STRATEGIC REVIEW
OF DEFENCE
AND NATIONAL SECURITY

2017

KEY POINTS

Liberté • Égalité • Fraternité

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

1. France's exposure and commitment

The threats and risks identified in the 2013 White Paper materialised more rapidly and more forcefully than expected. **Jihadist terrorism**, which struck France and its European neighbours, is evolving and expanding to new regions. It thrives on chaos, civil war and the fragility of some States. Addressing this threat will remain a priority for our societies and our populations.

Simultaneously, Europe is seeing a **resumption of open warfare and displays of force** on its doorstep, alongside the **greatest concentration of challenges** it has faced since the end of the Cold War : a migration crisis, persistent vulnerability in the Sahel-Sahara region and enduring destabilisation in the Middle East. **This concentration of threats and crises** comes as the European Union faces internal tensions which have come about since 2008 as a result of questions and doubts about its future.

The effects of climate change, pandemic risks, trafficking and organised crime are exacerbating these phenomena by creating further vulnerability and destabilisation. Increased flows of people, goods and data are amplifying interdependence. This is in turn increasingly exposing the European continent to **international tensions, including those furthest away from its shores**. The capacity to take action in **cyberspace** and in the **informational domain** is becoming increasingly accessible. As a result, our societies, populations, government services and businesses are more directly exposed to interference or malicious actions that may have major consequences.

France's armed forces are committed to dealing with crises that are **simultaneous**, **complex**, and geographically spread out. This places severe strain on their capabilities and their resources. In addition to ensuring the readiness and safety of the **nuclear deterrent**, they are deployed in operations in the **Sahel region,** on our **national territory**, and in the **Middle East**, in the counter-Daesh Coalition. They are also contributing to deterrence and reassurance measures alongside our allies on **Europe's eastern flank**. Alongside foreign deployments, they contribute to the defence and **protection of France's homeland** and its immediate surroundings.

2. An unstable and uncertain strategic environment

The international system that emerged after the Cold War is giving way to a **multipolar environment subject to sweeping changes**. **Instability** and **unpredictability** are its dominant features. A growing number of established as well as emerging powers are increasingly displaying military assertiveness, involving power politics and "fait accompli". Such assertiveness also fuels competition regarding access to **resources** and **control of physical and virtual strategic areas**, including oceans, airspace, outer space and cyberspace.

These trends have come about alongside direct **challenges to those international institutions and norms** that were set up to manage the use of force. **Proliferation** of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems remains a particularly troubling development.

These power strategies have been backed by the development of new strategies and operating methods based on maintaining **ambiguity** regarding intentions, and combining military and non-military means of action to intimidate or destabilise. This development greatly increases risks of **escalation**.

3. Tougher conflicts, better armed potential adversaries

Growing arsenals, the spread of modern conventional equipment and technological advances have been providing a **growing number of actors**, States and otherwise, with access to **advanced military resources**. At the same time, the dissemination of new civilian technologies means and capabilities, that were until recently the exclusive preserve of States, are now widely accessible.

When combined with innovative courses of action, these changes may challenge **Western armies' operational and technological superiority**, in all domains: on land, at sea and in the air, as well as in cyberspace, which has become a domain for potential conflict in its own right. This challenge could ultimately extend to outer space. Such changes are making operations **more difficult and more costly**, as current conflicts demonstrate.

At the same time, major powers are stepping up efforts with respect to very high technology systems, increasing the risk that **European capabilities end up lagging behind**.

4. Disruptive technologies give rise to new opportunities and new vulnerabilities

The faster pace of **technological revolutions and the uses of technology** in the civilian sphere point to many potential military applications for artificial intelligence, robotics, networking systems and biotechnologies. Our capacity to incorporate these disruptive changes will determine whether we can maintain operational superiority.

Advances in digital technology make it critical to how societies, governments and armed forces operate. Involving a wide range of private- and public-sector players operating in cyberspace, little legal oversight and the challenge of attacks attribution, cyberspace is becoming a new source of vulnerability. **Digital sovereignty** is thus becoming a priority.

5. European ambition and strong partnerships

France would like to see **European defence strengthened** based on shared security interests. France supports enhancing the EU's tools and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), including both *permanent structured cooperation* and the *European Defence Fund*.

Moreover, as the President of the French Republic stated in his speech at the Sorbonne on 26 September, France intends to **launch new projects**, such as the European Intervention Initiative, with partners that have the necessary military capabilities and political will. This initiative will complement major bilateral defence relationships with Germany and the United Kingdom. It will also help develop a **shared strategic culture** for Europeans, making them better able to operate together in the future, if the situation so requires. The objective is for Europeans to have common doctrines, the capability for credible **joint intervention** and appropriate common budget instruments by the beginning of the next decade.

At the same time, France will continue to shoulder its full responsibilities **within NATO**, including collective defence and reassurance. France will have to continue relying on its network of **partnerships spanning the world**, from Africa and the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific region.

6. Rebuilding capacity: consolidating our strategic autonomy

After Brexit, France will be the European Union's only permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, and nuclear-weapon State. As a founding member of NATO and the European Union with a full-spectrum forces model, France must have **two objectives**: preserving its **strategic autonomy** and helping to build a **stronger Europe** to address the growing number of common challenges.

Maintaining its freedom of analysis, decision-making and action will primarily depend on renewing **both components of its nuclear deterrent**. It will also entail maintaining **knowledge and anticipation efforts, particularly with regard to intelligence.** Such consolidation will in turn lead to better alignment of the five strategic functions, i.e. deterrence, prevention, protection, intervention, knowledge and anticipation. More specifically, it will strengthen our **conflict- and crisis-prevention capabilities**. These capabilities will rely on **strong and committed diplomacy** aimed at fostering a **comprehensive approach** that integrates security and development.

Consolidation of our strategic autonomy should also be underpinned by increasing **resilience** for functions and sectors that are critical for the life of the Nation and prone to new forms of vulnerability.

7. Rebuilding capacity: maintaining a full-spectrum and balanced armed forces model

Maintaining the **model of a full-spectrum and balanced military** is critical for France's **national independence**, **strategic autonomy** and **freedom of action**.

In a more demanding operating environment, this model must incorporate **all skills and capabilities necessary to achieve desired military effects** across **the full range of possible threats and engagements**, including the most critical ones. More specifically, it should make it possible to engage in high-intensity operations on land, at sea, in the air, and to operate in the cyberspace.

France's armed forces should be capable of **autonomous action** with respect to nuclear **deterrence**, the **protection** of its territory and approaches, as well as to **intelligence**, **operations command and control**, **special operations** and **cyberspace**. In other areas, partnerships and cooperation will enhance our armed forces' capacity. In this respect, the model of a full-spectrum military provides France with the legitimacy and credibility that are critical to forge **partnerships** and uphold the responsibilities of a **framework nation**. This stems from its possession of certain key capabilities only shared by few powers.

Efforts initiated under previous budgetary planning legislation must be maintained in order to take the wearing down of some military capabilities into account and to prepare for the future. Meanwhile, new investment should focus on **certain forms of readiness**, especially resources for **intelligence, command and control, first entry, combat and support**.

Maintaining the attractiveness of **military careers** and personnel **retention** will require improvement of service members' daily lives and career prospects, along with proper recognition by the Nation of the specific nature of the mission of the men and women in defence.

8. Rebuilding capacity: reasserting our industrial and technological ambition

France is a major technological power with a **solid defence industry and technology base** encompassing some ten major groups and more than 4,000 small and medium-sized enterprises accounting for 200,000 jobs in France. Its dynamism ensures that our armed forces have long-term access to equipment of the highest level. Therefore, pursuing a high level of **ambition in the manufacturing and technology fields** is a matter of sovereignty and a pillar of our strategic autonomy.

Preparing for the future is key to our technological performance. Major funding for **research** ensures that France's defence sector is able to maintain its position on the international stage and produce the equipment that our armed forces will need. At the same time, a comprehensive policy to **support innovation** will make it possible to identify, produce, harness, experiment and support the many transformations produced by innovation and to incorporate them in a responsive manner.

This technical mastery is critical for forging **balanced cooperative endeavours**. In this way, France intends to take part in the development of a **sound and coherent European defence industry**, through its involvement in the *European Defence Fund* and through the reaffirmation of its ambitions relating to technological and industrial cooperation.

More than ever, France needs to strike a balance between domestic procurement, civilian activities and exports, given how critical they are to a competitive defence industry and the maintenance of wide-ranging skills.

9. Innovation is at the core of the approach pursued by the Ministry and the Armed Forces

Supporting innovation and the digital revolution should also lead to **removing additional barriers** between civilian and military sectors and to creating greater **agility**. It should shape the design and management of **armament and acquisition programs**. In addition to the technological dimension, it should also foster new relationships between the defence world and all of the other areas of **research** in order to strengthen and enhance long-term planning capabilities, strategic planning and **operational agility**.

More broadly speaking, this innovative spirit should run through the entire Ministry, its organisation and its working methods in order to **change its culture** and to accept inherent risks. The recruitment and retention of talent and skills, which underpin the entire defence ecosystem, are key to this transformation.

DICoD - Bureau des éditions - octobre 2017