and crews between continents.

That is not a technical problem. That is a planning problem.

And planning is simply less spectacular than crisis management. Modern politics loves ribbon-cutting. Forest management does not provide good television footage. A new airport does. A defense summit even more. An international conference the most. A well-maintained firebreak? No one cuts a ribbon for that.

The Beriev Be-200: Wonder Weapon or Sober Technology?

When aerial firefighting is discussed, the Russian Beriev Be-200 inevitably comes up. Over the past twenty years, this aircraft has gained an almost mythical reputation. For some, it is the ultimate firefighting aircraft; for others, a politically charged symbol. As is often the case, the reality lies somewhere between these extremes.

The Be-200 is an amphibious jet aircraft that can scoop up about twelve tons of water during a glide over a suitable water surface. This gives it a greater firefighting capacity per sortie than the Canadair CL-415 or its successor, the DHC-515. Moreover, its cruising speed is significantly higher, allowing the aircraft to shuttle faster between the fire and the water source over longer distances.

These are real advantages. But they do not automatically mean that the Beriev makes every other aircraft obsolete. The higher speed comes with higher fuel consumption. The aircraft places higher demands on maintenance and infrastructure and is not equally suitable for every terrain or water surface. Performance also depends heavily on the distance to suitable lakes or coastal waters, wave height, and local weather conditions. Technology rarely has absolute winners. It mainly has different solutions for different problems. Nevertheless, one observation remains: Europe has few alternatives that offer the same combination of speed and payload, a reality made only more painfully visible by geopolitical blockages.

Europe dreams, Canada builds



While Russia deploys the Be-200 operationally, Europe chose a different path. The existing Canadair fleet is gradually being replaced by the De Havilland Canada DHC-515, a modernized version of the familiar CL-415. The cockpit is more modern, maintenance simpler, and reliability higher. That sounds sensible. And it is. There is just one small detail. An aircraft does not fight fires as long as it is still on the drawing board or waiting on the production line.

European orders are years ahead of deliveries. Factories simply do not produce firefighting aircraft like a coffee machine dispenses capsules. Construction requires specialized parts, certification, training for pilots and technicians, and extensive testing programs. In other words, when a minister announces today that twenty aircraft have been ordered, it does not mean that twenty extra aircraft will be flying over Provence next summer. Nature does not take production schedules into account.

The A400M as a Firefighting Aircraft

This brings us to another European idea that has received a lot of attention in recent years: the Airbus A400M. The transport aircraft can be equipped with a roll-on/roll-off firefighting module that releases thousands of liters of water or retardant in one go. On paper, that sounds impressive. In reality, the role is much more limited. The A400M is not an amphibious aircraft. It cannot scoop water during a glide over a lake. After each drop, it must return to an airport where the tanks are refilled. **That takes time. A lot of time.**



As a result, the aircraft is mainly suitable for specific situations, for example, when a large fire front needs to be slowed down before ground crews can intervene. For the classic, repeated water scooping operations that keep Canadiars or Beriev aircraft active over one fire for hours, the A400M is simply not designed. This does not make it useless. However, it does make it clear that it is not a replacement for a specialized firefighting fleet.

Bureaucracy flies faster than the fire

Europe excels at policy papers. Every crisis produces reports. Every committee formulates recommendations. Every recommendation leads to a new working group. And every working group writes another report. Meanwhile, the fire remains remarkably uninterested in administrative procedures. Wildfires do not adhere to European procurement rules. They do not wait until all member states have reached agreement on a multi-year budget. A fire front does not ask Brussels for permission before crossing a nature reserve.

That is precisely where the shoe pinches. The European Union has joint mechanisms for civil protection. Member states help each other when needs are high. That system has undeniably proven its value. But solidarity cannot fully compensate for a shortage of equipment. When Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece, and France are facing exceptional fires in the same week, it creates a simple sum. One aircraft can only fly over one fire at a time. **No policy paper changes that physical reality.**

Priorities

Politics is ultimately about choices. Every euro can only be spent once. That sounds banal. Yet this simple truth sometimes seems surprisingly absent from public debate. In recent years, much attention has been paid to defense spending, energy security, industrial subsidies, and geopolitical ambitions. Proponents see these as necessary investments in Europe's security. Opponents point out that other forms of security — such as climate adaptation, forest management, and civil protection — are less visible, but equally essential.

The question, therefore, is not whether defense is important. The question is whether governments invest sufficiently in the risks that actually affect citizens every year. For residents of a village threatened by a fire front, it matters little how many declarations have been signed at international summits. They look to the horizon. And hope that enough firefighting aircraft will appear.

The Real Lesson

Perhaps the most important lesson of the summer of 2026 lies not in technology. Not in the Beriev. Not in the Canadair. Not even in the climate debate. But in something much more fundamental. A modern state is ultimately judged not by the elegance of its speeches. It is judged by its ability to protect its citizens when the sirens sound. And precisely at that moment, slogans, election manifestos, and press conferences fade into the background. Then only one question counts. Is the capacity there? Or not?

The Bill for Years of Delay

Perhaps the greatest irony of the summer of 2026 is that nature is not an opposition party. A wildfire does not read election manifestos. It knows no governing coalitions. It has no interest in ideological slogans. Fire does only one thing. It exposes what has been postponed for years. That makes the wildfires in France much more than an ecological disaster. They constitute a stress test for public administration. Not just for Paris, but for all of Europe.

Because the same questions arise everywhere. Are there enough specialized firefighters? Is the fleet of firefighting aircraft large enough? Are forests actively maintained? Are firebreaks cleared? Is prevention taken as seriously as crisis management? These are unspectacular questions. Precisely for that reason, they easily disappear from the political agenda.

Politics loves visibility

A new high-speed rail line. An international summit. A European defense initiative. A state visit. An international conference. These are events that generate political attention. Preventive forest management hardly does. No one organizes a festive opening for a cleared firebreak. No television crew does a live broadcast about thousands of hectares of cleared undergrowth.

A minister rarely receives applause because a disaster did not happen. And yet that is precisely the core of good governance. Successful crisis management begins years before the crisis.

Climate changes. Policy must change too.

The climate in southern Europe is changing. There is broad agreement on this in the scientific literature. Longer drought periods, higher temperatures, and more frequent heatwaves increase the risk of major wildfires. But climate is only one part of the story.

The other part is administrative. When risks increase structurally, capacity must also grow. More prevention. More specialized training. More maintenance of natural areas. Modernization of equipment. Faster decision-making. None of these measures usually make the front page. Until the first plumes of smoke appear.

The Illusion of Unlimited Resources

Europe likes to present itself as an economic giant. That image is largely correct, especially for the "elite." But even wealthy societies do not have unlimited resources. Every budget reflects political choices. That does not mean that every euro for defense automatically comes at the expense of the fire department, or vice versa. Government budgets are more complex than simple sums.

It does mean, however, that governments must constantly weigh where scarce resources yield the greatest social value. The summer of 2026 has reopened that debate. How much do we invest in preventing disasters? How much in fighting them? And how much in recovery after the damage has already been done? These are legitimate political questions. They deserve more than slogans.

Europe rediscovers the importance of civil protection

For years, civil protection rarely topped the political agenda. Defense rightly received a lot of attention due to the deteriorating security situation in Europe. Energy security became a priority. Migration dominated election campaigns. But wildfires serve as a reminder that security is more than just geopolitics. Security also means that ambulances can respond. That power grids hold. That forests are maintained. That emergency services have enough people and equipment. And that states are prepared for risks that everyone has known for years are growing. In that respect, the flames of 2026 are also a mirror. Not just for France. For all of Europe.

The lesson from the aircraft

The debate about the Beriev Be-200 and the Canadair fleet is ultimately less important than it appears at first glance. No aircraft can compensate for years of delayed policy. Even the largest firefighting fleet in the world reaches its limits when forests are inadequately managed, heatwaves follow one another, and multiple countries are affected simultaneously. Technology remains indispensable. But technology is not a substitute for governance. The same applies to drones, satellites, artificial intelligence, and climate models. All valuable tools. None replace political responsibility.

An Uncomfortable Mirror

Satire has one advantage. It asks questions without always providing answers. Perhaps we should therefore end with a simple observation. When a minister declares that "everything is under control," while thousands of hectares of forest are going up in smoke in the background, irony arises naturally. Not because the situation is funny. On the contrary. Because the contrast between words and reality could hardly be greater.

The French firefighters deserve respect. As do their colleagues from Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece, and other countries who came to each other's aid during the summer of 2026. Their commitment is beyond doubt. The political debate, on the other hand, remains necessary. Because heroic firefighters should never become an excuse to avoid structural policy questions.

Concluding Remark



Europe faces a choice. It can consider the summer of 2026 as an exceptional incident. Or as a warning. Warnings have the annoying characteristic of seeming obvious only in hindsight. History is full of examples of societies that saw problems coming for years but only reacted when the damage had already been done.

Wildfires are not a geopolitical opponent. They do not negotiate. They do not compromise. They know no election calendar. They simply appear when heat, drought, wind, and human negligence converge. Perhaps that is the greatest lesson of this summer. Not that Europe holds too few speeches. But that good governance cannot ultimately be measured by the scale of conferences or the power of political rhetoric.

Good governance becomes visible on the day the first column of smoke appears on the horizon. If enough people, enough equipment, and enough preparation are present then, no one speaks of a miracle. It is simply called sound policy. And perhaps that, in a time when grand words often circulate faster than practical solutions, is the most underestimated form of political courage.

<https://youtu.be/blbdBDC7YpM>