

Eric Denécé

Reflections for a New Foreign Policy

Eric Denécé is the Director of the French Center for Intelligence Research (Cf2R). The following is the edited transcript of remarks he delivered to the first panel, “The March of Folly: Can Mankind Still Extinguish the Now-Lit Fuse of Thermonuclear War?” of the May 8, 2021 Schiller Institute conference, “The Moral Collapse of the Trans-Atlantic World Cries Out for a New Paradigm.” Subheads have been added.



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France no longer has a foreign policy worthy of the name. Its international action seems to be guided more by the moods of its presidents than by reason, as witnessed by Nicolas Sarkozy’s Americanophilia, François Hollande’s Syrophobia, and Emmanuel Macron’s need to lecture the world. Moreover, for the past decade the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been under the influence of a handful of diplomats—won over by American neo-conservative ideals—who impose their views on all issues.

It is clear that our international action today is incoherent and does not serve our national interests. This is why we believe it is useful to offer a few ideas—five principles and a few points of application—in order to contribute to the reflection on a new foreign policy so that our country regains its international credibility.

Principles of Change

Principle one: Return to a realistic appreciation of international relations.

The world is not what we would like it to be, nor is it likely to become so. This is why we must look at it in a clear-eyed manner in order to promote and defend our interests and to contribute, at our level, to international peace and stability. To do so, it is essential not to be blinded by ideology or by “friendships” that could alter our perception of events or influence our orientations. Unfortunately, our diplomacy today is characterized by this type of error, which makes it incoherent and partisan, and which has caused us to lose, in a decade, a large part of our international credibility.

Second principle: Reaffirm our independence in as-

sessing situations.

French foreign policy must regain its full autonomy, because since the mid-2000s it has been totally aligned with that of the United States. The American vision of the world is not ours and Washington’s international policy is questionable—even dangerous—in many respects.

Such autonomy cannot exist without courage and independence of judgment. This implies that we must have both an efficient foreign intelligence system and a true vision of international relations, which are

currently non-existent. However, it is not just a matter of being “different” or “original” for the sake of “existing,” but of bringing a truly independent and thoughtful point of view to the concert of nations, because, throughout the world, people are hoping for an original and free voice. Our country, with its particular vision, experience and history, has long played this useful role in the international community. We must return to it.

Without this independence of mind, we are condemned to be relegated to a second-class role in the concert of nations; and without the courage that must necessarily accompany it, we cannot be credible in order to play a mediating role in the resolution of international crises and conflicts. Above all, this could eventually lead us to lose our permanent seat at the UN.

Third principle: Strengthen our external military intervention capabilities.

Even though all external operations should be considered with utmost restraint, the fact remains that military action capabilities (coercion or interposition) remain one of the major assets of our foreign policy and of our global consideration. Whatever the importance that the modern world places on “influence capabilities,” diplomats without an army are little listened to and carry little weight. The excessive reduction of our military tools over the last two decades directly harms our diplomatic and economic action on the international scene. It is essential that we have sufficient and independent means to act without waiting for the goodwill of some of our allies. It is not acceptable that we

should have to call almost systematically on American logistical resources to conduct our interventions.

Fourth principle: Give our diplomacy the means necessary for its action.

The Foreign Affairs Ministry, which is one of the smallest ministries in the government, has a constrained and constantly shrinking budget, and the destitute situation in which some of our embassies find themselves does not allow them to have the means of action necessary to the challenges and to our ambitions. Whether in the areas of culture, development, humanitarian action or the French-speaking world, the resources of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are highly insufficient and do not allow it to effectively ensure France's influence in the world.

Principle five: Strengthen our economic diplomacy.

Since the end of the Cold War, the economy has once again become a central issue in international relations, and trade rivalries between developed nations have increased considerably. In a context that often involves economic warfare, it is essential that our diplomacy contribute directly to the prosperity of our country by allowing our companies to access international markets under optimal conditions and that we be able to acquire, from our foreign partners, the natural resources we need. We must recognize that economic affairs play as important a role today as political issues and that our export successes contribute directly to the strengthening of our diplomatic and military capabilities.

Applying Such Principles

After these five principles, some points of application.

One: If the idea of Europe and of its construction need not be questioned, the modalities of the latter must undeniably be reviewed, failing which this project could be rejected by the European peoples themselves.

The current dogma and single-mindedness, as well as the excessive power of the Brussels technocracy, have shown their limits and do not meet the expectations of the nations and citizens of Europe. The new members from Central and Eastern Europe joined the Union without meeting the criteria imposed on their predecessors. These too-hasty entries have had harmful effects on the common edifice (security, criminality, competition, etc.) and have contributed to accentuating the pro-American and anti-Russian orientation of Europe, which could be observed during the Ukrainian crisis.

The current system seems blocked and needs to be reinvented. BREXIT could be an opportunity to put the process "back on track," to clarify the positions

and expectations of the member states, and to identify those with whom collaboration for closer integration is possible.

Second point of application: Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has experienced a worrying drift towards hegemony, both economic and military. Its aggressive and irresponsible policy was demonstrated by the illegal invasion of Iraq (2003), which permanently destabilized the Middle East without being of any use in the fight against terrorism. Their political and financial support for the "Arab revolutions" (2011) contributed to sowing chaos throughout the region, without in any way satisfying the democratic aspirations of the populations. On the contrary, in order to further its interests, Washington systematically helped the Muslim Brotherhood—promoters of radical Islam—to come to power. These have since been overthrown by popular reaction wherever they have come to power (Tunisia, Egypt, etc.).

The Americans are constantly warning about "Russian rearmament." It should be remembered that the United States' defense budget (nearly \$600 billion) is by far the largest in the world and is greater than the combined budgets of the 10 countries that follow it, with Russia (nearly \$70 billion) coming in far behind China and Saudi Arabia.

By aligning itself with American policy, our country is associated with all of its mistakes. It is therefore important to return to a reasonable distance and to a rebalancing of our alliances.

This is all the more important given that, economically speaking, we are subjected to what is truly an American racket. Indeed, since the end of the Cold War, Washington has developed a planetary strategy of economic domination. The United States of America abuses a whole arsenal of methods in order to continuously strengthen its hegemony on the world markets. These methods aim to weaken foreign companies, to forbid them access to certain markets—in order to reserve them for American groups—or to sanction them when they have succeeded in being economically ahead of their rivals from across the Atlantic. In this arsenal, the extraterritorial application of law and sanctions is their favorite weapon, and the legal rules enacted in Washington are now imposed on the rest of the world.

Thus, the fight against corruption has been hijacked and instrumentalized by the U.S. Department of Justice to extort billions of euros from French companies (Technip, BNP Paribas, Alstom, etc.). We cannot accept such practices from an ally.

A Universal Interest

Third point of application: Russia has always been, and remains today, a major partner for France. After a two-decade period of erasure, Russia is again becoming a significant actor in world affairs. Russia-bashing, very popular among the Western media for some time and promoted by Anglo-Saxon networks, does not reflect this reality.

In the case of the crises of Libya and Syria, the Russian authorities demonstrated more sense than the Western world. In Syria, Moscow contributed to stabilizing a regime—admittedly a questionable one—and in weakening Islamists ... who are backed by the West! In the case of Ukraine, it is appropriate to firmly recall that, contrary to false notions, Russia is *not* the aggressor, even though it reacted by resuming control over Crimea.

Admittedly, Moscow is not as perfect a democracy as we would wish. But those who criticize Vladimir Putin seem, curiously, to take no offense at our close relations with the King of Saudi Arabia, the Emir of Qatar, or certain African heads of state. If we see a renewal of Russian hostility toward the West, it must be kept in mind that this is partly due to having rejected the hand extended by Moscow over the course of the 1990s. We must therefore reconsider our position with respect to Russia.

Fourth point of application: NATO. For the above reasons, it is essential that we leave the integrated command of the Atlantic Alliance and return to the pre-2008 situation. This collective organization, which in the past played its role to the full, has had no other reason to exist since the end of the Cold War than to satisfy American interests. Of course, leaving the integrated organization will not bring us anything, but remaining in it leads us to assume collective positions that are contrary to our interests.

Five: Africa. We must rebuild a major expertise on this continent, which is the basis of our international role. Indeed, we have regressed considerably on this point over the last two decades, because our elites are now more interested in other regions and other markets, which are undeniably more promising. However, these markets hardly “serve” us in terms of international influence. As a consequence of this progressive disinterest in Africa, the United States and China are tending to occupy places that were ours for a long time. We cannot lose interest in states and peoples whose destinies have long been linked to France.

All the more so since Africa is the continent *par excellence* of the French-speaking world. Its demographic growth is a major asset in the defense and international

promotion of our language. Moreover, Africa is also a market for our companies and a considerable reservoir of natural resources, to the exploitation of which we can contribute, while allowing local populations to benefit from them.

Contributing to the development and security of Africa must once again become a French priority, in order to resolve locally certain problems which, if not solved, would inevitably have consequences on our soil. Indeed, local conditions are as precarious as ever, despite the money poured in by international organizations and Western states. We cannot stand idly by in the face of such an explosive situation, which is a breeding ground for extreme ideologies, crime, and immigration.

The Common Good

Sixth point: Middle East. Our country is now faced with the dual threat of radical and terrorist Islam, which is based in the Middle East. Since war has been declared on Al-Qaeda and ISIS, it is therefore necessary to fight against the ideologies on which these radical movements are based (Salafism, Wahhabism, Muslim Brotherhood) and the states that support them: Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey—the latter government has been working for a decade to re-Islamize the country.

A 180 degree turn towards these three states is necessary, because they advocate a hateful ideology, contrary to our values, and finance terrorism and religious extremism all over the world, and even in our urban areas. We must go beyond the sometimes illusory promises of huge contracts and not allow ourselves to be bought by autocratic emirs, whose behavior towards their own population and towards foreigners is even further from democratic rules than those of Syria and Iran. Similarly, we must reconsider our position towards Teheran, a major player in the Middle East, and stop seeing this country only through the distorted prism of our American, Israeli and Sunni allies.

Finally, seventh and last point: China. China is certainly not a democracy, and many criticisms can be made of its policies (human rights, Tibet, maritime claims in the China Sea). But focusing only on the road ahead and not on the changes already made will not help to change some of its behaviors. While it is obviously advisable to remain vigilant with regard to its evolution (particularly military), it would be unfortunate to deprive ourselves of possible cooperation that could be beneficial to both our countries.

Today, outside the Western camp, many international actors are declaring: “France is back.” This state-

ment should be understood not as the return of our country as a major player in the international game, but rather as the fact that we have fallen into line, under American leadership, like all the other Europeans. This does not correspond to our history, our aspirations, or our interests.

It is therefore necessary to work on a complete repositioning of our foreign policy. Exiting NATO; re-establishing our independence and distancing ourselves

from the United States; rethinking and then relaunching the construction of Europe; reconsidering our relations with Islamic states; revitalizing our African policy; and considering new partnerships with Russia and China: these are just a few of the avenues—not all of them—that deserve to be taken into consideration in order to renew our approach to international issues and to offer the world a different face than that of a partisan French diplomacy, submissive to neo-conservative ideals.

Daisuke Kotegawa

The Obama Sanctions Sabotaged Japan-Russia Development

Daisuke Kotegawa is a former Japanese Ministry of Finance official, and former Director for Japan at the IMF. This is the edited transcript of remarks he delivered to the first panel, “The March of Folly: Can Mankind Still Extinguish the Now-Lit Fuse of Thermonuclear War?” of the May 8, 2021 Schiller Institute conference, “The Moral Collapse of the Trans-Atlantic World Cries Out for a New Paradigm.”



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Today, I'd like to talk about the problem of economic sanctions on Russia. As you know, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe started negotiations with President Vladimir Putin in 2012, which dealt with longstanding issues of disputed islands between the two countries. For the first time in these negotiations, issues involving economic cooperation between Japan and Russia were introduced. The negotiation bore fruit, identifying eight areas of cooperation as follows:

Number 1: Growth in health and life expectancy. That is to say, intergovernmental cooperation such as disease prevention, investment and technical alliances between Japanese and Russian companies.

The second area was to create cities that are comfortable, clean, easy to live in, and easy to operate; [cooperation in areas] such as urban environment improvement in Russia, and waste disposal in Eastern Siberia.

The third area was drastic expansion of interaction and cooperation between Japanese and Russian small- and medium-sized enterprises, such as support for Jap-

anese small- and medium-sized enterprises to enter Russia.

The fourth area was energy, including Japan-Russia resource exploration and development off the coast of Sakhalin Island. And also increasing natural gas and oil production off the Sakhalin coast.

The fifth area was industrial diversification and productivity improvement in Russia, including loans to Russian companies by the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation, and long-term investment agreements by Japanese ma-

chine-tool manufacturers.

The sixth area was industrial promotion and export based in the Far East, including greenhouse vegetable cultivation businesses through Japan-Russia joint ventures, and construction of rehabilitation hospitals.

The seventh area was advanced technology cooperation, such as support for postal system efficiency, mobile phone and information and communication technology cooperation.

The last area was a very drastic expansion of people-to-people exchanges, including inter-university cooperation between Japan and Russia, and relaxation of visa issuance conditions by the Japanese and Russian governments.

However, a stone wall blocked the implementation of these projects. In February 2014, a coup d'état toppled the Ukraine government, which was planned and orchestrated by the U.S. government [with the prominent role of] Victoria Nuland. In order to avoid the use