



## Premises and nature of the future confrontation

2/3 - BRENNUS 4.0

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**Strengthening the robustness of our fortress should not lead us to neglect the possibility of an assault against the mixed-hearted. On the contrary, theorizing about the importance of the "in-between" should encourage us to develop our capacity to intervene there. In this sense, therefore, the national territory should not be represented as a separate front from the one we would like to hold within the "in-between", but rather as a simple extension of the "world front" whose emergence is made possible by the development of technology, the refinement of cyber warfare and the continuous growth of the range of weapons.**

The future fight is a synthesis of our past martial experiences: It borrows from our old Cold War army the prospect of total combat against a determined opponent, numerous and equipped with a variety of weapon systems... It is similar to external operations over the past 30 years in that it is based on the projection of forces abroad within a relatively constrained timeframe. Above all, therefore, future combat will be a logistical challenge, since it will be necessary to adapt our projection capabilities to an adversary who is not only likely to challenge our control of sea, air and land space, but also to whom it will be necessary to adapt our projection capabilities to an adversary who is not only likely to challenge us in terms of control of sea, air and land space, but also to deploy a modern and combative force, with artillery, but also its own armoured cavalry, efficient aircraft and, in general, weapons as effective as ours.

It is possible to detail, as soon as this reality is stated, a certain number of failures which, while they are of no consequence today, would on the contrary have an extremely significant impact on the maintenance of our operational capabilities in the event of a high-intensity conflict. Thus, France is cruelly lacking a transport aviation [8] adapted to such a conflict. Similarly, its anti-aircraft systems are outdated, its supply of medium and heavy tanks [9] is insufficient, as is its towed and self-propelled artillery [10]. Finally, the number of armoured vehicles is too low. At sea, its ships are few in number and insufficiently

protected against the anti-ship missiles of tomorrow [11], while the Mistral assault helicopter carriers (PHA) are notoriously lacking in protection. In the air, the excellent quality of French aircraft does not hide a notorious quantitative weakness. From this state of affairs, it can be seen that, faced with a properly equipped adversary of equivalent power, France would suffer losses that would be all the more significant as they would be difficult to replace, given the limits in terms of manpower and equipment.

We presuppose here that the enemy will not come "to find us", but will on the contrary choose to conquer in the Entre-Deux the assets that will enable it either to attack our fortress directly afterwards, or to obtain world supremacy without going through a large-scale military confrontation. In this context, it is therefore futile to limit ourselves to the sole preparation of a defensive struggle centred around the national territory and its marches, when an adversary could find himself in a position to dominate us without even having to confront us. It is therefore a question of identifying, in the "in-between", those territories where the "alternatives" will tomorrow try to wrest from the "guarantors" the ability to to preside over the destiny of the world, through the accumulation of territories or resources opening the way to cultural, economic, technological and military domination. Here, the deterrence of the adversary will first of all require an understanding of the latter, its objectives, but also its functioning; in short, it is a question of asking oneself about the enemy's objectives: what is he or she seeking again?

## **The Army in future conventional deterrence**

In the "in-between", the opposing operations respond to the need to accumulate both material and immaterial gains, either in s'en s'In the "in-between", opposing operations respond to the need to accumulate both material and immaterial gains, either by seizing territories for their resources or to complete a defensive or offensive posture, or to demonstrate an effective military capability. We have two significant examples of this. By intervening in the Crimea, Russia has safeguarded its access to the Black Sea, extended its defences and proved to the world not only its ability to intervene in Ukraine, but also the inability of the West to put up an effective and coordinated resistance [12], thereby sending a message to all the third-tier powers likely to arouse appetites. In the same way, Chinese policy in the China Sea corresponds to a slow nibbling of the Entre-Deux in favour of Beijing. The occupied islets, transformed into naval fortresses, thus constitute as many possible firing sites, multiplying tenfold the value of the A2/AD [13] strategies of the Chinese armed forces. In both cases, two alternative powers challenged the Guarantors' camp to intervene and twice the latter slipped away, anxious not to get involved in a new deadly conflict. In this way, and without ever directly attacking the Western fortress, Moscow and Beijing detected a first flaw in our arrangements, thereby gaining new advantages that could provide the basis for world domination in the future.

Would it have been possible to dissuade the adversary from these two manoeuvres, both of which are fuelled by a solid historical revisionism and are free from international law? While the answer to this question is not certain, it is nonetheless certain that the presence of Western armed elements, properly equipped and with clear orders to to be applied in the event of intervention would have shaken the sense of impunity of the alternative powers, either by neutralising the opposing ambitions or by preventing them from staging an easy and apparently definitive triumph. This deterrent detachment should also have been supported by the maintenance in arms, on French territory, of a substantial projectable force, capable of intervening in support of the threatened nations; that is to say, of rapidly moving into line without being separated from its heavy means.

France has long maintained, in the context of the surveillance of the Soviet power [14], a Rapid Action Force (FAR) capable of seeking contact with the adversary upstream of the de facto positions [15], positions articulated around the national territory and with 47,000 personnel, 240 combat and manoeuvre helicopters, 200 light armoured vehicles and 200 artillery tubes. After its dissolution in 1999, France's ambitions in terms of force projection were severely reduced. The Defence White Paper of 2013 only mentions an "emergency national level" (5 000 personnel) making it possible to set up a "joint immediate reaction force" (FIRI, 2 300 personnel, including 1 500 for the joint land grouping) equipped with armoured vehicles and helicopters and supported by a naval group based around an assault helicopter carrier (PHA) and the associated operational, command and control resources. This unit must be capable of being projected up to 3,000 kilometres from the national territory within a maximum period of 7 days.

This FIRI could be seen as the vanguard of projectable land forces, for which the official documentation specifies the following: "The land forces will offer an operational capability of the order of 66,000 projectable troops, including 7 joint brigades, 2 of which will be capable of first entry and coercive combat against an adversary equipped with heavy means. These forces will have at their disposal approximately 200 heavy tanks, 250 medium tanks, 2,700 multi-role armoured and combat vehicles, 140 reconnaissance and attack helicopters, 115 manoeuvre helicopters and some 30 tactical drones." »[15]. Since the publication of this document, two new official texts have nevertheless rectified these ambitions: the 2017 Strategic Review of Defence and National Security and the Military Programming Law (2019/2025). The latter specifies that the FIRI "could be reinforced to the tune of 5,000 men within 30 days, equipped with additional resources".

The Military Programming Law (2019/2025) must guarantee the ability of the French armies to "be committed over the long term and simultaneously on three theatres of operations, with the capacity to assume the role of framework nation in a theatre and to be a major contributor to a coalition" through the deployment of a joint staff, an operational level staff, the equivalent of a joint brigade of 6 000 to 7 000 men, substantial naval and air assets and, lastly, projected air bases and their command posts. However, there are grounds for doubting France's ability to project such a mass of personnel and vehicles, even though the deployment of 15 600 men in the framework of the Operation Serval has been a major challenge for French logistics, fortunately supported by allied means to the tune of 30% of the missions carried out [16]. However, the adversary at the time had only modest military means at its disposal.

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