

Europe is the global epicenter for COVID mismanagement and vaccine distribution — and leadership is facing political repercussions

Europe's third wave will cost thousands of lives and billions of euros. Summer vacationers, essential to the economies of Southern Europe, may have to stay away for a second year. This will increase the gulf in competitiveness and debt between the eurozone's rich north and poor south. Southern states could require another bailout, a scenario deeply unpopular with German voters, who go to the polls in national elections in September.

Europe's elected leaders, French President Emmanuel Macron and Ms. Merkel in particular, are responsible for the tragedy of errors that has caused Europe's vaccine fiasco. They and their parties are starting to pay the political price.

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[T]he EU's supposedly unified response is turning into a free-for-all. Germany has secured a stash of 50 million Moderna shots. Hungary has broken ranks by approving and buying its own supply of the Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine. The prime minister of Slovakia has offered to resign after buying Russian vaccine supplies without the approval of his coalition partners.

The EU has turned the Covid crisis into an opportunity for [Vladimir Putin](#) to profit from vaccine diplomacy. Its mishandled response has undermined the implicit promise of technocracy—the surrender of liberty for security—and discredited the ruling centrists in France and Germany.

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The EU won't be a casualty of Covid-19. But it is dying a slow death of a thousand self-inflicted cuts.

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