

at the core of France's international action²⁰. Notwithstanding its possible knock-on effect on our European partners, both in terms of strategic culture and effective capabilities, our national effort will not be enough to cope with the acceleration of destabilising strategic trends: the **search for convergence and increased cooperation with our partners** is therefore indispensable and requires a **credible linkage between the EU, NATO and ad hoc cooperation arrangements between multiple partners, in particular the European Intervention Initiative (EI2)**.

Significant progress has been made since the publication of the EU's Global Strategy in June 2016. At the **political** level, Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), as provided for in the Treaties, was activated in 2017. On the capability side, the European Defence Fund will support capability projects in cooperation from 2021 onwards. With the introduction of the PESCO projects, most of which are capability-based, and the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), the European capability cycle is being structured to foster cooperation and ensure continuity between priority setting, funding and equipment fielding in the armed forces. Finally, at the **operational** level, the Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) is getting up to speed, with the aim of enabling an "executive operation" involving up to 2,500 troops. The European Peace Facility (EPF) is being set up to support military missions. French efforts to **develop the EU's intervention capability to include more demanding military engagements** have borne fruit, with a strengthening of the mandate of EUTM Mali from 2018, which will make it possible to assist the Malian armed forces up to pre-deployment, and also the setting up in a few weeks of Operation *Irin*²¹. France's action in the Mediterranean is aimed at bringing together European efforts to block coercive actions against our partners and restore stability in the Mediterranean area, which is located at the gateway to Europe and is essential to its security.

At the same time, **NATO remains the bedrock of collective defence of the European continent** and of the transatlantic link, as well as of Europe's nuclear culture. The Atlantic Alliance stays committed to crisis management operations and missions in Afghanistan, the Balkans, the Middle East

²⁰ Speech for a sovereign, united, democratic Europe; 26 September 2017.

²¹ Operation EUNAVFOR MED *Irin* was launched on 31 March 2020 to strengthen oversight of the arms embargo on Libya. It also extends the former tasks of Operation *Sophia*, namely training the Libyan Coast Guard and monitoring human trafficking and illicit oil export networks.

and the Mediterranean. It also faces multiple challenges, with increasing threats in its immediate environment, tensions between its members and a more distant approach from the United States. France is playing its full part in collective defence, actively participating in air policing in the Baltic States and, since 2017, in the Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP), alternately in Estonia and Lithuania, and is even the leading contributor to the NATO Readiness Initiative (NRI). It is also supporting the Alliance's adaptation efforts and its deterrence and defence posture and knows that NATO is irreplaceable in achieving lasting interoperability among Allies.

However, the insistence on the Alliance's political and military credibility which France signifies through its engagement presupposes an **updated political contract**. This work on cohesion is at the centre of the strategic reflection initiated by the Heads of State and Government in London in 2019. The parameters of this new contract should make it possible to **redefine the contours of both allied solidarity and the transatlantic relationship**, counting on a **growing role for Europeans** to contribute to the common defence effort and assert their security concerns in a 360° perspective. This presupposes both that **Europeans continue their budgetary efforts** and the modernisation of their forces and that they become active stakeholders in **building a new security architecture capable of guaranteeing strategic stability** on the European continent.

The European Air Transport Command (EATC) also contributes to the interoperability and sharing of its members' projection capabilities. In this respect, it represents one of the most successful European operational cooperation efforts.

In addition to our engagements in the EU and NATO, in 2017 France proposed to a group of "able and willing" European States to work more closely together. **EI2** is thus contributing to the establishment of a common strategic culture through concrete cooperative projects. The initiative now has 13 members²² and serves as an incubator for projects that improve collective readiness or encourage our partners to invest in regions or subjects that are key to Europe's security.

²² In addition to France: Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

In the Sahel, France has also mobilised several European countries to deploy Special Forces in support of African forces in Mali and Niger, within the framework of the **Takuba²³ Task Force**. At the same time, the EMA-SoH-Agénor maritime surveillance operation in the Persian Gulf has rallied several European partners willing to contribute to regional de-escalation.

Europe's defence is also being enhanced through bilateral cooperation. France is thus continuing to develop its key partnerships in Europe: with the Treaty of Aachen, the **Franco-German relationship** has reached a new level, in particular thanks to the establishment of a privileged relationship in land systems²⁴ and unprecedented cooperation in terms of operations and capabilities²⁵, the latter also including **Spain**. An unprecedented major partnership has also been established with **Belgium** in the field of land mobility²⁶, in connection with the Scorpion programme, and with **Italy** in the field of naval cooperation (creation of the NAVIRIS Joint Venture in 2019). As far as the **UK** is concerned, and despite Brexit, the 10th anniversary of the Lancaster House Treaties provides an opportunity to measure the progress made, in particular on the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF) and the two key capability programmes FC/ASW and MMCM, and to open up shared perspectives for the coming decade. In addition, France has in recent years strengthened its already close ties with Spain, but also with many other European countries, including Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Norway, the Baltic States, Switzerland, and Greece

Because Africa and the Middle East are areas of major interest affecting the interests and security of French citizens, both abroad and at home, the French armed forces are developing the concept of **operational military partnership (PMO)²⁷** for crisis prevention purposes. French forces support partner forces, from training to combat, including equipment, so that they can eventually acquire the capability to ensure the security of their countries autonomously. Thus, **in the Sahel**, France is resolutely committed

23 Sweden, Estonia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Denmark, Belgium, Italy and the Czech Republic (ongoing process).

24 Nexter and KMW merged to form KNDS.

25 Future Combat Air System (FCAS) and Main Ground Combat System (MGCS) projects; Franco-German air transport squadron.

26 *Capacité Motorisée (CaMo)* programme.

27 PMO : *Partenariat militaire opérationnel*.

to mobilising its international partners and the **G5 Sahel** countries in a comprehensive approach: combating armed terrorist groups; strengthening the military and security forces of the States in the region; supporting reinstallation of governance and administrative structures in the region; and providing development aid.

The **Indo-Pacific is today the theatre of profound strategic changes**, from the intensification of Sino-American competition to Sino-Indian and Pakistani-Indian tensions, not to mention transnational threats and the implications of climate change. **These changes have direct consequences** on all populations and infrastructures in the region, **including French overseas territories**.

In this region, which is home to seven of the 10 largest defence budgets in the world, heightened strategic and military imbalances constitute a threat with global consequences – 30% of trade between Asia and Europe passes through the South China Sea. Unlike most European countries, the majority of Indo-Pacific States have invested in modern, yet large militaries for more than a decade. Combined with technological progress, this trend results in tougher operational environments and a potential disruption of regional and global balances.

As a European nuclear power with global interests, **France cannot define its interests solely in terms of geographical proximity** to the homeland: it must imperatively maintain a geostrategic reach in line with current developments and its ambitions, which are first and foremost to protect its citizens and territories, but also to preserve its influence and freedom of action. France's defence strategy in the Indo-Pacific was presented by the Minister of the Armed Forces at the Shangri-La Dialogue 2019 in Singapore.

France's action in the Indo-Pacific also aims to contribute to multilateral security efforts and to preserve the freedom of maritime and air navigation. This implies intensifying our cooperation efforts, by encouraging our European partners to become more involved in the Indo-Pacific, and by developing major strategic partnerships beyond Europe, in particular with India, Australia and Japan, as well as by supporting regional cooperation formats (ASEAN, IONS, IORA, SPDM, etc.).

Present in Europe as well as in the Indo-Pacific, active in the Middle East and as far away as Africa, the **United States** is both a global and an indispensable

ally. Beyond recurring political differences, France intends to preserve the excellence of its bilateral defence relationship with the United States, our historical ally, based on shared values and interests.

2.2. What challenges do we face in order to play our role as a stabilising power?

2.2.1. Uniting around European sovereignty and shared interests

As tensions and sources of instability accrue at Europe's borders, uncertainty as to the political will of the United States to become engaged in regional crises is leaving European States to face their responsibilities. While significant progress has been made since June 2016 and the recognition of the need for "shared strategic autonomy", it is **necessary to go beyond what has already been done in order to build a genuine European pillar of security and defence, consistent with developments in NATO**. This implies progress in three directions: consolidating European defence, reducing our dependencies, and developing common responses to hybrid aggression.

Europe's convergence around common defence and security interests will be one of the issues in efforts to define a "strategic compass", launched by Germany and due to continue until the French Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2022. The operationalisation of Article 42.7 of the Treaty on European Union should also make it possible to strengthen the effectiveness of solidarity mechanisms between Europeans.

The level of ambition of the EU's operational engagements, particularly in the Mediterranean, the Sahel and more generally in Africa, remains insufficient considering the interests to be defended and should therefore be augmented. The continued operationalisation of the European command structures (EUMS/MPCC), the strengthening of EU action in the maritime and air domains, the increased sharing of operational assets and support bases in strategic areas, the improvement of European situation assessment tools and the establishment of the European Peace Facility (EPF) are all priority areas for efforts to contain terrorist threats and the push of expansionist powers.

Harmonising the capability instruments (PESCO, CARD and EDF) and consolidating an innovative and competitive European defence industrial

base are major challenges, which must be taken up to open the possibility of real European strategic autonomy. Provided that it is sustainable and funded over the long term, the EDF will benefit all industries, both large groups and SMEs, will promote processes capable of bringing the different industrial bases closer together on a long-term basis, and will give Member States access to new-generation technologies and key equipment meeting the capability objectives of the Member States of both the European Union and NATO. France intends to play a leading role in this respect²⁸ and supports the new DG DEFIS in its increasing involvement in defence issues, which should be supported, while consolidating the respective roles of the EEAS and the EDA.

To **strengthen their sovereignty** and assume their shared responsibilities, **Europeans will have to increase their technological and industrial independence**. Dependencies can be mutual and consensual — particularly between European partners, whether they involve industrial consolidation or major programmes in progress — or they can be unilateral and imposed, in which case remedial solutions are called for. Europeans will therefore have to clarify what constitutes their national critical infrastructures in transport, energy, space and digital²⁹ technologies — infrastructures that must be protected from predatory actions and external influences. EU Member States are only beginning to converge on these key sovereignty issues. The new Commission illustrates the increasing importance of issues relating to defence and the protection of Europe's technological perimeter.

The need for greater independence can be seen in all key sectors: 5G, AI and data storage, quantum computing, energy — and their mostly imported regulatory standards — or critical supplies of raw material. In terms of **artificial intelligence** (AI), upscaling requires a global data architecture, allowing for massive data processing tools and artificial intelligence applications to reach their full potential. Similarly, the **energy transition** required by climate change is transforming the global energy mix.

28 French participation in 36 of the 46 of the Permanent Structured Cooperation projects, participation of French companies in 14 of the 16 industrial consortia selected following the 2019 call for projects of the EDIDP (European Defence Industrial Development Programme).

29 Cf. act no. 2019-810, known as "5G", which aims to preserve the security, integrity and resilience of networks, and which entails obligations for operators; at the same time, in January 2020, the Commission adopted a common "toolbox" on network security.

European countries should therefore start to diversify their sources of supply now in order to reduce their strategic dependencies³⁰; concerning gas, the EU intends to encourage a process of diversification of suppliers, routes, and means of supply. In addition, electrification and digitisation are creating **new, structural dependencies** on certain technologies (digital systems) and energy sources (renewables, electricity, batteries), as well as on the raw materials underlying their production. Whether in terms of access to critical materials, control of industrial value chains, definition of standards or data processing, the digital and “low-carbon” technology sectors constitute new areas of economic, technological, and normative competition.

The dual advances made possible by certain technologies **thus extend economic confrontation to new areas of competition** (digital, automation, financial or scientific computation, commercial artificial intelligence, high-speed telecommunications), in which European States are not sufficiently coordinated, with cumulative R&D budgets that are undersized, particularly in comparison with Chinese and American efforts. These inadequacies are likely to deprive Europe of its residual advance and influence in these fields, and to complicate or even subordinate to others its capacity for action and ultimately its sovereignty.

The risk of an irreversible downgrade, or even the withdrawal of **the European continent** from world affairs can no longer be ruled out today.

Faced with such challenges, we must both take into account our most critical dependencies and draw up an inventory of those that could be reduced, in order to limit risks and identify solutions to reduce our common dependencies and secure our supplies. While preserving technological interoperability between Allies over the long term, we must complement and develop further the tools already available at a national and European level³¹.

Moving towards greater European sovereignty also means reducing our shared vulnerabilities. Some of our competitors are resorting to **“comprehensive” or**

30 The EU imported 74% of its gas by pipeline in 2019, from Russia (31%), Norway (28%) and Algeria (5%). In the same year, LNG accounted for around 25% of EU gas imports, from Qatar (28%), Russia (20%), the U.S. (16%) and Nigeria (12%) - see BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2020.

31 Pacte Act (expanding the list of critical technologies, lowering the threshold of voting rights held that triggers the control procedure) and framework for the screening of foreign direct investments into the EU (EU Regulation 2019/452 of 19th March 2019).

“hybrid” strategies aimed at making gains by orchestrating the effects of their diplomatic, military, economic, informational and legal actions according to an overall dynamic that is ambiguous and often difficult to detect or denounce.

The increasingly widespread use of these “grey area” strategies and actions³² requires, in return, the ability to anticipate, detect, understand and, if necessary, attribute the adversary’s actions, which will make it possible to discourage them or at least to limit their effects and regain the initiative. Credibility requires organisation to be able to respond. While the response to hybrid threats must first of all be national and integrated, the contribution of external resources (partners, allies, NATO and particularly the EU, which brings significant added value to civil-military interaction) can enhance its effectiveness³³. Greater European strategic autonomy would thus contribute directly to the preservation of our national sovereignty, as well as that of other European countries.

Defining a posture and potentially an appropriate European response will require close coordination of our diplomatic, legal, economic, and informational resources, as well as certain national intelligence and action capacities, including cyber operations.

2.2.2. DTIB: consolidate through balanced cooperative ventures and stimulate through investment

The defence industry is an essential component of **national autonomy** and a key sector for the national economy. Capable of producing all types of equipment in all domains, it guarantees our security of access to the technologies needed to provide equipment essential to our sovereignty and critical weapon systems.

In addition to the major industrial contractors and their network of equipment manufacturers, subcontractors and suppliers, the **DTIB** is a **unique ecosystem** comprising the major public and parapublic research players³⁴

32 Speech by the President of the Republic on 7 February 2020: “the frontier between competition and confrontation, which used to distinguish times of peace (...) crisis (...) war, is today deeply diluted. It is replaced by many grey areas where, under the guise of asymmetry or hybridity, actions to influence, disturb or even intimidate are put in place, with a risk of degeneration”.

33 The creation of a Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki is an example of this.

34 ONERA, CNES, CEA, ISL, etc.

with the scientific and technical expertise needed to meet defence requirements. It also includes entities of the Ministry for the Armed Forces responsible in particular for equipment maintenance³⁵ or procurement programmes, with strong interaction between State agencies and industrial stakeholders, reinforced by new methods for managing arms programmes.

The broad and constant quest for cooperation on a European scale must contribute to the emergence of true innovative European champions, both prime contractors and subcontractors, capable of meeting the needs and satisfying the sovereignty ambitions of the various nations. In this respect, the four degrees of independence/cooperation — sovereignty, cooperation with nationally preserved skills, cooperation with mutual dependency, “market-based” solution — introduced by DNSSR 2017 are even more relevant in light of the economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Whether intergovernmental or industrial, cooperation implies, through induced specialisation and the quest for efficiency, the creation of **mutual dependencies with our partners**. In order to be consensual and not imposed, these dependencies must be identified *a priori* so that the desired autonomy can be restored if necessary, and be accompanied by agreement between partners as to the desired degree of autonomy with respect to the other actors.

Like the European economies in general, the **defence sector** sometimes depends on monopoly manufacturers based abroad, particularly in China, for its day-to-day supplies. This is true for the support and day-to-day operation of the armed forces (IT equipment, medicines, masks) as well as for supplies to arms manufacturers. **Both national needs and the ambition of European sovereignty** must therefore fully integrate independent access, in a timely manner and with guaranteed quality, to certain transverse technologies that are essential for the production of our major systems. For example, expertise in high-performance steels, from their elaboration to the manufacture of the associated mechanical parts, is indispensable for the production of the most sensitive platforms, while expertise in the design of printed circuits and electronic components is necessary to maintain our electronic systems in the long term; finally, our needs for rare metals and critical minerals (rare earths, lithium, cobalt, tantalum, etc.) are increasing.

35 SSF, SIMMT, DMAé, SIAé.

First of all, it is necessary to better identify **supply chain risks**, even if it means developing our own supply chains if need be. Certain **strategic industrial sectors** also require particular attention, which could go as far as providing capital support. The same applies to **emerging technology** fields (AI, hyper-velocity, stealth, cyber including networks, control of the electromagnetic environment, combat cloud, nanotechnology, etc.): in the absence of national or European suppliers and sufficient investment, **new, highly critical dependencies will develop to the point of becoming irreversible.**

A pivotal element in the economic health of the defence industry, **exports** must meet a threefold requirement: guarantee compliance with international commitments through strict oversight, satisfy the demands of our partners, who are increasingly demanding production and technology transfers and offsets, and preserve our industrial base by extending production runs. Transfers and exports must therefore be chosen so as not to disrupt our sovereign, long-term access to critical technologies, sometimes buried deep in the subcontracting chain.

Finally, innovation is at the heart of our DTIB. It is both long-term — in order to prepare critical investments, anticipate technological breakthroughs or ensure expertise in emerging technologies of a strategic nature — and short-term, in order to rapidly capture innovation from the civilian market and from the armed forces, directorates and departments through the actions of the Defence Innovation Agency (DIA) created in 2018.

Our DTIB not only contributes directly to the country's security and sovereignty, but also has a **remarkable economic impact**, in terms of jobs, trade balance, investment, and research. It is a key sector of the national economy, accounting for 10% of industry, more than 20% of R&D and about **11% of French exports of goods in 2019**. Because the DTIB has been preserved from the waves of offshoring of the last 30 years, it constitutes a real **local network; defence investment therefore has a direct knock-on effect** on the many regions where the defence industry remains firmly established, and more generally on the economy as a whole.

The activity of the DTIB's 4,000 companies of all sizes generates about **200,000 direct and indirect** (subcontractor) **jobs**, intrinsically industrial and qualified: engineers, blue-collar workers, technicians, researchers, etc. Exports of military equipment alone made a positive contribution to the

national trade balance of €6.9 billion in 2018 and €8.5 billion in 2019. In addition to the DTIB, there are 26,000 companies supplying the Ministry for the Armed Forces throughout the country. Since laboratories and production lines are located on national soil, public spending in this sector, which represents 80% of State investment, has a particular **macroeconomic multiplier effect** — equivalent to **a factor of two over 10 years**.

2.2.3. Contributing to the Nation's resilience

Five years after the terrorist attacks of 2015 and three years after the hurricanes that devastated part of the West Indies, the Covid-19 crisis has illustrated the need for a **versatile military, capable of strengthening the Nation's resilience** through its ability to take action in a wide variety of critical situations, from health or environmental disasters to terrorist or hybrid attacks in metropolitan France or the overseas territories.

Thus, in the spring of 2020, and despite the Covid-19 crisis, the armed forces continued to fulfil all their permanent missions and all their operational commitments (nuclear deterrence, homeland protection, internal and external operations), while visibly contributing to the national effort to combat the virus through the three components of Operation Resilience: health, logistics, and protection.

However, in the light of lessons learned from the pandemic, among other things, **the armed forces' capabilities** need to be strengthened to deal with large-scale crises. In this respect, the implementation of a **strategic "protection-resilience" function** is now clearly necessary. Indeed, the notions of protection and resilience complement each other, as resilience is an essential prerequisite for ensuring the protection of the French people and the national territory and guaranteeing the continuity of the nation's essential functions. The rationale behind this function could moreover be **extended to our European partners and our Allies**.

With the *Vigipirate* system and Operation *Sentinelle*, the armed forces have shown for several years now that they are able to provide homeland security forces with valuable assistance that can be adapted to the evolving terrorist threat. This increased role in domestic security has required specific resources and training. Similarly, in the face of the **CBRN threat**, particularly of a terrorist nature, it is clearly indispensable to reinforce

the equipment dedicated to this threat, as well as the acculturation of all personnel, and to pursue research programmes in the biological and chemical fields.

The armed forces, set to act in situations of sudden crisis, constitute — together with the entire ministry and within an inter-ministerial framework — an essential link in the Nation’s resilience, particularly with regard to strategic or vitally important infrastructure. Because of their specific capabilities and know-how, for example in planning, they also play an important role in the inter-ministerial response to hybrid attacks, particularly in the face of repeated, low-intensity actions that require long-term follow-up in response.

At the same time, in the cyber domain, the emerging confrontations with regional and major powers confirm the need to continue strengthening the capabilities of the armed forces to operate in cyberspace and exploit technical intelligence.

In terms of resilience, the geographical location of our overseas territories is significant. The health crisis has shown the reality of the **strategic continuity between the homeland and our overseas territories** and the need for reassurance in the face of predatory actions and information manipulation. Our “presence and sovereignty” forces, currently sized as tightly as possible given our interests³⁶, could be reconfigured to be able to receive, at short notice and for extended periods, detachments deployed as reinforcements from mainland France. In addition to all the services and resources of the State, a credible global posture should also mobilise the cooperation of Western or regional partners, who have their own resources or support bases. Faced with the need for a global response, our **Basing Overseas and Outside France (OME) system** is a precious lever that from now on must integrate the entire conflict spectrum, including competition between great powers.

Reinforced resilience involves reconsidering certain **in-service support dependencies**. Faced with a crisis that affects delivery flows, supplies for the armed forces cannot be based solely on a logic of efficiency, inspired by a private sector model. It is essential to have strategic stocks and to accept the associated additional costs. Outsourcing of services must also take account of resilience issues. **What is true in the light of the Covid-19 crisis**

³⁶ -25% of personnel since 2008, with temporary capacity reductions that the 19-25 MPA must compensate for.

would also be true in the event of a surprise of a completely different nature (digital or environmental), and a fortiori in the context of a high-intensity engagement possibly threatening the homeland.

Furthermore, the armed forces are increasingly subject to legal standards that sometimes ignore the special nature of the military profession. The indiscriminate application of regulatory constraints to ordinary activities as well as to operational or combat training activities risks in the long run reducing our ability to engage in operations. **Positive laws applied to the armed forces must therefore be adapted in a necessary and proportionate manner** to enable the forces to fulfil their missions in all circumstances. Respect for defence issues must therefore be given due consideration by all the national or European bodies that define the regulatory framework in a multitude of areas (labour legislation, environmental code, social rights, laws governing digital and data issues, etc.).

Finally, it is important to continue to ensure the full support of our fellow citizens for the defence effort, by demonstrating very concretely its contribution not only to their security, but also to the economy, employment and social cohesion. This requires continuing efforts to ensure that the armed forces reflect the diversity of society to an even greater degree.

2.2.4. Ambition 2030: stepping up current efforts

The geopolitical disruptions noted above are reflected at the military level by tougher operating environments and the multiplication of fields of confrontation. As a result of all these developments, the hypothesis of a **direct confrontation between major powers** can no longer be ignored. The engagement of the armed forces on home soil is also set to continue in the implementation of protection postures, for the benefit of civilian authorities and in all fields of confrontation. Between now and 2030 and beyond, current tensions and possible upheavals therefore require us to **prepare** ourselves for **scenarios of "engagement (...) in a major conflict"**³⁷ and to continue to build up our capabilities and adapt our general posture.

In critical areas such as deterrence, intelligence, access to space, power projection or first and forcible entry capability, the objective of **controlled sovereignty** remains a priority. Our freedom of action thus requires us to

³⁷ As indicated by the President of the Republic in his speech of 7 February 2020.

ensure the credibility and renewal of our deterrent, and to guarantee our autonomy of assessment and decision-making, based on national intelligence and command capabilities with guaranteed resilience.

Wherever possible, we need to retain a **national intervention capability**, covering the widest possible spectrum of action, from counter-terrorism to high-intensity conflict to responding to hybrid attacks. Having a **full-spectrum armed forces model**, fully equipped and capable of acting in both physical and immaterial fields will also make it easier for us to rally our **European partners**.

However, the French armed forces cannot completely free themselves from dependence; they rely on their **closest partners**, the European and American armed forces in particular, for operations, intelligence, or the provision of certain specific capabilities.

In terms of capabilities and operations, the United States is thus the primary provider of support for the French armed forces, directly in a bilateral format, or more indirectly via NATO or within ad hoc coalitions. To this must be added the resources of our European partners, which carry out all kinds of missions for our benefit, as well as contributing financially to some of our efforts. The strategic and military alliance between Europe and the U.S. remains essential. While preserving transatlantic solidarity, burden-sharing needs to be rebalanced to enhance engagement capabilities.

At the same time, it will be necessary to strengthen force **protection**, both on bases and combat platforms. This will particularly apply to the areas of health, CBRN, air defence and missile defence, but also counter-UAV systems — the latter applies to French territory as well as to our deployed forces, given the intensive use of armed UAVs, as attested by recent examples (Libya, Syria, Nagorno-Karabakh). The same logic applies to the improvement of communication and information systems, with a special focus on interoperability with domestic security forces.

Our forces will also have to retain a capacity to operate in a technological environment that is both digitised and degraded, combining constant challenges to the electromagnetic spectrum, the risk of paralysing or deceptive cyber attacks, and the proliferation of missiles of all types to an increasing number of players. Our forces will operate in a digital and

informational environment presenting more and more risks and opportunities, where they will need to have the capacity to implement defensive as well as offensive postures.

Engaged in possible high-intensity combat against adversaries with multiple modern capabilities, they will also have to **strengthen their capability for joint collaborative combat**, and thus their capability for multi-domain integration alongside our Allies and partners. Even within multinational coalitions, conflicts could involve a maximum level of engagement, difficulties in accessing areas of confrontation, and direct, kinetic, electromagnetic and cyber attacks.

The French armed forces will also have to **gradually build up sufficient critical mass**, in terms of manpower and equipment, in order to simultaneously rebalance the odds in their favour, endure by compensating for potentially high attrition, and engage in several theatres.

Finally, they will have to **continue to diversify their offensive capabilities at the top end of the spectrum**, particularly for deep penetration of anti-access / area denial (A2/AD) postures. This implies “**scaling up**” our capability to conduct operations at divisional or even corps level (and their air and naval equivalents), thanks to interoperability with our partners and allies, and reinforced reserves.

Substantial modernisation is already under way: reception of FDI frigates and operational commissioning of the first four *Barracuda* class SSNs with enhanced combat capabilities, from 2021 to 2025; delivery by 2025 of a large number of medium armoured vehicles (*Griffon* and *Jaguar*), followed by the *Leclerc* battle tank upgrade; enhanced connectivity and collaborative air combat thanks to the deployment of the F4 standard on Rafale in 2024 and improvement of our air defence systems (SAMP/T-NG) in 2027, etc.

In addition, major programmes have been launched, in cooperation or open to cooperation, to prepare for the **renewal of the capabilities needed beyond 2030**. These include in particular the Franco-British FC/ASW missile system, the future Franco-German land combat system in 2035, the new-generation aircraft carrier in 2038 and the future combat air system, being developed with Germany and Spain — its initial operational capability is expected around 2040. These complex programmes and the

projects³⁸ that will follow will ensure the connectivity and credibility of our forces and incorporate the **requirements of collaborative combat in a joint and combined environment**, in order to guarantee their **operational superiority** in the face of future threats. Developed over the longer term and continuously modernised, these major capabilities will be designed to allow upgrades to ensure they can adapt to conditions of engagement that are still remote and uncertain, but which will constitute the challenge of future high-intensity combat.

It is **necessary to continue the build-up initiated in 2017**, whether it involves countering A2/AD postures in all domains, ensuring the projection and reinforcement of our forces, or guaranteeing our intervention capability.

The accelerated transformation of the international order thus confirms that **Ambition 2030 combined with the MPL** should be seen as an **intermediate but indispensable step towards a full-spectrum, coherent, agile and innovative, and therefore effective, armed forces model**, in which conventional and nuclear forces permanently complement each other. In this way we will be able to guarantee our security and self-sufficiency as well as our capacity to rally others in Europe and beyond.

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*As a **stabilising power** dedicated to peace and security, **France** promotes effective multilateralism that respects human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic principles. In a world marked by heightened competition, **our political efforts must be backed by a strengthened, effective and agile defence apparatus**. It is by pursuing our national military modernisation efforts, but also by developing European and global partnerships based on trust, reciprocity and these common values, that we will be able to confront the deteriorating international environment and its multiple challenges.*

³⁸ TITAN, Axon@v and Connect@éro, relating to the renewal of the land forces decision segment, the new-generation carrier battle group and the Future Combat Air System (FCAS), respectively.



Translation: AéroTraduction

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