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EDITOR'S PICK

World Geostrategic Insights interview with **Eric Denécé** on an alleged totalitarianism of the Western media in presenting the war in Ukraine, the propaganda war machine set up by the Russians, Americans, and Ukrainians, and the prospects for an end to the conflict.



Eric Denécé

Eric Denécé, PhD, HDR, is the Director and Founder of the French Centre for Intelligence Studies (CF2R). During his career, he previously served as: Naval Intelligence Officer (analyst) within the Strategic Evaluation Division at the

Secretariat Général de la Défense Nationale (SGDN); Sales Export Engineer of Matra Defense; Director for Corporate Communications of NAVFCO (French Naval Defence Industry Advisory Group); Founder and Managing Director of Argos Engineering and Consulting Ltd, a Competitive Intelligence consulting company.

Q1 – On Wikipedia, you are presented as “pro-Putin” and a “transmitter of his disinformation”. You are ostracized because of your statements on the war in Ukraine, such as “Responsibility for this appalling conflict is widely shared, and Ukrainian and Western provocations cannot be minimized or passed over in silence It is a conflict that should have been avoided and in which all actors involved, directly or indirectly, bear their share of responsibility.” Of course, your statements may be highly questionable, but it should be legitimate to express them. In this regard you also denounced that “the Western media have succeeded in establishing a real media totalitarianism, which aims to silence any dissenting voice, to prevent any criticism of Kiev, in particular by systematically passing off those who criticize its actions and those of the Americans as pro-Russian.” Have we really entered a totalitarianism of thought? Is freedom of expression, typical of western democracies, becoming a collateral casualty of war?

A1 – This is a very important issue. There is indeed in the presentation of this conflict, a real media totalitarianism of the West. As we observe every day, almost all the Western media and politicians have taken up the cause of Ukraine since 24 February 2022.

But in reality it started as early as the events of 2014 and the real coup that took place in Kiev against Yanukovich. While there was nothing respectable about this man and he was notoriously corrupt – even Vladimir Putin did not like him – he had been legitimately elected in an election supervised and validated by OSCE observers. Maidan is therefore the overthrow of a legal and legitimate regime with the support of Europe and the United States, less



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than a year before a new election that would have likely removed him from power. This illegal act led to Moscow's reaction, which re-annexed Crimea to its territory.

Similarly, it was Kiev's discriminatory actions and then its military operations against the Russian-speaking people of the Donbass that provoked the Russians to step in. To deny these facts is to subscribe to a Western narrative that totally distorts historical reality.

Similarly, if Russia clearly attacked Ukraine at the beginning of 2022, it did so following a long process of American provocations (refusal to suspend the extension of NATO to the East, refusal to negotiate with Moscow a new security architecture in Europe) and Ukrainian provocations (launching of the offensive in the Donbass on 17 February). Washington knew that Ukraine was a "red line" for the Russians and that they would react. The United States is therefore just as responsible for this conflict as Moscow.

Of course, when one says such things, one is immediately accused of being pro-Russian and of relaying Kremlin propaganda. This is the argument with which Western politicians and media disqualify all those who try to present a version of the facts much closer to reality than their propaganda.

However, I do not seek to defend Russia, but to produce an analysis as objective as possible of the situation in order to find ways out of the crisis. It also seems essential to me to alert the public opinion on the major manipulation of the information which we are witnessing because of the American and Ukrainian Spin Doctors. But the latter and



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their European relays (politicians, media, pro-Ukrainian activists) do not want this discourse to be audible and are energetically working to stifle it.

I was a young intelligence officer during the Cold War and I have no illusions about the totalitarian Soviet system against which we fought and which collapsed.

However, in the last thirty years, things have changed. Russia is no longer the USSR. Yet everything is done to ensure that we continue to analyze it through the old prism of the Cold War. Thus, it is necessary to note that for thirty years, the West has not ceased to scorn the Russians, to lie to them, to impose sanctions on them and to give them lessons in “democracy”, while not applying them itself.

The vocation of an intelligence officer is to describe the world as it is and not as he would like it to be. This is why we are often qualified as Cassandras and not listened to by politicians. I make this quote from Jean Jaurès (*Discours à la jeunesse*, 1903) my own:

“

Courage is going for the ideal and understanding the real... Courage is seeking the truth and telling it. Courage is not to suffer the law of the triumphant lie that passes and not to echo, with our soul, our mouth and our hands, the imbecilic applause and the fanatical booing.

The example of the Ukrainian crisis is a perfect illustration. I have no doubt that in the years or decades to

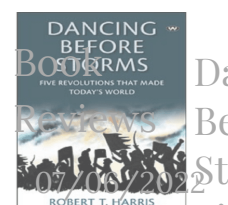


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come, history will show that this crisis was deliberately provoked by the United States to weaken Moscow and that the vassalized Europeans obediently followed them to the detriment of their own interests.

Q2 – War propaganda is the use of true or false information to manipulate public opinion and evoke strong emotional reactions, such as fear, anger, guilt, admiration or outrage. It has been used throughout history, and particularly since World War 1, as a key tool of warfare and is also widely used by both sides in the conflict in Ukraine. According to a widespread narrative, Russia has perfected and uses an aggressive propaganda and misinformation machine through media control, censorship, socials, trolls, etc. Less emphasis, however, is given to the Ukrainian side's war propaganda, which seems to have been very effective in gaining Western support. What is your opinion on the information and disinformation warfare in the Ukrainian conflict and propaganda techniques used by the warring sides? While the final outcome on the battlefield still seems uncertain, can we say that there is already a winner in the propaganda war?

A2 – War propaganda actually has even older origins. Julius Caesar already used it in the first century BC; Catholics and Protestants made extensive use of it during the European wars of religion and Napoleon and his British adversaries understood its importance. However, it has developed considerably with the entry of our societies into the information age since the mid-1990s. While propaganda and disinformation were for a long time mainly the work of totalitarian regimes (Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Communist Soviet Union), they are now systematically practiced by the United States, which

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prefers to speak of “information warfare”. We could observe this during the first Gulf War (1991), the NATO aggression against Serbia (1999), the invasion of Iraq (2003) in violation of the UN Security Council decision, the interventions in Libya and Syria (2011) and finally, the Ukrainian crisis (2014 and 2022). There has been a shift in their use over the past thirty years: propaganda and disinformation are used as much – if not more – by Western “democracies” as by authoritarian regimes. The United States, having a great deal of control over the world’s means of communication – both the channels and their content – orient the presentation of facts to their advantage in order to achieve their political objectives.

Therefore, to say that today Russian propaganda is raging is to smile. While it is undeniable that Moscow seeks to present the facts to its advantage, its actions have nothing in common with the real information war machine implemented by the Americans and the Ukrainians. For the first time in history, “democracies” lie and misinform more than authoritarian regimes, whether we like it or not.

In particular, we assume – obviously wrongly – that everything the Russians say is a lie and must be systematically rejected, but that everything the Ukrainians say is the pure truth and cannot be questioned. This is abysmally bad faith, but its purpose is to prevent any diplomatic resolution of this conflict, because one does not negotiate with a demonized opponent.

No one sanctioned the United States for having caused the death of hundreds of thousands of inhabitants through

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inhumane sanctions to make Baghdad comply, nor for having invaded Iraq in 2003 despite the UN veto and for having created chaos in that country. Nobody criticizes them either for the numerous collateral victims caused by their indiscriminate military interventions in the name of the “war on terrorism”, nor for having legally re-established torture and for having engaged in it on a large scale with the help of their allies...

But paradoxically, the West blames the Russians for blocking the export of Ukrainian wheat – information that is not even confirmed. All this reminds of the parable of the straw and the beam...

Q3 – How do you think this conflict will end? Is there still room for a ceasefire and diplomatic solution, and under what conditions? Or, as you recently stated, “the folly of politicians will drag us into a nuclear war”?

A3 – For the moment, it is necessary to distinguish the situation of the four actors involved.

For the United States, which set this trap for Russia in the hope of destabilizing it quickly, it is a half-victory. Washington has not achieved its main goal, but it has succeeded in domesticating Western Europe and making it an appendage of NATO. In addition, the United States has succeeded in permanently weakening competing European economies and is in the process of wiping out the Old World’s defense industry. However, the economic situation on the other side of the Atlantic is also very difficult (inflation), which may well lead to the defeat of the war-mongering Democrats in the mid-term elections in

early November.

For Russia, which knowingly fell into the trap set by Washington, this is also a half-victory. Militarily, its initial action was partly a failure and it did not manage to win a decisive victory over the Ukrainian forces. Moreover, it is now cut off from Europe. However, it is not weakened as the West had hoped. Its economy is holding up very well, its revenues are growing despite the sanctions, many countries are refusing to associate themselves with Western policy and its internal cohesion has not suffered. Moreover, its army is far from being in disarray and time is on its side in the theater of operations.

For the European states, it is a major defeat, which has increased their dependence and their submission to the United States. Obedient to the American diktat, the countries of the Union have imposed sanctions on Moscow which are having a severe impact on their economy. They are therefore clearly playing against their own interests. They no longer have any will of their own, and therefore no sovereignty. Worse, while putting forward their “democratic values”, they have not hesitated to flout them by signing an important gas partnership with Azerbaijan, a bloodthirsty dictatorship which has been demonstrating for years its will to exterminate the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh and which has attacked the Republic of Armenia without any noticeable reaction from the international community.

For Ukraine, this is a total defeat. The country is in a deplorable state, its infrastructure is destroyed, many inhabitants have fled abroad, part of its territory is

occupied and the number of deaths and injuries in combat is particularly high. However, let us remember that before the beginning of this conflict, Ukraine was already a failed quasi-state, undermined by corruption and criminality, led by elites who – like Zelensky and his entourage – have never stopped enriching themselves to the detriment of the country's development and the well-being of its population since independence (1991). Playing the Americans' game has only accelerated the decomposition of this state.

The main event that could, in the short term, lead to a de-escalation, if not an end to the conflict, would be a change in American policy, with the arrival of a Republican majority in Congress. Since the Ukrainian army is totally on Western funding, a reduction or cessation of aid would cause it to collapse in a few weeks, pushing Kiev to negotiate with Moscow.

Finally, I do not believe in a nuclear war. Neither Moscow nor Washington wants it. But there is a risk that Kiev will act rashly to escalate the conflict. However, Russia and the United States are particularly vigilant about the risks of this uncontrollable regime getting out of control.

Eric Denécé, *PhD, HDR, – Director and Founder of the French Centre for Intelligence Studies (CF2R). During his career, he previously served as: Naval Intelligence Officer (analyst) within the Strategic Evaluation Division at the Secretariat Général de la Défense Nationale (SGDN); Sales Export Engineer of Matra Defense; Director for Corporate Communications of NAVFCO (French Naval Defence Industry Advisory Group); Founder and Managing Director of Argos*

Engineering and Consulting Ltd, a Competitive Intelligence consulting company. For years, he has served French and European companies on intelligence, counter-intelligence, information operations and risk management issues, in Europe and Asia. He is regularly consulted by the French and international media on terrorism and intelligence issues. Eric Denécé has published thirty books, more than 200 articles and 40 research projects in Geopolitics, Intelligence and on Special Forces, for which he was more specifically awarded the 2009 Akropolis Prize (Institute for Homeland Security Studies) and the 1996 Foundation for Defence Studies' Prize.

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