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BACKGROUND DOSSIER 2 march 2026

ADDRESS ON FRENCH NUCLEAR DETERRENCE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC

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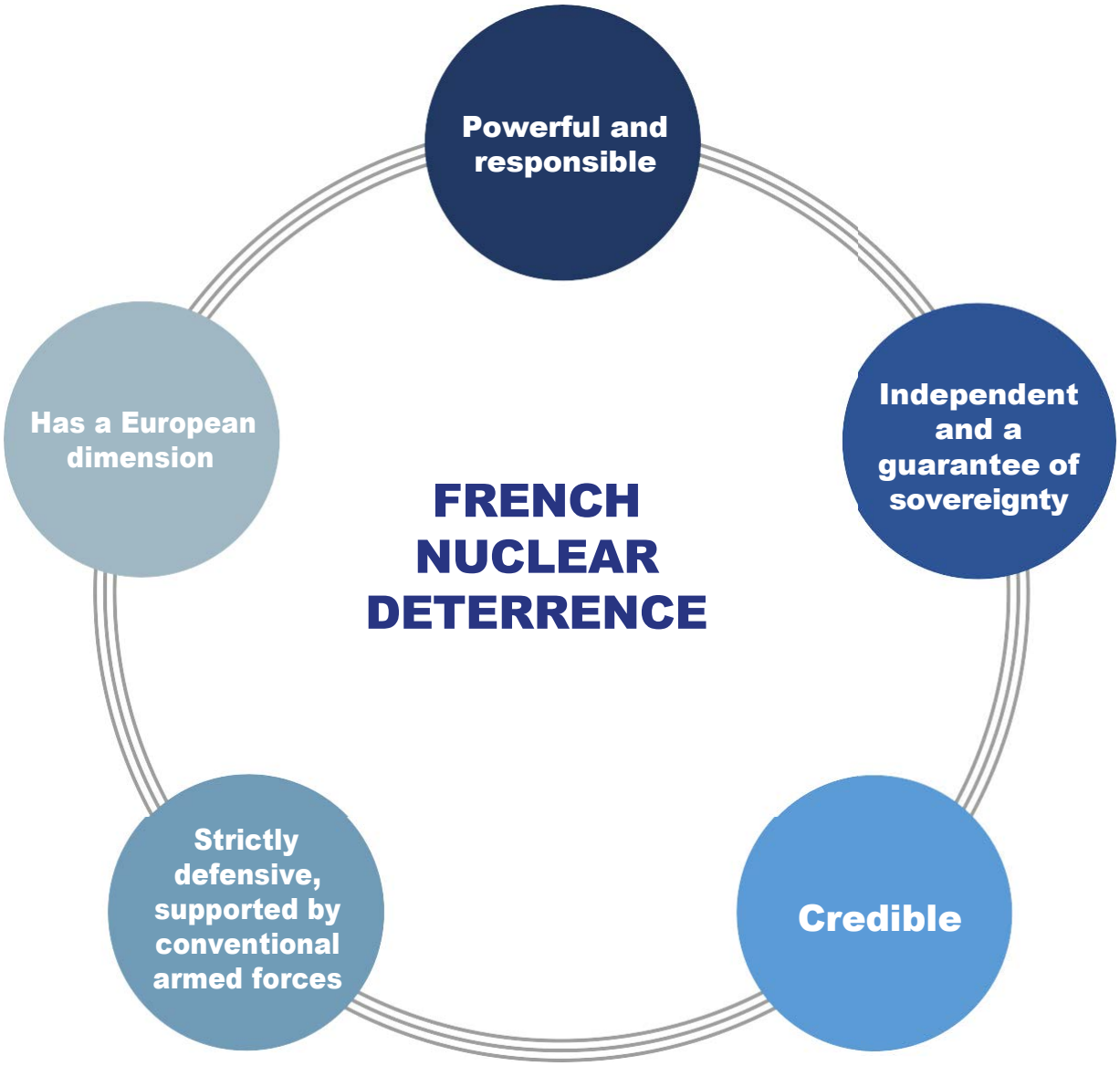
Powerful and responsible
Independent and a guarantee of sovereignty
Credible
Strictly defensive, supported by conventional armed forces
Has a European dimension
FRENCH NUCLEAR DETERRENCE

INTRODUCTION

For more than sixty years, nuclear deterrence has been the cornerstone of our defence strategy.

Initially formalised by General de Gaulle in his speech delivered on 3 November 1959 at the *École Militaire*, French nuclear doctrine has evolved incrementally over time. It has been clarified and adapted through successive addresses by the Presidents of the Fifth Republic.

Each French President has taken decisions that have shaped the organisation and capabilities of the nuclear forces. Adopted within the Council for Nuclear Armament (CAN), a dedicated formation of the Defence and National Security Council, these decisions preserve the fundamental nature and coherence of deterrence, while adapting it to the evolving strategic context, from the Cold War, to the era of nuclear proliferation and, today, to the return of war on European soil.

Despite changes in the strategic environment, French nuclear deterrence continues to be defined by five key characteristics that ensure it remains fully adapted:

- **Powerful and responsible;**
- **Independent and a guarantee of sovereignty;**
- **Credible;**
- **Strictly defensive, supported by conventional armed forces;**
- **Has a European dimension.**

On 11 September 1966, aboard the command cruiser De Grasse, General de Gaulle gave the order authorising the Betelgeuse nuclear test at Mururoa (French Polynesia), the first nuclear detonation conducted from a balloon.

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1. POWERFUL AND RESPONSIBLE

The Power of Nuclear Weapons

The very nature of nuclear weapons, with their unparalleled power and effects, renders them **unique and without equivalent among conventional weapons**. These inherent characteristics enable nuclear weapons to inflict harm that would be absolutely inacceptable and totally disproportionate to any potential gain an adversary might pursue. The certainty of such damage, when integrated into an aggressor's calculations, ultimately compels them to abandon the aggression.

For these reasons, France considers nuclear weapons to be inherently **strategic in dimension**. Any use of such weapons would irrevocably and fundamentally change the nature of a conflict. Nuclear deterrence is therefore unique and necessarily distinct from conventional military operations or from other forms of deterrence, such as diplomatic measures or economic sanctions.

France believes that nuclear weapons must remain instruments of deterrence, serving the sole purpose of preventing war. **They are not conceived as tactical weapons,** nor as instruments of intimidation, coercion or destabilisation.

In structuring its strike force so as to influence the calculations of any potential adversary, France has chosen to maintain **its arsenal at a level of strict sufficiency.** It does not, therefore, seek to achieve parity with the other nuclear-weapon states.

Our nuclear arsenal is therefore inherently adaptable, while remaining sufficient to respond to all possible threats, including advances in adversary defence capabilities. **This principle of sufficiency requires France to maintain high-performance weapons systems at all times**. The technological superiority of our ballistic and air-launched missiles must ensure their sustained ability to penetrate all enemy defences and inflict unacceptable harm.

Setting an example in disarmament and non-proliferation

France pursues a **progressive and pragmatic approach to disarmament and strictly complies with its international commitments**. It supports the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), regarded as the cornerstone of international security. In accordance with Article VI of the Treaty, France promotes disarmament efforts consistent with the principle of undiminished security for all.

Successful launch of an M51 strategic ballistic missile from the nuclear ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) Le Téméraire, *Audierne Bay, 12 June 2020.*

© Mélanie Denniel

A nuclear ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) departing from Brest, 12 May 2021.

Concrete actions undertaken by France as part of its commitment to disarmament include:

- **reducing its arsenal in 2008 to fewer than 300 nuclear warheads** – half the maximum number possessed by France during the Cold War – **and maintaining its nuclear forces at the lowest level** having regard to the international strategic environment;
- **irreversibly dismantling its facilities for the production of fissile materials for weapons, (uranium and plutonium)**. France supports the initiation of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons (Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty - FMCT) within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament;
- **ceasing nuclear testing and irreversibly dismantling its testing facilities**. France was the first nuclear-weapon state, together with the United Kingdom, to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996 and to ratify it in 1998. It calls for the Treaty's entry into force and universal adherence, while providing financial, political and technical support for the treaty organisation (CTBTO);
- **contributing to the reduction of strategic risks** through unilateral measures and multilateral talks, particularly within the framework of the "P5" process, with the aim of limiting the risks of misunderstanding and escalation;
- **providing negative security assurances** to more than one hundred non-nuclear-weapon states that comply with their non-proliferation obligations. France supports a regional approach and is party to most protocols to the treaties establishing Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones (NWFZs);
- **engaging in discussions on the technical challenges associated with the verification of nuclear disarmament** and pursuing dialogue with both nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states;
- **demonstrating transparency** regarding the doctrine and composition of its nuclear forces. France calls for further transparency measures by other nuclear-weapon states.

France also supports the other pillars of the NPT, namely efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The success of the Treaty's Review Conference, to be held in New York from 27 April 2026, is therefore of vital importance to international strategic stability.

2. INDEPENDENT AND A GUARANTEE OF SOVEREIGNTY

©Alex Paringaux

The Rafale is capable of conducting the full range of missions assigned to a multirole combat aircraft: nuclear deterrence, penetration and all-weather ground attack, maritime strike, air defence and air superiority…

France's nuclear deterrence is independent, serving as a guarantee of the Nation's sovereignty and its freedom of judgment, decision and action.

Independent Capabilities

To ensure the autonomy of its deterrent, France must rely on independent capabilities. **This principle of autonomy applies first and foremost to nuclear warheads**, for which the Military Applications Directorate (DAM) of the French Atomic Energy and Alternative Energies Commission (CEA) is responsible for securing the necessary raw materials. Fissile materials, including uranium and plutonium, are recycled from existing stockpiles.

Tritium, a gas essential for nuclear weapons, is a strategic material of a particular nature, as half of the stock radioactively decays every twelve years. A national tritium programme has therefore been initiated by decision of the President of the Republic to sustain its production. The CEA's DAM is also responsible for the design and manufacture of nuclear weapons.

In this regard, the modernisation and renewal of nuclear warheads draws on more than seventy years of knowledge and expertise developed within CEA. The DAM's centres have all the resources necessary for the maintenance of weapons in service and the development of next-generation nuclear warheads, validated through simulation.

The principle of autonomy also applies to the missiles that carry nuclear warheads and to the delivery systems that serve to reach the launch site:

- Nuclear ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) equipped with the M51.3 missile, which has recently entered operational service with the sea-based component;
- The Rafale-MRTT combination, which extends the operational range and enables access to the ASMPA-R missile firing point for the airborne component. The French Defence Procurement and Technology Agency (DGA) oversees the production of these weapons systems, ensuring sovereign control over the capabilities of France's nuclear forces.

These forces also rely on dedicated platforms, including the Île Longue operational base, nuclear air bases, and the Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier, to protect and implement their capabilities in complete security. **Command and control (C2)** is supported by hardened operations centres and

sovereign, secure and redundant communications systems, ensuring that orders can be transmitted and received.

To sustain this autonomy of capabilities, DGA has implemented a strategy to support and strengthen France's Defence Industrial and Technological Base (DITB). It ensures that the necessary dynamism and agility are maintained to guarantee an effective industrial fabric.

No Shared Decision-Making

French nuclear deterrence is not shared at any level, in particular with regard to the authority to decide on the use of nuclear weapons. The President of the Republic alone has authority to engage the nuclear forces and, more broadly, to determine the doctrine and scale of France's national capabilities. The very nature and the irreplaceable role of nuclear weapons confer upon him a unique responsibility, underpinned by the legitimacy derived from his direct election by the people of France.

This decision-making autonomy cannot be called into question under any circumstances, including in the context of the European dimension of France's deterrent. While the interests of allies may be taken into account in the President's decisions, those decisions will always remain sovereign and based on an assessment of the Nation's vital interests.

Freedom of Judgment, Speech and Action

Deterrence is a guarantee of freedom of judgment, speech and action for France. By protecting the Nation's vital interests, deterrence denies any adversary the prospect of successful escalation, intimidation or blackmail. The capabilities of France's nuclear forces preserve this freedom of action, including in the most complex or unforeseen circumstances, by offering a range of credible options.

@Kevin Auger/ Marine nationale/ Défense

The French carrier strike group (GAN – Groupe aéronaval) provides naval superiority, power projection and autonomous situational awareness, and is capable of operating in complex strategic environments.

3. **CREDIBLE**

Three levels of credibility underpin nuclear deterrence: political; operational; and scientific, technological and industrial.

Political Credibility

The political credibility of deterrence is based on the unique position held by the President of the Republic within the institutions of the Fifth Republic. He plays a central role in all related decision-making:

- **He determines the doctrine and its intended effects, as well as the scale of the nuclear forces,** thereby ensuring the overall coherence of the deterrent;
- Based on an independent assessment of the threat and his evaluation of the interests at stake, the President may adjust – **openly or covertly – the alert status of all or part of France's nuclear forces**;
- Lastly, only the President of the Republic, directly elected by the people, has the authority to order the engagement of nuclear forces.

The political credibility of deterrence is also underpinned by unwavering resolve, **expressed in particular in the addresses delivered by the successive Presidents of the Republic**. It is further grounded in the nation's sustained efforts to develop and maintain credible nuclear forces. The successive multi-year Defence Spending Laws (LPMs), adopted by Parliament, have consistently reflected this political determination, particularly through the resources allocated to deterrence.

This credibility is further based on measures designed to ensure **that the President of the Republic has nuclear deterrence capabilities at his disposal in all circumstances**. Entrusted to the Prime Minister, who is accountable to the Head of State, the mission known as "governmental control", as provided for in the French Defence Code, is exercised in three inseparable and complementary areas: the integrity of nuclear deterrence capabilities, compliance in the use of nuclear forces, and the engagement of those forces.

At all times and in all places, the President of the Republic has the assurance that nuclear forces are protected, may be deployed only in accordance with his directives, and that he alone has authority to give the final order to engage them.

Operational Credibility

The second level of credibility of France's nuclear forces is ensured by their **permanent readiness to**

The Clemenceau 25 *mission aimed to strengthen cooperation with France's allies and partners and to contribute to national and international operations in the Mediterranean Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific.*

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A Phénix Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) of the 31st Air Refuelling and Strategic Transport Wing (EARTS) and two Rafale Bs of the 4th Fighter Wing fly over the Grand Est region on 14 July 2024.

be deployed under all circumstances, and by the operational excellence of their two highly complementary components.

Operational credibility primarily requires that the **force posture determined by the President of the Republic be permanently maintained**. As a binding operational requirement for both components, the nuclear force posture must be maintained at all times.

This posture may be adapted, either overtly or discreetly, depending on the strategic context, thereby providing a flexible means of demonstrating resolve and preserving the political authority's freedom of action.

Whatever the circumstances, the operational readiness of the nuclear forces has remained uninterrupted since 1964 for the Strategic Air Forces (FAS) and since 1972 for the Strategic Oceanic Force (FOST).

The permanent deployment of at least one nuclear ballistic missile submarine at sea guarantees France's second-strike capability. This permanence of the deterrent is further ensured by the Strategic Air Forces and by all the systems that enable the President of the Republic to transmit his orders to the nuclear forces. As such, **the assured and continuous ability to launch a nuclear strike is essential to the credibility of French deterrence**.

Operational credibility is also demonstrated by the permanent readiness of two components with highly complementary characteristics: invulnerability and stealth for the Ocean-based Nuclear Component (CNO) and demonstrativeness and reversibility for the Airborne Nuclear Component (CNA).

France's ocean-based nuclear forces (CNO) are grouped within the **Strategic Oceanic Force (FOST).** They are built around a squadron of four Le Triomphant-class ballistic missile submarines, based at Île Longue. These submarines are equipped with M51 intercontinental ballistic missiles, with a range of approximately 10,000 kilometres. Each M51 can carry multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs). In autumn 2025, the M51.3 entered operational service, armed with the TNO-2 thermonuclear warhead, designed and validated through advanced simulation capabilities.

At all times, at least one armed ballistic missile submarine remains on deterrent patrol. Its dispersal in the ocean depths, mobility, endurance and exceptional stealth ensure its operational effectiveness. This continuous presence guarantees France's second-strike capability and reinforces the credibility of its response in the event of a surprise attack. Within a very short timeframe, two additional submarines can deploy at sea, significantly increasing strike capacity. The fourth submarine is in long-term maintenance, undergoing major refit.

The airborne nuclear component (CNA) comprises two forces: the Strategic Air Forces (FAS), a permanent force under the authority of the French Air and Space Force (FASF), and the Naval Nuclear Aviation Force (FANu), a contingency force under the authority of the French Navy. The FAS ensure continuous deterrence by operating from nuclear air bases (BAVN) at Saint-Dizier (north-eastern France), Istres (southern France) and Avord (central France). They field two squadrons of more than twenty two-seat Rafale aircraft, which can be armed with the ASMPA-R supersonic nuclear air-to-surface missile (Air-Sol Moyenne Portée Amélioré – Rénové). The missile is ramjet-powered and carries the Airborne Nuclear Warhead (TNA), whose performance is guaranteed through simulation.

The Rafale aircraft of the FAS are supported by a fleet of MRTT tanker aircraft, which extend their strategic reach. FAS units can also deploy to other air bases. The Naval Nuclear Aviation Force (FANu), a contingency force activated by decision of the President of the Republic, deploys Rafale Marine aircraft capable of carrying the ASMPA-R nuclear missile from the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle. It may operate autonomously or in support of a strike carried out by the Strategic Air Forces.

In addition to the strike capability and signalling effect associated with the simultaneous patrol of three ballistic missile submarines, the airborne nuclear component (CNA) is characterised by specific graduated readiness measures: protection of aircraft to ensure their availability; deployment of Rafale aircraft to nuclear air bases; deployment of the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle; arming of the Rafale with ASMPA-R missiles; potential redeployment; issuance of the order to take off; and the formation of a strike package that remains reversible until the President of the Republic authorises the use of nuclear weapons.

Thus, **the operational complementarity of the two**

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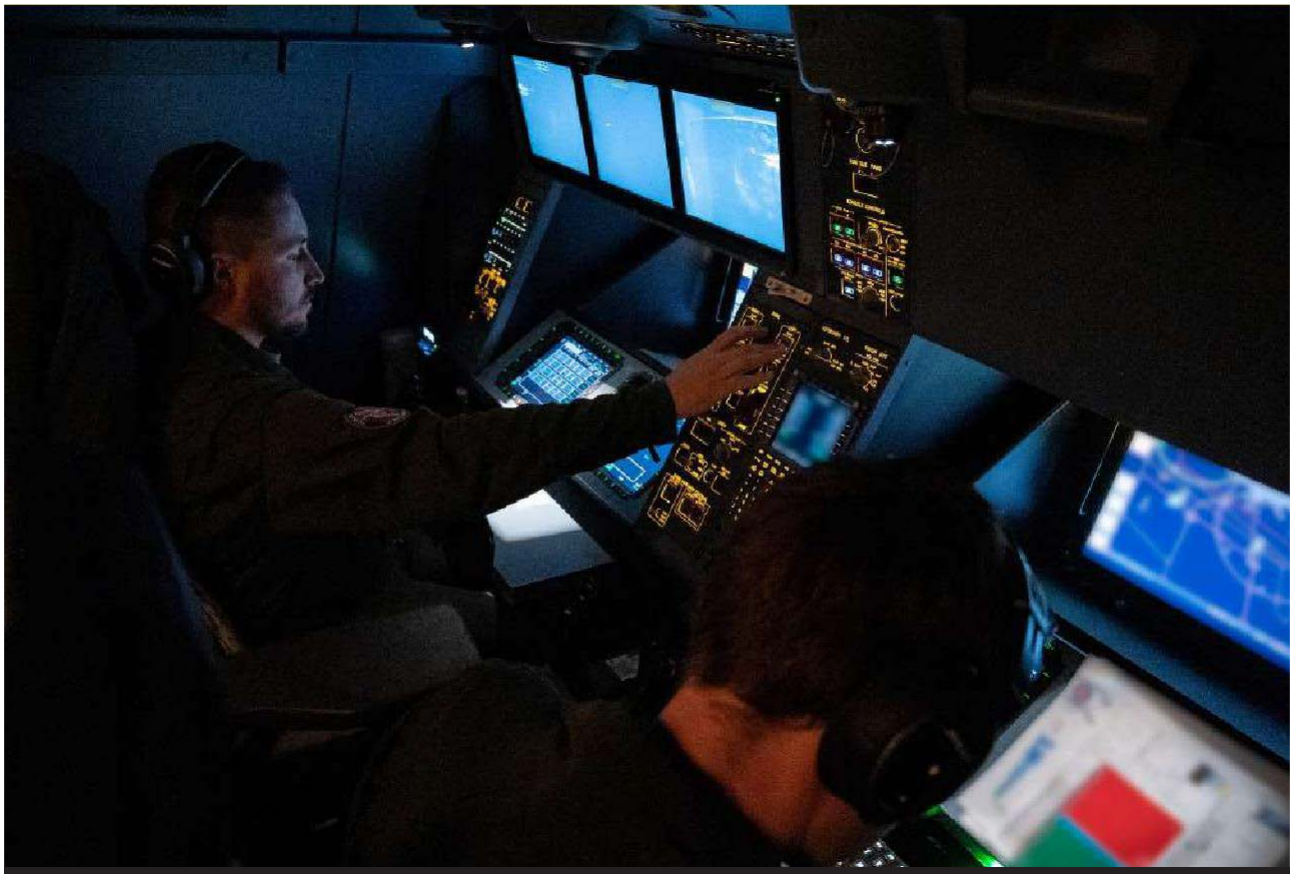
Equipped with multi-role weapons systems, the Rafale is an omnirole combat aircraft.



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An A330 MRTT Phénix during Operation Poker, an exercise designed to simulate the nuclear raid of the permanent airborne nuclear component (CAN).

components provides the French president with a diverse range of courses of action, which may be used to direct the deterrence dialogue with any potential adversary.

The operational excellence of the crews of both components is also fully demonstrated. The crews of France's four SSBNs began on conventionally armed nuclear attack submarines (SSNs), where they operated alongside allies and in environments observed by potential adversaries, thereby enabling their level of combat readiness to be assessed.

Regularly engaged in overseas operations, the crews of the FAS and FANu have likewise demonstrated their expertise. They also participate in numerous inter-allied exercises.

Finally, the credibility of the nuclear forces is reinforced by the **deliberate decision to conduct regular, operational deployments of nuclear weapon systems**. Our SSBNs at sea systematically carry their full load of nuclear missiles. Our Rafale aircraft are regularly equipped on the ground with operational ASMPA-R missiles. To ensure there is no doubt concerning our forces' ability to use their missiles, operational missile launches with non-explosive warheads are carried out at regular intervals. The recent successes of the M51.3 and ASMPA-R launches demonstrate the operational excellence of the forces.

Scientific, Technological and Industrial Credibility

France possesses scientific, industrial and technological credibility that is largely underpinned by a world-class defence industrial and technological base: the arms industry and related ecosystem, engineering, research and development, fundamental research, universities and schools. Today, these assets provide France with the best technological choices to ensure that next-generation nuclear missiles will retain their advantage over future defence systems.

Defence systems are modelled and prospectively assessed, and targeted investments in the most critical areas help to mitigate the risk of future technological surprise.

Within this ecosystem, the most advanced technologies are concentrated in nuclear weapons systems. **The missiles incorporate the technical characteristics required to ensure their effectiveness against defences**: speed, manoeuvrability, stealth, jamming and spoofing capabilities across varied trajectories.

Applied to the weapons systems of both components, these principles render any prospect of a comprehensive technological shield illusory. In this domain, the offence retains the advantage. The modes of defence penetration are distinct and highly complementary: a ballistic trajectory through space for the M51 missile, and a manoeuvring cruise flight profile – from high altitude to very low altitude – for the ASMPA-R.

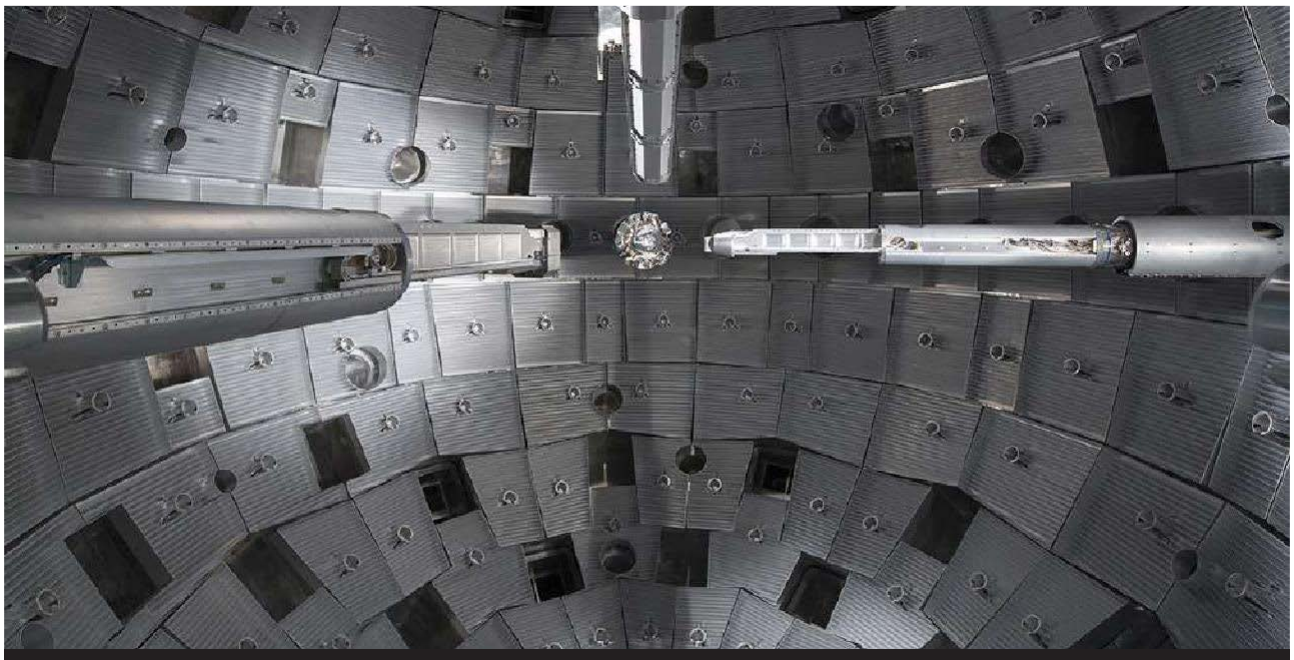
Scientific, technological and industrial credibility is also reflected in the investments provided for under the Defence Spending Law (LPM), aimed at modernising and renewing capabilities by 2035. The modernisation of missiles for both components has recently been completed, with the M51.3 and ASMPA-R entering operational service.

Work has begun on replacing the carriers and missiles for both components by 2035: SNLE3G and M51.4, Rafale F5 and ASN4G.

Finally, the technical credibility and long-term sustainability of French nuclear deterrence are ensured by the **Simulation programme, which will mark its 30th anniversary at CEA in 2026**. Since the cessation of nuclear testing in 1996, the safety and reliability of nuclear weapons have been guaranteed through this programme.

The programme is based on three pillars: physical modelling, digital simulation and experimental validation, implemented by highly qualified scientific and technical teams. Advances in physical modelling, the acquisition of increasingly precise data and, more broadly, progress in simulation technologies strengthen the capacity to design, optimise and certify nuclear weapons without recourse to further nuclear testing.

The Simulation programme relies in particular on the Laser Mégajoule (LMJ), the EPURE radiographic facility and high-performance computing (HPC) resources. Its credibility is reinforced by the international recognition of the scientific excellence and expertise of the teams involved.



The Laser Mégajoule (LMJ) is a high-energy research facility designed to reproduce the extreme temperature and pressure conditions found in nuclear weapons and in stellar cores.

4. STRICTLY DEFENSIVE, SUPPORTED BY CONVENTIONAL FORCES

Strictly Defensive

Nuclear deterrence is **strictly defensive in nature**. Its purpose is to protect France against any aggression, or threat of aggression, by a state targeting the Nation's vital interests, wherever and in whatever form it may occur.

France therefore envisages the use of nuclear weapons **only in extreme circumstances of self-defence, and under no circumstances for purposes of conquest, aggression, coercion or the pursuit of military advantage**. France threatens no one, and its deterrent is not directed against any State. It maintains that nuclear weapons must remain instruments of deterrence, whose sole purpose is to prevent war, and that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought".

French doctrine deliberately maintains **ambiguity regarding the scope of the Nation's vital interests**, and consequently regarding the precise circumstances in which the use of nuclear weapons might be considered. This ambiguity is intended to complicate the calculations of any potential aggressor and to constrain attempts to circumvent deterrence.

Nuclear warning to re-establish deterrence

Should a state engage in hostile action against France, having misjudged the scope of its vital interests, **a nuclear strike could be carried out as a warning**. Its purpose would be to demonstrate unequivocally to the aggressor that the nature of the conflict has fundamentally changed, and to restore deterrence by compelling the cessation of aggression against France.

Such a nuclear warning is **optional and non-repeatable**. **Only one strike could be envisaged**. It would be strategic in nature and **would not, under any circumstances, be intended to secure military superiority over an adversary**.

Conventional armed forces in support of nuclear forces

The model of the French armed forces is based on a **coherent structure of mutual support between nuclear and conventional armed forces**.

When the Nation's vital interests are liable to be threatened, conventional military manoeuvres may also contribute to deterrence. The posture of the nuclear forces, which can be adjusted to demonstrate France's resolve, may be coordinated with the employment of conventional forces in order to prevent uncontrolled escalation.

Nuclear forces fulfil a unique and irreplaceable role by signalling that the nature of a conflict could change should France's vital interests be threatened. At the same time, **conventional forces enable France to respond to threats and acts of aggression by raising the threshold at which such actions might affect its vital interests**. In doing so, they prevent attempts to circumvent nuclear deterrence below that threshold.

The President of the Republic clarified this function in his 2020 address on nuclear deterrence at the *École de guerre*: "*Robust conventional forces help guard against strategic surprise and the creation of a fait accompli, while serving to test an adversary's resolve at the earliest stage, by compelling it to reveal its true intentions*."

More specifically, in order to secure airspace and ensure the capacity for self-defence, **expanded air defence and deep strike capabilities have become increasingly necessary in Europe** since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. Initiatives are therefore underway to develop capabilities in response to these requirements:

- the French Joint Early Warning for a European Lookout (JEWEL) initiative, in order to detect and, if necessary, contribute to the interception of conventional ballistic missiles;
- the European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI), launched by Germany for the interception of conventional ballistic threats;
- the French European Long-Range Strike Approach (ELSA), an initiative aimed at strengthening the conventional strike capabilities of European armed forces.

By contributing to these initiatives and strengthening the capabilities that support its nuclear forces, **France preserves the overall coherence of its military model**. It seeks to confine potential adversarial aggression to the lowest possible level of intensity.

5. HAS A EUROPEAN DIMENSION

France's vital interests have a European dimension.

France's nuclear strategy was never conceived as an isolated measure intended to dissociate the country from the security of the European continent, but rather as a major contribution to it. The recognition that France's vital interests have a European dimension therefore does not constitute a departure from past policy, but reflects continuity with the principles that have underpinned its defence policy since the outset of the Fifth Republic.

French nuclear deterrence contributes to protecting the European continent

Since General de Gaulle, all the Presidents of the Fifth Republic have recognised the interdependence between the security of France and that of the European continent – an interdependence further strengthened by the deepening of European integration, closer solidarity and the resulting shared destiny.

Two conclusions follow for France's deterrence strategy:

- First, by its very existence, French nuclear deterrence constitutes a decisive factor in European security. The 1972 White Paper on Defence emphasised that "*France's strategy is a stable and decisive factor in European security*". In 2008, President Sarkozy likewise stated that French nuclear forces, by their very existence, are a key component of European security;

- Second, France does not regard its vital interests as being strictly confined to its national territory, but considers that they extend to Europe as a whole. The 1972 White Paper made this explicit: "*While French deterrence is reserved for the protection of our vital interests, the limits of these interests are necessarily vague [...] France exists within a network of interests that extends beyond its borders. It is not isolated.*" Successive Presidents have reaffirmed and progressively strengthened this European dimension of France's vital interests.

In his address delivered at the *Ecole de Guerre* on 7 February 2020, the President of the Republic again reaffirmed both:

- The European dimension of France's vital interests;

- The specific deterrent role played by our nuclear forces, which reinforce the security of Europe by their very existence and, in this respect, have a genuine European dimension.

In that address, the President also proposed initiating a high-level strategic dialogue with interested European partners on the role of French nuclear deterrence in European security. The purpose of this dialogue was to foster a shared strategic culture among Europeans, for example by associating interested partners in exercises conducted by France's nuclear deterrent forces.

In his address of 5 March 2025, the President announced his intention to open a strategic debate on the protection of European allies through France's deterrent. He stated: "*France's nuclear deterrent protects the Nation. It is comprehensive, sovereign and entirely French. Since 1964, it has explicitly contributed to the preservation of peace and security in Europe. Thus, in response to the historic call from the future German Chancellor, I have therefore decided to open a strategic debate on the protection of our allies on the European continent through our deterrent. Whatever the circumstances, the decision has always been and will remain in the hands of the President of the Republic, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces*".

On 13 May 2025, the President set out three conditions for this protection: France will not finance the security of others; the arrangements discussed must not detract from its own requirements; and the final decision will always remain with the President of the Republic, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.

Any implementation of this European dimension will therefore seek to reconcile the imperative of maintaining the credibility of deterrence with the requirements of European security.

Relations with the United Kingdom: a consolidating nuclear core for Europe

The bilateral relationship between Europe's only two nuclear-armed states continues to deepen. It is structured around:

- the **1995 Chequers Declaration**, in which France and the United Kingdom stated that the vital interests of one of the two countries could not be threatened without the vital interests of the other equally being at risk;

- the **Lancaster House Treaties** of 2010, notably the Teutates Treaty, which enable France and the United Kingdom to share certain technologies for

the conduct of experiments, while retaining full sovereignty. By pooling their resources, the two countries share the technological infrastructure, including radiographic equipment and detectors, required for the experiments that each conducts independently. The scientific and technical exchanges undertaken within this framework contribute to the credibility of the Simulation programme by drawing on the recognised expertise of the teams involved and the capabilities of the experimental facilities employed;

- The **Northwood Declaration** of July 2025, which affirms that, **while French and British nuclear forces are independent**, they can be coordinated, and sends a message of reassurance to European partners by stating **that there can be no extreme threat to Europe that would not prompt a response from both nations**. The Franco-British Nuclear Steering Group, established under the Declaration, met for the first time on 10 December 2025. It provides political guidance and coordinates bilateral cooperation on nuclear policy, capabilities and operations.

Complementarity of the European dimension of French deterrence with NATO deterrence

The independent French and British strategic nuclear forces play "a deterrent role of their own contributing to the overall strengthening of the deterrence of the Alliance" (Ottawa Declaration, 1974). As "separate centres of decision-making, [they] contribute to deterrence by complicating the calculations of potential adversaries" (Warsaw Summit communiqué, 2016).

Unlike the United States and the United Kingdom, France does not participate in NATO's nuclear planning mechanisms. This does not, however, **prevent it from demonstrating unwavering solidarity with its Allies, contributing to nuclear policy discussions**, and participating in the strategic acculturation of its partners.

The European dimension of French nuclear deterrence is **not intended to replace the extended deterrence** practised within the Alliance; **it complements it** in order to maximise the overall deterrent effect. The coexistence of these two approaches at the European level thus contributes to further complicating the calculations of any potential aggressor.

THE FRENCH MINISTRY FOR THE ARMED FORCES AND VETERANS

COMMITTED TO THE DEFENCE OF FRANCE AND THE FRENCH PEOPLE

At all times, 24 hours a day, some 30,000 military personnel safeguard French citizens at home and abroad: between 6,000 and 10,000 deployed on national territory and nearly 20,000 positioned worldwide.

PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF DEFENCE

in 2025

Nearly 200,000 military personnel and 64,000 civilian staff.
A total of 264,000 men and women, 23% of whom are women.
27,000 recruitments per year, including 4,700 civilian personnel.
44,400 operational reservists under contract.

A MAJOR ECONOMIC STAKEHOLDER

in 2025

€50.5 billion, including €10.6 billion for military equipment.
220,000 jobs generated by the Defence Industrial and Technological Base (DITB).
26,000 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and mid-sized companies under contract with the Ministry for the Armed Forces and Veterans.

FORWARD-LOOKING

in 2025

€9 billion invested in Research and Development, including €1.2 billion dedicated to innovation.

THE LEADING STATE ACTOR IN NATIONAL REMEMBRANCE

290 national necropolises, 10 high places of national remembrance, 2,200 military cemeteries, around 1,000 burial sites in 80 countries, sites of commemoration and remembrance.

2ND LEADING STATE ACTOR IN CULTURE

17 museums, 160 listed monuments, 3 million visitors per year.
3 million photographs and 21,000 films covering four centuries of history.
200 films and series supported each year.

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