



France's European Priority

U.S. Navy

Clemenceau-class aircraft carrier *Foch* during Exercise Distant Drum.

By PHILIPPE H. MALLARD and BRUNO TERTRAIS

France's widely-celebrated national consensus on defense has not been eroded by changes in the strategic landscape over the past five years. In fact, public support for the French military has increased since the end of the Cold War. Publication of *Livre Blanc sur la Défense* (or French white paper on defense) earlier this year illustrates this consensus as well as continuity in policy. But it also represents a crucial stage in adapting defense policy to

the new international security environment. The clear priority given to the European dimension of defense is one of the most significant elements of this new policy. Reorganizing the defense establishment has been a key feature of French security policy since 1991, particularly from a European and transatlantic perspective. It also forecasts the French military posture of the year 2000.

Reorganizing Defense

Defense reform, initiated in the wake of the Persian Gulf War, was the first of three steps in the review of French defense. The overall goal of this reform could be described as increasing the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and conduct joint operations

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defense reform could be described as increasing the ability to conduct joint operations

within a national or multinational framework. To fulfil this goal, operational and nonoperational national chains of command have been separated. Between 1991 and 1993 six organizational structures were put in place: *Direction du renseignement militaire* (DRM), a single joint military intelligence directorate that reports to the chief of defense staff and replaces various existing services; *Etat-major interarmées* (EMIA), a joint planning staff for operations in and out of Europe; *Centre opérationnel interarmées* (COIA), a joint operations center to conduct such operations; a special operations command; *Délégation aux affaires stratégiques* (DAS), a policy division with a focus on international affairs; and *Collège interarmées* (CID), a joint defense college.

The second and perhaps most important step of the review was *Livre Blanc sur la Défense*, a 160-page document which was commissioned by Prime Minister Edouard Balladur in April 1993 and made public in March 1994. The white paper was drafted through an interagency process in which all relevant departments and organizations were involved. Experts were invited to contribute to what was the most important review of French defense policy since the 1960s. In a context of change, there was a need for a reference text on defense doctrine (the previous white paper having appeared in 1972). There was also a need for a long-term analysis of security needs and priorities (including in the defense industry). There are elements of both change and continuity in the document because it was agreed that most of the basic features of French security policy remained valid.

The white paper is also ambitious and reveals some significant shifts in position. First, a clear priority is given to European and multinational dimensions of security. In the future, France will probably act in a multinational context most of the time; only if it becomes necessary will action be taken in a strictly national context. Second, a balance has been struck between deterrence and action, recognizing that conventional forces are likely to play a new and specific part in

the current strategic environment, especially for crisis management and peacekeeping.

Last, the white paper distinguishes among the means of defense: the first are contributions to what is called the permanent security posture which protect the nation from aggression against its vital interests at all times; the second are deployable forces to deal with regional crises or peace operations; and the third are requisite missions of a permanent support structure which carry out training, education, equipment, personnel support, etc.

The third step in reorganizing defense is the latest planning bill which is being discussed by parliament. Such bills are provisional frameworks for defense budgets and equipment programs for a three- to six-year period. The long awaited bill is very ambitious because it covers the years 1995 to 2000. (The current draft assumes an annual



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economic growth of about 1.5 percent by end of the century.) The annual equipment budget (traditionally around FF 100 billion) would grow by at least 0.5 percent per year in real terms. The budget is divided into six modules, the most important being air/land operations (module 4) and nuclear deterrence (module 1); it should also be noted that space/intelligence/communications (module 2) has constantly grown since 1991.

Security Policy: Key Features

Preserving nuclear deterrence is the ultimate guarantee of national survival. Accordingly, the debate is about *how* to maintain a nuclear deterrent and the extent to which it

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should be adapted, not *whether* it should be maintained. Nuclear doctrine firmly remains one of deterrence, based on the capacity to inflict unbearable damage. Nuclear weapons deter *any* adversary from threatening vital interests by *any* means, and with no precise definition of those vital interests deterrence rests on uncertainty. Whilst the doctrine remains the same, the instruments of deterrence may have to be adapted in the future to ensure that political authorities have the means to effectively persuade any conceivable adversary, under any conceivable

communication and French nationals in foreign territories. France also has a variety of defense agreements with non-European countries (particularly in Africa) which it intends to fulfil; hence the pre-positioned forces in those countries.

Global responsibility is also a duty that comes with permanent membership on the Security Council; thus the French contribution to worldwide crisis management and peacekeeping. France is a leading participant (*vis-à-vis* the number of troops involved) in U.N. peace operations around the world. In this respect, the French presence in many countries during this century has helped in effectively tackling peacekeeping on the ground. France estimates that its contributions to restoring peace in Cambodia and Somalia were significant and worthwhile. Lessons from these operations and, of course, the experience in Bosnia suggest that there is a need to adjust U.N. structures and decisionmaking processes for peacekeeping. The United Nations should be both better organized and prepared to conduct peace operations at both the political and the political-military levels.

To develop an all-European, overarching security framework requires a single set of rules for the continent to avoid unequal security zones in the post-Cold War world and to prevent conflict by treating the causes—ideally before the first symptoms of a crisis appear. Key to this is maintaining the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty and harmonizing the various arms control, security, and disarmament agreements; working toward a more effective implementation of the provisions of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE); finalizing a code of conduct on the use of force; and building a “stability pact” based upon regional and bilateral agreements. (The pact is a European Union (EU) initiative based on a French idea aimed at Central and Eastern Europe.)

CSCE has been recognized since 1992 as a regional organization in the sense of the U.N. Charter, which has potentially far-reaching consequences. There is a risk that the United Nations will be financially as well as politically unable (in the case of a

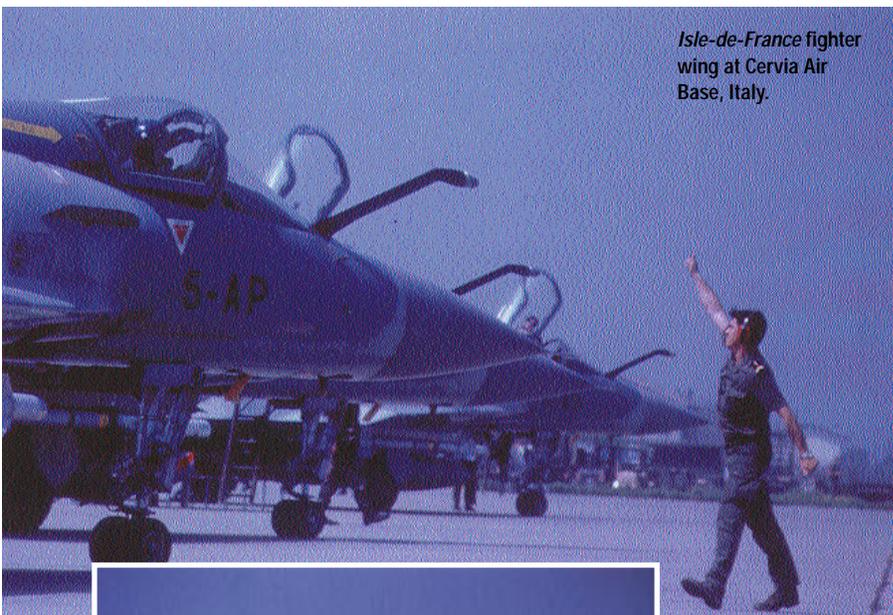
Fast attack craft
FS La Rieuse near
Aden during Operation
Desert Shield.



U.S. Navy (John Bourvia)

set of circumstances, that aggression against France and its vital interests would entail an unacceptable risk.

As a former colonial power with numerous overseas territories, France has commitments around the world. The security of overseas territories is a priority to which “sovereignty forces” contribute in peacetime. They ensure the security of lines of



Isle-de-France fighter wing at Cervia Air Base, Italy.

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Mirage 2000 returning from mission during Operation Deny Flight.

Security Council deadlock) to fulfil all its responsibilities around the world in the future—for instance, in managing more than two or three peace operations simultaneously. Therefore, the prospect of delegating some responsibilities to regional bodies should be explored.

One goal of the all-European security framework should be to avoid the isolation of Russia by allowing that country—which has always been a key player in European politics—to participate fully in the management of security on the Eurasian landmass. Russia views itself as having de facto special responsibility in peacekeeping in the former Soviet republics. The French view is that this should be a cooperative process with operations managed and controlled at a multilateral level.

European Identity

The object is not to establish an organization responsible for Europe's collective defense in place of NATO, but to establish the

structures and procedures that are required to allow Europeans to act autonomously if necessary. France regards the development of the European Security and Defense Identity (ESDI) as a natural “spin-off” of this construction. Franco-German partnership is key to developing ESDI. Indeed, European construction has moved forward each time France and Germany acted together; and it has slowed each time the two countries failed to agree on a mutual course of action. Initiatives such as the Euro-Corps, an organization with association status in the Western European Union (WEU) for Central and Eastern Europe, or a Franco-German armaments agency, demonstrate that the Franco-German “axis” remains at the edge of ESDI development.

This defense identity will also increasingly rest on Franco-British partnership—not as an alternative but as a complement. The two are much closer on security issues today than in the past. Indeed, their positions in world affairs rest on the same foundations (permanent seats on the U.N. Security Council, status of nuclear powers, experiences of empire, and strong defense efforts). Recently, French and British forces renewed the habit of working together (in Iraq and Bosnia), and the debate on future European security architecture has brought them closer together. Also, a bilateral dialogue on nuclear policy was initiated in 1992. Moreover, a “Mediterranean security partnership” is emerging among France, Italy, and Spain. The three countries launched a Maritime European Force in 1992 which is to be set up within the WEU framework. Italy made a follow-up proposition of a European Rapid Action Force in 1993 which is currently under study.

A satellite observation and monitoring capacity should be at the top of an ESDI shopping list since it is key to autonomy. France has taken the European dimension into account in *Helios* (a military observation satellite to be launched this year) through a memorandum of understanding with its partners in the program, Italy and Spain, aimed at making available high-quality pictures to the WEU Satellite Center located in Torrejon, Spain. Strategic lift capabilities—essential for power projection—may be provided by the Future Large Aircraft (FLA) project.

Finally, the nuclear dimension must be tackled, at least in the long-term, for two reasons. The first is that the European defense project will not be achieved if the nuclear element is left out. The second is that the EU perception of a gap between the nuclear haves and have nots should be

Destroyer *Suffren*
during Exercise
Distant Drum.



U.S. Navy

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avoided. While a European deterrent—in whatever form it might take—is only a distant vision, early discussions on the subject among France and its allies could be useful. France has already initiated a bilateral dialogue on nuclear policies and doctrines with the British.

The Transatlantic Link

France remains committed to a strong transatlantic link for European security. Here again the domestic debate is not over the need for a transatlantic link, but over its nature and form. From the Cuban crisis to the Gulf War and more recently with NATO operations in Bosnia, France has amply demonstrated its reliability as a full partner in the transatlantic Alliance. And, of course, the French commitment to collective defense by NATO in event of a threat against the security of any one of its members remains intact.

But France will not rejoin the NATO integrated military structure. This must be taken by its allies as a fact of life, as opposed to an open issue. Indeed, the new strategic environment as well as peace operations reinforce the belief that this issue is becoming more and more irrelevant. (In this respect, events in Bosnia further confirm this position: decisionmaking on enforcement of the no-fly-zone—when Serb planes violated the U.N. resolution—completely bypassed the NATO integrated command structure.) Instead the Alliance's military structure should be adapted to new realities, especially the need to "politically fine-tune" peacekeeping.

It can be said that the institutional game is slowly shifting from a logic of competition to a logic of complementarity. In this respect, the Alliance's summit in January 1994 was a watershed. On this occasion, the United States gave concrete proof to its allies that it "meant business" when it talked of supporting ESDI. The process of reforming NATO structures and procedures has been initiated and is expected to lead to a radically transformed pattern of cooperation between NATO and WEU. The object is to establish an environment in which Europeans are able to use NATO forces and assets for themselves when the United States decides not to participate significantly in a military operation. As for NATO (or NATO-plus) peace operations, the French doctrine is that of full participation on a case-by-case basis.

France welcomed the major decisions reached at the summit. In particular, it supported the prospect of setting up a Combined Joint Task Force headquarters and is ready to play an important role in this effort although it is clear that this will imply adapting the Alliance military structure. And, from the French point of view, this is only a starting point: one may wonder, for instance, whether the current geographical organization of the military structure (as opposed to its budgetary organization) is the best way to deal with the new strategic landscape. One thing is clear: the more flexible the military structure, the easier it is for France to collaborate. As for the Partnership for Peace program, it is an important step toward the rapprochement between Alliance states and their former adversaries, as well as a useful

vehicle to prepare for multinational peacekeeping operations with those countries. Finally, France's part in co-chairing (with the United States) one of two new NATO groups dealing with counterproliferation shows a readiness to play an active role in dealing with potential new threats to the Alliance.

By the beginning of the 21st century, Europe should have multinational forces that can be employed—with pre-defined procedures—in various contexts: NATO, WEU, the United Nations, and perhaps even CSCE. Most multinational forces will probably exist only on paper, a permanent command structure but with units activated or committed only in time of crisis on an ad hoc basis. This network will include Euro-Corps. Fully operational by 1995, Euro-Corps proba-

bly should not be expanded beyond the four currently committed nations if it is to remain “usable” (it already is corps-sized, and its deployment as a full-fledged military

unit is subject to agreement by member states). The European forces network should also include a rapid action force with land, sea, and air components. Other units currently assigned to NATO should be dual-hatted wherever possible.

The existence of this network should guarantee the availability to Western political leaders of tailor-made contingency forces, whatever the political and military situation. Operating on an ad hoc basis, however, is not tantamount to improvisation: thus the need for permanent multinational planning as well as peacetime exercises.

Military Posture

How will the French military posture look at the turn of the century? By the year 2000, the army will probably be comprised of about 225,000 men in eight divisions: three or four heavy divisions; a four-division *Force*

Armor maneuvering during Desert Shield.



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d'action rapide (FAR); a division and a brigade with Euro-Corps. Modernization efforts will include *Leclerc* main battle tanks, *Rafale* aircraft, the *Charles-de-Gaulle* nuclear-powered carrier, and Tiger and NH-90 helicopters. The navy will have approximately one hundred ships, including sixty high sea vessels; and the air force will have about twenty combat squadrons with about 380 aircraft.

Nuclear forces will have at least two components: one sea-based which will continue to be the core of deterrent forces (four new-generation nuclear-fueled ballistic missile submarines) and one probably air-based or perhaps land-based. France is fully committed to the comprehensive test ban treaty, but nuclear deterrence remains a national priority.

The political priority placed on intelligence, space, and recently on power projection will bear fruit by 2000. But current major programs are a heavy drain on the defense budget because of their simultaneity. For France in the 21st century most major programs will probably take place in a European framework.

Reconciling the European priority with national autonomy is the major task of developing France's defense for the next century. This task will be made easier as the vital interests of EU members become more and more intertwined.

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