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État-major des armées

Capstone Concept for Military Operations

**Joint Concept
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No. 130/DEF/CICDE/NP as of 12 September 2013



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CAPSTONE CONCEPT FOR MILITARY OPERATIONS

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Letter of Promulgation

Paris, 12/05/2013
No. 130/DEF/CICDE/NP

OBJECT: Capstone Concept for Military Operations.

REFERENCE: *The French White Paper on National Defence and Security*, April 2013.

SUPERSEDED DOCUMENT: *Capstone Concept for the Employment of Armed Forces*, no. 004/DEF/CICDE/NP as of 11 January 2010.

The publication of the French White Paper on Defence and National Security in April 2013 calls for an updated *Capstone Concept for Military Operations (CCMO)*. The French Armed Forces now have to translate the directives within the new White Paper into the tangible requirements of military missions, principles of action, and axes of effort.

The CCMO defines the framework by which the French Armed Forces will have to operate nowadays. To be able to face their new challenges with constrained resources, this document underlines the need for operational innovation and bases the utilization of armed forces on a dynamic synergy of efforts.

The CCMO is the capstone document of our doctrinal architecture. It is primarily addressed to the military in charge of preparing, developing, conducting and supporting the military operations. Within the French Ministry of Defence, it can also be used as a conceptual reference and doctrinal source of inspiration by the departments or directorates, which all contribute to the use of the Armed Forces.

More broadly and in compliance with the principle of “operational primacy” set by the minister, it is to be used as a reference document by all civilian and military staffs in order to enrich their thinking regarding the sense of their commitment to the military. It should therefore be widely disseminated.

Amiral Édouard GUILLAUD
Chief of Defence Staff



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Executive Summary

The *Capstone Concept for Military Operations (CCMO)*, a fundamental element of France's joint defence doctrine, is the military application of the LBDSN-2013 guidelines.

CCMO takes into account the new strategic framework and the evolution of the character of conflicts, which both lead the French Armed Forces to face new challenges:

- Mastering the operational tempo in its three dimensions: swiftness, synchronization, duration;
- Controlling the domains in their whole diversity, although ubiquity is out of reach;
- Winning the battle of perceptions, for if not new, this field of confrontation is increasingly important;
- Being effective while respecting the legal and ethical imperatives, when confronted to adversaries that could feel less constrained by such a framework;
- Interacting with partners not fully compliant with NATO standards;
- Innovating regarding the utilization of the Armed Forces (courses of action, doctrine, joint synergy, etc.).

To meet those challenges and enable the French Armed Forces to make the most of the means available to them, CCMO bases their action on a **dynamic synergy of efforts**, involving greater interaction between strategic functions, greater ability to shift effort between missions and between theatres, and increased flexibility in terms of organization, command and action.

To achieve this, it confirms the relevance of the **three traditional principles of military action**, while tailoring them to the realities of modern conflicts:

- Freedom of action, which means retaining both room for initiative and control of one's options;
- Concentration of efforts, which is not confined to a concentration of forces, but means combining complementary efforts;
- Economy of force, which must not lead to excessive caution, but to the allocation of the appropriate resources to the situation, for the best possible efficiency.

It also puts the stress on **five factors of operational superiority**:

- Agility, understood as the combination of initiative, responsiveness and adaptability;
- Combination of technological superiority and operational know-how, which enhance each other;
- Mastery of information, taking into account its growing flow;
- Ability to act in unconventional conditions, i.e. beyond the normal conditions of operating;
- Ability to cope with complex and changing operational environments, in order not only to adapt, but also to anticipate.

Finally, in a more targeted way, it defines **five major objectives**:

- Develop a sufficient level of autonomy in situational assessment, decision-making and operational action;
- Strengthen the Armed Forces' ability to operate with stakeholders of varying nature;
- Exert leverage within alliances and coalitions;
- Improve the integration of offensive and defensive cyber action within our operations;
- Increase subsidiarity and adaptability in terms of organization and command.

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Capstone Concept for Military Operations

The 2013 French White Paper on Defence and National Security (LBDSN-2013—*Livre blanc sur la défense et la sécurité nationale*) sets out France's ambition for her defence and security; it describes the evolutions of the strategic context in which the French Armed Forces will need to work over the next 15 years; and it infers the need to adapt the strategic priorities defined in the previous White Paper (LBDSN-2008). While acknowledging the pertinence of the concept of *national security*, it also restates, advocating greater convergence, the importance of coordinating the functions of *protection, deterrence, intervention, knowledge and anticipation, and prevention*. Finally it redefines France's military strategy, which it bases on a new Armed Forces model.

Such changes must necessarily be reflected in doctrine. Accordingly, the **Capstone Concept for Military Operations (CCMO)**, a fundamental element of France's joint defence doctrine, is the military application of the LBDSN-2013 guidelines.

In this respect, underlining the necessity for across-the-board operational innovation, it sets out the vision of the French Chief of Defence Staff (*CEMA—Chef d'état-major des armées*) and the resulting priority focus for the utilization of the Armed Forces. In particular, it introduces the concept of **dynamic synergy of efforts**, requiring a greater interaction between strategic functions¹, an increased ability to switch between missions and theatres and more flexibility in the areas of organization, command and action.

1. General Framework

LBDSN-2013 acknowledges the pertinence of the **national security** concept, prompting us to take into account the continuity of the threats and foreign and domestic risks liable to affect France's population, territory and interests: acts of aggression by another state against national territory, terrorist attacks, cyberattacks, attacks against scientific and technical potential, most serious forms of organized crime, major crises resulting from natural, health, technological, industrial or accidental risks and attacks on French nationals abroad.

It sets out five **strategic priorities** in order of importance:

- Protect the national territory and French nationals abroad, and guarantee the continuity of the Nation's essential functions;
- Guarantee the security of Europe and the North Atlantic space with our partners and allies;
- Stabilise Europe's near environment, with our partners and allies;
- Contribute to the stability of the Middle East and the Arabo-Persian Gulf;
- Contribute to peace in the world.

Finally, LBDSN-2013 reaffirms France's full participation to NATO and the complementary role of NATO and the European Union. It stresses the need to pursue the Alliance's transformation and strengthen the European Union's effectiveness and responsiveness in the framework of a comprehensive approach to external crises and operations.

11. Military Strategy

"The aim of the defence and national security strategy is to identify all threats and risks which could affect the nation's existence, particularly with regard to the protection of the population, the integrity of the Republic's territory and the permanence of its institutions, and determine how the public authorities must respond to them (...)." (Article L1111-1 of the French Defence Code—Code de la défense).

France's defence and national security strategy helps guarantee the nation's ability to decide its future in the interplay of freely consenting interdependencies. **Sovereignty** and **international legitimacy** are underpinning elements of this strategy.

¹ Translator's note: LBDSN-2013 restates the five strategic functions identified in 2008 – i.e. knowledge and anticipation, deterrence, protection, prevention and intervention.

Within the framework of this strategy, the Armed Forces' action will be shaped by three priorities: **protection**, **deterrence** and **intervention**, which mutually reinforce each other and are inseparable. They presuppose an ability to **know and anticipate** risks and threats, and that we can **prevent** at the earliest possible stage crises where our interests are at risk.

12. Armed Forces Model

Four guiding principles characterize the French armed forces model described in LBDSN-2013:

- **Strategic autonomy**, key to freedom to decide and act;
- **Consistency** between our armed forces model and predictable scenarios requiring engagement of our forces;
- **Differentiation of forces**, as a function of the missions they are called upon to carry out;
- **Pooling**, covering various aspects: at national level, pooling rare and critical capabilities at joint or interagency level and for different types of mission; and at international level, sharing major capabilities with our European partners, etc.

13. Diverse Scenarios

Operating in this strategic framework, in line with these aforementioned principles, the Armed Forces will have to deal with extremely diverse situations.

Different Types of Adversaries

Our forces may be engaged against state, non-state, military or non-military adversaries, or even, with regard to cyber threat, unidentified adversaries. Our forces could face a wide variety of strategies and courses of action: conventional military confrontation, terrorism, organized crime, activities on perception, cyberattacks, etc. Finally, some adversaries may be difficult to characterize in relation with the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC).

Multiple Partnerships

The Armed Forces will act in priority within the framework of NATO, the EU, defence agreements or ad hoc coalitions. They will develop bilateral partnerships, especially with Germany and the United Kingdom: the French-British partnership will take concrete shape once the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force reaches full operational capability. The Armed Forces will also work within an interagency framework, or, in certain circumstances, be engaged alongside military or non-military contingency partners.

Widening and Interweaving of Confrontation Domains

Two increasingly important intangible domains have been added to the classical physical ones of land, sea, air and space: cyberspace and perceptual battlegrounds. These physical and intangible domains, which already interact with each other, are likely to dovetail even further. The geographical dimension is no longer sufficient to characterize the notion of an area of operation: indeed we could face simultaneously a multiplicity of military and non-military activities, without any notion of physical boundaries (networks, flows, impact on national territory, etc.).

Operations of an Indeterminate Duration

Clashes may be triggered suddenly and spread swiftly. Development of information and communication technologies is likely to accelerate this tempo, given their possible use as a trigger, coordinating tool or instrument of influence.

The initial duration of engagements remains extremely hard to evaluate, particularly because some adversaries could adopt war-weariness or avoidance strategies in order to circumvent our conventional superiority and erode our determination. Moreover, crisis management is a complex process often calling for a sustained effort.

Strategic Decisions which are Harder to Implement Successfully

The character of warfare has already profoundly changed: the multifaceted, omnipresent and simultaneous nature of the threats blurs the notion of frontline and makes it difficult to determine a centre of gravity which has to be attacked to prevail. Eventually, to implement the strategic decision successfully, we must increasingly seek to synchronize various effects, which requires flexibility and a greater ability to coordinate at the joint, interagency and international levels.

14. Specificity of Military Action

The notion of national security is underpinned by a functional connection between defence forces and security forces. Indeed:

- Given the variety and interweaving of the threats, defence and security forces are naturally called on to collaborate.
- In the framework of a comprehensive approach, defence–security synergy is essential both prior to a crisis as well as for its resolution.
- As a result of globalization, security of the territory and population does not necessarily start at national borders; it begins beyond them.
- More particularly on national territory, defence, public and civil security forces complement and mutually reinforce each other's actions.

Nevertheless, from a legal perspective, security and defence remain two separate notions vis-à-vis the responsibilities involved and the missions undertaken in each area. Consequently, the military is liable to be engaged at any time and in any place, and has the specific task of fighting on behalf of the Nation, legitimately using lethal force against an adversary doing likewise.

Therefore, being complementary does not mean confusing missions, capabilities or courses of action, but ensuring synergy between respective skill sets to enhance overall effectiveness. Consequently, it is not the Armed Forces' role to encroach on the preserve of the state's other capabilities. Conversely, tasks falling to the Armed Forces cannot be carried out by other entities. The missions assigned to them and the resulting military status endorse this specificity.

15. Requirement for Legitimacy

Military effectiveness demands the combination of resources, will and legitimacy: insufficient resources or inadequate capabilities engender impotence; the absence of will results in pusillanimity, fickleness or inaction. Legitimacy is consubstantial to the rule of law. Consequently, legitimacy underpins the Armed Forces' action. Sustained by the Nation's support, it is conditional upon compliance with national and international laws, ethical standards and operational rigour.

Legality

Legal framework for the Armed Forces' actions:

- Article 35 of the French Constitution lays down the conditions required for the declaration of war and engagement of the Armed Forces abroad.
- The Law requires defence policy to respect alliances, treaties and international agreements (Article 1111-1 of the French Defence Code).
- The French Defence Code gives the Armed Forces their legislative and regulations framework.

The set words spoken whenever a command is taken up unambiguously recall the fact that any decision by a military authority has to be taken *“for the benefit of the service, in accordance with military regulations, in compliance with the laws and for the success of France's Armed Forces”*.

In addition, the Armed Forces' action is governed by engagement on international legal texts signed and ratified by France and her commitment to promote them. Compliance with the United Nations Charter, the UN Security

Council Resolutions, the Law of Armed Conflict and International Humanitarian Law thus contribute to underpinning the legitimacy of our military engagements.

From a legal perspective, the imperative of legitimacy rests both on an international and national basis.

Ethical Standards

As the Nation's defence arm, the Armed Forces have a particular ethical responsibility. They encapsulate France's values, which they must translate into their actions.

Rigour

Finally, legitimacy comes from the rigour of the military institution: competence of its members, exemplarity of their conduct, discipline and rigorous performance of their duties, organization and management. All these elements contribute to bolstering the nation's trust.

2. Armed Forces' Missions

"The defence policy aims to ensure France's territorial integrity and protect its population against armed aggression. It contributes to fight other threats jeopardizing national security. It ensures that alliances, treaties and international agreements are upheld and, in the framework of the current European Treaties, contributes to the Common European Security and Defence Policy (...)." (Article L1111-1 of the French Defence Code)

"France's Armed Forces are at the Nation's service. Their mission is to prepare and defend by force of arms the Homeland and Nation's highest interests." (Article L4111-1 of the French Defence Code)

21. Major Missions of the Armed Forces

The *Capstone Concept for Military Operations* spells out in military terms the missions set by the political authority for the Armed Forces: protection, deterrence and intervention (see above). Besides their responsibility for ensuring nuclear deterrence, the Armed Forces have the following three major missions.

Protecting the Nation Against any type of Military Threat

This involves guaranteeing:

- The security of national territory, airspace and maritime approaches in France and her overseas territories;
- The safety of French nationals and protection of our interests beyond our borders;
- The protection of our interests in space and cyberspace.

Involving the potential use of force, this mission falls within the overall context of the strategic function of *protection*, in which defence and security challenges overlap. Consequently it requires interagency coordination.

Moreover, the Armed Forces assist in fighting against non-military risks and threats which could threaten national security.

Using Coercion to Constrain a State Adversary's Political Will

This means, on the order of executive power, imposing our will on an adversary when a military response is required to defend our national interests or, within an alliance, the collective interest. It involves, right down to the lowest level, engaging the adversary in the physical domains while conducting actions in the virtual fields (cyberspace and perceptions).

To achieve this mission, the armed services have to ensure joint coordination at every operational level. It also requires interagency coordination. Finally, these missions are mostly conducted within an alliance or a coalition.

Contributing to International Stability by Acting on Flashpoints

The aim is to restore as early as possible or maintain in a given area the necessary security conditions that permit normal life. The Armed Forces can be involved by securing and carrying out control of vast expanses of land, airspace and maritime areas for a long duration. It can require the use of force. It must be conceived within a comprehensive approach embracing police, judicial, civil administration and development assistance, in addition to the military dimension.

The Armed Forces have to fulfil missions by permanent postures and deployments as well as by contingency engagements.

22. Permanent Postures and Deployments

These postures and deployments must not be considered separately, but linked to contingency engagements as a way to anticipate, facilitate or even determine outcomes.

There are two permanent postures—nuclear deterrence and security—which, if needed, may be reinforced. Moreover, France permanently maintains prepositioned troops and quick reaction forces on alert ready to intervene in a national or multinational framework.

Permanent Nuclear Deterrence Posture

Based on two components, seaborne and airborne, nuclear deterrence is the ultimate guarantee of France's defence, protection and independence. It protects her from any state-originated aggression which might threaten her vital interests, regardless of its form and origin.

The French nuclear deterrence doctrine imposes a principle of permanence and requires credibility, responsiveness and safety. The permanent nuclear deterrence posture is based firstly on the actual operational readiness of the naval and air components to respond to the orders of the President of the Republic, Commander in chief of the Armed Forces, but also necessitates a comprehensive strategy ensuring the mandatory intelligence for an independent assessment of the situation, transmissions to the nuclear forces as well as safety and protection of the stationed or deployed assets.

Permanent Security Posture

This encompasses all the permanent measures taken on the ground, at sea, in the air and in cyberspace to make the country, under any circumstances, safe even from a limited aggression against its territory, population or interests. Within this framework, the missions entrusted to the Armed Forces include the in-depth surveillance and control of the country and its approaches. They also draw on a permanent intervention capability.

The Armed Forces are also called on for civil support missions—to support the public, sovereignty missions and those contributing to domestic and civil security. In particular, they have a key role in governmental action at sea, in the air (including surveillance and active measures). They ensure a permanent situational awareness in the air, at sea and in space required for the security of France and her approaches, liaising with other government agencies.

As part of the permanent security posture, cyberdefence will be a particular area of focus, given the development of the threat and its potential consequences.

Prepositioned Forces

France's Armed Forces (including sovereignty², presence and deployed forces) contribute permanently and directly to the strategic functions of:

- *Knowledge and anticipation*, through their presence in areas of interest;
- *Protection*, particularly of French nationals abroad, lines of communication and national economic interests;

² Translator's note: "sovereignty forces" or *forces de souveraineté* are forces stationed in overseas French territories while "force of presence" or *force de présence* are forces stationed in allied countries.

- *Prevention*, through their ability to detect flashpoints as early as possible and take the initial measures to stem their expansion;
- *Intervention*, through their ability to prepare and support the deployed forces' engagement and join their action.

Characterized by their embedded jointness, these forces contribute to the overall responsiveness of France's military capabilities.

Immediate Response Capabilities

The strategic context also makes it of paramount importance to have a permanent autonomous immediate crisis response capability. This is achieved by keeping a joint national emergency response force on a high readiness status.

23. Contingency Engagements

Under some circumstances, the Armed Forces may be engaged:

- For a long duration, in crisis management operations, which can take very different forms: peace keeping or peace restoration, interposition, securing fragile states' maritime or air approaches, combating trafficking, piracy or terrorism, counter-insurgency, military assistance, etc.
- In coercive operations: international engagement in a major conflict, limited autonomous engagement, peace enforcement.
- In reinforcing homeland and civilian security forces in the event of a major crisis on national territory.

These types of engagement are not mutually exclusive. Given the threats' hybrid nature and variety of possible operational situations, one operation can thus, simultaneously or sequentially, include both coercive and crisis management actions.

24. Operational Contracts

Both the permanent and contingency engagements of the Armed Forces are spelled out in operational contracts, defined in LBDSN-2013. These contracts are developed by the Joint Staff in a specific separate document.

3. Operational Challenges

Both the framework and nature of contemporary military engagements present a number of operational challenges that our Armed Forces have to meet. This section is not exhaustive, but focuses on the important ones.

31. Control of the Operational Tempo: Swiftiness, Synchronization, Duration

Regarding the utilization of forces, three often interdependent time parameters have to be considered: swiftiness, synchronization and duration. Each presents specific challenges.

Challenge: Winning the Tempo Battle

The goal is to impose our tempo on the adversary in order to keep our freedom of action while limiting his, which requires swiftiness and responsiveness. This means:

- Anticipating, particularly as regards intelligence, planning, force preparation and readiness for action;
- Accelerating the decision-making cycle: situation assessment / decision / transmission of orders and reports;
- Acting or reacting rapidly to seize opportunities, cope with surprise, restore a situation before it worsens, etc.

Challenge: Synchronizing and Coordinating Efforts in Order to Better Concentrate Them

This means to organize efforts time-wise to improve effectiveness, if necessary simultaneously in several domains. This imperatively requires:

- Coordination of the forces' action (joint coordination down to the lowest level, efficient command structures, effective command and control technical capabilities and interoperability);
- Organization of military actions taking into account the respective time they need to achieve results, so as to better combine their effects;
- The requirement for synergy in generating all kind of effects with our different partners, military or otherwise (comprehensive approach).

Challenge: Avoiding Getting Bugged Down and Maintaining Coherence, Determination and Acceptability in the Long Run

Stabilizing an area of operation without prolonging our local military footprint is a permanent objective. Indeed when a military operation endures, it tests:

- The coalitions and alliances' determination and cohesion;
- The local population's acceptance of a foreign military presence;
- Our fellow citizens' support for the operations, particularly when these necessitate a significant financial effort and, above all, are costly in human lives;
- The military apparatus itself, i.e. human and equipment endurance, resilience of the organization, ability to support the action, etc.

Knowing these effects, the adversary may seek to achieve them by using war-weariness or avoidance strategies, using endurance as a factor. Avoiding being bogged down is a key challenge which needs to be taken into account right from the planning phase. However, such a challenge is beyond the restricted framework of this paper and falls under a pol-mil rationale (reassessment of mandates, strategic reviews, communication, etc.).

32. Controlling the Domains

Challenge: Being Effective without Ubiquity

Being willing to control large maritime, air or land spaces with limited means can dilute and weaken the force, especially as these domains have to be considered both in their human and physical dimensions. This enables asymmetric strategies, constitution of "grey areas" of relative impunity, one-off attacks or a quest by the adversary for ways to bog down the operation as part of a war-weariness or avoidance strategy.

To address such situations, there is no need to be present everywhere at all times, but to be able to focus our efforts by seizing every operational opportunity in a timely manner. This presupposes multiplying and varying sources and means to collect intelligence (human and relevant technical capabilities, agreements with local or locally deployed partners, social networks, etc.) as well as being agile, swift and precise to act in areas where we are not permanently deployed. It also presupposes an ability to provide targeting information, on a broader spectrum of targets and effects.

33. Credibility and Effectiveness of Discourse

Challenge: Winning the Battle of Perceptions

Discourse is an integral part of military strategy. Our potential adversaries are well versed in the art of disinformation and manipulation. With the expansion of information and communication means and technologies, the battle of perceptions is becoming increasingly important. Winning this battle is a challenge which requires us:

- To gain and sustain public support for the military engagement at national and allied level, in order to firm up national, alliance or coalition determination and cohesion;

- To undermine the adversary's determination, cohesion and decisions, deprive him of his support and counter his action in the perceptual field;
- To create acceptability of the deployed forces' presence in the areas of operations, get recognition of the legitimacy of the engagement and actions carried out, and gain political and influential opinion-makers' support.

In this perceptual war, the keys are to communicate rapidly and without mistakes, ensure a proper balance between the need for transparency and security imperative on operations, and maintain the credibility of official messages through consistency between discourse and action. Finally, there is a need to ensure international, regional and local acceptability of the discourse.

34. Norms Asymmetry

Challenge: Being Effective While Respecting the Legal and Ethical Imperatives

For our and our partners' armed forces as well as for public opinion, respecting legal and ethical norms helps to underpin the legitimacy of military action. However, we might face adversaries who ignore such norms. We might therefore be somewhat inhibited or impotent when fighting a less constrained adversary who may take advantage of this inequity.

Facing such risks, we must never lose sight of the ultimate purpose of our engagements and of the specific role of the military, whose primary duty is to use armed force on the state's behalf. This requires both determination and judgement.

35. Interaction with Partners not Fully Compliant with NATO Standards

Challenge: Acting Effectively with such Partners

Interoperability is in itself a challenge and NATO is and will remain our reference. However, future engagements may lead our Armed Forces to operate with local or contingency forces or entities who might operate according to different standards than our own, or those of NATO (with regard to organization, courses of action, or even legal or ethical reference, etc.). We could also form local or contingency partnerships. We need to know how to work with or alongside such partners, or even take advantage of these differences.

This requires anticipation (identification of potential partners), cooperation and mutual knowledge, training of officers in charge at every level, as well as establishment of regional references if not for interoperability, then at least for interaction.

36. Innovation Regarding the Utilization of the Armed Forces

Challenge: Fighting Efficiently Tomorrow with Legacy Equipment and Weapon Systems

In the next ten years, operations will be carried out with hardware over 80% of which is already on our inventory. Budgetary constraints as well as time and costs of developing a new weapon system are reasons to explain the need to extend the service life of our main equipment.

Therefore, short-term progress has to be sought elsewhere, and in particular in two areas: innovation in the utilization of the Armed Forces (taking into account changes in enemy courses of action, new processes and courses of action, doctrinal developments, equipment optimization, etc.) and better synergies (joint, combined, interagency, regional, etc.). More broadly, we need to create momentum in the field of military capability: doctrine, organization, human resources, equipment, support, training, pooling, sharing or collaboration with partners and allies.

4. Concept

DYNAMIC SYNERGY OF EFFORTS³

To:

- Achieve their operational objectives;
- Meet the new challenges resulting from the strategic environment described by the 2013 White Paper on Defence and National Security;
- Make the most of the means available.

The Armed Forces will base their action on a **dynamic synergy of efforts**, involving:

- Greater interaction between strategic functions;
- Greater ability to shift effort between missions and between theatres;
- Increased flexibility in terms of organization, command and action.

In this context, developing their ability to combine their actions at joint, interagency and allied levels:

- The Armed Forces will take into account the enduring principles of military action, tailoring them to the realities of modern conflicts:
 - Freedom of action;
 - Concentration of efforts;
 - Economy of force.
- They will develop five factors of operational superiority:
 - Agility, understood as the combination of initiative, responsiveness and adaptability;
 - Combination of technological superiority and operational know-how;
 - Mastery of information;
 - Ability to act in unconventional conditions;
 - Ability to cope with complex and changing operational environments.
- They will make a specific effort to:
 - Develop a sufficient level of autonomy in situational assessment, decision-making and operational action;
 - Strengthen their ability to operate with stakeholders of varying nature;
 - Exert leverage within alliances and coalitions;
 - Improve the integration of offensive and defensive cyber action within our operations;
 - Increase subsidiarity and adaptability in terms of organization and command.

³ Translator's note: translation for the French term *combinaison dynamique des efforts*.

5. Principles of Military Action

In both its preparation and execution, **military action obeys principles** whose observance enables success.

These principles are **timeless and enduring**, even if they need to be adapted to the strategic context and changes in the way our forces are engaged.

At strategic level, there are three such principles, validated by operational practice: **freedom of action, concentration of efforts** and **economy of force**. These principles are traditional, but must be understood in a modern context.

51. Freedom of Action

Freedom of action is based on the free exercise of both the *ability* and the *will* to act. Hence freedom of action consists of retaining both room for initiative and control of one's options.

- Firstly, we must not allow the adversary to impose his will, but pursue our own action. This demands intelligence, anticipation, security, timely decision-making and execution, as well as an operational reserve force allowing forces to undertake temporary offensive operations to counter enemy initiatives. Freedom of action also implies to be able to decide the time, the location and the method, which allows dominating and surprising the adversary.
- Vis-à-vis our allies and partners, freedom of action requires us to maintain sufficient credibility to influence decisions impacting on our forces' commitment.
- At national level, it is enabled by possessing autonomous situational assessment, decision-making and action capability, as well as the ability, if necessary, to sustain action into the long term.

The quest for freedom of action leads us to opt for an organization granting an appropriate degree of autonomy and subsidiarity, while safeguarding the coherence of the objectives and unity of command.

Freedom of action also includes a reversibility imperative, this being understood as the ability to reorient action, change its nature or disengage, partially or totally.

Finally, freedom of action cannot mean unlimited freedom to act; it must enjoy national and international legitimacy which underpins our defence and security strategy. Moreover, when using force, restraint should be exercised.

52. Concentration of Efforts

The aim of concentrating efforts is to dominate the adversary by focusing military action on a judiciously chosen point of application (in a broad sense, i.e. place, moment, given function, etc.).

Concentration of efforts is the concrete implementation of will through capabilities. It is not confined to a concentration of forces, but means combining complementary efforts. A variety of actions are coordinated to achieve the same goal. This synergy needs to be sought:

- By synchronizing the effects in space and time in the different domains and fields of confrontation;
- By mutually making the best use of the actions conducted by all stakeholders—civilian and military, state or non-state—involved in dealing with the crisis or conflict (comprehensive approach);
- By reallocating capabilities to support priority actions.

53. Economy of Force

The economy of force principle has two distinct but complementary aspects, both contributing to the effective use of the force:

- Firstly, prevailing at the lowest cost in human, equipment and financial terms within acceptable time spans and allocating to the action only the force necessary to achieve the objective. This does not rule

out undertaking temporary activity (to achieve a more favourable balance of forces, a quicker result, intimidation effect, etc.).

- Secondly, organizing and using the resources deployed so as to achieve maximum performance. This also enables better control of the use of force by making it proportionate to the situation and issue at stake.

Application of the economy of force principle must not lead to excessive caution, but to the allocation of the appropriate resources to the situation.

54. Principles: a Guide, not a Dogma

Judiciously combined, the three principles of military action mutually reinforce each other:

- Combining economy of force and concentration of efforts implies allocating only limited resources to secondary objectives in order to focus on the main one.
- Combining the principles of economy of force and freedom of action enables greater flexibility of action (ability to manoeuvre, reversibility, synchronization and coordination of effects, etc.).
- Relevant application of the economy of force principle allows achievement of the optimum balance between freedom of action and concentration of efforts.

These principles, which must be taken as a basis for reflection and guide for action, need to be applied astutely and their value depends solely on the way the military commander adapts them to the circumstances.

6. Elements of Operational Superiority

Elements of operational superiority are features or qualities conducive to giving our forces the **upper hand over the adversary**.

Some factors of superiority are absolute and timeless. This particularly applies to:

- **Moral force**, based on trust, cohesion and determination, and reflected, in an operational environment, by fighting spirit and perseverance. Essentially, moral force comes from education, training, high-quality command as well as human relations and ownership of the mission objectives. It is also conditional upon the support and trust of the nation to the Armed Forces and the combatants' perception of this support.
- **A favourable balance of forces**, to be achieved in a chosen place and time. The ability to obtain this depends in particular on knowledge of the enemy, the capabilities at one's disposal and the way to use them through implementation of appropriate tactical doctrine. It also relies upon knowledge of the opponent's strengths and weaknesses as well as the ability to take advantage of them.

When both planning and conducting an operation, specific elements of superiority will need to be determined. However, in view of the strategic and operational context, four elements have taken added importance and categorize the broad attributes our Armed Forces require: **agility**, ability to **combine technological superiority and operational expertise**, **mastery of information**, ability to **act in unconventional conditions** and ability to **deal with complex and changing operational environments**.

61. Agility

In the operational arena, success is linked to situational comprehension, combined with the ability to act fast and appropriately. Similarly, we must be capable of addressing all kind of uncertainty. So three interdependent aspects of agility are required from the Armed Forces:

- **Initiative**, specifically aptitude to decide, ability to seize opportunities, impose one's tempo on the adversary, outstrip and surprise him, and, if need be, by adapting the terms of the mission while remaining scrupulously close to its spirit.
- **Responsiveness**, i.e. the ability, at the strategic, operational and tactical levels, to analyse situations rapidly and provide a swift, relevant response.

- **Adaptability**, based on the human and material capacity to deal with diverse operational situations, organizational flexibility and open-mindedness.

This agility implies specifically:

- Rejection of all stereotypes or intransigence, and swift adaptation of all action to the realities of the situation;
- The ability to combine joint actions, from the lowest tactical levels, without being confined to preconceived patterns.

62. Ability to Combine Technological Superiority and Operational Expertise

Technology and operational expertise are two intertwined elements of success, mutually enhancing each other. Technology gives a leading edge. However:

- With current proliferation of technology, the adversary can obtain it without bearing the development costs, thereby, to a certain extent, narrowing the technological gap with our forces.
- He can also adopt courses of action or operate in environments which allow him to circumvent our technological superiority.
- Finally, the emergence of new technologies has triggered new dependencies and vulnerabilities.

Ensuring the long-term survival of our operational superiority thus requires not only high technological expertise, but also a fluid doctrine and continuous development in the fields of organization, training, robustness and development of situational comprehension.

63. Mastery of Information

Getting timely access to the relevant information is key to “winning the tempo battle” as well as making sound operational choices at all levels. Facing an ever increasing flow of information, one needs to:

- Detect signals in a timely manner before and during operations, anticipate crises, forestall an adversary’s intentions and counter his plans;
- Provide timely information to the political or military authorities to enable short decision-making cycles coherent with the operational tempo;
- Sort and distribute information depending on its pertinence with the operation under the principle of subsidiarity.

64. Ability to Act in Unconventional Conditions

By nature, the Armed Forces can operate in difficult operational conditions. They can face exceptional situations that jeopardize their standard operating procedures—either by the conditions they are fighting in or as a result of the human, organizational or technical prejudices. Whatever these conditions may become, operations will have to continue. Here, efforts must focus on:

- **The combatant**, whose robustness depends on expertise, physical strength, moral force and protection. Particular attention must be paid to the calibre of the commanders, on which depends the robustness of the units, especially through their exemplarity, ability to decide, determination and ability to stay calm at testing times.
- **Organization** (structures, command, logistic support, etc.), which must enable control of the situation under all circumstances—requiring an ability to adapt and reconfigure, initiative and subsidiarity.
- **Technical systems** (hardware, equipment, networks, etc.), to ensure their optimal implementation and compensate for any deficiency, regardless of circumstances or environment.

65. Ability to Cope with Complex and Changing Operational Environments

The diversity of adversaries, strategies, and potential courses of action, as well as the widening and dovetailing of the fields of confrontation, highlight the need to coordinate military and non-military actions and accept the possibility of a strategic surprise; all of which confirms the need for a thorough cultural adaptation of the Armed Forces. Even though combat remains their *raison d'être*, the very notion of operations is changing as well as, to an even greater extent, the notions of battle or campaign. So understanding, taking into account and anticipating such developments are clearly elements of superiority. In particular, this necessitates:

- Reviewing and renewing operational procedures, which requires doctrinal reflection without presupposition, dynamically analysing lessons identified and drawing on the widest possible sources of expertise;
- Adapting education and training so that they are in synchronisation with developments in strategic and tactical situations;
- Challenging existing organizations and cultures, in which development of the practice and spirit of jointery is paramount.

7. Priorities of Effort

The nature of the Armed Forces' missions and circumstances in which they are or will be engaged has prompted the identification of more specific areas on which to focus in conjunction with the general factors of operational superiority. While diverse, these efforts could be summed up in **five major objectives** described below.

71. Developing a Sufficient Level of Operational Autonomy

This includes:

- Situational awareness and assessment;
- Decision-making;
- Action (ability to conduct an operation autonomously, for the whole or part of a theatre);
- Development of a targeting ability, on a wide spectrum of targets and effects;
- Control of operational support for a long duration;
- Operational control of shared capabilities;
- Regeneration of forces and resources.

72. Strengthening the Ability to Interact with Various Stakeholders

Internally:

- Ability to conduct joint operations at all levels;
- Improvement of coordination between special and conventional operations;
- Improvement of coordination between actions conducted simultaneously in the physical and virtual domains;
- Integration of support.

Externally:

- Development of pooling or sharing capability both within NATO and the EU;

- Achievement of the Franco-British Combined Joint Expeditionary Force's (CJEF) full operational capability;
- Ability to collaborate with other ministries;
- Ability to interact with external partners, civilian and military, state or otherwise.

73. Exerting Leverage Within Alliances and Coalitions

Within an alliance or a coalition, this implies putting ourselves in a position to take the initiative, coordinate and exert leverage in decision-making. Such effort will focus on the following elements:

- Initial force entry capability;
- Ability to be a framework nation for a medium-scale combined operation;
- Ability to be the lead nation within a coalition providing key operational capabilities that constitute centres of excellence (deep strike, intelligence and situation assessment, special forces, support capabilities for force entry, medical and Petrol, Oil, Lubricants [POL] support, etc.);
- Operational communication within a coalition;
- Affirmation of France as an initiator of proposals within allied staffs and international organizations.

74. Integrating Offensive and Defensive Cyber Actions in our Operations

This involves:

- Integrating the offensive and defensive cyber dimension into the planning and conduct of operations;
- Ability to thwart the cyber threat and operate safely in this domain;
- Ability to conduct special cyber operations;
- Ability to assess the situation in cyberspace and gather intelligence to support cyber operations (cyber-oriented intelligence);
- Ability to synchronize cyber operations and actions in other domains.

75. Strengthening Subsidiarity and Adaptability in the Fields of Organization and Command

This requires:

- Strengthening the organizations' adaptability to the multiplicity and complexity of the situation;
- Improving data stream processing (sorting, exploiting, etc.) and organizing access to information;
- Limiting the effects of interference (top down) or denial of responsibility (bottom up);
- Simplifying the processes and streamlining of the command structures.

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