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Élisabeth Guigou, who we know of course as former Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the *Assemblée nationale* and member of the French government.

Élisabeth Guigou

Since I am supposed to provide a French perspective here—but I will also give the perspective of a very European Frenchwoman, before Zaki speaks for Europe above all— I would like to recall that France is and will remain a staunch NATO ally, even if the transatlantic relationship is no longer what it was.

Before starting, I would like to give a brief historical overview, as Jean-Claude just did. First, there has been remarkable continuity in the French policy toward the United States and NATO. While France is obviously deeply grateful for the United States' decisive support in winning the Second World War, and highly aware of and thankful for the sacrifice of so many young Americans, since then, and even before that, its policy, from General de Gaulle to Emmanuel Macron, François Mitterrand, Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande, has never been wholly aligned with that of our partner across the Atlantic. Allied, yes, but aligned, no. From the French perspective, France and Europe's interests mostly converge with those of the United States. We share common values, naturally, as well as the desire to maintain a multilateral system that works. But France and Europe also have their own interests, and they do not always coincide with those of the United States of America.

To sum up the French perspective, I would also say that it seems to me that France advocates sharing roles and working together earlier on the basic understandings that underpin the Atlantic Alliance in a positive spirit of mutual respect, unlike what's just happened with AUKUS, because we can see that going back on the deal has fewer consequences on the industrial level than it has on the geo-strategic one. And this, to me, is what matters.

However, what I personally note with regret—and I'm not alone on this—is that since the early 2000s, we have seen France and Europe drifting away from the United States—not a divorce, more like a distancing. Fortunately, this does not call the basics into question, but it does strengthen non-alignment with the United States, despite increasing pressure from the latter.

I think there are three key dates:

First, 2003 and the Iraq war, which, as we know, was based on a lie—the truth came out later—sowed the seeds of division among Europeans and led to a distancing from the United States, with repercussions on the United Kingdom. Personally, I think this was the curtain-raiser for Brexit: the Iraq war and division.

The second date is August 2013, when Bashar el-Assad attacked his own people with chemical weapons. This was a red line for Barack Obama. Everything was ready for an intervention targeting Syria's chemical facilities when Obama called it off at the last minute. After the Asian pivot, this obviously felt like the United States was leaving Europe out in the cold. We have had differences of opinion, often seen in the stance towards Russia. France has always advocated dialogue, even if it is hard work and has become increasingly difficult, especially since Russia annexed Ukraine. But the attitude of the United States has had considerable consequences. Russia helped Bashar el-Assad win the war (but not the peace) and extend his influence across the Near and Middle East. Iran has a much freer hand to do whatever it wants. So does Turkey.

Then came AUKUS, and this puts us where we are now. Some people say that once France lets off steam—the anger was real—it will not be business as usual. First, my feeling is that even though the United Kingdom may have a tactical interest, and in fact does have a real tactical interest, in AUKUS, this is the first global agreement for "Global Britain" since Brexit. But Australia is not what will help the United Kingdom solve its day-to-day troubles. Of course, it is important for the United States to strengthen its strategic presence in the Indo-Pacific region, but what about the Europeans who have a presence and a strategy there? I imagine Zaki will talk about this.

In any case, we, Europeans and Americans, must stand together to meet global challenges. I agree with Jean-Claude on this point. I hope there won't be a new Cold War, for I fail to see how the climate crisis can be solved if we are in the middle of a Cold War with China, the world's leading CO₂ emitter.

All these reasons support the case for pursuing dialogue with Russia and China. Europeans must refocus on their priorities, which are, naturally, security in the East. I'm glad to see Bogdan again, with whom we have continued to dialogue on this matter. Germany plays a key role, but it is ambiguous about Russia with Nord Stream. In any case, security in the East cannot be achieved without Putin, even if it is very difficult.

And then there's Africa. No strategic issues matter more to Europe than Africa. It's also very important for the United States, because China, Russia and Turkey are steadily building up their influence on the continent, which in my view is a continent of the future. In any case, if Europe and the United States have a common interest for the underemployment of young people in Africa, security in the Sahel and the climate crisis to have solutions, I think the United States has an interest in Europe being much stronger and recentering, and seeking complementarity, rather than competition, between Europe and them.

I'm glad to see that naivete about Chinese policy, which lasted for some time—Europeans were fighting each other to be China's best friends—has ended. Now I think we must take a clear-eyed look at what is happening, but at the same time, it is only with China that we can find solutions to the climate crisis.



Karl Kaiser

Thank you very much.

I would like to come back to that question later in the discussion. How you reconcile, as you said, on the one hand the decoupling between the US and Europe, and on the other, the necessity of maintaining a relationship.