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INTERVIEW : ERIC LE QUERE

Geoeconomics of Waters : a French SAS on the offensive internationally

By **Bruno Racouchot**

From 20 to 23 November 2025, the *Abu Dhabi International Boat Show* was held at the Abu Dhabi Marina Hall, with "*Life on the water*" as its central theme. Among the exhibitors was Le Quéré SAS, a French naval engineering firm which, for the first time, showcased to specialists of the river–maritime world its flagship product, the Boaxt. The Boaxt[1] – *a boat in a box* – is a 20-foot aluminium ISO container that quickly deploys into a 12 x 5 m vessel offering approximately 57 m2 of usable deck and up to 10 tonnes of payload. The Boaxt unveiled in Abu Dhabi is only the first in a series of innovations aimed at tackling issues linked to the oceans and to the blue territories of our planet: depollution of plastics, decarbonization of maritime transport, optimization of sustainable

[1] For all the technical specifications, see Box 1, which includes links to the various websites useful for understanding the projects mentioned. To learn more about the guest's recent activities and participation in international events, see: https://le-quere.com/

fishing, rearticulation of logistical issues, impoverishment of populations linked to the water world.

This French naval engineering company has specialised in innovative solutions, operating in the sphere of the geoeconomics of waters, from the oceans through to coastal and inland waterways. The systems it proposes are conceived as multimodal, deployable, multiplex, flexible and amphibious, combining naval architecture, logistics engineering and environmental technologies Within this permanently flexible and adaptable framework, the Boaxt is seen as a platform for fleets, services and continuous innovation – from depollution and circular management of water through to mobile infrastructures for public and private operators. Bearing in mind that France ranks as the second-largest maritime domain in the world, we immediately appreciate the scale of what is at stake for a modest French SAS engaged in global economic competition.

As discreet as it is innovative, bold and determinedly playing the international card – not only within the European Union, but also and above all in Asia and in the Gulf – this entity is a fascinating case study. It has built its development by putting into practice, very concretely and on a daily basis, the fundamental principles of economic intelligence (EI), with a strong territorial focus. We too often imagine that the practice of economic intelligence is the prerogative of large companies or State services alone. The case study examined here proves that this is not so. In the interview he granted to Bruno Racouchot[2] for the R2IE, Éric Le Quéré proves that above all it is a matter of leadership, vision, experience and will.

The man is a grassroots entrepreneur, who has spent his entire life working internationally and has an atypical profile, to say the least. Breton by origin, as his surname suggests, he has always loved the oceans. His training was forged the hard way. Built like a rugby lock, he combines natural physical strength with remarkable inventiveness, mental agility and a rare capacity to adapt to very different environments. Having roamed beneath every sky, he knows the inner workings of the naval engineering world, having

[2] Bruno Racouchot is the director of Communication *& Influence* and Comes Communication, a company founded in 1999 that specialises in influence strategies and has offices in Paris, Toronto, São Paulo and Porto Alegre (http://www.comes-communication.com/newsletter_collection.php).

held countless positions, in shipyards and at sea alike. His training therefore took place in the field and, incidentally, through continuing education: *Captain master unlimited* (COC, 1990); *Naval engineering* (certificate, 1996); *Cost engineering* (certificate, 1999); *International trade* (certificate, 2002); *Maritime operation and management* (MSc – VAE, 2013).

A fine connoisseur of the Arab–Muslim world, living in Dubai and seasoned in shipping and trading activities, he long ran his own shipyard in Morocco. It is in fact from the experience acquired in Agadir that he would, many years later, draw the Boaxt concept and develop it in concrete form, leading up to the presentation he gave at the Abu Dhabi boat show last November. But the man's inventive and creative genius does not stop there. For, as we shall see, Boaxt is for him only one stage within a broader vision, still firmly oriented towards the maritime universe and integrating in its approach the resources of strategic planning and AI. In short, if Éric Le Quéré has been able to create Boaxt – a boat in a box – we shall also see that this creativity and boldness stem from his ability to think out of the box. In other words, one of the primary qualities required to conduct an economic intelligence operation.

Your Boaxt was officially presented for the first time at the Abu Dhabi International Boat Show at the end of November 2025. But the idea seems to go back much further, does it not?

Yes. In the mid-2000s, my Agadir shipyard was building river boats intended to sail in England on the British waterways. However, the transportation cost was far from negligible, because they were oversize loads. Over time, I began to reflect on ways of reducing freight costs. That is where the idea of Boaxt was born, namely the creation of a floating surface that could be containerised and therefore fit within a standardised ISO volume. As everyone knows, the container is one of the key elements that made the worldwide globalisation of trade possible. In that sense, creating a floating platform, capable of being declined in multiple modes yet initially presenting itself as a simple container, represents a genuine qualitative leap for the shipbuilding industry. Instead of having to rely on a specific vessel for every different task, Boaxt offers a robust aluminium structure that can be projected and deployed

everywhere, very easily, in a few hours, to perform multiple missions.

You often say that your vision rests on a structural approach inspired by economic intelligence. Can you explain?

Indeed, the analytical framework proposed by economic intelligence rests broadly – to simplify – on the three pillars of monitoring, security and influence. I will come back a little later to the analytical part, which flows directly from monitoring.

The first observation is that while much has been said and written on this basis, my teams and I, once we had discovered this "software" that is economic intelligence, we made a point of setting this theoretical apparatus to music in an operational mode. And from very early on we made systematic use of the resources provided by AI to clear the undergrowth and clarify our reasoning. The tripod formed by monitoring, security and influence seems to me, in this respect, to be a logical and solid foundation.

Monitoring comes first. We quite naturally set up a very simple monitoring structure, allowing us to track, over time and space, the domains that concern us. This allowed us to gradually establish a map of our environment, present and potential, with its positive, neutral or negative points. However, this monitoring was not limited to technical criteria alone. We gradually integrated parameters that related to the different fields where we intended to deploy our actions.

Another point worth stressing is that we have constantly worked on breaking down the silo mindset, favouring a transversal approach, especially at international level. Indeed, a major flaw of small, highly inventive companies is usually to confine themselves, on the one hand, to their core business in the narrowest sense of the term, and on the other hand to their traditional territorial horizon. Because of my background, and with my team, we have a strong tropism for international affairs. So, this monitoring, and the practical mapping that results from it, allow us to have information sensors that are sensitive indicators.

A second aspect underlined by economic intelligence in its recommendations to small and medium-sized firms like ours is security. Having long managed maritime projects in in non-

European sometimes tense– not to say difficult – regions, I am naturally sensitive to these questions. Both for tangible and intangible assets. The processes we develop range from the simplest – Boaxt as a platform for events – to the most complex – our final project of an integrated hybrid multimodal fishery[3], *Blue Fishery*. Across this whole range of security measures, anticipation is essential. This is where strategic planning proves so valuable, by considering the spectrum of possible futures, from worst-case to best-case, in all their variations: physical protection of people and infrastructure, obviously, but even more so in today's immaterial age, through the legal dimension – filing patents, managing brands, protecting know-how, and so forth. In this respect, in terms of business model, our strength was that we did not follow the classic start-up path, but chose from the outset organic growth, cautiously, on our own equity. That has guaranteed our independence and freedom of manoeuvre. And in any case, with my Breton character, shall we say, rather assertive, it would have been difficult for me to operate in any other way.

A third point that convinced me that the economic intelligence framework was not only suited but indeed consubstantial to our project is the influence dimension, in particular through the creation and animation of networks. Beyond the very classic product communication and quantitative marketing approaches, I have always given priority, quite naturally – because such is my nature – to the building of human networks. Of course, there is technical communication, which consists in highlighting the innovative and positive aspects of a project. But above that, once the project is launched and has gained visibility, there is all the work to be done in forums and circles that act as opinion relays, to consolidate and enhance your positioning. In the configuration that is ours, experience has taught me that human networks are decisive, especially in an international environment.

Precisely, you have spoken at many major international events over recent months, which is unusual for a small French SAS.

Yes, we have taken up every speaking opportunity offered to us. For example, our several-year maritime partnership with the Japanese multinational Saraya led us to take part at their side in

[3] See last paragraph of Box 1

Expo 2025 Osaka, within the framework of their foundation dedicated to the world of the ocean. Under the Blue Ocean Dome – the largest private pavilion at Osaka 2025, financed by the group – I had the honour of presenting, face to face for some twenty minutes, to Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, the interest of the various projects we are leading. Impressed by this vision and the progress achieved, she immediately put me in regular contact with her office.

Likewise, to mention only a few recent examples, I have spoken at several major events relating to the maritime world, whether on sustainable fishing, plastic depollution, decarbonising maritime transport, and so on. In addition to the recent promotion of Boaxt at the Abu Dhabi International Boat Show in November, we established high-level contacts at the end of September by taking part in *Seafuture 2025* in La Spezia, Italy. A few days later I was a keynote speaker at the *Blue Africa Summit* in Tangier, Morocco. In short, in parallel with our research and development activity, we give priority to creating efficient networks through which we can reach the right decision-makers and shorten lead times in operational circuits. The network concept is extremely important, as professors such as Christian Marcon or Christophe Assens have clearly shown. By attending – as listener or speaker – around ten such events per year worldwide on subjects that concern us, I build up solid relays, some of them going back decades. The trust built up over time thus proves to be an extraordinary lever of both power and influence. Here again, we can see how the articulation proposed by economic intelligence in terms of influence strategy is very concrete and perfectly operational.

Along similar lines, with this clear interest in international affairs, you obviously integrate geopolitical analysis into your approach. What led you to adopt this position?

Myself and the friends who form my inner circle have always had a strong pull towards international affairs. We in fact form an informal network that extends across all continents. So it is quite natural that we all follow geopolitical and geoeconomic news closely. In addition to the monitoring cells we have set up, we keep a very careful eye on returns from websites that we deem useful for our work. In the French-speaking sphere I could mention, for

example, the magazine Conflits directed by Jean-Baptiste Noé, OpenBoxTV run by former High Commissioner for Economic Intelligence Alain Juillet, Pierre Verluise's Diploweb, Ali Laïdi's interviews on France 24, the FMES Institute in Toulon, the reports and analyses of Pascal Lorot's Institut Choiseul, CR451 or the work of the EPGE, and so on. Not to mention the websites of supranational bodies, professional organisations and major State services, or even regional authorities, which work in the field of economic intelligence and, above all, in our own areas of activity. And we replicate the same approach in the countries where we have friends or correspondents. In this way information circulates extremely quickly between us and allows us to be highly reactive.

In the same vein, we attach particular importance to everything that falls under territorial economic intelligence around the world. The upheavals induced by globalisation affect – sometimes painfully – populations whose living environment is being disrupted or even shattered. Having lived and worked in many poor countries, especially in the maritime and fishing spheres, I try to see how some of our inventions can help change the situation positively for communities in difficulty in countries that have not yet emerged. I am thinking, for example, of the impact that our Netless process will have on fishing – fishing with bubbles and therefore without nets[4] – in terms of protecting seabeds while allowing small-scale fisheries to survive. Or of our Boaxt, which will make it possible to facilitate movement in countries with a dense hydrographic network and few roads – which obviously has consequences for the way we think about spatial planning.

In fact, you have a decidedly atypical profile. Your time in the army in the mid-1980s, then your long experience in the world of the sea and naval engineering all around the globe, make you a most unconventional personality.

Indeed, I owe a great deal to my time in the army. The training I received as a reserve officer cadet at the 3rd Battalion of the Saint-Cyr Coëtquidan military academy proved extremely positive. Over time, I have been able to transfer many of the lessons learned there into my work as an entrepreneur. It is no doubt also why I was able so easily to adopt the analytical and operational framework of

[4] For more information, see Box 1 and the reference to the dedicated website.

economic intelligence. After Coëtquidan, I had the honour – and the bliss – of serving in the 6th Marine Infantry Parachute Regiment (6e RPIMa). That is not insignificant. For example, when designing Boaxt as a container, I naturally had in mind its ability to be air-lifted, by plane or helicopter. Think of the speed with which Boaxt can be deployed in flooded areas or during humanitarian operations. Similarly, Boaxt has aroused the interest of the armed forces and defence professionals. With all its possible variants, and its ability to be moved very quickly, it can prove an ideal vector for transport and action in coastal, lacustrine or river zones – not least if coupled with drone-based modes of action.

Certainly, I could have stayed in the army. But I have a temperament that is too independent for that. Being a privateer for my country, yes; being a career soldier did not fit my innate wanderer's nature. It is this taste for freedom and independence that enabled me to engage in trading and shipping in every corner of the world, to live among and discover such different populations. I personally spent many years in Morocco and am now based in the Gulf, since I have always had a particular predilection for the Arab–Muslim world. As for my military experience, I have kept profound friendships from it – solid, and resistant to all trials. Several superiors or comrades have since become friends, and we now work together on certain missions. Many of us went through the ordeal of war, with or without uniform, and we have been able – *mutatis mutandis* – to transfer the lessons learned yesterday in the turmoil to today's civilian world and to economic warfare.

In the entrepreneurial adventure that is ours, we have managed to preserve a commando spirit. And we understood long ago that we had to escape silo-type functioning in favour of efficiency – in the same way as the Special Operations Command was structured after the first Gulf War. General Bigeard constantly used to tell his paratroopers that they had to be "flexible, feline and maneuverable". That is exactly what we strive to be in economic warfare. When Christian Harbulot, Nicolas Moinet, Philippe Clerc and others explain that we must study power relations and develop our own reading grid, in order to detect contradictions and weaknesses in the market studied and among current and potential players, they are absolutely right. When we, French expatriates, return to mainland France, we sometimes have the feeling of a certain weariness, a kind of dereliction, a cruel disconnect with the

rest of the world. Yet there is no fatality, only wills in motion. Harbulot in particular is right when he urges us to adopt a combative posture and to go back on the offensive, first and foremost in the information sphere. The recipe for success rests above all on human factors (trust, the ability to think outside the box, leadership, a taste for innovation, an ability to adapt, the aptitude to decide, and so on). In short, it is up to us to assume a certain way of thinking about the world and of living within it. With my network, we strive to hunt in packs and to daily put into practice the motto of our dear 6e RPIMa: *Croire et oser* (Believe and Dare). In the dangerous world we live in, that imperative also applies at the very heart of economic warfare.

Box 1

Boaxt: the first stage in a strategic planning of innovations related to the blue territories of tomorrow

Le Quéré SAS has given us access to its business plan and its various derivations. In this respect, the Boaxt presented at the Abu Dhabi International Boat Show in November 2025 is only the first step in a vision unfolding within a much broader framework. This projection is the fruit of forty years of experience and intense reflection. The six points set out below are drawn from the files we consulted in May 2025 and give an idea of the structure and coherence of the whole, in which one readily recognises the key parameters of economic intelligence and strategic planning. Many of these items, already protected by patents and tested, will be officially unveiled over the coming months. A fine illustration of the ability of French naval engineering to anticipate tomorrow's challenges.

I – Boaxt™- A container that turns into a multifunctional floating platform

Boaxt (*A Boat in a Box*) is a modular and innovative concept: a floating platform housed in a 20-foot ISO container. Once deployed, Boaxt provides 57 m^2 of deck space afloat for a variety of uses:

nautical events, temporary accommodation, mobile base for marine works, capture of plastics and microplastics, combat vector, or support for humanitarian operations. Compact and quick to deploy, Boaxt is an ecological, mobile and versatile solution for coastal, river and port zones.

www.boaxt.com

II – Netless™ - Sustainable, net-free fishing using a curtain of bubbles

Netless is a patented technology that revolutionises fishing by eliminating the nets. Its system uses a curtain of bubbles and targeted lighting to attract fish before pumping them alive on board. This allows selective fishing with no damage to marine ecosystems. The system is also suited to recovering plastic waste from coastal seabeds and marinas. An innovation serving biodiversity and the depollution of the oceans.

www.netless.com

III – Streamesh™ - Capturing plastics and microplastics

A fusion of the English words *stream* and *mesh*, this device provides progressive screening of flows of seawater or river water through successive meshes to capture plastics and microplastics between 5 millimetres and 500 microns. The system operates by rotating meshes of decreasing size. The progressive reduction in passage is offset by hydraulic forcing that channels the water towards the intermediate meshes while ensuring active unclogging. The captured particles are then ejected and collected via a water spray system.

www.streamesh.com

IV – Wingfurl™ - Roll-up inflatable-rib wings to decarbonise maritime transport

Wingfurl is an auxiliary propulsion system based on semi-rigid inflatable wings that can be furled, with an asymmetric aerodynamic profile. Fitted to container ships without modification, it can cut fuel consumption and CO_2 emissions by up

to 30 percent, with no downtime or retrofit. Plug-and-play, automated and scalable, Wingfurl can be fitted both to existing vessels and newbuilds, including yachts, and can provide 100 percent of propulsive power in zero-emission mode.

www.wingfurl.com

V – Decarblue™ - A carbon fund to finance clean marine propulsion

Decarblue is a fund dedicated to certifying, monetising and reinvesting the carbon credits generated by maritime propulsion technologies such as Wingfurl. The emissions avoided are converted into certified carbon credits, sold on the markets and reinjected into engineering, R&D, production and industrial deployment. In this way Decarblue structures a virtuous loop serving the maritime energy transition. Luxembourg is being considered as the host country for the fund.

www.decarblue.com

VI – Blue Fishery™

In its current form, this project is the evolution of an initiative launched in Morocco in the 2000s, whose concept of an integrated hybrid multimodal fishery won several awards. It involved using zero-emission catamarans, propelled by thick sails, to catch small pelagic species (sardines, anchovies, mackerel, horse mackerel, and so on) with a purse seine, with pre-treatment of the catch on board. Since then, the project has integrated Netless technology – a selective fishing system using curtains of bubbles – as well as Wingfurl propulsion combined with electric pods and batteries. This system ensures totally decarbonised navigation. Blue Fishery has thus reached its culmination in terms of research and development.

The vessels currently under development, equipped with these technologies, will also be able, both in fishing and in transit, to activate the Streamesh system to collect plastics and microplastics, on the surface and on seabeds, whether coastal, port or nearshore. The extreme selectivity of the system makes it possible to pump live fish on board, trapped in a cylinder of bubbles. Juveniles can be

released unharmed, and a precise sorting is carried out between species (anchovies, sardines, squid, shrimps, and so on). Unlike traditional gear (trawls, nets, purse seines, longlines), which causes massive mortality, the catch here is kept alive and released intact if necessary. This method thus eliminates the waste of by-catch and unnecessary discards.

Such a model ensures the sustainability of resources by enabling complete selectivity of the species concerned. The fish are stored on board in refrigerated seawater tanks. Once landed, the products are fully valorised: fillets and flesh on the one hand, co-products on the other, transformed in onshore processing units into omega-3 for the cosmetics industry. This project constitutes both an economic and operational model for regenerating fishery resources, with a strong social, economic and human impact in the blue territories where it will be deployed.

https://le-quere.com/

Box 2

Territorial IE, Blue Territories and Corporate Strategy

Éric Le Quéré does not limit himself to being an inventor, he projects his vision beyond that, always seeking to embed his project within a wider and concrete framework. The idea is therefore to think upstream about the usefulness an innovation may have in a different setting, such as the *Blue Territories* for which he has a particular fondness. Hence his attention to geopolitics and, more precisely, to geoeconomics.

Below is an interview conducted in May 2025 in which Éric Le Quéré sets out the strengths that Boaxt offers in terms of territorial planning, notably on the technical, economic and social levels. An approach that aligns perfectly with the fundamentals of territorial economic intelligence.

Geopolitics and business strategy: integrating the resources of territorial EI into the Blue Territories concept

"In our multipolar world, threats abound, but so do opportunities. On the planetary scale, France holds a trump card of the first order:

the world's largest maritime domain. If the potential of the high seas is well known, that of littoral zones is less so. Yet they constitute an extraordinary, largely under-exploited reservoir of wealth that can be brought to value through the Blue Territory concept: rethinking the development of these hybrid lands by combining high technology, industrial know-how and natural resources.

Managing and running complex maritime projects in these territories, aligning the resources of French engineering with humanity's needs to develop synergies of knowledge, innovation and wealth creation, such is the vocation of Le Quéré SAS. This reterritorialisation, respectful of human communities and of their living environment, does not concern French overseas territories alone. It is the entire sphere of international cooperation that is at stake here, combining economic efficiency and environmental protection. By using the analytical and operational framework of territorial economic intelligence within a revisited geoeconomics of waters, Blue Territory stands out as a concept which, once translated into concrete action, becomes a formidable lever of power and influence for our country."

Geoeconomics of water and territorial EI

"Beyond the specifically technical parameters that presided over the birth of the Boaxt project, the aim is to think about the future of our world through the prism of the geoeconomics of waters, on both global and local scales. The term geoeconomics is not chosen by chance. It reflects Boaxt's desire to connect reality and thought, technology and nature.

Pascal Lorot, president of Institut Choiseul, was as early as 1997 the promoter of the geoeconomic concept in France and Europe,[5] just as Edward Luttwak was in the United States. To think of Boaxt emerging in the era of geoeconomics is thus to agree to integrate

[5] In 2010, during his exchanges with the great French "reinventor" of geopolitics Yves Lacoste, Pascal Lorot defined the sphere of geoeconomics as *"a space where each confrontation no longer has a physical territory as a closed field but rather a virtual territory, where the objective is no longer the conquest of a territory, the resources and the men who are there, but the control of a key technology, a strategic energy source (rare metals) or a unique know-how in that its possession gives its holder a competitive advantage in the fight, uninterrupted in history, for world hegemony".* [in *Geopolitics and the Geographer – Interviews between Yves Lacoste and Pascal Lorot*, Choiseul, 2010]

into our field of reflection all the parameters relating not only to the material economy but also to the immaterial economy. From this perspective, Boaxt appears in fact as a technical vector with a full and legitimate place in the knowledge economy.

The guiding idea behind this positioning is therefore to situate our approach at the confluence of multiple fields of thought and expertise. Far from limiting ourselves to a purely technical grasp of issues, we wish to foster transversal dialogues. As the founding fathers of the French school of economic intelligence – Christian Harbulot, Philippe Clerc, Henri Dou, Alain Juillet, Prefect Rémy Pautrat, recently deceased, and many others – have long pointed out, France suffers from a long-standing weakness which is working in "silos", where it would instead be necessary to think in terms of transversality and cooperation. A major flaw at a time of globalisation that demands, on the contrary, adaptability, open-mindedness and agility.

Optimising aquatic or marine surfaces by means of mobile floating platforms is not just a matter for engineers. By staking out the field of reflection on the geoeconomics of waters together with all those who accompany us, we want to bring together and get talking experts from a wide variety of horizons: the human and social sciences, cognitive sciences and neuroscience, management sciences and the natural sciences, artificial intelligence and economic intelligence, and more. In this way we fully integrate the optimisation of data and the tremendous possibilities opened to us by AI into our development. In practice, meeting on a prospective basis the challenges of developing tomorrow's territories requires a synoptic perception of our world and its future.

That is why, as it grows, Le Quéré SAS intends to propose an ad hoc communication and information strategy, designed to explore new horizons. The knowledge economy is not an empty phrase. It must articulate the material and immaterial economies on a planetary scale, while remaining respectful of environments and of the individuals and communities who live and prosper within them. Together with partners from every geographical horizon, we shall work in close collaboration so that, by interconnecting the sky, the land and the water, we can shape, as best as possible and for all, our world of tomorrow."