



# Università di Genova

DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE POLITICHE  
E INTERNAZIONALI

**Corso di Laurea Magistrale in  
Relazioni Internazionali**

EUROPEAN STRATEGIC AUTONOMY INTO PERSPECTIVE.  
ASSESSING THE EVOLUTION OF ITALIAN AND FRENCH  
DEFENCE POSTURES SINCE 2014

Tesi di Laurea in Foreign Policy Analysis

Relatore

*Chiar.mo Professore*

*Fabrizio Coticchia*

Candidata

*Federica Cavo*

**ANNO ACCADEMICO 2021/2022**

*Ai miei nonni,*

*se mi chiedessero  
'cos'è per te l'amore?'*

*parlerei di voi.*

## ABSTRACT

Many posit that Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, launched on 24 February 2022, will be a watershed moment in European defence, as it has provided unprecedented political impetus to the debate on European strategic autonomy. But is it really so?

This dissertation aims to contribute to the debate over European strategic autonomy by assessing whether Russia's growing assertiveness since 2014 has triggered an evolution in the prioritization of the perceived threats to national security of two selected countries – Italy and France –, eventually leading them to strategic convergence. The point of departure is a study of Meijer and Brooks (2021) in which the authors respond to Posen's argument (2020) according to which the inability to ramp up a European autonomy in defence is a matter of political willingness and that, bottom line, if the American security guarantee were to withdraw, Europe would be able to defend itself. Contradicting such claim, Meijer and Brooks identify two major obstacles hindering the effective realization of a European strategic autonomy: first, a *de facto* differentiation in the perceived threats to national security among the 27 member states of the European Union, which they call «strategic cacophony» and, second, deficiencies in terms of military and industrial capabilities. The combination of these mutually-reinforcing factors makes European dependency from US-provided security unlikely to be attenuated in the short term.

The objective of this research is twofold. On the one hand, the first section of the thesis aims to assess whether the first obstacle – strategic cacophony – is on the process of being overcome in light of Russia's increasing aggressiveness. For this reason, the temporal frame adopted starts in 2014, when, for the first time, the attitude of Western European states towards Russia started to change – namely, through the adoption of sanctions – in response of the latter's assertive posture against post-Soviet states. Part I is thus devoted to investigating whether Russia gained saliency as a threat in official strategic documents of Italy and France. On the other hand, Part II focuses on national defence budgets to analyse which capabilities are being developed through the investment programs currently underway in the two countries, while also paying specific attention to the geographical scope of international missions. This second section therefore focuses on investigating whether their national posture is pointing towards a revival of territorial defence, after decades in which their defence instruments fundamentally became expeditionary. In light of the vagueness and ambiguity surrounding the notions of territorial defence and power projection, an attempt to define these concepts constitutes the premise of the study. Finally, the dissertation gives an overview on existing instances of cooperation in the domain of defence between the two States in order to stress the advantages, as well as the major obstacles, featuring current and potential patterns of cooperation.

# CONTENTS

<b>Method and sources</b> .....	5
<b>Introduction</b> .....	6
<b>Premise on terminology</b> .....	11
<b>PART I – Defence posture according to national strategic documents</b> .....	19
New common trends in the post-Cold War era .....	20
Divergencies in defence institutionalization and practices.....	30
Italy: from the 2015 White Paper until today .....	38
France: continuity and novelty of Macron’s Presidency .....	47
A new threat prioritisation? Russia across strategic documents.....	55
<b>PART II – A factual evolution?</b> .....	63
Defence budgets and capabilities development.....	64
The geographical scope of international missions.....	72
Instances of industrial cooperation in defence .....	78
<b>Conclusions</b> .....	81
<b>List of figures</b> .....	83
<b>List of abbreviations</b> .....	84
<b>References</b> .....	86
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	102

## **METHOD AND SOURCES**

In terms of methodology and data collection, this study stands on a comparative analysis of two selected countries – Italy and France – across the post-Cold war era and, particularly, after 2014.

The analysis both relies on primary and secondary sources. Primary sources mainly consist in government and parliamentary official documents, as well as ministerial or armed forces official papers, public statements (i.e., parliamentary auditions, conferences), and data from archives. The thesis relies also on 10 interviews with experts, researchers, members of the defence industry, and former military officers, which have been conducted in Rome and Paris between November 2022 and May 2023. Secondary sources consist in academic papers, as well as think tank studies and reports.

## INTRODUCTION

Has Russia's growing assertiveness led to a strategic and factual convergence in Italy and France's foreign and defence policies?

To answer this question, this study compares the evolution of the two states' defence postures over a precise time span – namely, since Russia's annexation of Crimea and intervention in eastern Ukraine in 2014 – and contextualises it within the framework of their post-Cold War transformation.

The first section, which is devoted to the strategic-doctrinal level, investigates whether the two countries' threat prioritization has been re-defined, and precisely whether Russia (a conventional state threat) has gained saliency over threats long perceived as the most serious (asymmetric threats related to instability, i.e., terrorism and migration flows). The assessment of recent changes in threat hierarchization is integrated into a broader perspective on Italy and France's common and divergent trends in defence following the end of bipolarization.

The second section is structured in two main parts: first, it examines defence budgets and, second, if (and where) the geographical scope of military missions abroad has been refocused.

Defence expenditure is analysed both in comparison with previous years and within the three expenditure items (personnel, investment and training). On the one hand, trends show that in both countries defence spending started to increase before the war in Ukraine. On the other one, the analysis of the three budget invoices reveals whether resources allocation denotes strong imbalances (as in the case of Italy), and at the expense of which capabilities.

In terms of military operations abroad, these recent years have seen a significant evolution. The withdrawals from Afghanistan in August 2021 and Mali in August 2022 are two emblematic dates for Italy and France, respectively, as they mark the end of their most significant military engagements since 1945, in terms of time span, deployed military personnel, allocated resources, and casualties. At the same time, Russia's war against Ukraine has spurred an unprecedented post-Cold War commitment by the North

Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on the Eastern flank, to which Italy and France are actively contributing. After decades of interventionism in crisis management operations, the Alliance's return to its core task of deterrence and defence represents a paradigm shift. Adjusting to it will require deep reflection for Italy and France, whose strategic interests have traditionally been projected southward.

These two sections, therefore, deal with two distinct – yet complementary – levels, one regarding strategic doctrine and the other capabilities development and troops deployment. By combining them, the study aims to assess whether a vocal change is effectively followed by a factual one. Both industrial defence planning and deployment of missions abroad derive (or should derive, as in the case of Italy) from a strategic vision that clarifies national interests, strategic objectives and how to achieve them. Thus, the strategic positioning of a state – be it enshrined into a proper National Security Strategy or not – consists of striking a balance between short-term needs and long-term vision. Being primarily in the hands of political decision-makers, who are influenced by (swinging) media cycles and public debates, this level tends to be more responsive to the emergence of new threats than defence planning, which is instead framed on a long-term basis. Commitments, both in terms of industry and troop deployments abroad, are multi-year and thus «it takes time for new priorities to filter through» (Béraud-Sudreau and Giegerich, 2018). As such, defence is less conditioned by contingencies, and its adaptation to a new threat environment is not immediate because it is characterized a greater path-dependency. Indeed, withdrawing from a mission abroad or abandoning a procurement programme both imply heavy costs in terms credibility and reliability. In this sense, politics and defence react at a different pace to variations in the international scenario. Therefore, we should not expect the latter to fluctuate to the same degree as the former.

But how does this relate to European strategic autonomy? This comparative analysis of Italy and France shall be conceived as a piece of the broader European puzzle.

The approach adopted in this study differs from the one which is generally used in dealing with the topic of European strategic autonomy, which consists of focusing on European Union's (EU) actorness and agency in security and defence under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). On the contrary, the primary object and unit of this

research is represented by the state. In line with Meijer and Wyss (2018), this study focuses on national security and defence policy as «the analytical starting point» in assessing the current state of Europe's drive for strategic autonomy.

There are two major reasons underlying this choice. The first one stems from the acknowledgment that, *de facto*, defence represents a domain in which European states still keep an almost-exclusive grasp. Paradoxical as it may be, although Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has brought the urgency of greater European integration in defence back into the spotlight, federating against a common threat does not automatically lead to a greater push towards integration. On the contrary, it risks exacerbating the fragmentation – of vision and of action – that already exists among EU member states (Tocci, 2023; Marrone and Freyrie, 2023). In short, the hope for «Europe's defence momentum» (*ibidem*) risks to be drastically dashed by the facts and to give a greater impetus to «renationalization» of security and defence in Europe (Meijer and Wyss, 2018), which is quite the opposite of what the proponents of European strategic autonomy were wishing.

Besides being motivated by a pinch of realism, the other reason behind this approach – which consists in examining *state* policies in security and defence rather than those of the EU – is to unpack the multi-layered nature of the issue, which tends to be disregarded when European strategic autonomy is investigated through the EU prism. The latter indeed often tends to over-emphasize its political nature and, thus, to overlook the role played by the multiple stakeholders involved in defence. This results in a twofold problem. On one hand, there is a general oversimplification of the state of affairs of national defence systems, which consists in not taking into account that (often) reluctance towards greater European cooperation comes from the industry and/or the armed forces. By unpacking the black box of state action, it is possible to examine existing obstacles to European strategic autonomy, hence to put into perspective the effective revolutionary scope of current events for the EU. On the other hand, this implies precluding possible patterns of cooperation pertaining to a bottom-up approach. In the face of a security environment marked by constant technological evolution, emerging disruptive technologies, and an exponential increase in costs of new and more sophisticated weapon systems (not only in terms of production, but also in terms of research and development), cooperation among European industries is increasingly becoming a matter of necessity, rather than one of choice. Maintaining the leading-edge in defence technologies and armaments is fundamental to enjoy a strategic gap in the face of competitors.



Nevertheless, such bottom-up approach may not go far if not combined with to a top-down one. For instance, as demonstrated by existing instances of cooperation in defence, problems arise when it comes to export commonly produced weapon systems. Such hurdles cannot be solved unless the EU takes a more decisive stance intended at modifying arms market regulation. These two approaches must therefore be seen as complementary and mutually-reinforcing. As such, since the incentive for greater European defence cooperation could also come from the industry, the integration process should not be seen as exclusively driven by states. The last paragraph, indeed, is about existing instances of defence cooperation in order to illustrate possible way forward.

Insofar the case-studies selected, Italy and France represent probably the two EU countries who collaborate the most in security and defence, both in operative terms and industrial ones. The collaboration has been sealed by the signature of a long-awaited bilateral treaty, *Trattato del Quirinale*, in November 2021. This research provides an outlook on the main common trends in defence in the post-Cold War era, for which both countries consistently decreased defence spending, abandoned all-volunteer service and adopted conscription, turned the armed forces into a fundamentally expeditionary model, de-prioritised territorial defence and displayed a great military activism which denotes the same vision of the armed forces as a valuable foreign policy tool, not least as a means to acquire power status within alliances and on the world stage. At the same time, it also provides a framework of major divergences in defence. These mostly pertain to a different institutionalization of defence (which makes France a virtuous example of whole-of-government approach to defence, opposed to Italy's longstanding fragmentation), as well as a different relationship with the US and NATO, which derives from a very divergent conception of multilateralism, as well as different strategic cultures. Not only, despite Italy and France figuring at the front row of European strategic autonomy advocates, they articulate the very same objective in two very distinct ways.

But ultimately, will the systemic shock caused by 24 February 2022 be able to reverse the West's decade-long trend towards expeditionary warfare? Will it be – just as the end of the Cold War has been – a «critical juncture» (Coticchia and Meijer, 2022) capable of bringing about a shift in national foreign and defence postures?

Before trying to answering these questions, it seems imperative to clarify the very same notions on which they are grounded, namely, territorial defence and expeditionary

warfare. The aim of the paragraph “Premise on terminology” is to better frame current debate over a possible resurgence of territorial defence (Simón, 2022). To do so, it suggests a new categorization which overcomes a purely dichotomous narrative – opposing territorial defence to expeditionary warfare – and which consists of a three-circles distinction (territorial defence, collective defence and expeditionary warfare) which are located along a defence-security continuum. Being able to define and classify military operations according to their distinct nature is not merely a matter of semantic and academic speculation, but is instead charged with practical implications. Indeed, the proper framing of military missions is a preliminary but critical step in defining one’s national strategic doctrine, from which operational and industrial considerations derive. And lessons learned have clearly proven that it is better to question the appropriateness of deployed means *vis-à-vis* the intended goal before deploying troops and resources abroad, rather than once boots are already on the ground.

## PREMISE ON TERMINOLOGY

### **Territorial defence vs. expeditionary warfare**

The outbreak of a high-intensity, full-scale war in Europe sparked considerable speculation about the resurgence of territorial defence. In the aftermath of the end of the Cold war, this function was de-prioritized, and Western forces were instead extensively deployed abroad, mainly for crisis management operations. In the face of the new security paradigm, the Biden administration's new National Security Strategy, adopted in October 2022, even suggests that the (turbulent) Western withdrawal from Afghanistan marks the end of an era, meaning the epilogue of interventionism «to remake other societies» (Simón, 2022). Although effective in conveying the systemic shock caused by the ongoing conflict with respect to the theatres of engagement of the past three decades, this dichotomous narrative – opposing territorial defence to expeditionary warfare – seems quite simplistic.

It is not purely an academic matter, but it is charged with practical implications. Indeed, the proper framing of military missions is a preliminary but critical step defining one's national strategic doctrine, from which operational and industrial considerations derive. In sum, having a clear picture of the state of affairs helps decision-makers to elaborate a strategic posture which is coherent with the objectives they are willing to pursue.

On the one hand, such conceptual reflection has a direct impact on one's national strategic choices. Indeed, claiming that February 24 triggered the need for a reorientation towards territorial defence – as some have argued (*ibidem*) – entails acknowledging that the threats upon which one's national apparatus has been built are no longer considered a priority. A refocus on territorial *defence* implies pauperizing resources once devoted to tackle *security* challenges. This is particularly relevant for both France and Italy who, as Mediterranean countries, are primarily concerned by challenges coming from the South.

On the other hand, if the notion of territorial defence is inherently linked to the (national) territorial component, it follows that collective defence of the North Atlantic

Treaty Organization (NATO) escapes the dichotomous distinction. As collective defence goes beyond national borders, it cannot be considered territorial defence (this would indeed be an overstretch which risks undermining the very notion of territorial defence), but at the same time it cannot be labelled as expeditionary warfare.

In order to better understand the complexity of the topic, this study suggests a new categorization based on the nature of the operations carried out by armed forces. Such classification takes into account two parameters: 1) a defence-security spectrum and 2) a three-circles distinction consisting of territorial defence, collective defence, and expeditionary warfare.

According to these two criteria, territorial defence – which applies to national borders – is displayed as the closest function to the notion of “defence”, figuring in the high-end of the conflict continuum and requiring a strong role by the military, as it engenders an automated response of the state which is vitally threatened. As intensity diminishes and we move towards the notion of “security”, the opportunity to react (and how) does no longer imply an automated response, but instead progressively turns into a choice. Political decision-makers are thus increasingly entrusted to decide what to do, while the military absolve a complementary role pertaining to purely operational aspects (i.e., strategic and operational planning).

The second circle we encounter is the one of collective defence, which takes place within the Euro-Atlantic area under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. The principle of mutual assistance enshrined in Article 5, indeed, is an individual obligation for NATO members, yet the degree of assistance provided in the case of an attack against an Ally is «left to the judgment of each individual member country».<sup>1</sup> It follows that, contrary to territorial defence, no automated mechanism is triggered, but the answer is highly subjective and decided at national level.

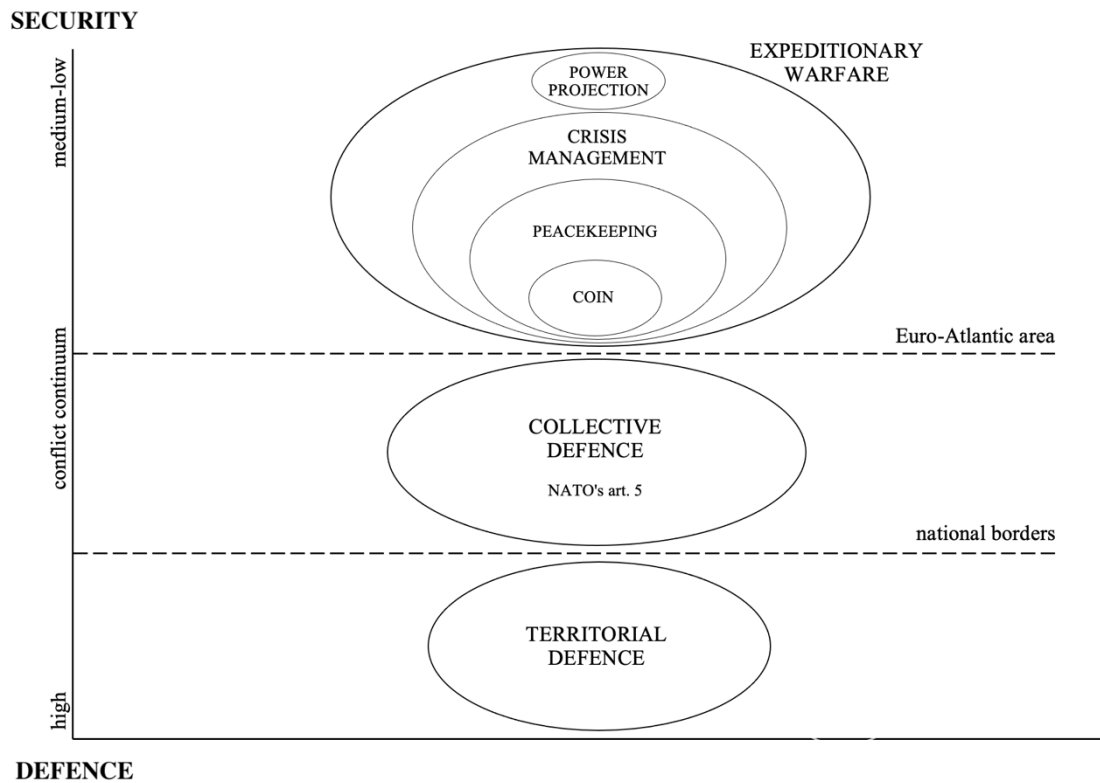
Finally, the last circle is the one of expeditionary warfare which, being the closest to “security”, requires a multi-dimensional approach consisting in a wide array of operations and instruments which are not purely military.

Such distinction can be portrayed as follows (Figure 1.).

---

<sup>1</sup> NATO, *Collective defence and Article 5*, 2023. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_110496.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_110496.htm)

**Figure 1. The three-circles categorization of military operations**



Source: Author

The defence-security spectrum is a spectrum which goes from defence to security and in which the degree of conflict continuum varies consistently. The more the mission tends towards “defence”, the higher the intensity of combat operations is. Conversely, the more the mission tends towards “security”, the more the intensity of combat operations decreases, up to including non-combat operations. Thus, the notion of “defence” calls for strictly military instruments (consistently with the definition of hard security), while that of “security” enshrines a more multidimensional approach which combines military and non-military instruments (consistently with the definition of soft security). Indeed, if the former is conceived as the automatic and necessary answer to a threat that jeopardizes the very same existence of the state, the latter instead focuses on the pursuit of objectives such as stability and development, or (as for the furthest sub-category of power projection) consists of actions whose sole objective is to “show the force” to other actors of the international arena.

This distinction makes it possible to consider the different degrees of subjectivity of the triggered response: the more an operation is defence-oriented, the more the response

is automatic, and - vice versa - the more an operation is security-oriented, the less the response is constrained and thus involves an increasing level of choice.

This inevitably implies a different division of competence between political and military decision-makers. For instance, once the inescapable political assent has been obtained, it is mostly up to the armed forces to decide how to react in case of a conventional attack by another state against national territory (territorial defence) since the response involves a very high technical-operational military assessments, which does not (and should not) fall under the jurisdiction of political decision-makers. Similarly, as an operation moves away from the “defence” field, there is no longer an automatic response, and competence must progressively shift from the military to the political level. The action no longer relates to a necessity, but to a choice. As such, it is matter of strategic opportunity evaluation that concerns the country's foreign policy and must therefore be taken by political decision-makers. As the military operation becomes security-oriented, the role of the military is complementary to the (preponderant) role of politicians. The former are responsible for strategic planning, while the latter are responsible for the elaboration of the national strategy (therefore also defining missions' mandates) that, by providing the foundations of the country's defence and security posture, guides the actions of all stakeholders involved, including the armed forces.

The three-circles distinction, instead, identifies three categories of military operations, that are territorial defence, collective defence, and expeditionary warfare. The first two categories, contrary to the third, present a physical-geographical connotation, that are respectively national borders and the borders of the Atlantic Alliance.

The first circle represents territorial defence, which is strictly linked, yet not limited to, the physical sphere of national borders. Since it consists in the defence of the national territory, it cannot be separated from the territorial component of the state, which does not merely refer to the soil within national borders, but also includes its airspace, its exclusive economic zone and, to some extent, also critical infrastructures considered vital to the nation's functioning (i.e., fibre optic cables, energy pipelines). Territorial defence generally displays a high-intensity, full scale combat scenario.

The second circle is collective defence of the Euro-Atlantic area, that is the deterrence and defence of NATO's territory. It is not limited to the national borders of the member states of the Alliance, but includes all actions aimed at deterring a possible attack or act of aggression against one or more members which would activate Article 5 of the North

Atlantic Treaty. For instance, the ongoing air policing operations and naval surveillance operations along the Eastern flank take place in an area stretching from the Baltic to the Eastern Mediterranean, thus including the Mediterranean Sea. So far, as NATO's deterrence proved effective, there has been no active fighting within this circle.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, the third circle, under the umbrella term “expeditionary warfare”, identifies every military operation which is, at the same time, beyond national borders and which does not absolve the function of NATO's collective deterrence and defence under Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty. It comprises a wide array of mid-to-low-intensity combat operations (in semi-permissive or permissive environments), as well as non-combat operations (i.e., maritime surveillance, training missions of local forces). Expeditionary warfare operations can be deployed within a multilateral framework, an *ad hoc* coalition, bilaterally (through an agreement with the hosting country) or on a purely national mandate. Since these operations are focused on the multidimensional nature of security, they are intended to tackle challenges which are not merely military, but instead relate to crises that can be political, military or humanitarian (i.e., instability, radicalization, underdevelopment, post-disaster relief). They can be summarized in two sub-categories: crisis management and power projection. Within the first sub-category, operations concern the full crisis management spectrum, which includes counterinsurgency (COIN) and peacekeeping operations (PKO), from conflict prevention to post-conflict peacebuilding. The reason why COIN operations figure under a specific sub-circle of peacekeeping is that they are characterized by a higher degree of intensity as compared to other peacekeeping operations (namely, conflict prevention, peacekeeping, post-conflict peacebuilding) while, at the same time, may display the same degree of intensity as peacemaking or peace enforcement. Plain power projection figures within a second (separate) sub-category because it has a more pro-active nature than a reactive one, as it is not intended to solve any crisis, but rather aimed at “showing the force” to other peer competitors (along with the promotion of national interests abroad, i.e., the finalization of economic and trade agreements, strategic partnerships, etc.).

Regarding the type of capabilities required, it is worth noting that some relate to a specific category of operations, while others are cross-categories. For instance, the second

---

<sup>2</sup> France owns an autonomous nuclear deterrent, while Italy, as a party to NATO's Nuclear Sharing Agreements, hosts around 40 US nonstrategic nuclear weapons at the Aviano and Ghedi bases (Kristensen and Korda, 2019). On dual-capable aircrafts, see also Maitre (2016).

sub-category of plain power projection requires high expeditionary capabilities which are not required to accomplish territorial defence tasks (i.e., a carrier battle group, which escorts and supports an aircraft carrier) and, vice versa, territorial defence requires a degree of missile defence capability that is not needed in expeditionary warfare. At the same time, however, certain capabilities are common to the performance of missions belonging to different categories. For instance, in order to project power beyond national borders, both collective defence and expeditionary warfare need multirole combat aircraft, as well as, clearly, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) are pivotal to all categories. The overlapping of certain capabilities between different missions may lead some to argue that, from a military point of view, any distinction between territorial defence and expeditionary warfare would be superfluous, if not misleading.<sup>3</sup> However, the evaluation concerning the relationship between weapon systems and military missions pertains more to strategic planning, while the three-circles categorization proposed in this study aims to clarify the nature of the missions. The complementarity of the two, hence the complementarity between military and political decision-makers, only emphasizes the need to provide the latter with a well-defined frame of reference that serves as a prerequisite for the elaboration of one's national security strategy.

In conclusion, such categorization might be useful in order to make choices that are actually strategic, that is, suited to the objectives to be pursued. This is particularly relevant in the current international scenario, in which Western powers – at national, EU and NATO level – are still assessing how to strike a balance between East vs. South engagement, as well as what posture to adopt in the Indo-Pacific region in light of the evolving relationship with China. Indeed, as noted by Tocci (2023), the 2022 Strategic Concept «dodges a clear-cut answer to this question». Both processes are still in the making, yet it seems imperative to engage in a thorough debate – in all the above-mentioned fora – before making international commitments. Lessons learned have clearly proven that it is better to question the appropriateness of deployed means *vis-à-vis* the intended goal before deploying troops and resources abroad, rather than once boots are already on the ground.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> General Vincenzo Camporini, interview (2 May 2023).

<sup>4</sup> This categorization was conceived primarily with reference to the European framework. Subsequent research could explore to what extent it can be applied to other regions of the world.



## European Strategic Autonomy

As the notion of European strategic autonomy refers to the capacity of the European Union (EU) to be an actor on the international stage – that is, «to be able to act, preferably with others, but also alone if necessary» (Tocci 2023) –, it applies to a wide array of policy areas. These also include foreign policy, trade, energy, climate, and, obviously, security and defence (EU Global Strategy, 2016; Fiott, 2018; Tocci, 2021). This study focuses on the latter.

In this regard, European strategic autonomy means that while «deepening the transatlantic bond», «Europeans [...] must have the necessary capabilities to defend themselves».<sup>5</sup> On one hand, unity in action inevitably requires strategic convergence among EU member states, that is a «shared assessment of internal and external threats and challenges».<sup>6</sup> On the other one, it also calls for the creation of a European defence industry that allows the development of capabilities underpinning the ability to act autonomously (i.e., weapon systems, equipment, key strategic technologies).<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the EU cannot have «operational and political autonomy without industrial autonomy» (Fiott, 2018).

As such, European strategic autonomy shall not be assessed in dual terms, but according to a *continuum*, that takes into account the different degrees of its effective capacity to act autonomously in the «full spectrum of defence capabilities», «if and when necessary», with little or no help from the United States (US).<sup>8</sup> This is why «emancipation» from the US is an inner component of the notion of European strategic autonomy (Fiott, 2018). At the same time, Europe recognises that the only way to achieve this objective is to avoid presenting it in antithetical terms *vis-à-vis* the United States. This presupposes that, while «connect[ing] to new players» (Mogherini, 2016), the EU still retains the specificity of the transatlantic bond. This eventually led the advocates of European strategic autonomy to frame the concept as a way for Europe to finally take

---

<sup>5</sup> European Union (EU). European External Action Service (EEAS). (2016). *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, p. 18. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs\\_review\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 49.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 23-49.

responsibility for its own security, long delegated to the US. The rhetoric of European strategic autonomy as the missing European pillar inside NATO's architecture embeds the concept within the same US narrative that has – rather vocally than factually – urged European states to assume a fairer “burden sharing” within the Alliance.

Ultimately, this study relies on the definition provided by Meijer and Brooks (2021), according to which European strategic autonomy is

«the institutional capacity to independently plan and conduct military operation across the full spectrum of conflict (including in high intensity military operations such as expeditionary warfare and territorial defence missions) and to autonomously develop and produce the related defence capabilities with minimal or no assistance from the US».

## **PART I**

# **DEFENCE POSTURE ACCORDING TO NATIONAL STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS**

## New common trends in the post-Cold war era

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Western European states found themselves deprived of their main “Other”, that is, of the threat that had served as the pivot of their strategic doctrines for decades. Consequently, both Italy and France – alongside many European counterparts – embarked on a process of structural transformation, to the extent that the end of the Cold War has been defined as a *game changer* in their foreign and defence policy (Meijer and Wyss, 2018).

Despite political and cultural divergencies between the two neighbouring countries (namely, in terms of institutional and political systems, as well as different cultural attitudes towards military affairs), the post-Cold War scenario has been characterized by common trends in defence. In general terms, these points of converge can be summarized as follows: an overall reduction in defence budgets and in the size of national armed forces (determined by the end of conscription and the adoption a professional model), preference for quality, deployability and agility over mass (in a couple of words, a projectable force in out-of-area contexts), and, finally, the importance of interoperability, both domestically (among the different services of the national armed forces) and within multilateral coalitions. This last aspect was particularly spurred by the fifth Strategic Concept adopted by NATO in 1991, which indeed called for a closer intra-force cooperation, as well as a «highly integrated, multinational approach».<sup>9</sup>

All these features are inherently linked to the changed strategic paradigm, which shifted from being shaped by the bipolar confrontation to being featured by a single superpower, the United States. For both Italy and France, indeed, the prospect of a conventional peer-to-peer conflict no longer represented a priority and was overcome by the appearance of more compelling asymmetric and far-away threats, such as terrorism, instability and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, as the protection of national borders from a state adversary was no longer felt as an impellent

---

<sup>9</sup> On the one hand, NATO Strategic Concept of 1991 claims that «ground, maritime and air forces will have to co-operate closely and combine and assist each other in operations aimed at achieving agreed objectives». On the other one, it posits that «the ability to work closely together [...] will be particularly important for the achievement of the missions of the Allies' forces» (NATO, *The Alliance's New Strategic Concept*, 1991).

and direct need<sup>10</sup>, the military instrument of both states progressively moved away from territorial defence and turned to expeditionary missions of varying intensity. Such missions are commonly referred to as *missioni internazionali* (international missions) in Italy and *operations extérieures*, OPEX (external operations) in France. It is not fortuitous that both countries adopted such large umbrella terms to designate operations of heterogeneous nature, stretching from humanitarian action to counter-terrorism, and also including the protection of national economic interests and crisis management. After the end of the Cold War and especially since the Gulf War of 1991 – whose revolutionary character in warfare has been widely stressed by the literature (Biddle, 1996; Krepinevich, 1997) –, the new archetype of defence, both in Italy and France, started to be shaped according to the capability to rapidly project reaction and intervention forces beyond national borders, especially within a multinational coalition. Such strategic evolution was enshrined, respectively, in the New Defence Model (*Nuovo Modello di Difesa*) adopted by Italy in 1991 and in the French White Paper (*Livre blanc sur la défense*) of 1994.

During the 1990s and up to the new millennium, such missions abroad had been primarily oriented towards crisis management and conflict prevention in the form of peacekeeping and humanitarian intervention, with major exceptions represented by the already-mentioned Iraqi war (1990-1991) and the NATO-led strikes in Serbia and Kosovo (1999) (see Coticchia and Moro, 2020a; Coticchia and Moro, 2020b; Davidson, 2011). As a response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Italian and French missions were fundamentally shaped as counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency (COIN) operations, in which the engagement in Afghanistan alongside NATO partners has represented the most significant military intervention in the post-war period.<sup>11</sup> In the second decade of

---

<sup>10</sup> New NATO Strategic Concept of 1991 affirms that «the threat of a simultaneous, full-scale attack on all of NATO's European fronts has effectively been removed and thus no longer provides the focus for Allied strategy» (NATO, *The Alliance's New Strategic Concept*, 1991). Likewise, the 1994 French White Paper states that «for the first time in its history, France no longer encounters a direct military threat along its borders», and a 1991 document of the Italian Ministry of defence – entitled *Modello di Difesa. Lineamenti di sviluppo delle FF.AA. negli anni Novanta* – identified power projection as the main task of the military instrument (République française, *Livre blanc sur la défense*, 1994, p. 7; Repubblica Italiana, *Professione: Difesa. Le Forze armate italiane alla prova del modello professionale*, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> France withdrew earlier from Afghanistan than its Western partners. However, this theatre has been one of the most important international missions for France along with the engagement in the Sahel region. Across thirteen years of military intervention in Afghanistan (2001-2014), more than 70.000 French soldiers were deployed, but even afterwards France remained committed in terms of civilian support and training of local forces. Italy's two-decade involvement in Afghanistan (which started in 2001 and concluded in August 2021) has been the most significant and compelling military engagement for the country since 1945, in terms of deployed military personnel (more than 50.000 soldiers), allocated resources, and casualties (53). Italy was the fourth troops contributor to NATO's ISAF mission (where it also led the Regional Command West from 2005 to 2014), and one of the major contributors to NATO's

2000s, and precisely after the publication of the EU Global Strategy of 2016<sup>12</sup>, the focus shifted towards stabilization of regional areas struck by multiple crises. Many regions in Africa and the Middle East started to be deemed as a true source of destabilization for Europe, which for France primarily materialized in the threat posed by Islamist terrorism, whereas for Italy was identified in immigration.

In 1996, through law 97-1019/1997, the then French President Jacques Chirac ended military conscription and opted for the creation of professional armed forces – *une armée de métier* – which effectively came into being in 2001. Italy simultaneously carried out the same process with law 331 of 2000, adopting an all-volunteer force since January 2005.<sup>13</sup> Such reforms gave rise to a more responsive, lighter, and flexible defence apparatus. This had a twofold implication. On the one hand, the number of personnel was drastically reduced (as shown in figures 1.1. and 1.2.), on the other one, as the geographical scope of military operations was no longer strictly focused on the European continent, missions became inherently expeditionary.

In August 1990, France launched the plan *Armées 2000*, aimed at cutting 35.000 personnel in four years. From amounting to 606.000 in 1994, French forces were reduced to 446.000 in 2008.<sup>14</sup> Although the size of Italian armed forces consistently shrunk as compared to Cold War figures, Italy has struggled to give substance to the long-awaited reform aimed at downsizing and rationalizing its defence apparatus. Initially proposed in 1997 (law 25/1991), this renovating attempt was relaunched in 2012 (law 244/2012). The latter was commonly known as Di Paola reform, from the name of the then Minister of defence who drafted it. It called for a progressive reduction of the Italian armed forces from 183.000 to 150.000 servicemen, a cut of nearly 18%, to be achieved over a ten-year temporal window. Civilian personnel of the Ministry of defence, instead, had to be limited from 30.000 to 20.000 units (Marrone, 2012). However, such (needed) structural reorganization has never been implemented, and the Italian Parliament only last July

---

Resolute Support mission (Ministère des Armées, *La France en OPEX. 50 ans d'engagement*, 2017; Calcagno and Marrone, 2022; Marrone, 2023).

<sup>12</sup> European Union (EU). European External Action Service (EEAS). (2016). *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs\\_review\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Repubblica Italiana. Senato della Repubblica. (2018). *Professione: Difesa. Le Forze armate italiane alla prova del modello professionale*. Rome: Impact Assessment Office. <https://www.senato.it/service/PDF/PDFServer/BGT/01069543.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> République Française. Direction de l'information légale et administrative. (2022), *La politique de défense au travers des lois de programmation militaire*. <https://www.vie-publique.fr/eclairage/269187-la-politique-de-defense-au-travers-des-lois-de-programmation-militaire>

opted to postpone the target by ten years, in 2032.<sup>15</sup> De facto, the Di Paola reform has been scuttled. In fact, since 2014, the number of (military and civilian) personnel has almost remained constant in both countries: according to NATO estimates referring to 2022, in France it amounts to 207.100 (compared to 207.000 in 2014), while in Italy it amounts to 174.800 (*vis-à-vis* 183.500 in 2014).<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, the 2012 reform aimed at rebalancing the expenditure items of the defence budget<sup>17</sup>, due to a long-standing disproportion in favour of personnel, which resulted in insufficient investments in both equipment and procurement programmes, as well as in training. For long, indeed, the share of the Italian defence budget allocated to personnel exceeded 70% of total defence spending. Only recently has this imbalance been subjected to a gradual – yet still insufficient – adjustment, primarily benefitting investment in equipment and programmes, including Research and Development (R&D), which is critical in order to maintain a modern and efficient military instrument resting upon leading-edge technologies. In comparison, whereas France spent roughly 49% of its national defence budget on personnel and 25% on equipment in 2014, Italy spent approximately 76% and 10% of its defence budget respectively on the same categories over the same period.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, besides structural, organizational and operational changes afflicting the armed forces, the post-Cold War era also brought new trends in the financial dimension concerning defence. As illustrated in figures 2.1 and 2.2, both Italy and France started to reduce the proportion of their national budgets allocated to defence, a downward trend that has been reversed in the second decade of the new century, though spending remained much below levels seen in the 1990s. French budget for defence went from representing 7.2% of the GDP in 1952, to 2.88% in 1989 and 1.84% in 2018. The share of Italian GDP Italy devoted to defence went from 4% in 1952, to 2% in 1989 and 1.2% in 2015.<sup>19</sup> In 2022, the share of real GDP spent on defence by France and Italy amounts to 1.89% and

---

<sup>15</sup> See, among others, Nones (2022).

<sup>16</sup> NATO, *Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries 2014-2022*, 2023. [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/3/pdf/230321-def-exp-2022-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/3/pdf/230321-def-exp-2022-en.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> According to the principle 50-25-25, that is, 50% devoted to personnel, 25% to investment (in equipment, programmes, and Research and Development) and 25% to exercise (namely, training and infrastructure maintenance) (Liaci and Ricciardi, 2022).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> SIPRI, *Military Expenditure Database*, 2023, <https://milex.sipri.org/sipri>; MilEx Observatory, Osservatorio sulle spese militari italiane, <https://www.milex.org>.

1.51% respectively.<sup>20</sup> Please note that the increases in defence spending in both countries for 2020 and 2021 are also linked to the GDP loss induced by the Covid-19 crisis.

The financial aspect will be examined further in the chapter entitled “*Defence budgets and capabilities development*”. This last, besides analysing national trends in defence expenditure since 2014, aims to investigate how national defence budgets are divided among the three main invoices (investment, personnel, and training) and what capabilities Italy and France intend to develop through an examination of ongoing procurement programs.

As a last remark, it is worth noting that the Old Continent’s tendency to reduce its defence capacity – often referred to as the “peace dividend”<sup>21</sup> – contrast sharply with the attitude of other international actors, particularly China and Russia, which have been investing heavily in their national defence for at least two decades.<sup>22</sup>

---

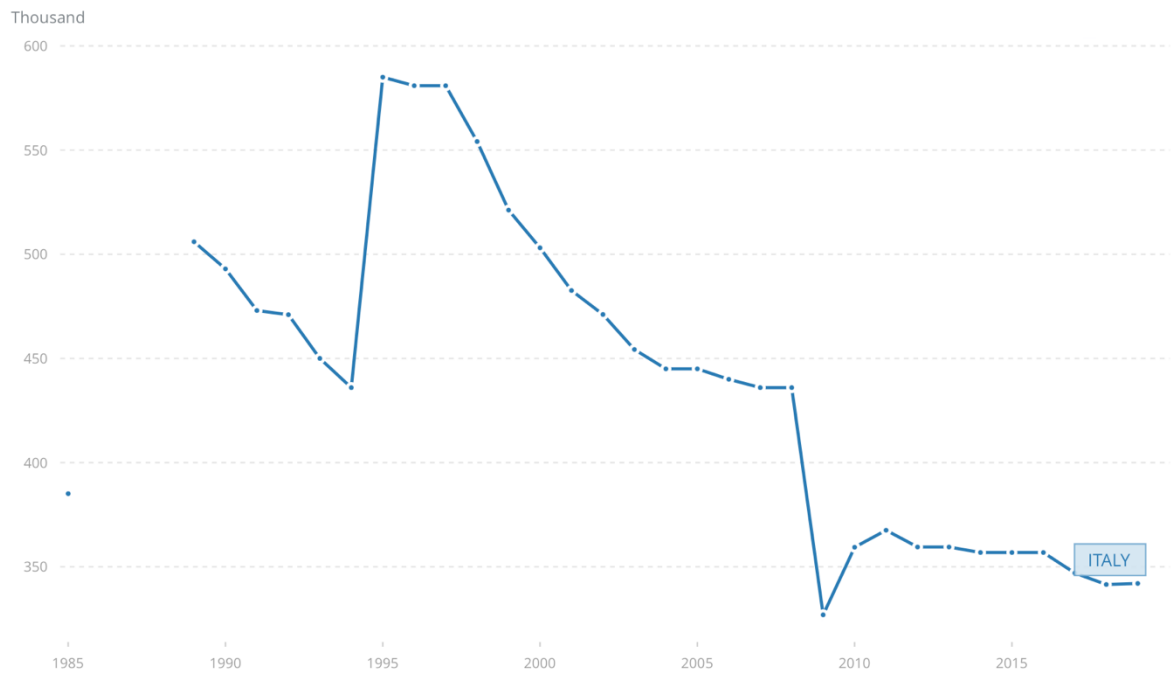
<sup>20</sup> Figures for 2022 are estimates and refer to 2015 prices (NATO, *Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries 2014-2022*, 2023).

<sup>21</sup> Whether the welfare state of the Old Continent actually benefitted from the so-called “peace dividend” – i.e., the aforementioned reduction in defence spending – remains to be assessed. The question of where the peace dividend has been reallocated represents an interesting puzzle that deserves to be investigated further through a rigorous empirical analysis.

<sup>22</sup> The tremendous surge in Russia’s and China’s defence spending has gone hand in hand with the extraordinary growth in their GDP since the early 2000s. As a result, not only have Russian and Chinese defence budgets climbed in absolute terms, but also as a share of their GDP. (Garlaschi and Ricciardi, 2022).

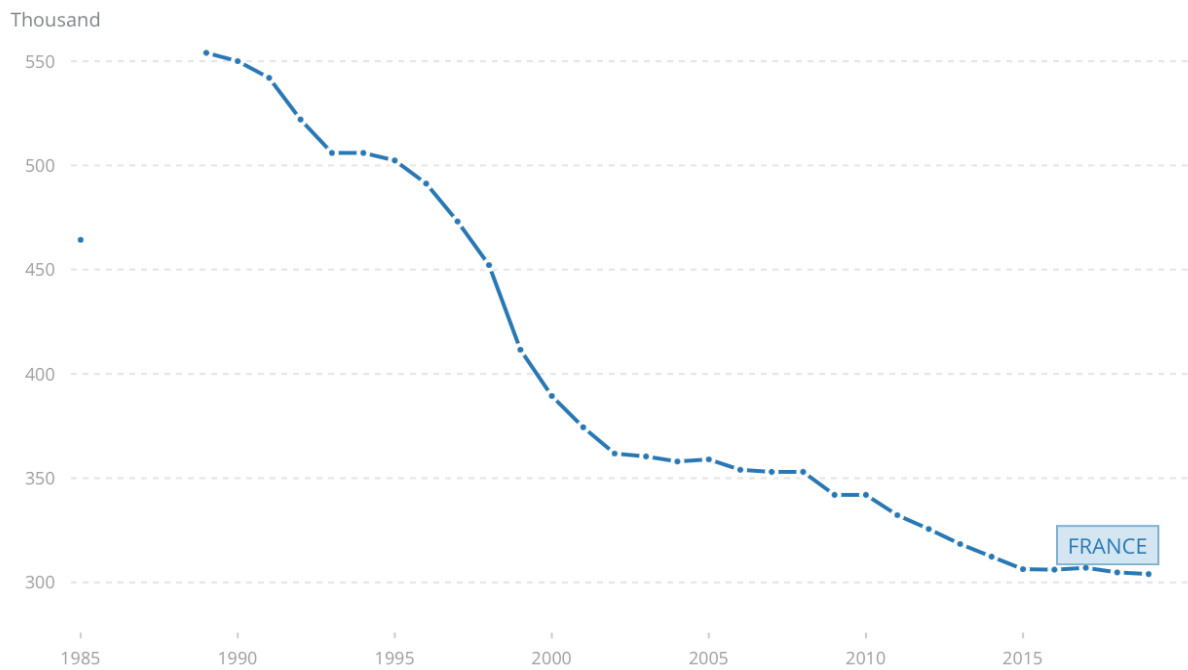


**Figure 2.1. Italian armed forces, total personnel  
1985-2019**



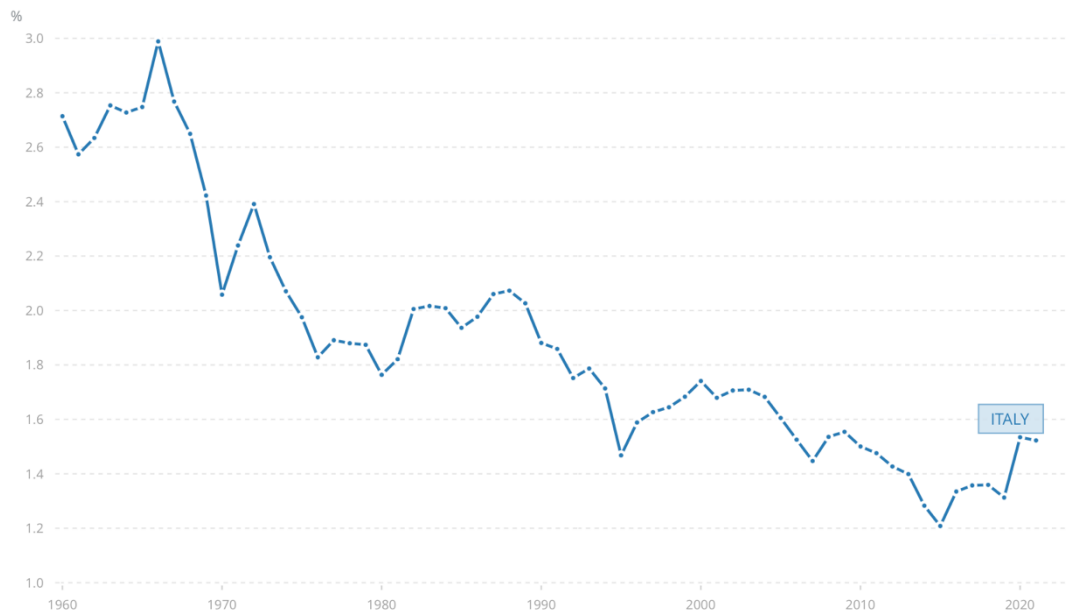
Source: World Bank

**Figure 2.2. French armed forces, total personnel  
1985-2019**



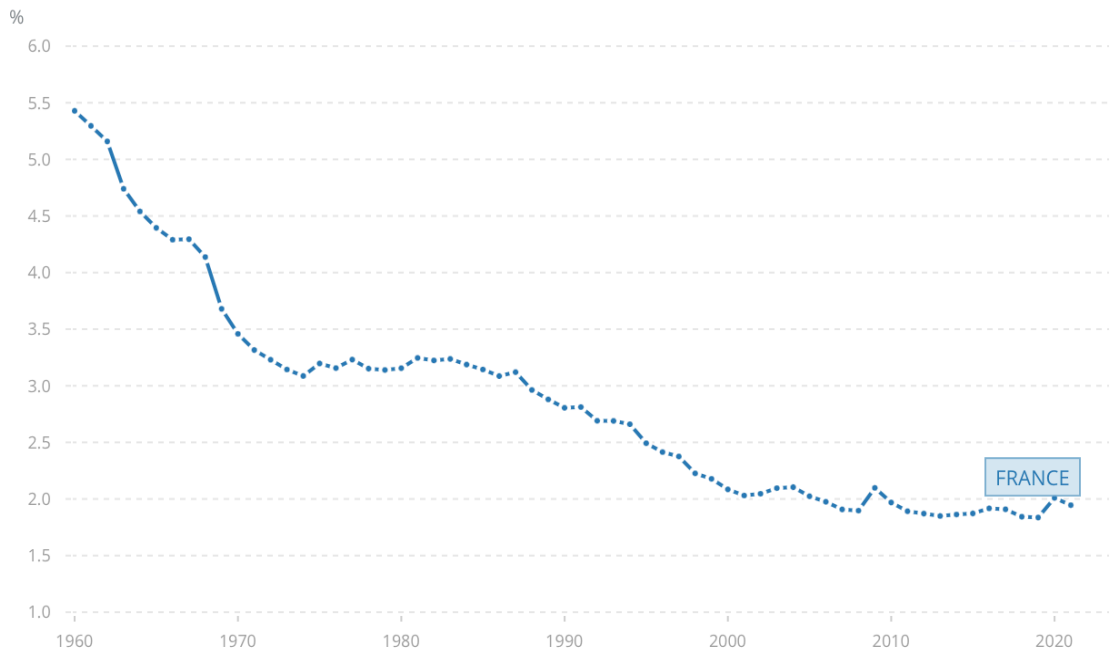
Source: World Bank

**Figure 3.1. Italy military expenditure (% of GDP)<sup>23</sup>  
1960-2021**



Source: World Bank

**Figure 3.2. France military expenditure (% of GDP)  
1960-2021**



Source: World Bank

<sup>23</sup> In the case of Italy, calculating the overall amount of defence spending is problematic since several Ministries, in addition to the Ministry of Defence, allocate funds and resources (i.e., Ministry of Economy and Finance, and Ministry of Economic Development, recently renamed Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy in 2022). These, however, are not always included in the overall budget calculation. For a more in-depth discussion, see section “Defence budgets and capabilities development”.

An additional feature shared by Italy and France in the post-Cold War era consists in their international military activism and, more precisely, in their understanding of the armed forces as a key tool of their foreign and security policy (Coticchia and Moro, 2020a; Schmitt and Rynning, 2018). Whereas interventionism – especially in its former African colonies – traditionally represented a trait of French foreign policy also during the Cold War, in line with the Gaullist quest for «a third way» between the two blocks (Schmitt and Rynning, 2018), the post-bipolar activism of Italy – which turned it into one of the major troop contributors to the United Nations (UN) – was a novelty compared to its Cold War inertia (Coticchia and Moro, 2020a). The Italian transition from «static defence» to «military dynamism» (Coticchia, 2018) through its numerous military interventions abroad, indeed, represented a major evolution in its foreign and defence posture, and essentially transformed Italy from a «security consumer» to a «security provider» (Coticchia and Moro, 2020a; Carati and Locatelli, 2017).

For both states, the military instrument is seen as an asset of their foreign policy, even if France interprets it more as a means to re-affirm its status of *puissance* (furtherly enhanced – in the context of the European Union, EU – by Brexit), while Italy as an instrument to show itself as a reliable partner, also to make up for its institutional weakness. Therefore, whereas France mostly regards its military power as a «status-seeking tool», mostly linked to its difficulty in accepting the objective loss of the centrality of Europe following the Second World War (Schmitt and Rynning, 2018), Italy often conceives the use of its armed forces as a means to «obtain political results», such as carving out a certain degree of peculiarity with its American ally or guaranteeing an influential position within alliances (Marrone, 2023).

Nevertheless, as will be analysed in the following chapter, Italy and France deeply diverge on the way such use of force is portrayed and narrated to both domestic and international audience. France has never been reluctant – due to a mix of institutional, political and cultural reasons – to present the prospect of the use of force not only as a possible option, but also as a legitimate one, thus «revealing a strong militarism as a base of foreign-policy attitudes» (Schmitt and Rynning, 2018). On the contrary, Italy has (almost) always framed its military missions in terms of humanitarianism and peace-keeping, primarily to avoid domestic opposition from a deeply-rooted pacifist public

opinion, thus struggling to maintain credibility when reality on the ground was anything but consistent with official discourse (Coticchia and De Simone, 2016).

In conclusion, it is by now common knowledge that, in light of the briefly discussed background, February 24, 2022 – the day which marks the beginning of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine – represented a watershed moment for European and international security. The shock caused by the return of a war of conquest and «territorial revisionism» on the European soil (Coticchia and Meijer, 2022) – notions which had been dismissed since the Second World War – triggered unprecedented reactions at both national and EU level. For the first time in decades, liberal-democracies overtly adopted a more conflictual and securitized language<sup>24</sup>, calling for the need to ramp up defence expenditures. The return of a conventional warfare has forced the Transatlantic community, and European Allies especially, to reassess not only the adequacy of their armed forces, but also the ability of their defence industries to provide the necessary support in terms of logistics and supply chain. The prospect of a high-intensity, full scale conflict against a near-peer competitor challenges the existing military and industrial apparatus, especially after decades of expeditionary warfare in which Western forces had enjoyed a *de facto* asymmetric advantage, in both informational and air domains.<sup>25</sup> Thus, while technically and tactically demanding, past experiences – from Afghanistan to Sahel and the Middle East – took place in an uncontested environment. Western forces did benefit from a clear superiority of the skies, and there was no compromise of the lines of communication (Beal 2022). In this regard, the current conflict in Ukraine demonstrates «a shift in scale, pace, and intensity of combat operations» (*ibidem*). As blunt as it may sound, indeed, «terrorists do not have an air power» (Goffus, 2023).

---

<sup>24</sup> On November 9, 2022, during a speech introducing the new National Strategic Review, *Revue nationale stratégique*, President Emmanuel Macron spoke not only of «rivals» or «adversaries», but of real «enemies» of France, and declared that the path taken five years ago outlines «a true rearmament of the nation». He also reiterated the need to steer the economy towards a «war economy», a notion he had introduced a few months earlier during an official speech for France’s national day celebrations in July 2022 (République Française, *À Toulon, le Président de la République présente la Revue nationale stratégique*, 2022; République Française, *Discours aux armées à l’Hôtel de Brienne*, 2022).

<sup>25</sup> The latest strategic doctrine adopted by France in November 2022, entitled *Revue nationale stratégique*, explicitly states that the «context [of the war in Ukraine] questions the current model of the French armed forces, which is conceived in a primarily expeditionary logic» (République Française, Élysée, *Revue nationale stratégique*, 2022, p. 27).

In light of NATO's return to its core business – that is, collective deterrence and defence against Russia, as explicitly stated in the 2022 Strategic Concept<sup>26</sup> – Italy and France are both concerned that today's focus on the Eastern flank does not translate into a disregard for the Southern flank, which is the fundamental area for the security and defence interests of both nations. On one hand, as claimed by former Italian Minister of defence Lorenzo Guerini, the enlarged Mediterranean is the «area of priority national strategic interest». On the other one, the 2022 French National Strategic Review confirms «the European periphery, the area from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea, part of Africa (from the Sahel to equatorial Africa), the Arabian Gulf and the Indo-Pacific» as «priority areas for the defence and security of France».<sup>27</sup> Maintaining a balanced Eastern-Southern engagement will also depend on the ability of Italy and France to converge on common positions, which implies speaking with one voice within the Euro-Atlantic community,<sup>28</sup> not least to compensate for an EU that, following Brexit, is becoming «increasingly more Carolingian».<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> NATO, Strategic Concept, 2022. <https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/>

<sup>27</sup> Repubblica Italiana, Ministero della Difesa, *Strategia di sicurezza e difesa per il Mediterraneo*, 2022; République Française, *Revue nationale stratégique*, 2022, p. 23.

<sup>28</sup> In the words of the Italian Minister of defence Guido Crosetto, «at a time when we are logically unbalanced on the Eastern front, it is our job to remind NATO that there is also a Southern front». Likewise, the Italian Chief of Staff Admiral Giuseppe Cavo Dragone affirmed that «the tragedy unfolding in Ukraine should not overshadow the issue of NATO's southern flank» (Formiche & AirPress Conference, *Prospettive europee per una Difesa comune*, 2023; CSIS Online Event, *The Future of Italy's Armed Forces*, 2022).

<sup>29</sup> IAI closed-door workshop, *L'Italia nell'Alleanza Atlantica: priorità e prospettive*, 2023.

## Divergencies in defence institutionalization and practices

In light of the previously discussed convergences, one might be led to conclude that Italy and France share very similar attitudes in security and defence. However, the picture is far more nuanced, and dissimilarities between the two nations have to do with institutional, political, and cultural factors.

To begin with, the post-Cold War dynamism of Italy and France – consisting in an interventionist and expeditionary attitude – followed decades in which the international posture of the two countries had been profoundly different. The bipolar confrontation had meant diametrically opposed things for Italy and France. Whereas the former's foreign and defence policy had been characterized by a standstill, also due to domestic factors (Coticchia and Moro, 2020a), the latter's had been quite active. Indeed, France had been very involved on the world stage during the Cold War, both politically and militarily – often resorting to its armed forces during the decolonization process. This divergence is inherently linked to a second fundamental element, namely, the relation with the United States (US).

Although both Italy and France are founding members of NATO and the EU, their relationship with the US has always profoundly differed. On the one hand, even though Italy was home to the most important Communist party in Western Europe, Italian governments have firmly been anchored to the US and NATO. Indeed, Atlanticism and pro-Europeanism have traditionally represented the two pillars of Italian foreign policy, marking a substantial continuity between Cold War and post-Cold War politics. Even the most disruptive, populist, and anti-system government Italy has had in its history – the Yellow-Green government of the Five Star Movement and the Ligue, which lasted from June 2018 to April 2019 – marked a *de facto continuum* in the country's foreign policy, despite its vocal reformist agenda (Muti, 2022; Coticchia, 2021). In a nutshell, Italy has always shown a predisposition to act within a multilateral framework, in conjunction with its European and Atlantic partners, rather than unilaterally.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Karolina Muti, interview (28 April 2023).

In this regard, the country's latest White Paper for International Security and Defence, adopted in 2015, clearly states that

«the Euro-Atlantic region represents the core of national interests and, as such, its security is the absolute priority of the country. The constitutional dictate of the homeland defence as the sacred duty of every citizen [under art. 52], therefore, is also carried out through the broader defence of peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region. Within this architecture, full and convinced national membership in the Atlantic Alliance and the development of a process of progressive integration of the European Union countries' defences represent the keystones [...] of national security and defence».<sup>31</sup>

At the same time, such centrality of the Euro-Atlantic region embodies Italy's conceptualization of pro-Europeanism, which «does not hesitate to put European integration among the pillars on which [its] new defence architecture rests» (Darnis, 2015). In this regard, Italy deems the development of European defence as «complementary to and synergistic with NATO».<sup>32</sup>

On the other one, instead, France has traditionally held a more autonomous – if not independent – stance in foreign policy. This resulted in a relentless effort to carve a sort of «third way between the two blocs», which also stems from the fact that it essentially never accepted Europe's «objective loss of geopolitical importance» following the Second World War (Schmitt and Rynning, 2018). France's quest to «navigate beyond bipolarization» (*ibidem*) also led it to the adoption of an autonomous nuclear deterrent in 1960s under President Charles De Gaulle. Such (nuclear) asset, besides representing the «backbone» of the country's defence,<sup>33</sup> is also a powerful bargaining tool leveraged by France to assert its power *vis-à-vis* allies. The legacy of the Gaullist approach still conditions the country's foreign policy, and essentially makes France «a reluctant Atlanticist» (*ibidem*). France aims to maintain some room for manoeuvre within its alliances, which does not exclude the possibility of acting unilaterally in order to pursue

---

<sup>31</sup> Repubblica Italiana, *Libro bianco per la sicurezza internazionale e la difesa*, 2015, pp. 26-27.

<sup>32</sup> Repubblica Italiana, Ministero degli Affari Esteri, *Rapporto 2020. Le scelte di politica estera*, 2020, p. 20.

<sup>33</sup> République Française, *À Toulon, le Président de la République présente la Revue nationale stratégique*, 2022.

its national interests. Despite its reintegration into the NATO Command Structure (NCS) in 2009 following 43 years of absence,<sup>34</sup> France's operational participation in NATO's activities remains limited compared to that of Italy. Thus, France is «hardly an agenda-setter in NATO», and its agency within the Alliance remains solidly grounded on the three Gaullian principles of autonomy, non-alignment, and solidarity (Calmels, 2022). France's latest National Strategic Review, *Revue nationale stratégique*, adopted in November 2022 somewhat preserves such foundation, reaffirming that

«France [...] refuses to be locked into bloc geopolitics. This has always been France's position and it is important it is maintained in the search for a balanced relationship with our allies». In addition, «France intends to maintain a unique position within the Alliance [...] because of the specificity and independence of its defence policy, owing in particular to its nuclear deterrent».<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, whereas in the 2015 White Paper Italy clearly defines its area of responsibility in security and defence, by «translat[ing] its national position into a scheme of collective security» (Marrone, 2015), France has always tended to be an autonomous political and military player, and keeps emphasizing the peculiarity of its own stance within the Alliance. While NATO is an essential frame of reference for Italy, France still tends to consider the Alliance as a «last resort» tool in its foreign policy, favouring instead national, bilateral, coalitional, and EU formats (Calmels, 2022).

This different international posture and, in particular, *vis-à-vis* the US underlies the different interpretation of the concept of strategic autonomy. Indeed, while Italy and France strongly agree on the urgency of pursuing European strategic autonomy as the only viable way to face current threats, they diverge on how such objective should be fulfilled. If France understands European strategic autonomy as the pursuit of full political, military, and industrial independence,<sup>36</sup> Italy interprets the notion in a less orthodox way. This means strengthening political, military, and industrial cooperation

---

<sup>34</sup> France withdrew from the military structure of NATO in 1966, but has never suspended its Allied member status.

<sup>35</sup> République Française, *Revue nationale stratégique*, 2022, p. 15 and p. 41.

<sup>36</sup> The French interpretation of European strategic autonomy is epitomized by President's Macron recent visit to China in April 2023, which was followed by his statement on what Europe should be, namely a «third superpower», rather than a mere US «follower» (Politico, *Europe must resist pressure to become "America's followers"*, says Macron, 9 April 2023).



among member states to enable the EU to become an effective actor in foreign and defence policy, while avoiding cutting off major reference partners (i.e. the UK and the US).<sup>37</sup> The notion of strategic autonomy, indeed, entails a fundamental question, that is: “autonomy from whom?”. Only by articulating the concept of a common European defence as the lacking European pillar within NATO’s architecture, have the proponents of the European strategic autonomy managed to legitimize the drive for common defence in the eyes of their American Ally. This inevitably supposes that, in seeking to enhance its role as an autonomous actor in the international stage, the EU recognises the primacy of the transatlantic bond, which means that its relationship with the US must remain *sui generis*.<sup>38</sup> The diverging views of Italy and France on this are hardly deniable. Whereas the former advocates for a European strategic autonomy which should remain open to its main partners (US and UK in the front row), the latter interprets the notion as the achievement of a full independence, but is often perceived as a «more polite form of souverainism» rather than true pro-Europeanism.<sup>39</sup>

The different nature of the political systems of Italy and France paves the way to a third element of dissonance, that is to say a different institutionalization of defence.<sup>40</sup> Through the introduction of semi-presidentialism with the 1958 Constitution, the French President’s power has considerably expanded. Indeed, the birth of the fifth Republic marks an «uncontested» pre-eminence of the President of the Republic over foreign and defence policies (Calmels, 2022), which results in a very powerful executive and weak parliamentary control having no equivalent in other democracies (Forster, 2006). The President’s quasi-monopoly over national defence and foreign policy has been reinforced by the practice of the fifth Republic. Custom has set off national defence, security, and foreign policy as being a “reserved domain” (*domaine réservé*) of the Head of state, even in case of cohabitation, that is, when the political majority of the *Assemblée nationale* is opposed to the President. Consequently, «presidential supremacy on defence and foreign issues remains the main feature of [French] policymaking», determining the international orientation of the country (Schmitt and Rynning, 2018). In this key function, the President of the Republic is assisted by the Prime minister and the Minister of defence (*Ministre*

---

<sup>37</sup> In this regard, some have recently started to speak of a “open European strategic autonomy”.

<sup>38</sup> Michele Nones, interview (24 April 2023).

<sup>39</sup> IAI closed-door roundtable under Chatham House Rule, *La sicurezza italiana di fronte alla guerra in Ucraina*, 3 May 2023.

<sup>40</sup> See Panebianco (1997).

*des armées*) who are both responsible of the defence policy in front of the Parliament. The decision to deploy troops abroad is a prerogative of the National Defence and Security Council (a structure currently missing in Italy), which is chaired by the President of the Republic.<sup>41</sup> This is a major difference between France and Italy. Even though in both countries the Head of State is the supreme commander of the armed forces (in Italy under article 87 of the Italian Constitution and under article 15 of the French Constitution), in Italy, contrary to France, the President of the Republic does not have to authority to decide upon their deployment, which is instead a decision made by the government with the approval of the parliament. Although the 2008 Constitutional reform reinforced the role of the French Parliament, its control remains limited. Indeed, even if it must be informed by the government of the decision to deploy troops abroad within three days, it has no faculty to vote. In addition, the disposition introduced under article 35 of the Constitution, according to which an authorization of the Parliament is required to prolong a military intervention for a period longer than four months, merely represents an «*a posteriori* control» of external operations which does not mark an actual qualitative improvement (Schmitt and Rynning, 2018).

Therefore, whereas foreign, security and defence policymaking in France is highly centralized in the hands of the executive, in Italy the system is not only more «polycentric»<sup>42</sup>, but also less institutionalized. In the case of Italy, the lack of a strong executive power (Panebianco, 1997), coupled with the vivid aversion to military affairs stemming from the legacy of the Second World War and its Fascist past, entails a vacuum of a political leadership capable of structuring defence policy according to a long-term vision for the country. In other words, Italy lacks a political guidance responsible for achieving the synthesis of the demands of the various stakeholders involved in defence. This would imply not only harmonizing the needs of the industry with those of the armed forces, but above all framing them, first, in a strategy that defines and specifies national interests, and then in a clear institutional structure.<sup>43</sup> In this context where there is no political driver willing and able to set forward this systemic process, the 2015 White Paper represented an attempt by the Italian Ministry of defence to fill the conceptual gap deriving from the absence of a national security strategy. However, its desired reforming

---

<sup>41</sup> See, among others, Casardi (2018).

<sup>42</sup> Alessandro Marrone, interview (24 April 2022).

<sup>43</sup> Alessandro Marrone and Michele Nones, interviews (24 and 26 April 2023).

impulse has only partially been actualized since it has not been followed by the «set of norms of different legal dignity» (Camporini, 2015) that would have been necessary in order to concretize it. Moreover, as there is no well-established institutional framework, Italy has developed a certain degree of informal practices. For instance, the formal central role attributed by the Constitution (through article 117) to the Parliament in matters of defence, security, and the armed forces has long been overlooked by an informal practice that has allowed the executive power to exercise a key power. The custom of Italian governments to bypass a formal Parliamentary vote over military deployments abroad lasted until the approval of law 145 in 2016, which grants the Parliament an *ex ante* formal veto power over the deployment of the armed forces. Nevertheless, despite the normative dictate, another informal practice has emerged: instead of a thorough monitoring of each mission, parliamentary control is limited to a mere overall mandate of all international missions (including both the approval of new missions and the extension of past ones), within the annual vote on international missions, commonly known as *decreto missioni internazionali* (Coticchia and Moro, 2020b).

This is a major factor which distinguishes Italian and French attitudes in defence matters. Indeed, whereas the former suffers from doctrinal and political fragmentation, the latter is a «champion of a whole-of-government approach».<sup>44</sup> France has built a cohesive national defence system, based on public-private partnerships (involving the industry, academia, and think tanks), which acts according to a well-defined vision of the country's national interests and role in the world. The Italian defence apparatus, instead, goes «in a more scattered order».<sup>45</sup> It is difficult to argue that this systemic divergence plays no role in the often-perceived unbalance in the Franco-Italian relationship, especially in terms of industrial cooperation. Acknowledging it, on the contrary, could finally pave the way to a process of domestic reflection and reform in Italian defence, which the new Minister of defence Crosetto has claimed to be willing to undertake.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Karolina Muti, interview (28 April 2023).

<sup>45</sup> (*Ibidem*).

<sup>46</sup> On 25 January 2023, during the presentation of its policy guidelines in front of the Parliament, the Minister of defence Crosetto announced its intention to reform the existing security apparatus in both normative and institutional terms, whose point of departure consists in the «elaboration of a clear national security strategy» (Repubblica Italiana, *Audizione Crosetto su linee programmatiche Ministero Difesa*, 2023).

The last worth-noting divergence between the two selected countries pertains to the attitude of their respective public opinions towards military and defence matters, as well as their different strategic cultures. Whereas the French is «systematically the most supportive of military options among the European public opinions» (Schmitt and Rynning, 2018), especially following the 2015 terrorist attacks on France's national soil, the widespread aversion of the Italian public to talking about military affairs has to do with a deep-rooted pacifism stemming from cultural and historical reasons. This dissonance has led to a substantial difference in how the two countries frame military interventions abroad in public discourse.

Paradoxically, Italy has been more successful in forging its own strategic narrative than France has been, despite the latter's well-disposition to resorting to military action as a foreign policy tool. Therefore, France and Italy differ, firstly, on how to attain their security objectives, and, secondly, on how this action is portrayed to the general audience, both domestically and internationally. Insofar the first point, while France prioritizes military force over non-military tools, including in crisis management (*ibidem*), Italy tends to juxtapose the use of armed forces to a multi-dimensional toolkit made of «diplomacy [...], intelligence, [and] a constant focus on reconstruction and development» (Coticchia 2018). In addition, Italy has been very effective in building up its own strategic narrative grounded on humanitarian intervention and pacifism, so much so it succeeded in depicting itself as an «an international peacekeeper» (Coticchia and Ruggeri, 2022). This focus on the anthropological dimension of security – which according to some makes up an «Italian specificity»<sup>47</sup> – has been fruitful not only at the national level (thus managing to legitimize *military* operations abroad as *peace* operations in Italian public opinion), but also at the international level. This is confirmed by the fact that Italy is not included in Forster's (2006) classification of the expeditionary warfare models of armed forces in Europe, next to France and the United Kingdom. France, instead, failed to elaborate «a new transpartisan grand narrative» (*ibidem*), partly due to its difficulty to finding its own dimension in the unipolar international order that followed the dissolution of the Soviet Union. France has consistently advocated for the emergence of a multipolar world as a way to offset the global supremacy of the US. Furthermore, it has so far failed to reconcile its ambition to be «a driver of European integration» with its primary objective consisting in national strategic autonomy. This contradiction comes to light in

---

<sup>47</sup> IAI closed-door workshop under Chatham House Rule, *L'Italia nell'Alleanza Atlantica: priorità e prospettive*, 30 March 2023.

the 2022 National Strategic Review which presents national strategic autonomy as «the prerequisite for protecting [France's] fundamental interests», but also calls for a greater European integration in order to achieve «European sovereignty».<sup>48</sup> In conclusion, the ambivalence of France's goal to pursue both independence and multilateralism (Meunier, 2008), seems to confirm its attitude in foreign policy and in particular towards multilateralism, which tends to be interpreted as a forum to transpose its own national interests beyond national borders. It is also the reason underlying France's constant quest to act as a «framework nation» within coalitions.<sup>49</sup> This seems to be confirmed by French relations with both NATO and the EU, and contributes to fostering the reticence of many European states towards Macron's vision of European strategic autonomy. As stressed by Calmels (2022), within the Atlantic Alliance, France aims to «shape [...] debates according to [...] its own [...] interests by setting the agenda on specific topics for which it has a doctrinal or technological advantage over most Allies». With regards to the relationship with the EU, instead, the words of former Italian Ambassador to France Pietro Quaroni, despite dating back to the 1950s, are still effective today in giving an idea of how French initiatives within the EU are often perceived by member states.

«Historically speaking, the French are the least European among European peoples. I sometimes wonder if actually they are not even less European than the English. They indeed are willing to admit Europe and whatever European combinations one wants, but under one condition: that Europe is French and the combinations in question are all for the main, if not exclusive, benefit of France».<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> République Française, *Revue nationale stratégique*, 2022, p. 20.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 27.

<sup>50</sup> Varsori, A. (2022b). Pietro Quaroni. 1946-1957. *Gli ambasciatori d'Italia in Francia dal 1945 al 1991*, Conference organized by Italiques, Italian Embassy in Paris (1-2 December 2022). See also Varsori (2022a).

## Italy: from the 2015 White Paper until today

The White Paper for International Security and Defence (*Libro bianco per la sicurezza internazionale e la difesa*) published in April 2015 is the fourth of its genre, following the ones of 1977, 1985 and 2002. It has represented an ambitious reform effort by the Italian Ministry of Defence aimed to make up for structural and cultural distortions that have long been ingrained in the country's defence system. Not only did it put forward a rationalization of the personnel in order to rebalance the defence spending, but also it tried to bridge the chasm between the public opinion and defence actors through the creation of a country-system approach. Also, it was intended to adapt Italy's doctrinal posture to a changed international scenario. In doing so, it defined guidelines of action, first and foremost, by identifying a precise geographical area as the priority *locus* of national interests. Unfortunately, as is often the case in this country which has «an intense passion and weak institutions»<sup>51</sup>, its reformist scope has been strongly downgraded, if not overtly opposed.

This paragraph is aimed at highlighting the most relevant features of the Italian defence system from the White Paper to date. Most of them add up to the characteristics previously discussed and, as such, represent a *continuum* of Italy's foreign and defence policy, while others represent a (slight) evolution as compared to the past. These consist of being an active security provider (in continuity with the trend that started with the end of the Cold War) but, contrary to the past, Italian military missions abroad started to focus on the “Enlarged Mediterranean” region, primarily the Sahel and North Africa. A second characteristic relates to a sort of Italian specificity towards the use of force («an Italian way to peace operations», Coticchia and Ruggeri, 2022), which does not merely serve rhetorical purposes, but also translates into a practical and operational approach combining the use of force with other non-military initiatives. Third, a preference to act within a multilateral framework, which does not preclude, however, bilateral operations. Indeed, in the period from the end of the Second World War to 2020, Italy took part to 151 operations abroad, of which 129 under a multilateral framework (UN, NATO or EU) while only 22 were bilateral missions (Vignoli and Coticchia, 2022). Finally, a vision of

---

<sup>51</sup> Aldo Moro, 28 February 1978 (Damilano, M., *Un atomo di verità. Aldo Moro e la fine della politica in Italia*, 2019).

the military instrument as a fundamental foreign policy tool, especially *vis-à-vis* Euro-Atlantic allies, in order to play an important role for the agenda setting.

Italy as a security provider. «In continuity with previous years, Italy intends to maintain an active and leading role outside the national context, and in operations, to restore international stability», claims the latest three-year Programming and Policy Planning Document (*Documento Programmatico Pluriennale*, DPP) published in 2022.<sup>52</sup> This exemplifies Italy's expeditionary vocation, which consists in projecting its armed forces beyond national borders to contribute to international peace and security. Moreover, in 2022, the former Minister of Defence Lorenzo Guerini reconfirmed the vision of the military instrument as a crucial asset in the country's foreign policy, by stating that «defence [...] plays a fundamental role in supporting Italy's positioning in the international scenario and the country's competitiveness». In his words, this is crucial to allow Italy to «continue supporting the role it has assumed [...] as an eminent exporter of security».<sup>53</sup> The 2015 White Paper states that «over the past 20 years [...] participation [...] in multinational military operations has strengthened Italy's international role» and that the country must «assume greater responsibilities and a role as an active participant [...] to resolve various crises».<sup>54</sup> Italy's activism, however, and especially within NATO, pursues a pragmatic approach, which stands on the awareness that

«only the Atlantic Alliance can ensure sufficient deterrence and defence of the Euro-Atlantic territory against a possible conventional military threat [...]. The only strategy capable of maximizing the security framework and mitigating the related risks is that of active participation in NATO. Within this framework, Italy must propose itself as a net security contributor».<sup>55</sup>

It should be noted that, even during the pandemic crisis, the commitment to international missions not only did not decrease, but even grew. In 2021, indeed, international missions increased from 38 to 40 (Calcagno and Marrone, 2022).

---

<sup>52</sup> Repubblica Italiana, Ministero della Difesa, *Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2022-2024*, 2022.

<sup>53</sup> Repubblica Italiana, Ministero della Difesa, *Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2021-2023*, 2021, p. 16.

<sup>54</sup> Repubblica Italiana, Ministero della Difesa, *Libro bianco per la sicurezza internazionale e la difesa*, 2015, p. 33.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 38.

The push towards greater pro-activism is therefore a constant in the post-Cold War foreign and defence policy of Italy. An element of evolution can nevertheless be noted as compared to the 2015 White Paper. Whereas in 2015 Italy's contribution to the stability of its neighbourhood was associated with spreading the liberal-democratic model, this goal has today been abandoned. This change of approach denotes an implicit acknowledgment of how unsuccessful and ill-fated the previous interventionism of the 2000s and 2010s has been.

The primacy of the “Enlarged Mediterranean” region. The 2015 White Paper introduced a significant novelty: it translated the centrality of the Mediterranean into operational terms, relocating the armed forces in a more delimited area. Indeed, although it has traditionally represented the basin in which «our country is historically, politically and economically located»<sup>56</sup>, such geographical primacy had never coincided with the projection focus of the Italian armed forces, which had instead been deployed in every part of the globe, from East Timor to Haiti, passing through Somalia and Afghanistan (Vignoli and Coticchia, 2022; Coticchia and Moro, 2020a).<sup>57</sup>

The concept of “Enlarged Mediterranean” (also known as “Wider Mediterranean”) is an Italian-crafted notion – an «autonomous interpretation, reflected in the British literature when speaking of “regional security complex”»<sup>58</sup> – through which Italy identifies a «strategic dimension, not anchored to rigidly established geographical landmarks», whose stability – or lack thereof – affects the fundamental interests, development and security of the country. Indeed, Italy is «directly affected by the instability of this region which represents the Southern flank of both the Atlantic Alliance and the EU».<sup>59</sup> It includes «areas immediately contiguous to the Mediterranean in the narrow sense, incorporating the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf and passing through the sub-Saharan belt, which – from the Horn of Africa through the Sahel – extends to the Gulf of Guinea»<sup>60</sup>, as well as Western Balkans, in which Italy «will continue to aspire to

---

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

<sup>57</sup> For a list of Italian military operations abroad since the end of the Second World War, see Repubblica Italiana, Camera dei Deputati, *Nuovi profili della partecipazione italiana alle missioni internazionali*, 2010. For an overview of Italian military operations in the new millennium, see Repubblica Italiana, Camera dei Deputati, *Le missioni internazionali: tabelle e grafici 2004-2020*, 2020.

<sup>58</sup> IAI closed-door workshop under Chatham House Rule, *L'Italia nell'Alleanza Atlantica: priorità e prospettive*, 30 March 2023.

<sup>59</sup> *Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2022-2024*, 2022, p. 8

<sup>60</sup> Repubblica Italiana, Ministero della Difesa, *Strategia di sicurezza e difesa per il Mediterraneo*, 2022.



play a central role in ongoing military operations, consistently with its role as reference partner» due to its «geographical location, continuity and depth of interactions».<sup>61</sup>

Even in the aftermath of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, at doctrinal level, the absolute centrality of the Mediterranean persists. The 2022 DPP, indeed, defines it as a «vital space» for the country, the Atlantic Alliance and the EU, in continuity with the 2015 White Paper which deemed the «stability of the Euro-Mediterranean region as a vital national interest» and, thus, «the main area of national intervention».<sup>62</sup> The 2022 DPP clearly posit the primacy of the “Enlarged Mediterranean” claiming that

«Italy, which by its very nature possesses an innate maritime vocation, is strongly dependent on the Mediterranean Sea» and since «the security of Europe – and thus that of Italy – is primarily linked to the security and stability of the Mediterranean, [this is] consistently reflected in our country's foreign and defence policy».<sup>63</sup>

This «widespread fragility» takes the form of a series of asymmetric and multifaceted threats, namely Islamist terrorism (referred to, by both Italy and France, through the pejorative adjective “Jihadist”), illicit trafficking (including migration flows), hybrid threats from actors outside the region, a persistent demographic unbalance (exacerbated by the effects of climatic change), and, since 24 February 2022, the «projection of influence of old and new actors» – respectively Russia and China who nevertheless are not explicitly mentioned – among which some have had a «never-ending ambition [...] in areas of direct NATO and EU’s interest».<sup>64</sup>

In all the multilateral *fora* to which it is a party, the EU and NATO in the first place, Italy is committed to emphasizing the link between the Eastern and the Southern flanks, as well as that between «external and internal security», with particular reference to the Mediterranean. Italy, indeed, conceives «internal security and defence to be a *continuum* with out-of-area projection and a way to contributing to international stability».<sup>65</sup> This extract from an official document of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirms two well-

---

<sup>61</sup> *Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2022-2024*, 2022, p. 16.

<sup>62</sup> *Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2021-2023*, 2021, p. 3; *Libro bianco per la sicurezza internazionale e la difesa*, 2015, p. 27-39.

<sup>63</sup> *Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2022-2024*, 2022, p. 6.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

<sup>65</sup> Repubblica Italiana, Ministero degli Affari Esteri, *Rapporto 2020. Le scelte di politica estera*, 2020, p. 20.

established trends in Italy's foreign and defence policy: on one hand, its projection beyond national borders, especially Southward (to serve both the strengthening of NATO's deterrence and defence posture, as well as for crisis management operations) and, on the other one, its constant reference to being «an international peacekeeper» (Coticchia and Ruggeri, 2022). In this regard, the three-circle categorisation proposed in this study could be useful for a twofold reason. First, to ponder on how to capitalize on Italy's assets, in light of their dual value – that is, to serve the purposes of NATO's defence and deterrence, as well as crisis management – and, at the same time, to be able to clearly distinguish the nature of the operation in order to adapt the approach consistently to the intended goal. If one of the objectives of Italian crisis management – as will be seen in a moment – is capacity building in the Sahel region and North Africa especially, then the approach must not only effectively be more holistic, but also involve other Euro-Atlantic partners. This also requires a change in the EU's attitude towards Africa – both as individual member states and Europe as a whole – which consists in «seeing the Others as they are and not as we would like them to be» (Del Re 2023).

«A national way to peace operations».<sup>66</sup> In 2022, the former Italian Minister of Defence Lorenzo Guerini claimed that Italy's strategy should rely also on a «military diplomacy approach».<sup>67</sup> Through this expression – which sounds like an oxymoron, since it implies the use of soft power which is, by definition, antithetical to the use of force –, he referred to a way of approaching military operations abroad which has been defined as an «Italian specificity».<sup>68</sup> The 2015 White Paper defines this notion as «a constant, careful, and pragmatic action developed by the defence apparatus in international relations [...] facilitating both international stabilisation and the development of fruitful economic, cultural and social relations».<sup>69</sup> Besides relying primarily on NATO and the EU, «the international projection of the military instrument is complemented by bilateral activities with a high strategic impact on the security and stability [...] of partner countries», aimed at «strengthening the institutions of the countries where [Italy] operate[s]».<sup>70</sup> This goes beyond a purely rhetorical rationale and consists of using the

---

<sup>66</sup> Ministero della Difesa, 2001. *Nuove forze per un nuovo secolo* in Coticchia and Ruggeri (2022).

<sup>67</sup> *Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2022-2024*, 2022, p. III.

<sup>68</sup> IAI closed-door workshop under Chatham House Rule, *L'Italia nell'Alleanza Atlantica: priorità e prospettive*, 30 March 2023.

<sup>69</sup> Repubblica Italiana, Ministero della Difesa, *Libro bianco per la sicurezza internazionale e la difesa*, 2015, p 47.

<sup>70</sup> *Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2022-2024*, 2022, pp. 8-19.

military instrument along with «various formats of cooperation», including the combination of civil-military cooperation (CIMIC), diplomatic actions and development cooperation initiatives. This approach has been particularly applied in the Sahel region, where, along with the deployment of troops in multilateral and bilateral formats (i.e., operation Task Force Takuba, operation MINUSMA, EUCAP Sahel Mali, EUTM Mali), Italy has broadened its diplomatic presence by opening two new Embassies in Niger and Burkina Faso. In this regard, «the [...] appointment of Emanuela Del Re as the new EU Special Representative for the Sahel, the first woman and first Italian to hold this prestigious post, is an important recognition of this».<sup>71</sup> For instance, the Italian «way to peace operations» considerably relies on missions aimed to advising e mentoring of local armed and police forces, as well as maritime surveillance to fight piracy and human trafficking, as well as to ensure compliance with the arms embargo on Libya (Coticchia and Ruggieri, 2022; Coticchia 2021). For instance, the ongoing bilateral missions in Libya, Lebanon and Palestine are intended to strengthen local institutions in order to support the local government in accomplishing different tasks, such as contrasting terrorism, better control borders and illicit trafficking, or protect national companies operating in the area.

However, as important as they are, these actions remain a minor part of Italy's overall security approach. Thus, if the country actually intends to contribute to the capacity-building of these states, it has to do more.<sup>72</sup>

The preference for multilateral frameworks. This feature remains a constant in Italy's foreign and defence policy. As the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs recently claimed, multilateral cooperation represents «the pole star» of Italy's action.<sup>73</sup> In this regard, NATO has been Italy's main frame of reference, both in operative terms and in terms of conceptualising military transformation. This has favoured standardization, interoperability and jointness among different national armed forces (Coticchia and Ruggieri, 2022) and, as such, has been particularly valuable for capabilities development.<sup>74</sup> The 2022 DPP reaffirms that Atlanticism and pro-Europeanism are Italy's bedrock in security and defence<sup>75</sup>, and it is no coincidence that the main objective of the

---

<sup>71</sup> Repubblica Italiana, MAECI, *L'Italia e il Sahel*, 2021.

<sup>72</sup> See Biddle, Macdonald and Baker (2017).

<sup>73</sup> Repubblica Italiana, Parlamento, *Comunicazioni Tajani e Crosetto su missioni internazionali e processi di pace*, 2023. <https://webtv.camera.it/evento/22433>

<sup>74</sup> General Vincenzo Camporini, interview (2 May 2023).

<sup>75</sup> «The Atlantic Alliance and the European Union [are] the two main references [are] in security and defence» (*Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2022-2024*, 2022, p. 8).

2022 Security and Defence Strategy for the Mediterranean (*Strategia di sicurezza e difesa per il Mediterraneo*) is to foster an «active posture within frame organizations» in order to bring a renewed attention and action to the Southern flank. The fact that the 2022 NATO Strategic Concept mentions the Southern flank – albeit in a secondary way compared to the threat to the East (Marrone and Freyrie, 2022) – is proof of Italy's ability to influence the agenda setting of the organizations to which it is an active party. If Italy succeeds in proposing Italian nominees for NATO top positions (which are set to expire at the end of 2023), it will be a further confirmation of this engaged role at NATO tables.

So far, Italy has not only obtained a strong focus on the “Enlarged Mediterranean” in a perspective of cooperation and synergy between NATO and the EU, but has also been able to define the EDIRPA legislation (European Defence Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act) in line with national interests, i.e., allowing participation of European companies with shareholders from outside the EU (Marrone and Freyrie, 2023). Another instance of Italy’s activism within the Alliance is embodied by the notion of 360-degree approach, which it successfully managed to integrate in NATO jargon, as displayed in the 2022 Strategic Concept.<sup>76</sup> Italy also managed to assert its vision, grounded on a solid EU-NATO cooperation, by advancing a process of revision of NATO’s Strategic Concept in parallel to that of the EU, which finally led to the adoption of the EU Strategic Compass in March 2022.<sup>77</sup>

Italy’s strategy therefore consists of being an effective security contributor in NATO and the EU – in both operational and industrial terms<sup>78</sup> – in order to maintain a greater room for manoeuvre in the negotiating tables of the Euro-Atlantic community. Keeping this influential role will be even more critical in light of the fact that the “Enlarged Mediterranean” is becoming increasingly secondary in the agenda of NATO due to the Alliance’s «return to its core task» of deterrence and defence against Russia (*ibidem*).

---

<sup>76</sup> Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani before the Parliamentary Foreign and Defence Commissions, 18 May 2023. <https://webtv.camera.it/evento/22433> ; NATO, *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept*, 2022, p. 1.

<sup>77</sup> An official document of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs indeed figured among the foreign policy objectives of the country to make «the possible review of the European Security Strategy [...] as a consensus building exercise in parallel with the probable elaboration of a new Strategic Concept for NATO» (Ministero degli Affari Esteri, *Rapporto 2020. Le scelte di politica estera*, 2020, p. 21).

<sup>78</sup> With 156 entities participating, Italy ranks second in the proposals selected by the European Defence Fund (EDF), which is aimed at financing R&D projects, after France (with 178 entities). See EU, European Commission, *Results of the EDF 2021 Calls for Proposals: EU invests €1.2 billion in 61 defence industrial cooperation projects*, 2022. [https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/results-edf-2021-calls-proposals-eu-invests-eu12-billion-61-defence-industrial-cooperation-projects-2022-07-20\\_en](https://defence-industry-space.ec.europa.eu/results-edf-2021-calls-proposals-eu-invests-eu12-billion-61-defence-industrial-cooperation-projects-2022-07-20_en)

The reformist drive of the 2015 White Paper. Whereas, through the institution of an Operational Inter-Force Command Headquarters (*Comando Operativo di Vertice Interforze*, COVI), Italy succeeded in transposing the principles of interoperability and jointness at a structural level, many reforms proposed by the White Paper remain unimplemented.

First and foremost, no progress has been recorded regarding the implementation of the law 244 of 2012, which envisaged a quantitative reduction of the workforce (from 190,000 military and 30,000 civilians to 150,000 military and 20,000 civilians) to build a «younger [and] leaner» personnel structure, as well as a rationalization of the overall defence apparatus to «eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic superstructures and unproductive duplications».<sup>79</sup> The existence of numerous language schools, one for each service of the armed forces, is a striking example of this inefficiency.

In addition, the collaboration between the Italian defence and the academic world remains negligible, as evidenced by the fact that generally experts are not invited to participate to parliamentary hearings, differently from France where, instead, parliamentary discussion regularly involves them. Likewise, the public debate on defence matters remains limited and superficial, as the (rough) parliamentary oversight over military operations abroad (Coticchia and Ruggeri, 2022; Coticchia and Moro, 2020b).

Ultimately, the defence governance reform envisaged by the 2015 White Paper never translated into concrete deeds. In presenting the Parliament the guidelines of his dicastery in January 2023, the Italian Minister of Defence Guido Crosetto put forward his intention to launch such governance reform, as well as to (finally) provide the country with a long-awaited National Security Strategy.<sup>80</sup> Whether Italy will be able to “walk the talk” remains to be seen.

A final remark concerns the potential evolution of Italy’s attitude in legitimizing the use of its military instrument, which has long been framed according to a strategic narrative grounded on humanitarianism and peace operations (Coticchia and De Simone, 2016). Former Prime Minister Mario Draghi’s «we have to spend much more than we have done so far»<sup>81</sup>, indeed, launched an «unusual signal within Italian public debate»

---

<sup>79</sup> *Libro bianco per la sicurezza internazionale e la difesa*, 2015, pp. 41-9.

<sup>80</sup> Repubblica Italiana, Camera dei Deputati, *Audizione Crosetto su linee programmatiche Ministero Difesa*, 2023. <https://webtv.camera.it/evento/21623#>

<sup>81</sup> Mario Draghi, 1 March 2022.

(Calcagno and Marrone, 2022), which may inaugurate a new way in how defence matters are presented. This represents a major novelty in Italy's attitude in defence and might possibly pave the way to a new frame that «deviates from the traditional rhetoric focused on peace as the sole cornerstone of the country's foreign and defence policy» (Coticchia and Moro, 2023).

## France: continuity and novelty of Macron's Presidency

In light of the central role played by the President of the Republic in foreign and defence policies, this section focuses on Emmanuel Macron's Presidency in order to assess its elements of continuity, as well as those of change, compared to the international posture adopted by his predecessors.

President Macron has been defined as a leader who has triggered a «political big bang» within French politics (Fourquet, 2019) and, in some regards, his reformist drive has not spared foreign and defence policy.

Just some months after being elected in April 2017, indeed, he published France's first-ever Strategic Review for National Defence and Security (*Revue stratégique de défense et de sécurité nationale*, RSDSN) in October 2017. In doing so, he first and foremost made a choice of formal discontinuity with the past. Instead of following the practice of revising the then current White Paper on Defence and National Security (*Livre blanc sur la défense et la sécurité nationale*) of 2013<sup>82</sup> – which, according to former President Hollande's, was aimed at defining the «future perspective» of France's defence for a fifteen-year period<sup>83</sup> – Macron opted for an ambitious reflection of French foreign policy modelled after US grand strategies. An exceptionality can also be seen in the significant number of documents produced, a choice that denotes a desire to provide a precise presidential slant to France's direction in defence.<sup>84</sup> In a nutshell, «Macron has consolidated his stature as foreign policy chief» (Cadier, 2022). The number of strategic documents issued under Macron's Presidency is unprecedented: three strategic doctrines in just six years *vis-à-vis* four White Papers across the previous sixty years. Such documents consist of the 2017 *Revue stratégique de défense et de sécurité nationale* (RSDSN), its updating in 2021 (*Actualisation stratégique*), and finally the 2022 National Strategic Review (*Revue nationale stratégique*). Their relationship with the 2013 White

---

<sup>82</sup> The 2013 White Paper is the fourth White Paper to be adopted by the Fifth Republic, following those of 1972, 1994, and 2008.

<sup>83</sup> République Française, Ministère de la Défense, *Livre blanc de défense et de sécurité nationale*, 2013, p. 9.

<sup>84</sup> Criticism has mounted regarding the last National Strategic Review (RNS) because neither members of the Parliament, nor think tanks have been involved in its drafting. On the contrary, the RNS 2022 is the result of work conducted purely by the executive, concerted by the Direction générale des relations internationales et de la stratégie (DGRIS) and the Secrétariat général de la défense et de la sécurité nationale (SGDSN) (Tenenbaum, Varma and Dufour, 2022).

Paper remains ambiguous, as no hierarchy has been established between them (Tenenbaum, Varma and Dufour, 2022).

From a substantial point of view, instead, two features of Macron's Presidency mark an effective evolution as compared to the past. The first one consists in an increasing trend in defence spending and is part of the reform of the French military apparatus launched by the 2017 RSDSN. The second one, instead, consists in renewed focus on high-intensity inter-state scenarios, and is a novelty essentially brought about by the war in Ukraine to which France responded with the adoption of a new strategy, the *Revue Nationale Stratégique*, published in November 2022.

Insofar the first novelty, the 2017 RSDSN launched an ambitious reform of the armed forces to be completed by 2030. After decades of chronic under-budgeting, also worsened by the 2008 economic crisis, in 2017 France started to increase its defence budget to meet the target of 2% of GDP by 2025, in compliance with the pledge made by NATO Allies at the 2014 summit in Wales, a commitment which had remained essentially a dead letter until then.<sup>85</sup> The 2019-2025 Military Programming Law (*Loi de programmation militaire*, LPM), which regulates the allocation of defence expenditure according to the National Strategic Review guidelines, provided for a defence budget of 295 billion euros spread over seven years. This represents a 23% increase compared to 2014-2018, that is, an increase of 7.4 billion per year.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, an upward trend in the defence budget began in 2017 in order to «regenerate the armed forces and make up for some capability shortfalls».<sup>87</sup> As stressed by the French Court of Audit (*Cour des Comptes*), «the implementation of the [defence] budget has been in line with the programming for the first time in two decades», which represents a «considerable progress» with respect to the past.<sup>88</sup> This means that Macron's reformist agenda – aimed at an «increase in power» (*montée en puissance*) by 2030 – has so far been fulfilled. Moreover, the 2019-2025 LMP

---

<sup>85</sup> According to the Wales Summit Declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Wales, «Allies whose current proportion of GDP spent on defence is below [2%] level will [...] aim to move towards the 2% guideline within a decade with a view to meeting their NATO Capability Targets and filling NATO's capability shortfalls» (NATO, Wales Summit Declaration, 2014).

<sup>86</sup> République Française, Direction de l'information légale et administrative, *Budget de la défense : les étapes pour le porter à 2% du PIB*, 2022. <https://www.vie-publique.fr/eclairage/284741-budget-de-la-defense-les-etapes-pour-le-porter-2-du-pib>

<sup>87</sup> République Française, Cour des comptes, *La Loi de programmation militaire (LPM) 2019-2025 et les capacités des armées*, 2022, p. 13.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibidem*.



also provides for an increase of 6.000 posts in the personnel of the Ministry of Defence (*Ministère des Armées*).

The growing saliency attributed to high-intensity, instead, obviously stems from the security paradigm shift provoked by the Russian aggression of Ukraine, which has turned the prospect of interstate conflict from a mere potential scenario into a factual reality. Although previous strategic documents already considered great power competition as a challenge and a source of instability, it was not perceived as a primary threat, and terrorism remained by far the main threat to France's national security. This applies to the 2013 White paper adopted under President François Hollande, as well as to the 2017 RSDSN and its update in 2021 under President Macron. Indeed, even though the 2013 White Paper already emphasized the threat posed by great power competition, following the 2015 terrorist attacks against French national territory, Islamist terrorism has unquestionably occupied the first place in France's threat prioritization. This led to an increased engagement of French armed forces both in homeland security (through *opération Sentinelle*, which was launched in January 2015), and abroad, in Syria and Iraq (*opération Chammal*), as well as in the Sahel region (*opération Serval*, later renamed *Barkhane*). Likewise, although the 2017 RSDSN recognised that heightened strategic competition increases the «likelihood» of inter-state military confrontation, Islamist terrorism remained the major threat perceived to France's national security.<sup>89</sup> At the same time, two reports respectively drafted by the Court of Audit (*Cour des Comptes*) and the Parliamentary Defence Commission before the Russian invasion of Ukraine,<sup>90</sup> assessed whether the French armed forces model would be able to face a high-intensity war. They both agreed that, as things stand, French armed forces no longer have «neither a sufficient level of mass, nor a sufficient level of training» to deal with such a scenario.<sup>91</sup> In light of the systemic shock spawned by 24 February 2022, the latest RNS clearly states that by 2030, the French armed forces model «will have to provide France with the capacity to deal with [...] a possible return to high-intensity inter-state conflict».<sup>92</sup> Consequently, it

---

<sup>89</sup> République Française, Comité de rédaction de la Revue stratégique, *Revue stratégique de défense et de sécurité nationale*, 2017, p. 53.

<sup>90</sup> The report of the Court of Audit is entitled *La Loi de programmation militaire 2019-2025 et les capacités des armées*. It was drafted in January 2022, but its publication was intentionally postponed until May for a twofold reason: on one hand, to bear in mind the shock of the conflict in Ukraine and, on the other one, to respect the period of silence related to the presidential elections held in April 2022. The report of the Parliamentary Defence Commission is entitled *Rapport d'information par la Commission de la défense nationale et des forces armées sur la haute intensité* and was published on 17 February 2022.

<sup>91</sup> République Française, Cour des comptes, *La Loi de programmation militaire 2019-2025 et les capacités des armées*, 2022, p. 14.

<sup>92</sup> République Française, *Revue nationale stratégique*, 2022, p. 27.

draws attention on aspects that had been partially set aside by the French armed forces in recent decades, like other Western European countries did, such as logistics, mass (which is central in Russia's strategy in the ongoing conflict in Ukraine) and the availability of large quantities of strategic stocks and spare parts. The reference to the need to involve the industrial and civilian sectors of the French society to ensure the resilience of the nation is probably the most disruptive point of the 2022 RNS with respect to the equilibrium established with the end of bipolarity, thanks to which Europe essentially became a civil power.<sup>93</sup> The appeal to concepts such as moral strength, national cohesion and the «war economy»<sup>94</sup>, together with the use of a more militarized and securitized language, marks – at least on a vocal level – a paradigm shift for a liberal democracy such as France.

France's vision of its role in the world has remained consistent throughout the various strategic documents adopted in the Fifth Republic. Such a vision relies on three major assets that can be considered the cornerstones of its foreign and defence policy. In full continuity with the past, Macron upholds and emphasizes France's international power status, which is firmly anchored in the possession of an autonomous nuclear deterrence, its permanent seat in the Security Council of the United Nations (UNSC), and its territorial extension owing to its overseas territories (*territoires d'outremer*). Before analyzing these three building blocks, it is interesting to point out that, despite a relentless quest to enhance the country's worldwide standing, Macron's Presidency does not define what kind of *puissance* France is, contrary to the 1972 White paper which instead labelled France as a «middle power». The only titles with which France is associated are those of «nuclear» power (2017 RSDSN), of «European nuclear power with global interests» (2021 *Actualisation stratégique*) and of «balancing» power (2021 *Actualisation stratégique*; 2022 RNS). France is a country that has certainly great ambitions, but limited resources as compared to great powers. By re-elaborating former President Giscard d'Estaing's words (2009), according to which France is «a great middle-size power» (*une grande puissance moyenne*), Jean-Louis Thiériot (2023) very effectively defines France as «a middle-size strategic power»: “middle-size” since only through multilateral

---

<sup>93</sup> *Revue nationale stratégique*, 2022, pp. 37-38.

<sup>94</sup> During the presentation of the 2022 RNS, President Macron claimed that France «must orient [its] economy [...towards...] a war economy posture» (République Française, Élysée, *À Toulon, le Président de la République présente la Revue nationale stratégique*, 2022).

alliances and frameworks (primarily the EU and, if need be, NATO) can it truly have a say in the world, but at the same time “strategic” thanks to its autonomous nuclear deterrent and its permanent seat in the UNSC.

Nuclear deterrence traditionally represents the «keystone»<sup>95</sup> of France’s defence strategy, in its «two complementary components, airborne and submarine»<sup>96</sup>, and is what makes France the EU’s leading military power. Despite this primacy, the «European dimension» of the *force de frappe* – an expression that was much echoed following Macron's speech at the *École de guerre* in February 2020<sup>97</sup> and which recurs in the 2022 RNS<sup>98</sup> – remains ambiguous. While securing a first-rank position, such national deterrence also requires substantial resources to be maintained and reinforced. This necessarily leads to a trade-off in terms of defence investment, which has often been at the expense of training, ammunition and spare part stocks (Decis, 2023), capabilities that have gained particular relevance with the war in Ukraine.

The second asset that France traditionally leverages to assert its power status is determined by being a permanent member of the UNSC. This condition politically reinforces France's international standing and serves as a pretext for claiming responsibility in the maintenance of international peace as a «provider of security».<sup>99</sup>

The last resource is related to geography and, precisely, to French overseas territories (*territoires d’outre-mer*). «We shall never forget that our nation is an archipelago», stated President Macron while presenting the draft of the new Military Programming Law for 2024-2030 on 20 January 2023.<sup>100</sup> With «11 million km<sup>2</sup>, that is 3% of the globe's sea surface», France has the world’s second largest exclusive economic zone (EEZ), after the

---

<sup>95</sup> *Revue stratégique de défense et de sécurité nationale*, 2017, p. 15; *Revue nationale stratégique*, 2022, p. 20; *Discours du Président Emmanuel Macron sur la stratégie de défense et de dissuasion devant les stagiaires de la 27ème promotion de l'école de guerre*, 2020, <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/02/07/discours-du-president-emmanuel-macron-sur-la-strategie-de-defense-et-de-dissuasion-devant-les-stagiaires-de-la-27eme-promotion-de-lecole-de-guerre>.

<sup>96</sup> République Française, *Actualisation stratégique*, 2021, p. 28.

<sup>97</sup> «Nuclear deterrence has played a fundamental role in the preservation of international peace and security, particularly in Europe»; «Our nuclear forces play their own deterrent role, especially in Europe. They reinforce Europe's security by their very existence and therefore have an authentically European dimension» (*Discours du Président Emmanuel Macron sur la stratégie de défense et de dissuasion devant les stagiaires de la 27ème promotion de l'école de guerre*, 2020).

<sup>98</sup> A very short paragraph of the RNS of 2022 is entitled “The European Dimension of the French Deterrent” (*Revue nationale stratégique*, 2022, p. 31).

<sup>99</sup> Strategic objective n. 7 of the 2022 RNS (*Revue nationale stratégique*, 2022, p. 45-47).

<sup>100</sup> République Française, Élysée, *Transformer nos armées : le Président de la République présente le nouveau projet de loi de programmation militaire*. <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2023/01/20/transformer-nos-armees-le-president-de-la-republique-presente-le-nouveau-projet-de-loi-de-programmation-militaire>

US.<sup>101</sup> This asset, combined with the fact that France is «the only navy outside of the US operating a nuclear-powered [...] aircraft carrier [...] and one of the six navies operating a class of Nuclear-Powered Ballistic Missile Submarine (SSBNs)» (Decis 2023), contributes to its role as a world-class maritime power. By ensuring France a worldwide presence, the *territoires d'outre-mer* give it both the burden to intervene to protect its citizens and its national soil and, at the same time, the legitimacy to be present in regions of the world well far from its metropolitan territory, as the map on page 77 shows. In this regard, the 2022 RNS is quite straightforward, claiming that

«in addition to our commitments to our UE partners and NATO allies, our interests must also take into account [...] areas of the world where states are engaging in increasingly aggressive strategic competition [...]. As a balancing power, France has a duty to contribute to the stability and security of these regions. The fact that some French territory is located in these areas requires us to maintain our presence in all domains and gives us a particular legitimacy to act».<sup>102</sup>

Two elements here require specific attention: the veiled reference to the Indo-Pacific region and the notion of “balancing power”.

First, despite not explicitly mentioned in this specific passage, the RNS clearly refers to the Indo-Pacific region, which is home to seven of France's thirteen overseas territories, accounts for nine of the eleven million km<sup>2</sup> of its EEZ and sees the deployment of 4.150 troops (out of a total of 7.300) in permanent presence, besides those on mission. French troops deployed on a permanent posture across French overseas territories are emblematically called “sovereignty forces” (*forces de souveraineté*) and they are aimed at, among other, protecting the national territory, as well as the sovereignty of the State in its territorial waters and its exclusive economic zone.<sup>103</sup> Interestingly, a recent report of the French Senate defines the *forces de souveraineté* as

---

<sup>101</sup> République Française, *Livre blanc de la défense et de sécurité nationale*, 2013, p. 14

<sup>102</sup> *Revue nationale stratégique*, 2022, p. 21.

<sup>103</sup> République Française, Ministère des Armées, *Forces de souveraineté*, 2023. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/forces-prepositionnees/forces-souverainete>

«strategic points of support and projection, [that] allow France to belong to the “club” of countries possessing a global military presence, which is even more exclusive than that consisting of nuclear powers. By also taking into account “presence forces” (*forces de présence*)<sup>104</sup>, France has the world’s third largest network, beyond the US and Russia, but before the UK».<sup>105</sup>

Under Macron’s Presidency, indeed, the Indo-Pacific region has acquired much saliency for both military and commercial purposes. Since the publication of the Defense Strategy in the Indo-Pacific (*Stratégie de défense en Indopacifique*) in 2019, updated in February 2022, France has acknowledged that the strategic polarization between major powers is increasingly playing out in this area. In this regard, the 2017 RSDSN states that «DROM-COMs<sup>106</sup> constitute crucial assets in terms of military cooperation [...]. They host bases that allow participation in the control of common spaces [...], and they provide France secure platforms for power projection anywhere in the world».<sup>107</sup> Moreover, from the French perspective, the Indo-Pacific region has significant economic potential, offering «great opportunities for French companies, including those in the defence sector since this region has become the world's leading importer of military equipment».<sup>108</sup>

The second aspect pertains to France’s international stature. By the term “balancing power”, France translated into English the ambiguous notion of “*puissance d’équilibres*”, which despite being presented as a cornerstone of France’s foreign policy, is nowhere defined. Whereas the notion was once conjugated in the singular form (*puissance d’équilibre*) as in the 2021 *Actualisation stratégique*, the 2022 RNS conjugates it in the plural form (*puissance d’équilibres*), which makes the concept even more fluid and susceptible to contradictory interpretations. Is it to be interpreted in accordance with the traditional British approach of seeking a balance in power relations or, on the contrary,

---

<sup>104</sup> “Presence forces” (*forces de présence*) consist of 3.850 French armed forces deployed in five countries (Côte d’Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, Senegal and United Arab Emirates). Please refer to map on page 77 for a visual distinction between *forces de souveraineté* and *forces de présence*. The latter figure on the map under the label “*Forces répositionnées*”.

<sup>105</sup> République Française, Sénat, *Rapport d’information fait au nom de la commission des finances sur les forces de souveraineté*, 2023, p. 28. See also Tenenbaum, Paglia and Ruffié (2020).

<sup>106</sup> The expression DROM-COM – which stands for “French overseas departments and regions” (*Départements ou Régions français d’Outre-Mer*, DROM) and “overseas communities” (*Collectivités d’Outre-Mer*, COM) – is less and less frequent in the three strategic doctrines adopted by Macron in favour of the more generic term “outre-mer”. While it appears six and three times in the 2017 RSDSN and its 2021 update respectively, it recurs only once in the 2022 RNS.

<sup>107</sup> *Revue stratégique de défense et de sécurité nationale*, 2017, p. 77.

<sup>108</sup> Ministère de l’Europe et des Affaires étrangères, *La stratégie de la France dans l’Indopacifique*, 2022, pp. 11-14.

as a Gaullist third way? A hint may come from a document published by the Ministry of Defence in November 2017, according to which

«out of necessity or because it gives credibility to its great power vocation, overseas action is therefore a constant in the military history of France».<sup>109</sup>

This confirms France's pragmatic commitment towards multilateralism and the respect of the rule of law, which consists in «acting on two parallel levels: fostering dialogue [...while also...] preparing for tough conflicts».<sup>110</sup> In short, France aspires to maintain the current *status quo* by acting first and foremost within the EU framework – the primary reference of Macron's doctrine – also to overcome budget constraints,<sup>111</sup> so as to imprint Europe with a strategy in line with a vision that is as French as possible. This implies an approach that combines rejecting any «logic of blocks»<sup>112</sup> with a pro-active stance, in order to contribute – as a leading power – to the definition of solutions to international challenges.<sup>113</sup>

In conclusion, despite considerable elements of change (i.e., an upward trend in defence spending and a renewed focus on high-intensity inter-state war), Macron's Presidency has remained anchored to the cardinal principles of French foreign policy, consisting of «striving to preserve the post-WWII international liberal order, where [France] enjoys a privileged position» (Cadier, 2022).

---

<sup>109</sup> République Française, Ministère des Armées, *La France en OPEX. 50 ans d'engagement*, 2017, p. 26.

<sup>110</sup> République Française, Assemblée Nationale, *Rapport d'information par la Commission de la défense nationale et des forces armées sur la haute intensité*, 2022, p. 13.

<sup>111</sup> In this regard, the 2022 report of the Court of Audit suggests «to identifying the room for budgetary maneuver that may exist [...] within the framework of European cooperation» (Cour des comptes, *La Loi de programmation militaire 2019-2025 et les capacités des armées*, 2022, pp. 9-15).

<sup>112</sup> «Multilateralism, which engages all actors, is the best framework for reducing tensions [...], beyond any logic of blocs»; (*La stratégie de la France dans l'Indopacifique*, 2022, p. 3).

<sup>113</sup> «The only way to resolve the paradox consisting in the risk of fragmentation in the face of problems that should on the contrary unite us [...] is by re-trying to build an effective multilateralism, thus, solutions that are proposed by coalitions of actors» claimed Macron during the Paris Peace Conference of 11-12 November 2022. (Macron, *Universalism in the face of war, Paris Peace Forum*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition).

## **A new threat prioritisation? Russia across strategic documents**

This paragraph examines the degree of evolution in Italy and France's threat prioritization to assess the degree of change *vis-à-vis* Russia as compared to Meijer and Brooks' 2021 categorization. To do so, it compares the saliency attributed to Russia across national strategic documents since 2014 to today.

Whereas, in response to the systemic shock caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, France adopted a new National Strategic Review, Italy – because of its polycentric and multi-layered approach in defence – has neither updated its 2015 White Paper, nor has it elaborated a comprehensive security strategy.

Prior to the «exogenous shock» (Coticchia and Meijer 2022) caused by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, both Italy and France were part of those Western states traditionally inclined towards a position of openness – if not compliance – to Russia, even after its annexation of Crimea in March 2014 and its following destabilization of Eastern Ukraine.

Despite endorsing EU's sanctions against Russia and participating to NATO's deterrence posture in the Eastern flank since 2017, the two countries actively tried to act as a mediator between the West and Russia. In doing so, they essentially adopted the same pragmatism which favoured dialogue over a zero-sum game approach, in sharp contrast to Eastern-Central European countries (Muti, 2022; Cadier, 2022). Both countries, indeed, kept on pursuing economic interdependence with Russia (to which Italy also added a heavy dependency on Russian gas import), and although they both demonstrated their contribution to the Alliance security through the deployment of national contingents – on a rotational basis – within NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP), their strategic national interest remained focused on Europe's Southern periphery, mainly linked to asymmetric threats related to instability, terrorism, and migrants flows.

Bottom line, Russia was not perceived as a threat (as for Italy) or, if so, it was largely a minor one (as in the case of France). For these reasons, both countries saw their relationship with Russia as an opportunity to somewhat relaunch EU-Russia relations and prove to be great diplomatic powers. For these reasons, Meijer and Brooks (2021) classify

the two countries at the lower edge of the spectrum, and label Russia as “not a threat” for Italy, and to be a threat, yet largely secondary, for France.

Table 4.1. Threats assessments in Europe in 2021

Russia is unimportant/not a threat	Russia is a threat, but other threats are more significant	Russia and other threats have roughly equal significance	Russia is the highest threat, but other threats are also significant	Russia is the dominant threat by far
Bulgaria	Austria	Belgium	Czech Republic	Estonia
Greece	Croatia	Denmark	Norway	Finland
Hungary	France	Germany	Romania	Latvia
Ireland	Switzerland	Netherlands	Slovakia	Lithuania
Italy		United Kingdom	Sweden	Poland
Luxembourg				
Portugal				
Serbia				
Spain				
Slovenia				

*Note.* The table includes European Union member states, member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, plus Serbia and Switzerland.

Source: Meijer and Brooks (2021)

The 2022 *Revue Nationale Stratégique* (RNS) was conceived to adjust France’s strategic posture to the systemic shift triggered by the war in Ukraine. In this regard, its comparison with the previous Nation Security Strategies (the 2017 *Revue stratégique de défense et de sécurité nationale*, RSDSN, and the 2021 *Actualisation stratégique*), clearly shows the change in the French attitude towards a threat perceived as increasingly salient.

Although already in 2017 Moscow was essentially conceived in French official strategy documents as a military competitor, it is only with the war in Ukraine that France explicitly recognizes Russia’s «revisionist» and «imperial ambitions based on its view of the balance of power», as stated in the 2022 RNS.<sup>114</sup> The 2021 *Actualisation stratégique* is quintessential of France’s «duality» (Cadier, 2022), claiming that

<sup>114</sup> *Revue nationale stratégique*, 2022, p. 9.



with regard to Russia's «development of power politics», «France has opted for a balanced response that, by combining firmness and commitment, has made it possible to relaunch a lucid dialogue with Russia».<sup>115</sup>

President Emmanuel Macron's relentless attempt to act as a mediator continued until February 2022 when, four days before the invasion, he phoned Putin to discuss about the stationing of Russian troops on the borders of Ukraine. As the *Elysée* official note reports, President Macron was convinced to have obtained reassurances from Putin regarding the diplomatic resolution of the crisis, as well as his revived commitment to «resume work within the Normandy format» on the resolution of the war in Donbass.<sup>116</sup>

Indeed, although France recognised the potential damaging repercussions of Russian assertiveness in the post-Soviet area already prior to 24 February 2022, it avoided to frankly and unequivocally define it as a threat to its national security in order to have some room for dialogue.

Although the 2017 RSDSN acknowledges «Moscow's desire to rebuild a zone of influence», the Mediterranean and «the Southern shore» figure in the first place among the «risk-bearing zones» as they condense threats of different kinds to the security of France and Europe, primarily identified in Islamist terrorism and migration flows.<sup>117</sup> Among them, the militarization of the Eastern Mediterranean is also mentioned, due to «the permanent presence of Russian air and naval assets, as well as the arrival of China» which determines a «return of power strategies».<sup>118</sup> In particular, thanks to its expansion from Crimea to Syria, Russia «regained its status as a Mediterranean power».<sup>119</sup> The RSDSN recognises as well that the issues related to the «renewal of Russian power» include a «policy of all-round assertion [...] which is ascribed to a logic of spheres of influence [...] accompanied by forms of strategic intimidation».<sup>120</sup> France also recognized that Russia managed to develop, also thanks to a defence budget of between 3% and 4%

---

<sup>115</sup> *Actualisation stratégique*, 2021, p. 21

<sup>116</sup> République Française, Élysée, *Entretien téléphonique avec Vladimir Poutine, Président de la Fédération de Russie*, 2022. <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2022/02/20/entretien-telephonique-avec-vladimir-poutine-president-de-la-federation-de-russie-1>

<sup>117</sup> *Revue stratégique de défense et de sécurité nationale*, 2017, pp. 23-24.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 44.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 42.

of GDP, «intervention capabilities [...] in what it considers to be its close neighbourhood, which is also that of Europe».<sup>121</sup> At the same time, the 2021 *Actualisation stratégique* takes account of the fact that

«Moscow can [...] project its forces (occupation of Crimea and Donbass, intervention in Syria), deploy an intimidatory strategy across its neighbourhood and beyond (Arctic, Caucasus, Balkans, Mediterranean Sea) degrade the freedom of action of Western powers and make itself indispensable in the management of regional crises. As has been demonstrated, especially in the Levant, Russia has become an opportunist and agile power, capable of projecting itself rapidly».<sup>122</sup>

Nevertheless, despite being aware of Russia's military resurgence and increasing assertiveness, following the 2014 Ukrainian crisis, «France remained cautious of new military activities eastward» because at that time it «was focused on the terrorist threat» (Calmels, 2022), which implied a heavy engagement in the Sahel region and in the Middle East.

The 2022 RNS, on the contrary, acknowledges the strategic rupture of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, which is defined as «the most open and brutal manifestation» of its «strategy that seeks to undermine European security».<sup>123</sup> This «makes it necessary to anticipate confrontation with Moscow [...], taking place over a long period of time, in multiple regions and spaces».<sup>124</sup> Therefore, the RNS explicitly admits that the relationship with Russia is moving from «latent competition to open confrontation».<sup>125</sup>

In terms of threat prioritization, this is a major shift as compared to the past. With the RNS' emphasis on high intensity, the threat posed by Islamist terrorism becomes de-prioritized. In fact, whereas in the 2017 RSDSN terrorism constitutes the most «immediate and pregnant» threat to France's security (so much so as to demand a

---

<sup>121</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>122</sup> *Actualisation stratégique*, 2021, pp. 17-18.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 9.

«permanent adaptation to the evolution of the threat» with *Sentinelle* operation)<sup>126</sup>, the 2022 RNS simply notes «the persistence of the terrorist threat continues to resonate».<sup>127</sup> Moreover, the 2022 RNS claims that «without replacing those posed by terrorism or crisis management, [...] threats are part of an environment that increasingly features a high intensity of potential confrontation between conventional forces and what are known as "hybrid" strategies».<sup>128</sup>

Nevertheless, the degree of change in France's threat prioritization remains unclear. On one hand, the 2022 RNS sets a high level of ambition but does not identify any hierarchy among the country's major interests. On the other one, it does not deal with a deep change in France's foreign and defence posture, that is, the reconfiguration of its military presence on the African continent and, especially, in the Sahel region after the withdrawal from Mali in August 2022 with the end of *Barkhane* operation.

Quite representative of Italy's posture, the 2015 White Paper makes no reference to Russia's annexation of Crimea or its intervention in Eastern Ukraine.

Despite the 2021 DPP recognizes that the stability of the "Enlarged Mediterranean" is jeopardized by the «increasingly assertive posture of actors [...] external to the region», there is no explicit mention of Russia.<sup>129</sup> The DPP 2021 talks about the Eastern Mediterranean, but only after a whole series of other regions (i.e., MENA, Arabian Peninsula, Western Balkans), and as an area in which the Italian military presence will have to be «functional to support a political and diplomatic effort [...] while maintaining a prudent and discreet approach».<sup>130</sup> (DPP 2021, p. 17). This passage reconfirms Italy's relentless effort, prior to the war in Ukraine, to act as «a diplomatic bridge» (Muti, 2022).

It is interesting to note that – and this partially confirms that a cross-force cooperation has not yet been fully implemented – although the 2019 DPP does not even mention the growing Russian presence in the Mediterranean as a potential threat or destabilising factor, the 2019-2034 Navy's Strategic Guidelines (*Linee di Indirizzo Strategico della Marina Militare*), published on the same year, take account of Russia's «renewed

---

<sup>126</sup> *Revue stratégique de défense et de sécurité nationale*, 2017, p. 9.

<sup>127</sup> *Revue nationale stratégique*, 2022, p. 7.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>129</sup> *Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2021-2023*, p. 2.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 17.

assertiveness» and its «deployment of military forces in the Eastern Mediterranean».<sup>131</sup> In particular, the document notes Russian (and Chinese) policies in the Eastern Mediterranean, which consist of a renewed presence of «surface and underwater assets» which provides it with «concrete power projection capabilities from the sea and on the sea».<sup>132</sup> Albeit in a footnote, the Navy document points out Russia's (as well as China's) «renewed activism in the maritime dimension [... including] the massive return of conventional and nuclear submarines to the Mediterranean, which has also witnessed, for a significant period, the presence of its aircraft carrier group».<sup>133</sup>

The 2022 DPP, recognises that Russia's direct aggression against Ukraine «poses a concrete threat to global security and stability» and, as such, «has obviously led to a major rift between the Western world and Russia, which places any diplomatic initiation in stalemate for a definite time».<sup>134</sup> In his introduction to the 2022 DPP, former Minister of Defence Lorenzo Guerini labels the current war in Ukraine as a «systemic shock» that marks the return of «power politics» in Europe and denotes a «vision of the world order based on spheres of influence». The war «has brought [...] symmetrical [...] and conventional threat [s] back to the fore».<sup>135</sup> Beyond this vocal attention, the reluctance of the 2022 DPP to overtly indicate Russia as a threat to national security is quite striking. Indeed, despite identifying a source of threat to the stability of the “Enlarged Mediterranean” in the «projection of influence [and power] of old and new actors [...] in areas of direct interest to NATO and the EU», there is no reference to either Russia or China. Ultimately, the 2022 DPP seizes the current situation to re-emphasize the centrality of the Mediterranean which is «once again at the centre of the scene, as demonstrated by the growing military presence in the region – initially visible mostly in the maritime domain and now, increasingly, in others as well».<sup>136</sup>

To underline the centrality of the Mediterranean as Italy's priority area of interest, even in the aftermath of the conflict, it is emblematic that the 2022 DPP identifies, among the

---

<sup>131</sup> Repubblica Italiana, Stato Maggiore della Marina, *Marina Militare. Linee di indirizzo strategico 2019-2034*, 2019, p. 13.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 60.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 4.

<sup>135</sup> *Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2022-2024*, 2022, p. II.

<sup>136</sup> *Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2022-2024*, 2022, p. 8.

challenges posed by Russia, first those in Middle East and Africa and, then, the aggression against Ukraine.<sup>137</sup>

The Russian threat is perceived especially in reference to the Southern flank. Among its destabilising actions, Italy notes its growing military presence in the Mediterranean «thanks to a naval base and an air base» which allow Russia to exert a «significant influence» mainly through its link with Syria.<sup>138</sup> In addition, the 2022 DPP also takes into account the increased Russian paramilitary presence in Africa, especially in the Sahel, «through the supply of weapons and the support of the war industry, as well as the parallel activism of paramilitary troops».<sup>139</sup>

In conclusion, as far as Italy is concerned, greater salience is devoted to the Russian threat, but it is primarily referred to the framework of the “Enlarged Mediterranean”: first, as a threat to the stability of the Mediterranean in light of a renewed Russian military presence and, second, as a destabilising factor on the African continent, especially in the Sahel. The 2022 DPP confirms Italy’s primary focus on instability, and the enduring presence of Italian armed forces in the MENA region (although reduced) demonstrates it. Not only terrorism remains a priority in Italy’s strategy even after the end of the War on Terror (Cottichia and Ruggeri, 2022), but it also remains crucial after the war in Ukraine. Indeed, it keeps representing «a widespread and imminent threat [...], especially in the area of Sahel» because «the military defeats inflicted on terrorist organisations» do not imply «the end to the ideology that inspires them».<sup>140</sup>

Therefore, even after the war in Ukraine, Italy’s absolute centrality of the “Enlarged Mediterranean” endures. Compared to the past, it is possible to note a revived attention towards Eastern Mediterranean. Indeed, the 2022 DPP lists the «strengthening of the [...] military presence in the central and Eastern basin of the Mediterranean» among the priorities of military deployments abroad.<sup>141</sup> This is a novelty if compared with the 2021 DPP, in which the presence in the “Enlarged Mediterranean” primarily translated into an attention to the Southern shore of the Mediterranean, especially in reference to the

---

<sup>137</sup> «With regards to Russia, [...] it should be noted how dramatic are the challenges posed by Moscow both in insidious forms, as in the Middle East and Africa, and in more conventional forms, as in the direct aggression against Ukraine» (*Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2022-2024*, 2022, p. 4).

<sup>138</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 5.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20.

instability of North Africa, Libya and Sahel. In this regard, with respect to the 2021 DPP, conventional threats acquire salience, nevertheless this does not de-prioritise asymmetric threats, such as uncontrolled immigration, crime, terrorism, climate change, population growth, piracy and illegal trafficking.<sup>142</sup>

---

<sup>142</sup> Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2021-2023, p. 17

## **PART II**

### **A FACTUAL EVOLUTION?**

## Defence budgets and capabilities development

Before delving into the analysis of the evolution of the two countries' defence budgets across the years, a premise seems fundamental.

The highly mediatized debate on Europe's defence *momentum* (Tocci, 2023) sparked by the war in Ukraine shall be regarded under two complementary yet distinct levels: a more vocal one (relative to the political-strategic domain) and a more factual one (that is, the defence domain in its *stricto sensu*, consisting of industrial defence planning, as well as deployment of troops abroad). The former is subject to wider variations and fluctuations, the latter, instead, evolves more gradually.<sup>143</sup>

On the one hand, the political-strategic level consists in the assessment of the country's strategic priorities and national interests. In the case analysed by this study, it consists of assessing whether (and to what degree) Russia's blatant aggressiveness in the international arena has brought about an evolution in the threats' prioritization of France and Italy. This level, therefore, must take into account the doctrinal-strategic positioning of the states selected. It can be enshrined into a proper National Security Strategy – as in the case of France, who adopted a new *Revue nationale stratégique* in order to better adapt to the evolving international scenario – or not – as in the case of Italy, who instead displays a more fragmented approach towards defence. One's national strategy consists of striking a balance between short-term needs and long-term vision – respectively represented by threats relating to contingency and the country's longstanding international posture. As a result, this strategic level, which is managed by political decision-makers, is more affected by current events. It is indeed influenced by media cycles and public-political debate, which tend to be very volatile. The degree to which a new emerging threat is able to determine a change in the foreign and defence policy of a state is not a given. It depends on the importance the state attaches to the threat itself, as well as on external constraints (i.e., whether a state is part of a scheme of multinational alliances or partnerships). Therefore, the very same systemic shock can give rise to very different reactions across states. It can either result into a major change (i.e., a foreign policy re-orientation) or a minor one (i.e., lesser foreign policy adjustments, such as an

---

<sup>143</sup> Alessandro Marrone, interview (24 April 2023).



evolution in threat prioritization).<sup>144</sup> The current situation clearly demonstrates it: whereas 24 February 2022 led two traditionally neutral countries (Finland and Sweden) to join NATO, it did not cause a striking rearrangement in the foreign and defence policies of France and Italy. This is precisely due to the fact that France and Italy have started to perceive Russia as a more compelling threat, yet it did not become their vital one. Therefore, adjusting to the evolving international scenario calls for a revision of their respective hierarchy of national strategic priorities. In addition, both countries' membership to NATO and the EU, makes them part of a systemic scheme which restraints their room for manoeuvre. Any unilateral move would undermine the cohesion and unity of the Euro-Atlantic community and thus would entail a serious loss of international prestige. External constraints, therefore, somewhat attenuate the level of change in a country's foreign and defence policy.

On the other hand, there is also the level pertaining to defence in a narrower sense which consists in defence planning and programming, both in terms of industrial defence planning and military missions. Defence fluctuates much more slowly than politics because it is framed on a long-term basis. Commitments, both in terms of industry and troop deployments abroad, are multi-year and thus less conditioned by contingent events. Industrial defence planning consists in investments devoted to the acquisition and the development of procurement programmes and therefore relates to the capabilities needed to face threats to national security identified at political-strategic level. The magnitude of resources allocated for research and development (R&D) of weapon systems, as well as the unpredictability of evolving threats, results in path-dependency. A country cannot withdraw from a mission abroad or abandon the development of procurement programmes out of the blue, as both imply heavy costs in terms of credibility and reliability. This is confirmed by the case of Italy's Yellow-Green government, under which there has been a substantial continuity in missions abroad and procurement programs (Coticchia and Ruggeri, 2022). Ultimately, sudden variations risk jeopardizing the country's international stance, especially *vis-à-vis* partner countries and allies. Capabilities are not improvised but are instead the result of choices made in the past. The time lag between the initiation stage of development of a weapon system and its actual arrival on the market takes decades. For instance, the French *Leclerc* main battle tank was first conceived

---

<sup>144</sup> See Hermann (1990).

toward the end of the 1960s, but did not begin to enter into service until 1991 (Béraud-Sudreau and Giegerich, 2018). Similarly, the development phase of the fifth-generation combat aircraft F-35 – a programme spawning from a collaboration between the US and a consortium of eight partner countries, among which Italy and the UK – started in 1996, but it entered into service in 2021, with a delay of at least five years on the initial roadmap.<sup>145</sup> Also, Italy is investing in the 6<sup>th</sup> generation aircraft programme (Global Combat Air Programme, GCAP) although the F-35 (5<sup>th</sup> generation aircraft) have recently entered into service. Therefore, defense plans over the long term and tends to be rather cautious and conservative. Such rigidity of approach and mindset certainly makes the defence apparatus less responsive and flexible, and poses great challenges in the face of the rapid technology advancements. At the same time, however, it allows to maintain capabilities previously acquired, even when there is a great evolution in threat perception. For this reason, although in the post-Cold War era French and Italian strategic doctrines have moved toward expeditionary operations and prioritized asymmetric threats, they have not utterly abandoned deterrence and defense capabilities.

Therefore, adapting arms acquisition to a new threat environment is not immediate, but on the contrary «it takes time for new priorities to filter through» (Béraud-Sudreau and Giegerich, 2018). This means that there is usually gap «between the appearance of new threats assessments and the responses they trigger» (*ibidem*).

Participating in procurement programmes thus requires medium-to-long term investments, which cannot therefore satisfy short term needs. The difference between participating in procurement programmes and acquiring “off-the-shelf”<sup>146</sup> assets lies in the «industrial return, technology transfer and creation of qualified jobs», also in terms of advanced technologies and related know-how (Camporini *et al.*, 2014). The latter, indeed, implies involving national industries in the development and production phases, which is even more important when there is a generational (thus technological) leap, and also creates a positive industrial return in terms of production and maintenance (*ibidem*).

---

<sup>145</sup> Repubblica Italiana, Camera dei Deputati, *Il programma Joint Strike Fighter-F35*, 2021.

<sup>146</sup> “Off-the-shelf” means to buy a weapon system «in the marketplace when it is already developed and produced on a large scale». This is the opposite of participating to the procurement programme, which implies contributing to its development and/or production (Camporini *et al.*, 2014).

The French defence budget is set by the Military Programming Law (*Loi de programmation militaire*, LPM). The draft of the latest LMP has been presented at the Parliament in April 2023 and is currently under discussion. It is set to cover a 7-year period, from 2024 to 2030, and has allocated an unprecedented budget of 413 billion euros. This marks a sharp increase in the overall defence spending, as compared to the previous LPM referring to the period 2019-2025, which provided for a budget of 295 billion euros.

Similarly, the Italian defence budget is set by the Three-year Programming and Policy Planning Document (*Documento Programmatico Pluriennale*), whose main objective is to define priorities for the military in terms of capability development and investment (Calcagno and Marrone). Italy's overall defence budget is not exclusively allocated by the Ministry of Defence, but two other ministries contribute: the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy (former Ministry of Economic Development). The collaboration between the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Economic Development (renamed Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy) has made it possible to carry out fundamental programmes, such as Eurofighter Typhoon (in collaboration with Germany, UK and Spain), the technological modernization of the TORNADO aircraft, the FREMM European Multimission Frigates and the modernization of FSAF and PAAMS (*Famille des systèmes Surface-Air Futurs/Principal Anti-Air Missile System*) missile systems.<sup>147</sup>

As figure 5.4. displays, in 2022 France's defence budget amounts to 49,616 million euros, whereas Italy's defence budget amounts to 28,758 million euros. France and Italy's upward trends in defence spending date back to second half of the 2010s, precisely in 2016/2017. Figure 5.1. shows NATO countries defence expenditure in percentage of GDP by comparing 2014 and 2022. Both countries have not yet met NATO's 2% target, and both countries' defence budgets have increase as compared to 2014. Whereas France is expected to meet NATO's pledge of 2% of GDP in 2025, the Draghi government announced that Italy's goal would be postponed to 2028<sup>148</sup>, but the new Minister of Defence Guido Crosetto has not yet defined any precise roadmap.

---

<sup>147</sup> *Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2021-2023*, 2021, p. 190.

<sup>148</sup> In 2022, former Minister of Defence Guerini claimed that «there must be no doubt about the need to continue on the path of growth of the defence budget», in order to reach the target of 2 % in 2028, as set

In recent years, Italy started to adjust the strong structural imbalance characterizing its defence spending, for which personnel expenditure also amounted to almost 70% of the overall budget. This partial adjustment has mostly favoured investment expenditure, which has increased both in absolute and as a percentage of defence spending: 2.810,7 million euros in 2020 (around 18% of the overall defence budget), 4.036,6 million euros in 2021 (around 24% of the overall defence budget) and 7.847,8 million euros in 2022 (almost 30% of the overall defence budget). This evolution deserves particular attention because through investment in procurement programmes, weapon acquisition and R&D, the country effectively acquires capabilities. As figure 5.2. shows, both Italy and France have investment spending which are beyond NATO target of 20%. The unbalance in Italy's defence budget has only partially been arranged: as figure 5.3. illustrates, Italy has the second highest personnel spending among NATO countries (beyond Portugal), which in 2022 amounts to 58,6% of the overall defence budget. This mostly goes to the detriment of exercise expenditure, which only represent 11,4% of the 2022 defence budget. This signals a great deficiency, as it is not enough in invest in technological capabilities if human capital and competence acquisition are completely left aside.<sup>149</sup> France's defence budget is more balanced, displaying, in 2022, almost 41% to personnel spending, around 26% for exercise and almost 28% for investment, an allocation which is in line with NATO's guidelines of 50-20-20.

A way to make up for Italy's structural unbalance in favour of the personnel item could be represented by facilitating the transition between the defence sector and the civil one, which would also prevent the military instrument from an inescapable ageing of its personnel.<sup>150</sup>

There is a substantial continuity in Italy's procurement programmes, which have not been disrupted by the war in Ukraine. «Despite the increase in the perception of insecurity towards Russia [...] planning remains anchored to [...] a perspective (of external projection of forces and crisis management) before territorial defense» (Coticchia and

---

out in the 2022 National Military Policy Directive (Repubblica Italiana, Ministero della Difesa, *Direttiva per la politica militare nazionale*, 2022; Repubblica Italiana, Ministero della Difesa, *Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2022-2024*, 2022).

<sup>149</sup> See Ungaro (2014).

<sup>150</sup> General Vincenzo Camporini, interview (2 May 2023); Alessandro Marrone, interview (24 April 2023).

Moro, 2023). The country priorities which emerged before the war, therefore, endure. As presented in the 2022 DPP (which envisages a policy planning for 2022-2024), these consists in strengthening and modernization of air defence systems, advancing the 6<sup>th</sup> generation aircraft programme GCAP with the UK and Japan – which is it is the most important procurement program for Italy after the cooperation with the USA for the F-35 (Marrone and Freyrie, 2023) –, new amphibious units and infantry fighting systems (*ibidem*).

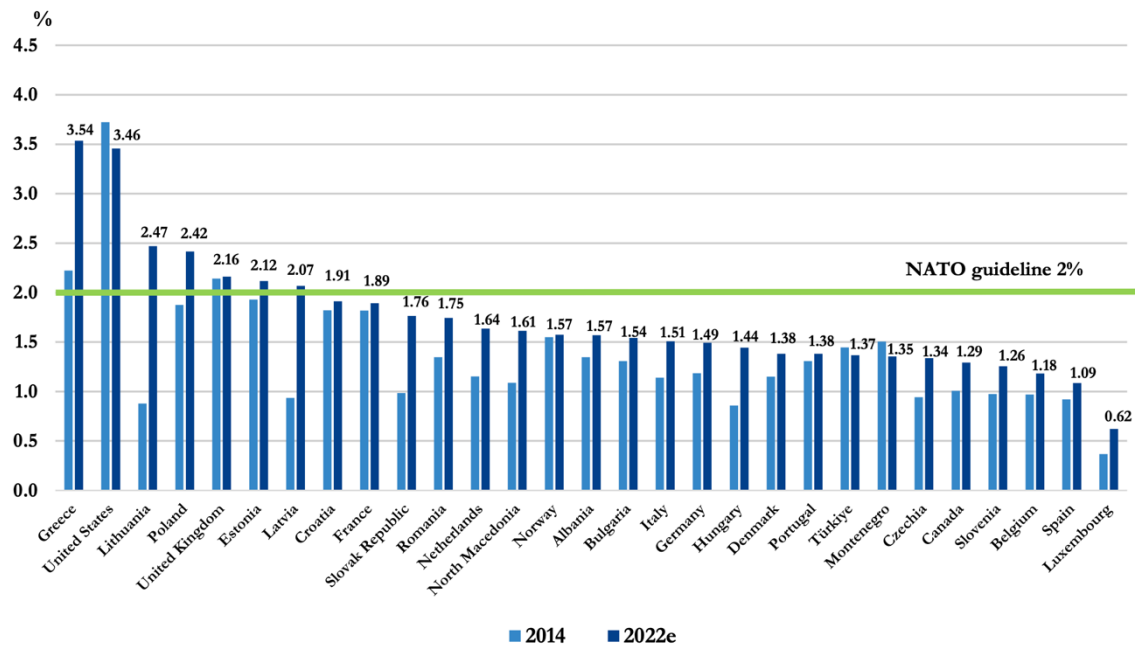
French priorities in the defence budget set by the next LMP for 2024-2030, instead, consist, first and foremost, in the replacement of the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier *Charles De Gaulle* by 2036-2037, the refurbishment of nuclear-powered submarines, the imperative need to make up for current ammunitions and stocks shortfalls, strengthen air defence. Nuclear capabilities particularly suffered previous cuts in defence spending, as with the end of the Cold War and the fact that nuclear capabilities increasingly became a remote prospect, France focused its investments in conventional capabilities, especially expeditionary (Schmitt and Rynning, 2018). The conflict in Ukraine triggered a vivid debate in France over the necessity to replenish stocks.<sup>151</sup> This should serve a twofold goal, on one hand, ensure Ukraine a continuous armament support and, on the other hand, replenish national stocks. Ammunitions «were tailored according to the rhythm of missions abroad (*operations extérieures*) [...], not on high-intensity military operations» (Maulny, 2023). At the same time, the budget for military operations is expected to be reduced in light of the end of *Barkhane* operation.

At the same time, the war in Ukraine confirmed the necessity to maintain information superiority and assure constant data and information flows, in terms of by Space Situational Awareness/Space Surveillance and Tracking (SSA/SST). In this regard, the cyber and space domains represent cross-domain crucial assets to ensure communication and interoperability among systems. With the 2022 RNS, France introduced a new operational function, that is, influence. This seems a lesson learned from the hasty withdrawal from Mali and mounting anti-French sentiments

---

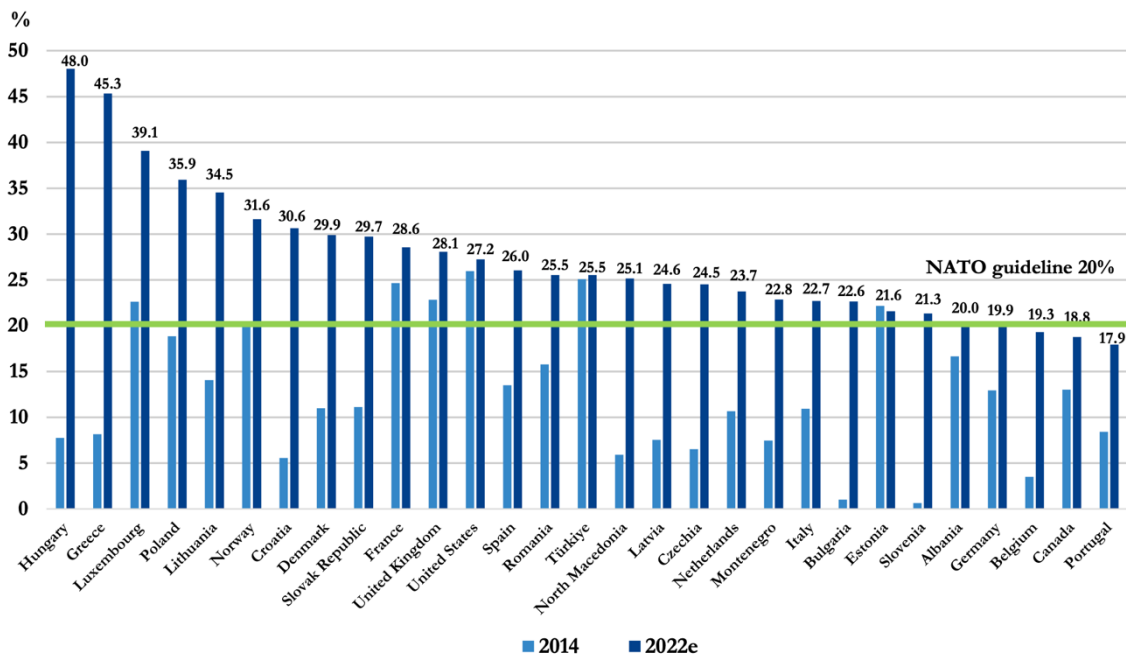
<sup>151</sup> See Péria-Peigné (2022).

**Figure 5.1. NATO countries defence expenditure (% of GDP)  
2014-2022**



Source: NATO

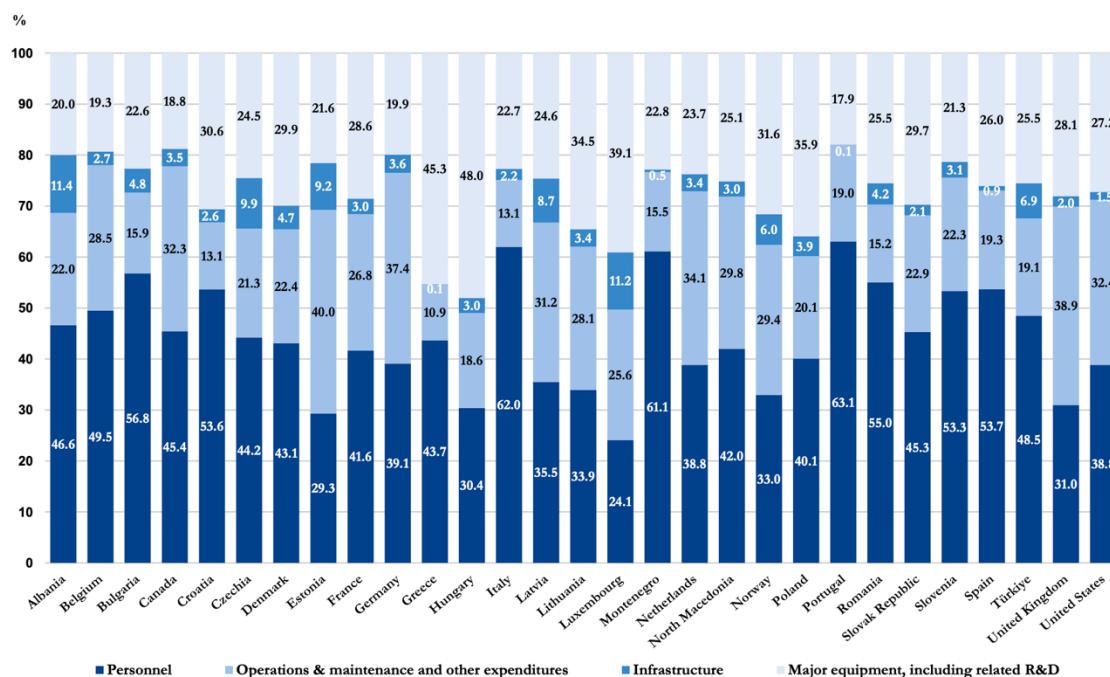
**Figure 5.2. NATO countries equipment expenditure (% of GDP)  
2014-2022**



Source: NATO

N.B. (1) Figures refer to 2015 prices and exchange rates. Figures for 2022 are estimates.  
 N.B. (2) NATO definition of equipment expenditure includes expenditure on major equipment as well as on research and development (R&D) devoted to major equipment. Personnel expenditure includes pensions paid to retirees.

**Figure 5.3. NATO countries main categories of defence expenditure  
(% of total defence expenditure)  
2022**



Source: NATO

**Figure 5.4. NATO countries defence expenditures  
(million national currency units)  
2014-2022**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022e
<b>Current prices</b>									
Albania (Leks)	18,788	16,671	16,250	17,199	18,995	21,670	21,348	23,072	32,633
Belgium (Euros)	3,913	3,789	3,848	3,932	4,101	4,253	4,665	5,276	6,529
Bulgaria (Leva)	1,102	1,116	1,186	1,255	1,593	3,771	1,920	2,109	2,481
Canada (Canadian dollars)	20,076	23,900	23,474	30,761	29,025	29,949	31,289	31,976	36,012
Croatia (Euros)	811	804	756	812	805	881	861	1,150	1,244
Czechia (Koruny)	41,003	47,264	45,598	52,805	59,752	68,373	74,257	84,864	91,000
Denmark (Kroner)	22,769	22,633	24,190	24,961	28,787	29,929	31,962	33,161	38,676
Estonia (Euros)	386	418	450	479	521	569	630	633	771
France (Euros)	39,149	39,199	39,950	40,852	42,748	44,206	46,018	47,790	49,616
Germany (Euros)	34,749	35,898	37,598	40,265	42,127	46,936	51,392	52,431	57,681
Greece (Euros)	3,939	4,073	4,190	4,208	4,560	4,483	4,812	6,764	7,445
Hungary (Forint)	281,402	316,338	362,798	468,765	436,500	636,566	852,321	927,965	957,964
Italy (Euros)	18,427	17,642	20,226	21,166	21,702	21,042	26,360	28,015	28,758
Latvia* (Euros)	221	254	364	430	601	618	651	696	806
Lithuania* (Euros)	322	425	575	724	895	977	1,030	1,105	1,647
Luxembourg (Euros)	190	225	213	288	301	341	373	341	485
Montenegro (Euros)	52	51	56	58	64	66	72	77	82
Netherlands (Euros)	7,788	7,816	8,234	8,539	9,456	10,778	11,249	11,789	14,808
North Macedonia (Denars)	5,743	5,853	5,770	5,532	6,232	8,029	8,303	10,605	13,177
Norway (Kroner)	48,660	49,529	54,022	56,664	61,349	66,318	68,054	72,483	80,615
Poland* (Zlotys)	31,874	39,940	37,082	37,558	42,824	45,404	52,110	58,304	73,898
Portugal (Euros)	2,263	2,384	2,364	2,424	2,750	2,947	2,867	3,295	3,328
Romania* (New Lei)	9,014	10,337	10,738	14,765	17,183	19,527	21,431	22,027	24,311
Slovak Republic (Euros)	752	889	907	935	1,098	1,610	1,796	1,746	1,896
Slovenia (Euros)	366	361	406	422	463	511	498	645	734
Spain (Euros)	9,508	10,000	9,014	10,528	11,172	11,281	11,240	12,546	14,135
Türkiye (Liras)	29,727	32,522	38,203	47,323	68,300	79,987	93,910	116,482	200,034
United Kingdom (Pounds)	39,902	38,940	41,590	43,257	45,202	46,509	49,495	52,291	53,878
United States (US dollars)	653,942	641,253	656,059	642,933	672,255	750,886	770,650	793,990	821,830

N.B. Figures refer to 2022 prices, which based on 2015 prices correspond to 39,596 (2014); 39,199 (2015); 39,743 (2016); 40,428 (2017); 41,891 (2018); 42,770 (2019); 43,318 (2020); 44,395 (2021); 45,035 (2022) for France, whereas for Italy amount to 18,734 (2014); 17,642 (2015); 19,769 (2016); 20,511 (2017); 21,079 (2018); 20,248 (2019); 24,963 (2020); 26,387 (2021); 26,241 (2022).

Source: NATO

## The geographical scope of international missions

The geographical focus of missions is itself a fundamental aspect in order to assess whether a vocal shift in the perceived threats to national security actually corresponds to a shift in one's country factual engagement in different regions of the world. In the face of Russia's aggression, both Italy and France boosted their contribution to the strengthening of NATO's deterrence and defence posture on the Eastern flank.

Whether the growing salience attributed to Russia entails, not only an evolution in threat prioritization, but also an enduring (re)localisation Eastward of military operations abroad, remains to be seen.

Whereas in France the decision to deploy troops abroad stems from the President of the Republic, in conjunction with the National Defence and Security Council, in Italy – under law 145/2016 – the Parliament must approve operations. Nevertheless, this parliamentary vote is generally casted in June/July, and this means that missions do not receive any parliamentary approval in the first half of the year. Italian military operations abroad are financed through a special fund of the Ministry of Economy and Finance called *Fondo Missioni*. For 2022, it amounts to 1.397 billion euros.

There are currently 12.060 Italian armed forces deployed in 43 missions abroad, across the European, African and Asian continent (among which 5.000 deployed on national soil for the operation *Strade Sicure*). Three new missions have been approved in 2022, among which the most important one, both in numerical terms and for its political relevance, concerns the Italian participation to NATO battlegroups in Bulgaria and Hungary.

France is currently deploying about 30.000 servicemen, among which 6.000 on its metropolitan area under *Sentinelle* operation and 7.300 in its overseas territories as *forces de souveraineté* (and as such should not be considered part of *operations extérieures*, OPEX). As the map on page 77 shows (figure 5.2.), the geographical scope of France's force projection stretches along the globe, thanks to its overseas territories which allow it to be present all over the world.

As previously discussed, the two major evolutions in Italy and France's military operations abroad are respectively represented by the withdrawal from Afghanistan (in



August 2021) and from Mali (in August 2022). The parallelism between Kabul and Bamako has been advanced by many and should spur a thorough debate regarding the appropriateness of the approach used, as zero improvement in terms of security, stability or capacity-building has been recorded. Besides Mali, France also left Burkina Faso and Mauritania. The reconfiguration of the French military presence in Africa and, particularly, in the Sahel, represents the elephant in the room of the 2022 *Revue nationale stratégique*.

At the same time, 2022 witnessed an unprecedented involvement in the Alliance's defence and deterrence posture on its Eastern flank owing to Russia's aggression of Ukraine.

France's contribution to NATO's deterrence and defence posture consists of mission *Aigle* to Romania (1000 servicemen along with a series of defensive assets, among which a MAMBA weapon system), mission *Lynx* in Estonia (300 servicemen) as part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence, air patrolling and surveillance, and maritime surveillance in both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic through Standing NATO Maritime Groups.<sup>152</sup>

Italy's operations in the European continent more than doubled in 2022 as compared to 2021: whereas in 2021 Italian armed forces deployed on European soil amounted to 32,4%, in 2022 they represented 54,6%. In this regard, the Russian war in Ukraine did represent a shift in focus towards the European continent. Italy is the leading nation in Bulgaria (750 units) and contributes to NATO deployment in Hungary (250 units). These missions add up to Italy's contingents in the Baltics (250 units), the surveillance of Allied airspace (305 units and 14 air assets), the naval presence in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean (638 units, 5 naval and 1 air asset), as well as the 1,350 units and 77 land vehicles participating in the Very High Joint Readiness Task Force (which had been extended to 31 December 2022).

However, Italy's renewed commitment on the Eastern flank has not meant abandoning other operational theatres (Marrone and Freyrie, 2023) in peacekeeping and capacity building missions (i.e., Libya, Iraq, Kosovo, Lebanon), in which it exercises also the role

---

<sup>152</sup> République Française, Ministère des Armées, *OPEX – Opérations extérieures*, 2023.

of framework nation (i.e., Iraq, Lebanon). The Italian participation to the EU anti-terrorist coalition Task Force Takuba has been interrupted due to the degradation of security conditions on the ground. Likewise, also the EU Training Missions (EUTM) in Mali and in the Central African Republic have been interrupted.<sup>153</sup>

However, the increase in the volume of international commitment has not been followed by an increase in the missions' budget. Furthermore, Italy continues to be the one of the major troop contributors to EU CSDP missions, which are not merely military, but also civil, and therefore involve multiple institutions and actors, such as the Carabinieri, Police, Judiciary, Coastal Guard, Agency of Customs and Monopolies.

Like Italy, France is traditionally present in Lebanon, since 1978. France currently participates to the United Nations' peacekeeping mission UNIFIL with 700 soldiers. At the same time, it is also present in Iraq under NATO's mission Inherent Resolve (which has been guided by Italy until May 2023) through operation *Chammal*, which involves 600 French soldiers.

Regarding the East-South rebalancing, the 2022 DPP claims that

«Italy supports the strengthening of the Allied posture of deterrence and defence [...] but is resolute in demanding 'reciprocity' from the allies in terms of stability projection to the South».<sup>154</sup>

«Stability projection to the South», therefore, represents Italy's second most important objective, in addition to the protection of strategic interests and national security.<sup>155</sup>

Finally, it is not possible to avoid mentioning the fact that since 2008, and without interruption, Italy has been using its armed forces on national soil under the operation *Strade Sicure*. There are currently 5.000 troops deployed across national territory. This represents «the most onerous commitment of the Italian Army in terms of manpower, means and materials».<sup>156</sup> This troop deployment has performed a wide variety of tasks: from preventing and fighting crime and terrorism, to patrolling sensitive sites and targets,

---

<sup>153</sup> Repubblica Italiana, Senato della Repubblica e Camera dei Deputati, *Autorizzazione e proroga missioni internazionali*, 2023.

<sup>154</sup> *Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2022-2024*, 2022, p. 15.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 8.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 26

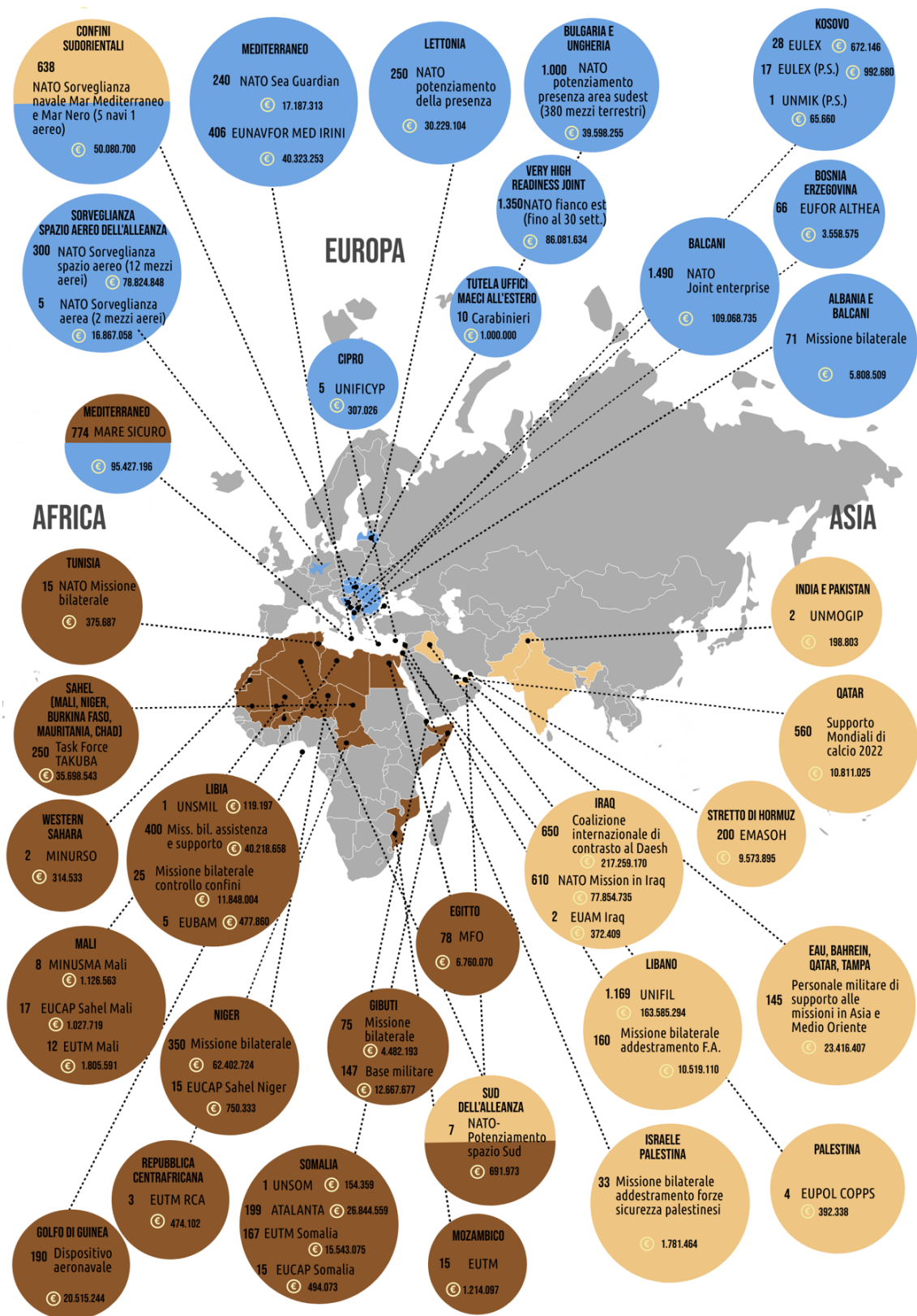
to managing the waste emergency. As such, it clearly represents a distortion in terms of resources, mindset and training compared to the core tasks of the armed forces.

French troops are also involved in homeland security missions, namely operation *Sentinelle*, which was launched in the aftermath of the January 2015 terrorist attacks on Charlie Hebdo. The mission involves the permanent deployment of 6.000 soldiers on French metropolitan territory.

In conclusion, it is not yet possible to claim whether Russia's invasion of Ukraine sparked a reorientation of the geographical focus Italy and France's force projection, as the enhanced contribution to NATO's posture Eastward is parallel to the reconfiguration across the African continent and, especially, the Sahel.

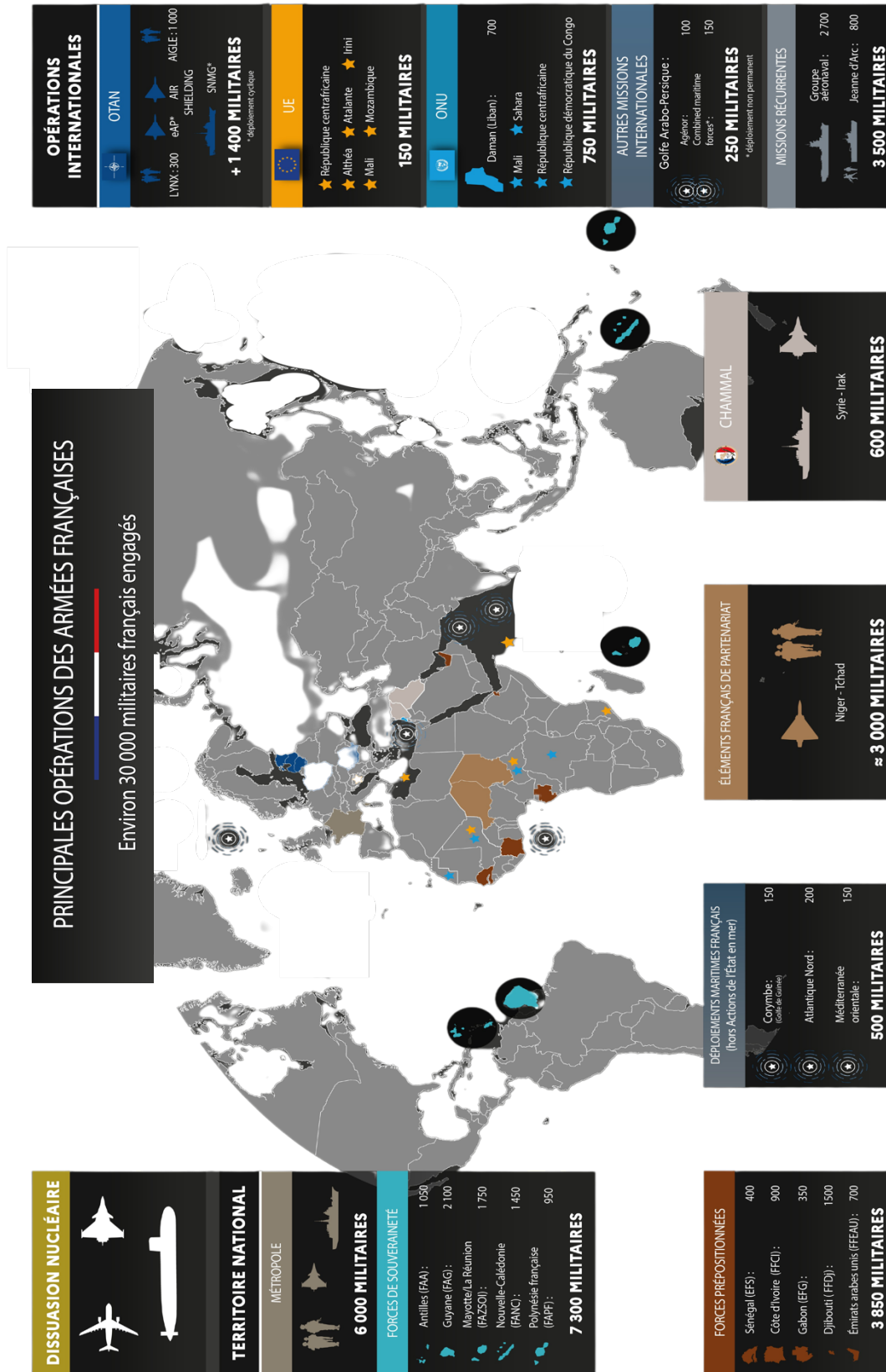
This evolution deserves, however particular, attention. How it will unfold, and whether there will be a balance between East-South commitments, ultimately depends on the ability of the two countries to present themselves with a single voice at Euro-Atlantic tables in order to advocate for greater cooperation between the two organizations, also due to the fact that the EU could have more suitable tools to deal with non-military crises, while NATO could keep on ensuring the defense and deterrence of the European continent.

**Figure 6.1. INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS – ITALY  
2022**



Source: Camera dei Deputati

Figure 6.2. INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS – FRANCE  
2023



Source: État-major des armées

## Instances of industrial cooperation in defence

Contrary to what has happened in the US, where defence industries underwent a process of concentration and consolidation in the 1970s, rather than building a European defence, European member states strengthened their national defence companies. The result is that the latter, with some exception, cannot today compete with powerful multinational defence companies on global export markets (Weiss and Biermann, 2018).

Despite European industrial cooperation in defence has enhanced as compared to past decades, «defence contractors still rely a significant degree on national equipment orders, which means that, although companies have become internationalized, they are “not truly transnational”» (Uttley, 2018).

After years of slow and limited progress in industrial cooperation in defence, many European have started to claim how Russia’s invasion of Ukraine could possibly represent a *momentum* for European integration. Unfortunately, these hopes have soon been broken by the reality. The incumbent Russian threat, especially on Eastern-Central European States, led many to buy “off-the-shelf” arms procurement that could fill in short-term needs and capability deficiencies, rowing against an (inevitably lengthy) process of development of European capabilities that would lay the foundations for the EU's Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB).

The two instances of cooperation here analysed – MBDA and Naviris – represent two very different patterns. Whereas European industrial cooperation in advanced aerospace and electronics domains is already «deeply consolidated [...and] is a daily occurrence, the land and the naval system sectors are widely lagging behind» (Weiss and Biermann, 2018). Whereas MBDA is a strong a consolidated reality, Naviris is an emerging one.

MBDA is «a truly European company with shareholder from all major European powers» (*ibidem*) created in 2001 after the merger of the main missile systems companies in France, Italy and the United Kingdom. Germany joined in 2006 and Spain in 2010. The company today represents the collaboration of the three European leaders in aerospace

and defence: Airbus, BAE Systems and Leonardo. After twenty years, MBDA has become a world leader in missile designing and production.

Naviris is a joint venture between Fincantieri and Naval Group created following the signature of the Franco-Italian bilateral treaty (*Trattato del Quirinale*) in Novembre 2021. Naviris coordinates the consortium that builds the European Patrol Corvette (EPC), which is one of the most important projects carried out under the EDF, the European Defence Fund that finances R&D.

Another major difference between the two relates to the weapon system. Whereas a missile is a finished system, a ship is *par excellence* a system of systems, thus, is modular by definition.<sup>157</sup> This makes industrial cooperation even harder.

In the case of MBDA, if the industrial reality had not been integrated, the national companies would not have had the capacity to develop these weapon systems, faced by increasing costs and technological complexity. However, this is not the case for Naviris, whose major cooperation project – the EPC – is a product which could be developed and produced by the two national companies on solo. This illustrates that the cooperation is also intended at testing whether the two national industries match and can really work together.

MBDA produces Missile Aster 30, which is part of a procurement programme carried out by both Italy and France aimed the renewal of their respective anti-aircraft and missile air defence capabilities. These include, among others, SAMP-T (*Superficie Aria Media Portata Terrestre*) procurement programme, which was started by Italy and France in the early 2000s. By strengthening their national air defence capabilities, Italy and France contribute to the strengthening of NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD) and, therefore, to the collective defence of the Euro-Atlantic area. The SAMP-T programme is part of the Franco-Italian cooperation programme FSAF (Family of Systems Surface-to-Air of the Future) started in 1988 for the development, production and maintenance of a family of missile systems to be used on land and at sea. Since 2012,

---

<sup>157</sup> Elio Calcagno, interview (26 April 2023).

the FSAF programme is under the aegis of the EU agency for joint armament cooperation (*Organisation Conjointe de Coopération en matière d'Armement, OCCAR*).

Four elements should be retained.

First, industrial cooperation works if there is a market for the weapon system created and, unless European industries converge and collaborate, they cannot compete with American companies. The more the EU and its member states continue to depend on the American defence technological and industrial base (DTIB), the further the goal of European strategic autonomy will be.

Second, European defence industries (and this is the case of Fincantieri and Naval Group) are in competition with each other. If states – and, in parallel, the EU – do not find a way to make cooperation a true added value (i.e., through national specializations, different EU market regulation), there would never be any incentive to join forces and, thus, no prospect of a EDTIB.

Third, the more the cooperation, the more the standardization and interoperability. The EU struggles to create European standards and, *de facto*, a greater synergy and convergence has so far been encouraged by NATO, not the EU.

Fourth (and last), there is no predefined scheme to attain greater industrial cooperation within the EU. Naviris today, as MBDA twenty years ago, is a pioneer in this path towards greater industrial convergence. There is neither a pre-set *modus operandi*, nor existing rules of engagement of the collaboration. Both are in the making.



## CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research is to investigate whether Russia's growing assertiveness has led two very close, yet quite different, European states – Italy and France – to converge in foreign and defence matters. To assess such degree of convergence, the study has relied upon three parameters: threat assessment to national security, defence planning orientation and the geographical scope of military missions.

Insofar the first level is concerned, by examining official strategic documents in a comparative perspective, it is possible to affirm that Russia has gained saliency in the threat prioritization and has thus become a more compelling threat for both countries. On the one hand, France's latest *Revue nationale stratégique* admits that the relationship with Russia is moving from «latent competition to open confrontation» and brings high-intensity conventional scenarios back to the fore. On the other hand, Italy's latest *Documento Programmatico Pluriennale* acknowledges, for the first time, Russia as a threat and ascribes it to its primary frame of reference, that is, the “Enlarged Mediterranean”.

The analysis of defence budgets, instead, shows that increased defence spending does not result from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, but is a trend that started earlier. This exogenous shock certainly reinforces the drive to boost defence expenditures (as in the case of France) and may serve as a pretext to pave the way for a possible new strategic narrative no longer exclusively grounded on humanitarianism and peacekeeping (as in the case of Italy) (Coticchia and Moro, 2023).

As expected, however, despite being watershed, February 24 has not substantially modified procurement programmes. Since defence plans on a long-term basis, it displays a greater path-dependency and is less responsive to sudden shocks, contrary to politics which is instead extremely influenced by contingencies. In this regard, some strategic considerations have certainly acquired importance in defence planning and programming, namely stocks and ammunitions, as well as the protection of cyber infrastructures and communication platforms.

Finally, the greatest degree of change (so far) is represented by the geographical scope of military operations. Both countries have indeed (re)located considerable portions of their armed forces and assets on the European continent, which is rather unusual for two expeditionary powers such as France and Italy. Russia's resurgence has triggered NATO

countries to re-discover the core task of the Alliance, leading to a greater military activism in the Eastern flank for deterrence and defence purposes. However, this concentration of troops in Europe is emphasized by Italy and France's withdrawal from Afghanistan and Mali, which represented their most important theatres of engagement.

The juxtaposition of these events which point towards opposite directions may tempt/induce to talk about the end of the interventionist era and the resurgence of territorial defence. However, such dichotomous distinction, besides being oversimplified, might also preclude room for manoeuvre. Managing to show the interdependence of the two fronts of the Euro-Atlantic Alliance, for instance, might pave the way to the elaboration of new approaches which combine the action of NATO with that of the EU, according to a solid and complementary collaboration. Whereas the former might be the most suitable to collective deterrence and the defence, the latter's reliance on non-military means would better fit the multidimensional nature that characterizes instability. And striking a balance between the two may represent a great opportunity for Italy and France, not least, to relaunch the EU's role as a global security actor.

## LIST OF FIGURES

1.1. The three-circles categorization of military operations	13
2.1. Italian armed forces, total personnel 1985-2019	25
2.2. French armed forces, total personnel 1985-2019	25
3.1. Italy military expenditure (% of GDP) 1960-2021	26
3.2. France military expenditure (% of GDP) 1960-2021	26
4.1. Threats assessments in Europe in 2021	56
5.1. NATO countries defence expenditure (% of GDP) 2014-2022	70
5.2. NATO countries equipment expenditure (% of GDP) 2014-2022	70
5.3. NATO countries main categories of defence expenditure (% of total defence expenditure) 2022	71
5.4. NATO countries defence expenditures 2014-2022	71
6.1. International missions – Italy, 2022	76
6.2. International missions – France, 2023	77

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAMM – ER	Common Anti-air Modular Missile – Extended Range
COIN	Counterinsurgency
COVI	Operational Inter-Force Command Headquarters ( <i>Comando Operativo di Vertice Interforze</i> )
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DDP	Three-year programming and policy planning document ( <i>Documento Programmatico Pluriennale</i> )
DROM-COM	French Overseas Departments and Regions-Overseas Communities ( <i>Départements ou Régions français d’Outre-Mer et Collectivités d’Outre-Mer</i> )
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EDF	European Defence Fund
EDIRPA	European Defence Industry Reinforcement through Common Procurement Act
EDTIB	EU's Defence Technological and Industrial Base
eFP	Enhanced Forward Presence
EPC	European Patrol Corvette
EU	European Union
FREMM	European Multi-Purpose Frigates ( <i>Frégate Européenne Multi-Mission</i> )
FSAF/PAAMS	Family of Systems Surface-to-Air of the Future ( <i>Famille des systèmes Surface-Air Futurs</i> )/Principal Anti-Air Missile System
GCAP	Global Combat Air Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
LPM	Military programming law ( <i>Loi de programmation militaire</i> )
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NATO IAMD	Integrated Air and Missile Defence

OCCAR	Organisation for Joint Armament Co-operation ( <i>Organisation Conjointe de Coopération en matière d'Armement</i> )
OPEX	French military operations abroad ( <i>Operations extérieures</i> )
PKO	Peacekeeping operation
R&D	Research and Development
RNS	National Strategic Review ( <i>Revue nationale stratégique</i> )
RSDSN	Strategic Review for National Defence and Security ( <i>Revue stratégique de défense et de sécurité nationale</i> )
SAMP-T	Ground-Air Missile System ( <i>Superficie Aria Media Portata Terrestre</i> )
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
SSBNs	Nuclear-Powered Ballistic Missile Submarine
US	United States
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

## REFERENCES

- Anderlini, J. and Caulcutt, C. (2023, April 9). Europe must resist pressure to become “America’s followers”, say Macron. *Politico*. <https://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macron-china-america-pressure-interview/>
- Antezza A. et al. (2022). The Ukraine Support Tracker: which countries help Ukraine and how?. *Kiel Working Paper*, 2218. <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/publications/kiel-working-papers/2022/the-ukraine-support-tracker-which-countries-help-ukraine-and-how-17204/>
- Arpino, M. (2017). Grande strategia e interesse nazionale. *Rivista Aeronautica*, 4 (July-August 2017), 18-21.
- Bansept, L. e Tenenbaum, E. (2022). Après Barkhane. Repenser la posture stratégique française en Afrique de l’Ouest. *IFRI Focus stratégique*, 109 (May 2022). <https://www.ifri.org/fr/publications/etudes-de-lifri/focus-strategique/apres-barkhane-repenser-posture-strategique-francaise>
- Beal, S. (2022). Shift in focus. French Army plans for peer threat. *Defence and Intelligence Review*, Janes, 11|2022.
- Béraud-Sudreau, L. and Giegerich, B. (2018). NATO Defence Spending and European Threat Perceptions. *Survival*, 60(4), 53-74. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00396338.2018.1495429>
- Biddle, S. (1997). The Gulf War Debate Redux: Why Skill and Technology Are the Right Answer. *International Security*, 22(2), 163–74.
- Biddle, S., Macdonald, J. and Baker, R. (2017). Small footprint, small payoff: The military effectiveness of security force assistance. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 41(1-2), 89-142. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01402390.2017.1307745>
- Bondaz, A. (2022). La France, une puissance d’initiatives en Indo-Pacifique. *Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique (FRS)*, 37 (November 2022). <https://www.frstrategie.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/notes/2022/202237.pdf>
- Briant, R., Florant, J.B. e Pesqueur, M. (2021). La masse dans les armées françaises: un défi pour la haute intensité. *IFRI Focus stratégique*, 105 (June 2021). <https://www.ifri.org/fr/publications/etudes-de-lifri/focus-strategique/masse-armees-francaises-un-defi-haute-intensite>

- Cadier, D. (2022). France: What was Behind the Macron Russia Initiative?. In Kaeding, M., Pollak, J. and Schmidt, P. (Eds.), *Russia and the Future of Europe. Views from the Capitals* (pp. 39-42). Cham: Springer. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-95648-6>
- Calcagno, E. (2021, August 17). Difesa 2021-2023: cyber, spazio e slancio interforze. *AffarInternazionali*. <https://www.affarinternazionali.it/archivio-affarinternazionali/2021/08/difesa-2021-2023-cyber-spazio-e-slancio-interforze/>
- Calcagno, E. and Marrone, A. (2022). La politica di difesa italiana. In Dessì, A. and Nelli Feroci, F. (Eds.), *Il governo Draghi e il nuovo protagonismo internazionale dell'Italia. Rapporto sulla politica estera italiana. Edizione 2021* (pp. 37-43). Rome: IAI. <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/9788893682367.pdf>
- Calcara, A. (2020). Cooperation and non cooperation in European defence procurement. *Journal of European Integration*, 42(6), 799-815. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07036337.2019.1682567>
- Calcara, A. and Simón, L. (2021). Market Size and the Political Economy of European Defense. *Security Studies*, 30(5), 860-892. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09636412.2021.2023625>
- Calmels, C. (2022). France in NATO. An evolving Gaullian agenda. *NATO Defence College (NDC) Research Paper*, 26 (October 2022). <https://www.ndc.nato.int/news/news.php?icode=1749>
- Camporini, V. (2015). Un atto rifondatore della Difesa. In Marrone, A. (Ed.), *Il Libro bianco: una strategia per la politica di difesa dell'Italia, Documenti IAI*, 15|09 (May 2015). <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iai1509.pdf>
- Camporini, V. et al. (2014). The Role of Italian Fighter Aircraft in Crisis Management Operations : Trends and Needs. *IAI Research Papers*. [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iairp\\_16.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iairp_16.pdf)
- Carati, A. and Locatelli, A. (2017). Cui prodest? Italy's questionable involvement in multilateral military operations amid ethical concerns and national interest. *International Peacekeeping*. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2016.1229127>
- Casardi, P. (2018). Riflessioni sul concetto di interessi strategici nazionali. *Rivista Marittima*, May 2018, 16-27.
- Coticchia, F. (2018). Italy. In Meijer, H. and Wyss, M. (Eds.), *The Handbook of European Defence Policies and Armed Forces* (pp. 109-124). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-handbook-of-european-defence-policies-and-armed-forces-9780198790501?q=wyss&lang=en&cc=it>

Coticchia, F. (2021, April 19). Un centro di gravità permanente? La difesa italiana e il Mediterraneo allargato. *Formiche*. <https://formiche.net/2021/04/mediterraneo-allargato-coticchia-unige/>

Coticchia, F. (2021). A sovereigntist revolution? Italy's foreign policy under the "Yellow-Green" government. *Comparative European Politics*, 19, 739-759. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41295-021-00259-0>

Coticchia, F. (2022). A Watershed Moment? European Defence and the War in Ukraine. In Giusti, S. and Grevi, G. (Eds.), *Facing War: Rethinking Europe's Security and Defence* (pp. 23-34). Milan: ISPI.

Coticchia, F. and De Simone, C. (2016). The War That Wasn't There? Italy's "Peace Mission" in Afghanistan, Strategic Narratives and Public Opinion. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 12(1), 24-46. <https://academic.oup.com/fpa/article/12/1/24/1786423>

Coticchia, F. and Meijer, H. (2022). La politica di difesa italiana nel nuovo quadro europeo. *Il Mulino*, 2|22, 96-106. <https://www.rivistailmulino.it/isbn/9788815380531>

Coticchia, F. and Moro, F.N. (2020a). From enthusiasm to retreat: Italy and military missions abroad after the Cold War. *Italian Political Science*, 15(1). <https://italianpoliticalscience.com/index.php/ips/article/view/122>

Coticchia, F. and Moro, F.N. (2020b). Peaceful legislatures? Parliaments and military interventions after the Cold War: Insights from Germany and Italy. *International Relations*, 34(4), 482-503. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047117819900250>

Coticchia, F. and Moro, F.N. (2023). The Italian armed forces and the new conflicts in Europe. *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 15(2), 219-236. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/23248823.2023.2191231>

Coticchia, F. and Ruggeri, A. (2022). An International Peacekeeper. The evolution of Italian Foreign and Defence Policy. *IAI Policy Paper*. <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaip2206.pdf>

Crosetto, G. (2023, January 27). Prospettive europee per una Difesa comune. *Formiche & AirPress Conference*, Rome. <https://formiche.net/gallerie/difesa-europea-evento-formiche-airpress-pizzi/>

CSIS Online Event. (2022, May 11). *The Future of Italy's Armed Forces*. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/future-italys-armed-forces>



- D'Estaing, G. (2009, February 22), Valéry Giscard d'Estaing au 31ème Colloque de l'Alliance française. *Canal Académies*.  
<https://www.canalacademies.com/emissions/partager-le-savoir-le-francais-en-partage/les-alliances-francaises/valery-giscard-destaing-au-31eme-colloque-de-lalliance-francaise>
- Damilano, M. (2019). *Un atomo di verità. Aldo Moro e la fine della politica in Italia*. Orio Litta: La Feltrinelli.
- Darnis, J.P. (2015). La dimensione europea del Libro bianco. In Marrone, A. (Ed.) (2015). Il Libro bianco: una strategia per la politica di difesa dell'Italia, *Documenti IAI*, 15|09 (May 2015). <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iai1509.pdf>
- Davidson, J. (2011). *America's allies and war: Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Decis, H. (2023). France. In Marrone, A. and Calcagno, E. (Eds), Naval Combat Systems: Developments and Challenges (pp. 41-47), *Documenti IAI*, 23|01 (January 2023). <https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/naval-combat-systems-developments-and-challenges>
- European Union (EU). European External Action Service (EEAS). (2016). *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*.  
[https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs\\_review\\_web\\_0.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eugs_review_web_0.pdf)
- Forster, A. (2006). *Armed Forces and Society in Europe*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/9780230502406>
- Fourquet, J. (2020). *L'archipel français. Naissance d'une nation multiple et divisée*. Chambray-lès-Tours: Seuil. <https://www.seuil.com/ouvrage/l-archipel-francais-jerome-fourquet/9782757886359>
- Garlaschi, M. and Ricciardi, G. (2022). Le spese militari nel mondo dagli anni Sessanta. *Pubblicazioni Osservatorio Conti Pubblici Italiani (OCPI)*.  
<https://osservatoriocpi.unicatt.it/ocpi-pubblicazioni-le-spese-militari-nel-mondo-dagli-anni-sessanta>
- Gilli, A., Ungaro, A.R. and Marrone, A. (2015). The Italian White Paper for International Security and Defence. *The RUSI Journal*, 160(6), 34-41.  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/03071847.2015.1122978?needAccess=true&role=button>
- Goffus, T. (2023, May 13). Italian Air Force's 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – 1929-2023. Doctrine: what beliefs?. *AeroSpace Power Conference 2023*, Panel 4, Rome.

- Hermann, C.F. (1990). Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy. *International Studies Quarterly*, 34(1), 3-21. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2600403>
- [http://documenti.camera.it/leg16/dossier/Testi/di0238.htm#\\_Toc268187871](http://documenti.camera.it/leg16/dossier/Testi/di0238.htm#_Toc268187871)
- [https://www.difesa.it/Content/Documents/Documento\\_Programmatico\\_Pluriennale\\_\(DPP\)\\_2019\\_2021\\_digit.pdf](https://www.difesa.it/Content/Documents/Documento_Programmatico_Pluriennale_(DPP)_2019_2021_digit.pdf)
- [https://www.difesa.it/Il\\_Ministro/Documents/Direttiva%20PMN%202022.pdf](https://www.difesa.it/Il_Ministro/Documents/Direttiva%20PMN%202022.pdf)
- IAI. (2023, March 30). *L'Italia nell'Alleanza Atlantica: priorità e prospettive*. Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) closed-door workshop under Chatham House Rule.
- IAI. (2023, May 3). *La sicurezza italiana di fronte alla guerra in Ucraina*. Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) closed-door roundtable under Chatham House Rule.
- IAI. (2023). *Sahel Instability & Spill-over Effects in the Gulf of Guinea: Threats to Regional Security*. IAI Conference with EU Special Representative for the Sahel Emanuela Del Re, 3 February 2023, Rome. <https://www.iai.it/en/eventi/sahel-instability-spill-over-effects-gulf-guinea-threats-regional-security>
- Irondele, B. and Schmitt, O. (2013). France. In Biehl, H., Giegerich, B. and Jonas, A. (Eds.), *Strategic Cultures in Europe. Security and Defence Policies Across the Continent* (pp.125-138). Potsdam: Springer. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-658-01168-0>
- Kristensesn, H.M. and Korda, M. (2019). United States nuclear forces, 2019. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 75(3), 122-134. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00963402.2019.1606503>
- Liaci, S. and Ricciardi, G. (2022). Le spese militari in Italia. *Pubblicazioni Osservatorio Conti Pubblici Italiani (OCPI)*. [https://osservatoriocpi.unicatt.it/ocpi-pubblicazioni-le-spesse-militari-in-italia#\\_ftn2](https://osservatoriocpi.unicatt.it/ocpi-pubblicazioni-le-spesse-militari-in-italia#_ftn2)
- Macron, E. (2022). Universalism in the face of war, *Paris Peace Forum*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJ0fH7mEuSw>
- Maitre, E. (2016). Nato, the F35 and European Nuclear Dilemmas. *Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique (FRS)*. <https://www.frstrategie.org/en/publications/notes/nato-f35-european-nuclear-dilemmas-2016>
- Marrone, A. (2012, December 17). I quattro pilastri della riforma della Difesa. *AffarInternazionali*. <https://www.affarinternazionali.it/archivio-affarinternazionali/2012/12/i-quattro-pilastri-della-riforma-della-difesa/>

Marrone, A. (2020). Politica di difesa: continuità e maggiore dinamismo. In Nelli Feroci, F. and Dessì, A. (Eds.), *Il governo Conte bis, la pandemica e la crisi del multilateralismo. Rapporto sulla politica estera italiana. Edizione 2020* (pp. 33-38). Rome: IAI. <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/9788893681735.pdf>

Marrone, A. (2022). Italians and Defence at the Time of the Ukraine War: Winds of Change. *IAI Commentaries*, 22|54. <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaicom2254.pdf>

Marrone, A. (2023). L'Italia nella NATO post-Guerra Fredda: missioni militari e interessi nazionali. In Natalizia, G. and Termine, L. (Eds.). *La NATO verso il 2030. Continuità e discontinuità nelle relazioni transatlantiche dopo il nuovo Concetto Strategico*. Bologna: il Mulino. <https://www.mulino.it/isbn/9788815386397>

Marrone, A. (Ed.) (2015). Il Libro bianco: una strategia per la politica di difesa dell'Italia. *Documenti IAI*, 15|09 (May 2015). <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iai1509.pdf>

Marrone, A. and Camporini, V. (2016a). La politica di sicurezza e difesa. In Greco, E. and Ronzitti, N. (Eds.), *Rapporto sulla politica estera italiana: il governo Renzi. Edizione 2016* (pp.47-56). Rome: IAI. [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaiq\\_17.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaiq_17.pdf)

Marrone, A. and Camporini, V. (2016b). Recent Developments in Italy's Security and Defence Policy. *Documenti IAI*, 16|19 (November 2016). <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iai1619.pdf>

Marrone, A. and Di Camillo, F. (2013). Italy. In Biehl, H., Giegerich, B. and Jonas, A. (Eds.), *Strategic Cultures in Europe. Security and Defence Policies Across the Continent* (pp.193-206). Potsdam: Springer. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-658-01168-0>

Marrone, A. and Freyrie, M. (2023). La politica di difesa italiana e il ruolo della Nato. In Nelli Feroci, F. and Goretti, L. (Eds.), *L'Italia dal governo Draghi al governo Meloni. Rapporto sulla politica estera italiana. Edizione 2022* (pp.40-48). Rome: IAI. <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/9788893682800.pdf>

Marrone, A. and Sartori, P. (2018). La riforma della Difesa, le missioni di pace e il lancio della Pesca. In Greco, E. (Ed.), *L'Italia al bivio. Rapporto sulla politica estera. Edizione 2018* (pp. 81-92). Rome: IAI. [https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaiq\\_19.pdf](https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/iaiq_19.pdf)

Maulny, J.P. (2023). La Loi de programmation militaire 2024-2030: une montée en puissance de nos armées?. *Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques (IRIS)*. <https://www.iris-france.org/174898-la-loi-de-programmation-militaire-2024-2030-une-montee-en-puissance-de-nos-armees/>

- Meijer, H. and Brooks S.G. (2021). Illusions of Autonomy: Why Europe Cannot Provide for Its Security If the United States Pulls Back. *International Security*, 45(4), 7-43. [https://doi.org/10.1162/isec\\_a\\_00405](https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00405)
- Meijer, H. and Wyss, M. (2018). Introduction: Beyond CSDP. The Resurgence of National Armed Forces in Europe. In Meijer, H. and Wyss, M. (Eds.), *The Handbook of European Defence Policies and Armed Forces* (pp. 1-31). Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-handbook-of-european-defence-policies-and-armed-forces-9780198790501?q=wyss&lang=en&cc=it>
- Mendershausen, H. (1980). Reflections on Territorial Defense. *RAND Note*. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/notes/N1265.html>
- Meunier, S. (2008). France and the World: From Chirac to Sarkozy. In Cole, A., Le Galès, P. and Levy, J. (Eds.), *Developments in French Politics* (pp. 243-257). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- MilEx Observatory. (2023). *Osservatorio sulle spese militari italiane*. <https://www.milex.org>.
- Muti, K. (2022). Diplomatic Bridge But Hybrid First: Italy's Possible Approach Towards Russia. In Kaeding, M., Pollak, J. and Schmidt, P. (Eds.), *Russia and the Future of Europe. Views from the Capitals* (pp. 59-62). Cham: Springer. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-95648-6>
- Natalizia G, Termine L. et al. (2022). Oltre il Trattato del Quirinale. Le relazioni italo-francesi alla prova dei mutamenti politico-strategici in Europa. *Osservatorio di Politica internazionale*, 190. <https://www.parlamento.it/application/xmanager/projects/parlamento/file/repository/affariinternazionali/osservatorio/approfondimenti/PI0190.pdf>.
- NATO. (1991). *The Alliance's New Strategic Concept*. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_23847.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_23847.htm)
- NATO. (2014). *Wales Summit Declaration*. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_112964.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_112964.htm)
- NATO. (2022). *NATO 2022 Strategic Concept*. <https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/>
- NATO. (2023). *Collective defence and Article 5*. [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_110496.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_110496.htm)
- NATO. (2023). *Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014-2022)*. [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/3/pdf/230321-def-exp-2022-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2023/3/pdf/230321-def-exp-2022-en.pdf)

Nelli Feroci, F. and Goretti L. (Eds.), *L'Italia dal governo Draghi al governo Meloni. Rapporto sulla politica estera italiana. Edizione 2022.* (pp. 40-48). Rome: IAI. <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/9788893682800.pdf>

Nones, M. (2022, August 30). La Difesa aspetta ancora la riforma dello strumento militare. *AffarInternazionali*. <https://www.affarinternazionali.it/la-difesa-aspetta-ancora-la-riforma-del-suo-strumento-militare/>

Panebianco, A. (1997). *Guerrieri democratici. Le democrazie e la politica di potenza.* Bologna: il Mulino.

Péria-Peigné, L. (2022), Stocks militaires: une assurance-vie en haute intensité ?. *IFRI Focus stratégique*, n. 113 (dicembre 2022). <https://www.ifri.org/fr/publications/etudes-de-lifri/focus-strategique/stocks-militaires-une-assurance-vie-haute-intensite>

Posen, B.R. (2020). Europe Can Defend Itself. *Survival*, 62(6), 7-34. <https://www.iiss.org/globalassets/media-library---content--migration/images/publications/survival/2020/decjan/62-6-02-posen.pdf>

Repubblica Italiana e Repubblica Francese. (2021). *Trattato tra la Repubblica Italiana e la Repubblica Francese per una cooperazione bilaterale rafforzata.* [https://www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/Trattato\\_del\\_Quirinale.pdf](https://www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/Trattato_del_Quirinale.pdf)

Repubblica Italiana. Camera dei Deputati. (2010). *Nuovi profili della partecipazione italiana alle missioni internazionali.* Rome: Chamber of Deputies Study Service.

Repubblica Italiana. Camera dei Deputati. (2018). *Il libro bianco per la sicurezza internazionale e la difesa.* Rome: Parliament. <https://www.camera.it/temiap/documentazione/temi/pdf/1104891.pdf>

Repubblica Italiana. Camera dei Deputati. (2020). *Le missioni internazionali: tabelle e grafici 2004-2020,* 2020. Rome: Chamber of Deputies Study Service. [http://documenti.camera.it/leg18/dossier/pdf/DI0275.pdf?\\_1685884895556](http://documenti.camera.it/leg18/dossier/pdf/DI0275.pdf?_1685884895556)

Repubblica Italiana. Camera dei Deputati. (2021). *Il programma Joint Strike Fighter - F35.* Rome: Chamber of Deputies Study Service. [https://www.camera.it/temiap/documentazione/temi/pdf/1193084.pdf?\\_1685541896018](https://www.camera.it/temiap/documentazione/temi/pdf/1193084.pdf?_1685541896018)

Repubblica Italiana. Camera dei Deputati. (2022). *Deliberazione del Consiglio dei Ministri in merito alla partecipazione dell'Italia a ulteriori missioni internazionali, adottata il 15 giugno 2022. Doc. XXV n 5.* Rome: Parliament. [http://documenti.camera.it/\\_dati/leg18/lavori/documentiparlamentari/IndiceETesti/025/005/INTERO.pdf](http://documenti.camera.it/_dati/leg18/lavori/documentiparlamentari/IndiceETesti/025/005/INTERO.pdf)

Repubblica Italiana. Camera dei Deputati. (2022). *Il concetto strategico del Capo di Stato Maggiore della Difesa*. Rome: MoD. [https://www.difesa.it/SMD\\_/CaSMD/Concetto\\_strategico\\_del\\_Capo\\_di\\_SMD/Documents/CS\\_22/Concetto\\_Strategico\\_del\\_CaSMD\\_2022.pdf](https://www.difesa.it/SMD_/CaSMD/Concetto_strategico_del_Capo_di_SMD/Documents/CS_22/Concetto_Strategico_del_CaSMD_2022.pdf)

Repubblica Italiana. Camera dei Deputati. (2022). *La partecipazione italiana alle missioni internazionali*. Rome: Chamber of Deputies Study Service. [https://www.camera.it/temiap/documentazione/temi/pdf/1355755.pdf?\\_1682794549378](https://www.camera.it/temiap/documentazione/temi/pdf/1355755.pdf?_1682794549378)

Repubblica Italiana. Camera dei Deputati. (2022). *Relazione analitica sulle missioni internazionali in corso e sullo stato degli interventi di cooperazione allo sviluppo a sostegno dei processi di pace e di stabilizzazione, riferita all'anno 2021, anche al fine della relativa proroga per l'anno 2022. Doc. XXVI n. 5*. Rome: Parliament. [http://documenti.camera.it/\\_dati/leg18/lavori/documentiparlamentari/IndiceETesti/026/005/INTERO.pdf](http://documenti.camera.it/_dati/leg18/lavori/documentiparlamentari/IndiceETesti/026/005/INTERO.pdf)

Repubblica Italiana. Camera dei Deputati. (2023). *Audizione Crosetto su linee programmatiche Ministero Difesa*. Rome: Parliament. <https://webtv.camera.it/evento/21623#>

Repubblica Italiana. Camera dei Deputati. (2023). *Le spese per la difesa nel bilancio dello Stato*. Rome: Chamber of Deputies Study Service. [https://www.camera.it/temiap/documentazione/temi/pdf/1366891.pdf?\\_1682790611968](https://www.camera.it/temiap/documentazione/temi/pdf/1366891.pdf?_1682790611968)

Repubblica Italiana. MAECI. (2021). *L'Italia e il Sahel*. Rome: Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [https://www.esteri.it/it/sala\\_stampa/archivionotizie/approfondimenti/2021/07/l-italia-e-il-sahel/](https://www.esteri.it/it/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/approfondimenti/2021/07/l-italia-e-il-sahel/)

Repubblica Italiana. Ministero degli Affari Esteri. (2020). *Rapporto 2020. Le scelte di politica estera*. Rome: Ministry of Foreign Affairs. [https://www.esteri.it/mae/doc/rapporto2020\\_sceltepoliticaestera\\_090408.pdf](https://www.esteri.it/mae/doc/rapporto2020_sceltepoliticaestera_090408.pdf)

Repubblica Italiana. Ministero della Difesa. (2015). *Libro bianco per la sicurezza internazionale e la difesa*. Rome: MoD. [https://www.difesa.it/Primo\\_Piano/Documents/2015/04\\_Aprile/LB\\_2015.pdf](https://www.difesa.it/Primo_Piano/Documents/2015/04_Aprile/LB_2015.pdf)

Repubblica Italiana. Ministero della Difesa. (2019). *Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2019-2021*. Rome: MoD.

Repubblica Italiana. Ministero della Difesa. (2021). *Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2021-2023*. Rome: MoD. <https://www.difesa.it/Content/Documents/20210804%20DPP%202021-2023%20-ult.pdf>



Repubblica Italiana. Ministero della Difesa. (2022). *Direttiva per la politica militare nazionale*. Rome: MoD. [https://www.difesa.it/Il\\_Ministro/Documents/Direttiva%20PMN%202022.pdf](https://www.difesa.it/Il_Ministro/Documents/Direttiva%20PMN%202022.pdf)

Repubblica Italiana. Ministero della Difesa. (2022). *Documento Programmatico Pluriennale della Difesa per il triennio 2022-2024*. Rome: MoD. [https://www.difesa.it/Il\\_Ministro/Documents/DPP\\_2022\\_2024.pdf](https://www.difesa.it/Il_Ministro/Documents/DPP_2022_2024.pdf)

Repubblica Italiana. Ministero della Difesa. (2022). *Strategia di sicurezza e difesa per il Mediterraneo*. Rome: MoD. [https://www.difesa.it/Il\\_Ministro/Documents/Strategia%20Mediterraneo%202022.pdf](https://www.difesa.it/Il_Ministro/Documents/Strategia%20Mediterraneo%202022.pdf)

Repubblica Italiana. Parlamento. (2023, May 18). *Comunicazioni Tajani e Crosetto su missioni internazionali e processi di pace*. <https://webtv.camera.it/evento/22433>

Repubblica Italiana. Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri. (2023). *Relazione sulla politica dell'informazione per la sicurezza 2022*. Rome: Government. [https://www.sicurezzanazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Relazione\\_annuale\\_2022\\_interattiva.pdf](https://www.sicurezzanazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Relazione_annuale_2022_interattiva.pdf)

Repubblica Italiana. Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri. (2025). *Relazione sulla politica dell'informazione per la sicurezza 2024*. Rome: Government. <https://www.sicurezzanazionale.gov.it/sisr.nsf/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/relazione-2014.pdf>

Repubblica Italiana. Senato della Repubblica e Camera dei Deputati. (2022). *Autorizzazione e proroga missioni internazionali e interventi di cooperazione e sviluppo per l'anno 2022 – Doc. XXV n. 5 e Doc. XXVI n. 5*. Rome: Parliament. [http://documenti.camera.it/leg18/dossier/pdf/DI0501.pdf?\\_1683185801788](http://documenti.camera.it/leg18/dossier/pdf/DI0501.pdf?_1683185801788)

Repubblica Italiana. Senato della Repubblica e della Camera dei Deputati. (2023). *Autorizzazione e proroga missioni internazionali*. Rome: Study Services of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. <https://www.senato.it/service/PDF/PDFServer/BGT/01376310.pdf>

Repubblica Italiana. Senato della Repubblica e della Camera dei Deputati. (2021). *Schema di decreto ministeriale di approvazione del programma pluriennale di A/R n. SMD 11/2021*. Rome: Study Services of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. <http://documenti.camera.it/leg18/dossier/PDF/DI0395.pdf>

Repubblica Italiana. Senato della Repubblica. (2017). *Difesa. L'attualizzazione del "Libro bianco" e la riorganizzazione delle Forze armate*. Rome: Impact Assessment Office.

[https://www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg18/file/repository/UVI/Consultazioni\\_pubbliche\\_Difesa.pdf](https://www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg18/file/repository/UVI/Consultazioni_pubbliche_Difesa.pdf)

Repubblica Italiana. Senato della Repubblica. (2018). *Professione: Difesa. Le Forze armate italiane alla prova del modello professionale*. Rome: Impact Assessment Office. <https://www.senato.it/service/PDF/PDFServer/BGT/01069543.pdf>

Repubblica Italiana. Senato della Repubblica. (2023). *Comunicazione dei Ministri degli affari esteri e della difesa. Commissioni congiunte III Senato e III e IV Camera*. [https://webtv.senato.it/4621?video\\_evento=242677](https://webtv.senato.it/4621?video_evento=242677)

République Française. (2022). *Budget de la défense : les étapes pour le porter à 2% du PIB*. <https://www.vie-publique.fr/eclairage/284741-budget-de-la-defense-les-etapes-pour-le-porter-2-du-pib>

République Française. (2022). Direction de l'information légale et administrative. *Budget de la défense : les étapes pour le porter à 2% du PIB*. <https://www.vie-publique.fr/eclairage/284741-budget-de-la-defense-les-etapes-pour-le-porter-2-du-pib>

République Française. (2022). *La politique de défense au travers des lois de programmation militaire*. <https://www.vie-publique.fr/eclairage/269187-la-politique-de-defense-au-travers-des-lois-de-programmation-militaire>

République Française. (2022). *Les opérations militaires extérieures de la France (OPEX)*. <https://www.vie-publique.fr/eclairage/18474-les-operations-militaires-exterieures-de-la-france-opex>

République Française. (2022). *Les opérations militaires extérieures de la France (OPEX)*. <https://www.vie-publique.fr/eclairage/18474-les-operations-militaires-exterieures-de-la-france-opex>

République Française. (2022). *Politique de défense : éléments de chronologie 1949-2023*. <https://www.vie-publique.fr/eclairage/268669-politique-de-defense-elements-de-chronologie-1949-2023>

République Française. Assemblée Nationale. (2022), *Rapport d'information déposé en application de l'article 145 du règlement, par la Commission de la défense nationale et des forces armées, en conclusion des travaux d'une mission d'information sur la préparation à la haute intensité*. Paris : Parlement. [https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/rapports/cion\\_def/115b5054\\_rapport-information](https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/rapports/cion_def/115b5054_rapport-information)

République Française. Comité de rédaction de la Revue stratégique. (2017). *Revue stratégique de défense et de sécurité nationale 2017*. Paris: DICOd, [https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/2017-rs-def1018\\_cle0b6ef5-1.pdf](https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/2017-rs-def1018_cle0b6ef5-1.pdf)



République Française. Commission du Livre Blanc. (1994). *Livre Blanc sur la Défense*. [https://medias.vie-publique.fr/data\\_storage\\_s3/rapport/pdf/944048700.pdf](https://medias.vie-publique.fr/data_storage_s3/rapport/pdf/944048700.pdf)

République Française. Cour des comptes. (2022). *La Loi de programmation militaire (LPM) 2019-2025 et les capacités des armées.*, <https://www.ccomptes.fr/fr/documents/59759>

République Française. Délégation à l'information et à la communication de la Défense. (2021). *Actualisation stratégique 2021*. Paris: DICOd, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/dgris/REVUE%20STRAT%202021%2004%2002%202021%20FR.pdf>

République Française. Direction de l'information légale et administrative. (2022). *La politique de défense au travers des lois de programmation militaire*. <https://www.vie-publique.fr/eclairage/269187-la-politique-de-defense-au-travers-des-lois-de-programmation-militaire>

République Française. Élysée. (2020). *Discours du Président Emmanuel Macron sur la stratégie de défense et de dissuasion devant les stagiaires de la 27ème promotion de l'école de guerre*. <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/02/07/discours-du-president-emmanuel-macron-sur-la-strategie-de-defense-et-de-dissuasion-devant-les-stagiaires-de-la-27eme-promotion-de-lecole-de-guerre>

République Française. Élysée. (2022), *À Toulon, le Président de la République présente la Revue nationale stratégique*. <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2022/11/09/a-toulon-le-president-de-la-republique-presente-la-revue-nationale-strategique>

République Française. Élysée. (2022), *Discours aux armées à l'Hôtel de Brienne*. <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2022/07/13/discours-aux-armees-a-lhotel-de-brienne-1>

République Française. Élysée. (2022). *À Toulon, le Président de la République présente la Revue nationale stratégique*. <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2022/11/09/a-toulon-le-president-de-la-republique-presente-la-revue-nationale-strategique>

République Française. Élysée. (2022). *Discours aux armées à l'Hôtel de Brienne*. <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2022/07/13/discours-aux-armees-a-lhotel-de-brienne-1>

République Française. Élysée. (2022). *Entretien téléphonique avec Vladimir Poutine, Président de la Fédération de Russie*. <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2022/02/20/entretien-telephonique-avec-vladimir-poutine-president-de-la-federation-de-russie-1>

République Française. Élysée. (2023). *Transformer nos armées : le Président de la République présente le nouveau projet de loi de programmation militaire*. <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2023/01/20/transformer-nos-armees-le-president-de-la-republique-presente-le-nouveau-projet-de-loi-de-programmation-militaire>

République Française. Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères. (2022). *La stratégie de la France dans l'Indopacifique*. Paris: MEAE. [https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/fr\\_a4\\_indopacifique\\_022022\\_dcp\\_v1-10-web\\_cle017d22.pdf](https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/fr_a4_indopacifique_022022_dcp_v1-10-web_cle017d22.pdf)

République Française. Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères. (2022). *La stratégie de la France dans l'Indopacifique*. Paris: MEAE.

République Française. Ministère de la Défense. (2013), *Livre blanc de défense et de sécurité nationale*. [http://www.livreblancdefenseetsecurite.gouv.fr/pdf/le\\_livre\\_blanc\\_de\\_la\\_defense\\_2013.pdf](http://www.livreblancdefenseetsecurite.gouv.fr/pdf/le_livre_blanc_de_la_defense_2013.pdf)

République Française. Ministère des Armées. (2017). *La France en OPEX. 50 ans d'engagement*. <http://www.para-trans.org/images/Documents/france-50-ans-d27opex.pdf>

République Française. Ministère des Armées. (2023). *Forces de souveraineté*. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/forces-prepositionnees/forces-souverainete>

République Française. Ministère des Armées. (2023). *L'histoire des opérations extérieures (OPEX) des armées françaises depuis 1963*. <https://www.cheminsdememoire.gouv.fr/fr/lhistoire-des-operations-exterieures-opex-des-armees-francaises-depuis-1963>

République Française. Ministère des Armées. (2023). *OPEX – Opérations extérieures*. <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/terre/missions-larmee-terre/opex-operations-exterieures#title-9302>

République Française. Secrétariat général de la défense et de la sécurité nationale. (2022). *Revue nationale stratégique 2022*. Paris : SGDSN. <https://www.sgdsn.gouv.fr/files/files/Revue%20nationale%20strategique%20-%20Français.pdf>

République française. Sénat. (2023, March 8). *Nouvelle loi de programmation militaire: quels enjeux?*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uz9hPFk5fqg>

- République Française. Sénat. (2023). *Rapport d'information fait au nom de la commission des finances sur les forces de souveraineté*. Paris: Senate. <https://www.senat.fr/rap/r22-012/r22-0121.pdf>
- Schmitt, O. and Rynning, S. (2018), France. In Meijer, H. and Wyss, M. (Eds.), *The Handbook of European Defence Policies and Armed Forces* (pp. 35-51). Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-handbook-of-european-defence-policies-and-armed-forces-9780198790501?q=wyss&lang=en&cc=it>
- Shaun, G. (2000). *French Defence Policy into the Twenty-First Century*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/9780230536739>
- Simón, L. (2022, November 28). European strategic autonomy and defence after Ukraine. *Real Instituto Elcano*. <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/european-strategic-autonomy-and-defence-after-ukraine/>
- SIPRI. (2023). *SIPRI Military Expenditure Database*. <https://milex.sipri.org/sipri>
- Stato Maggiore della Difesa. (2001). Concetto Strategico. *Informazioni della Difesa*, Inserto n. 1/2001. [https://www.difesa.it/InformazioniDellaDifesa/periodico/IIPeriodico\\_AnniPrecedenti/Documents/Concetto\\_Strategico.pdf](https://www.difesa.it/InformazioniDellaDifesa/periodico/IIPeriodico_AnniPrecedenti/Documents/Concetto_Strategico.pdf)
- Stato Maggiore della Marina. (2019). Marina Militare. Linee di indirizzo strategico 2019-2034. *Rivista Marittima*, Supplemento al n. 4 (April 2019).
- Tenenbaum, E., Paglia, M. and Ruffié, N. (2020). Confettis d'empire ou points d'appui? L'avenir de la stratégie française de présence et de souveraineté. *IFRI Focus stratégique*, 94 (February 2020). <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/etudes-de-lifri/focus-strategique/confettis-dempire-points-dappui-lavenir-de-strategie>
- Tenenbaum, E., Varma, T. and Dufour, I. (2022). Quelle est la stratégie de la France?. *Le Collimateur*, Institut de Recherche Stratégique de l'Ecole Militaire (IRSEM) Podcast. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/2jnj7AE9UnlyJa4rxfaeD9?si=48BPdAbIQIeePFfDavUyCw&nd=1>
- The World Bank – IBRD. (2023). *Armed forces personnel, total – France*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.TOTL.P1?locations=FR>
- The World Bank – IBRD. (2023). *Armed forces personnel, total – Italy*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.TOTL.P1?locations=IT>
- The World Bank – IBRD. (2023). *Military expenditure (% of GDP) – Italy*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?locations=IT>

- The World Bank – IBRD. (2023). *Military expenditure (% of GDP) – France*. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?locations=FR>
- Thiériot, J.L. (2023). La RNS: des ambitions bienvenues, des moyens à confirmer. *Revue Défense Nationale*, 1(856) (January 2023), 31-36. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-defense-nationale-2023-1.htm>
- Tocci, N. (2021). European Strategic Autonomy: What It Is, Why We Need It, How to Achieve It. *IAI Papers*. <https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/9788893681780.pdf>
- Tocci, N. (2023). The Paradox of Europe’s Defense Moment. *Texas National Security Review*, 6(1). <https://tnsr.org/2023/01/the-paradox-of-europes-defense-moment/>
- Tull, D. (2021). Operation Barkhane and the future of Intervention in the Sahel. *German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP)*. [https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2021C05\\_OperationBarkhane.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2021C05_OperationBarkhane.pdf)
- Ungaro, A. (2014, December 12). Lo sapete che l’addestramento delle Forze Armate è la cenerentola della Difesa italiana?. *Formiche*. <https://formiche.net/2014/12/laddestramento-delle-forze-armate-cenerentola-della-difesa/>
- Uttley, M. (2018). Arms Procurement. In Meijer, H. and Wyss, M. (Eds.), *The Handbook of European Defence Policies and Armed Forces* (pp. 675-692). Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-handbook-of-european-defence-policies-and-armed-forces-9780198790501?q=wyss&lang=en&cc=it>
- Varsori, A. (2022a). *Dalla rinascita al declino. Storia internazionale dell’Italia repubblicana*. Bologna: il Mulino.
- Varsori, A. (2022b). Pietro Quaroni. 1946-1957. *Gli ambasciatori d’Italia in Francia dal 1945 al 1991*, Conference organized by Italiques, Italian Embassy in Paris (1-2 December 2022).
- Vignoli, V. and Coticchia, F. (2022). Italy’s military operation abroad (1945-2020): trends, data, and pattern. *International Peacekeeping*, 29(3), 436-462. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13533312.2022.2054044?journalCode=fi np20>
- Vignoli, V. and Coticchia, F. (2022). Italy’s Military Operations Abroad (1945-2020): Data, Patterns, and Trends. *International Peacekeeping*, 29(3), 436-461. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2022.2054044>
- Weiss, M. and Biermann, F. (2018). Defence Industrial Cooperation. In Meijer, H. and Wyss, M. (Eds.), *The Handbook of European Defence Policies and Armed Forces* (pp.

693-709). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-handbook-of-european-defence-policies-and-armed-forces-9780198790501?q=wyss&lang=en&cc=it>

Yché, A. (2022). Défense et territoire. *Revue Défense Nationale*, 9(854) (November 2022), 7-12. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-defense-nationale-2022-9.htm>

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**