

Delfi 28.08.2024

Link to article:

<https://www.delfi.ee/artikkel/120317611/intervjuu-prantsuse-senaator-ukraina-peab-saama-tulistada-neid-vene-sihtmarke-mida-vaja>



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INTERVJUU | Prantsuse senaator: Ukraina peab saama tulistada neid Vene sihtmärke, mida vaja (64)

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INTERVIEW | French Senator: Ukraine Must Be Allowed to Strike Russian Targets as Needed

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Olivier Cadic stated at the inauguration event of the French-Estonian Chamber of Commerce that French companies are drawn to Estonia by the strong image of its technology sector. "It seems we were late in coming here, and now we are pleased to see progress," he said. French Senator Olivier Cadic emphasized that since Russia is firing long-range missiles at Ukraine from Russian territory, Ukraine must respond by destroying the locations from which these missiles are launched. "I see no question about it," he said.

Yesterday, the inauguration event of the French-Estonian Chamber of Commerce took place in Tallinn, with representatives of French citizens living in the area from both houses of parliament meeting with local entrepreneurs. Both Senator Olivier Cadic and National Assembly member Vincent Caure expressed hope that the new association would take the trade relations between the two countries to a new level.

In an interview with Delfi, Cadic, a centrist senator and member of the defense committee, noted that the establishment of the French-Estonian Chamber of Commerce is a very interesting development because it creates additional opportunities for companies in both countries. "This is why members of both the Senate and the National Assembly are on this joint visit, which is a very rare occurrence," he noted.

Which sectors are French investors and exporters most interested in, in Estonia and the region at large?

Major French companies are interested in expanding their international reach, including firms like Accor Group (which operates six hotels in Tallinn, such as Swissôtel, Mövenpick, and Ibis) and the sporting goods chain Decathlon. Finding new customers abroad is part of their business model.

In Estonia specifically, the level of technological development and its associated image are attractive. After the 2007 cyber-attacks, Estonia made cybersecurity its trademark and has since developed significantly in areas like electronic identification. This image also attracts French companies looking for partners and development opportunities. It seems to us that we were late in coming here, and now we are pleased to see progress. This is why the establishment of the French-Estonian Chamber of Commerce is such an interesting development because it creates additional opportunities for companies in both countries interested in operating on the opposite side. This is why members of both the Senate and the National Assembly are on this joint visit, which is a very rare occurrence.

Building a Startup Before Moving to Politics

Senator Olivier Cadic represents French citizens living abroad in the upper house of the French Parliament and resides mainly in the United Kingdom. Before entering politics, he spent 20 years in IT entrepreneurship and founded the startup Infoelec, which grew to collaborate with the French defense industry.

In Parliament, his areas of focus are cybersecurity, foreign and defense policy, and human rights. He is also a member of the Senate defense committee. He belongs to the United Centrists group, which often collaborates with President Emmanuel Macron's administration.

What are the main problems faced by French citizens living abroad? What do they complain to politicians about?

French citizens abroad fall into two categories. Those living in European Union countries have it easy—they have the same rights as local citizens. The situation is different outside the EU. The first issue there is access to education in their language, and the second is security, especially in Africa and Latin America. These are the two main concerns.

Could you comment on the political situation in France? On Monday, President Emmanuel Macron stated that Lucie Castets, the candidate from the left-wing coalition that recently won parliamentary elections, is not suitable for the position of Prime Minister. Who might be suitable, and how can the deadlock be resolved?

Who would be suitable as Prime Minister? Oh... It seems that the President is having trouble with this, and even two months after the election, he has not made a decision. According to the French Constitution, he appoints the Prime Minister, but the National Assembly (the lower house of Parliament) can dissolve the government.

The problem now is that the National Assembly is split into three parts that cannot cooperate. Besides the far-right, we also have the far-left, which is a significant part of the left-wing coalition. And this threatens to damage France's international image.

The President must find a Prime Minister candidate from outside his electoral alliance, as he no longer has a majority. This will take time, and there is no solution yet. The issue is not just about finding a Prime Minister, but ensuring that the National Assembly does not pass a no-confidence motion against them a week later.

The idea that a left- or right-wing extremist isolationist might come to power in France is worrying. How can this be prevented?

This can be avoided by convincing voters not to support them. The rise of extremists is largely due to the spread of disinformation, which is also driven by foreign countries whose interests lie in fueling domestic tensions. We need to learn to deal with this and fight against disinformation.

People often seek simple solutions, like fixing migration policy by just sending migrants back—easy to say. But I live in the UK, and I remember that the same was said about Brexit: we'll leave the European Union, and then there will be no more problems with migrants. Yet now their numbers are higher than ever in history. People need to be educated and properly informed because, in the eyes of the far-left and far-right, isolationism is the solution to all problems.

Currently, there is much attention on the case of Pavel Durov, the owner of the Telegram platform, who was arrested in Paris. Do you think this issue belongs more to crime news or the realm of IT and civil liberties?

In France, democracy includes the separation of powers. If the judiciary wants to question someone or if someone is suspected of something, neither members of Parliament nor Mr. Macron can comment on it. As I understand from the court's proceedings, Mr. Durov allegedly refused to cooperate with the police and allowed his company to be used for organized crime. This is a matter for the courts, and I have no further comments.

Ukraine currently seeks permission from Western countries to use all the weapons it has received, including French SCALP missiles, to strike targets deep within Russia. What is your political stance on this?

I believe that Ukraine is under attack, and they need weapons for self-defense. We must arm them. We know that if Russia wins in Ukraine and manages to occupy the entire country, the next problem will arise either here, in Lithuania, Poland, or perhaps Romania, but it will follow the same logic: Russia will come and claim that all these countries should belong to them. So, Ukraine needs to be given weapons. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Ukraine trusted Russia, for example, by giving up its nuclear weapons. Now we see that Russia has

violated those agreements, failed to fulfill its obligations, and—worse—used the opportunity to attack Ukraine.

I support giving Ukraine the weapons they need to defend their country. Russia must start following UN rules. They are a member of the Security Council, yet they are directly attacking another country to seize territory. This cannot be accepted, or the next problems will be right within the European Union.

So, long-range missiles should also be used to strike targets deep inside Russia?

The goal is to protect Ukraine from Russia. Russia is firing long-range missiles at them from Russian territory; they are not launching them from Ukrainian soil. If you are being attacked, you must try to respond and destroy the places from where the missiles are coming. I see no question here because Russia is using its territory to attack another country.

One of the consequences of the war is that French weapons, such as CAESAR howitzers and SCALP long-range missiles, have shown their effectiveness in a real combat situation. How has this impacted the reputation of the French defense industry?

It's definitely positive that Ukrainians appreciate French weapon systems. I remember President Macron announcing the delivery of CAESAR systems on April 22, 2022, relatively soon after Russia's invasion began. This has helped to showcase the effectiveness of French technology and sent a good signal. It also demonstrates that Europe can pursue its own defense policy.

What's interesting about the war is that when President Macron spoke about European defense capability in 2017, it was said that it wasn't necessary, that NATO was enough. Now, people realize that Europe does indeed need defense capability. And European defense industry is necessary.

France has shown that European independence is important. The unity of the European Union includes our differences—there's no need to turn Estonia into France or vice versa. But the defense industry is precisely the area that helps maintain our unity.

Finally, I would like to ask about China, where you are not in good standing (as a result of critical statements, Cadic became a target of organized cyber-attacks from China this year – K. K.). How should the relationship between the European Union and China be assessed?

The problem with China is that while their government is legal, it is not legitimate. It is a government that lacks the legitimate support of its people. It is a dictatorship with 1.4 billion people, and the regime there also promotes anti-democracy elsewhere. We need to discuss to what extent we can work with such a regime. Can we accept what we see happening in Tibet and Hong Kong? Can we accept the threats against Taiwan or the power plays in the South China Sea? These are big questions.

China has grown economically large, but should we continue to feed them? Right now, they are supporting disinformation campaigns against us. For example, during the Paris

Olympics, three of our districts were without electricity for ten minutes, and immediately, four million TikTok accounts began spreading messages that all of Paris was without power.

We are facing governments that are trying to destroy our citizens' trust in their own governments because they fear that their own people might start demanding a change in leadership. The problem has become international, as Communist China is collaborating with Russia, Iran, and other anti-democratic regimes. This must be taken into account when shaping the future relations of the European Union.

A Nordic representative of the French abroad was elected to parliament thanks to the votes from Tallinn.

Vincent Caure, who also attended the inauguration event of the French-Estonian Chamber of Commerce in Tallinn, secured his seat in the National Assembly largely due to the decisive votes from Tallinn and London.



Siinsete prantslaste hääletega parlamenti valitud Vincent Caure ütles, et kaubanduskoja avamine viib kahe riigi suhted uude etappi.

FOTO: JAANUS LENSMENT | DELFI MEEDIA

In the recent French parliamentary elections, President Emmanuel Macron's party, Renaissance, generally had a poor showing. However, they managed to retain their parliamentary seat in the lower house in the electoral district made up of French citizens living in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Northern Europe. This district also includes the three Baltic states.

As a new candidate, 31-year-old Vincent Caure of Renaissance won the support of voters in this region. His victory was largely secured by votes from London and Tallinn, while elsewhere the Green Party candidate was more favored.

In parliament, Caure represents French expatriates from ten countries, ranging from Iceland to Estonia. "These countries are very different, but all these people are French, representing the French way of life and mindset. Many have been waiting for additional support for business activities, and organizations like the French-Estonian and French-Baltic Chambers of Commerce are designed to provide just that," he said.

Regarding the political situation in France, Caure noted that the appointment of the prime minister is within Macron's authority and that consultations are ongoing. "This is an important time, offering an opportunity to change the mindset of French politicians and teach them how to work in coalitions. In Estonia and many other countries, all governments rely on coalitions, but we still have to learn this," he said.

When asked what Renaissance can do to prevent extremists from winning the next presidential election, Caure replied, "The development of French political life is centered on the presidential elections, but there's still time until 2027, and much can happen before then. The best way to combat far-right and far-left extremists is to form a coalition government based on forces that want to ensure France's stability and economic growth. The same applies elsewhere."