France, the New Military Strategy: Winning the War Before the War

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France wants to prepare for a more unstable and competitive world, where war no longer begins only with armed conflict, but takes shape earlier, in diplomatic, informational, technological, and economic challenges. This is the core of the strategic vision outlined by General Thierry Burkhard, summarized in the formula: **"winning the war before the war."**

In the document, **France presents itself as a "power of balance"**, determined to defend its strategic and European interests in an international context marked by the return of great power competition, the crisis of multilateralism, and the persistence of the terrorist threat. **Paris reaffirms its commitment to international law but recognizes the need to act with greater speed and realism.**

One of the central points is overcoming the traditional "peace-crisis-war" sequence. **In its place, the French military leadership proposes three key notions: competition,**

contest, and confrontation. Competition becomes the ordinary condition of international relations, while contest and confrontation describe increasing levels of antagonism and use of force.

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From Multidomain Competition to Hybrid Warfare

The novelty, the text emphasizes, is that competition, contest, and confrontation can coexist simultaneously. For this reason, France considers it necessary to have armed forces capable not only of reacting but also of anticipating, deterring, and blocking hostile initiatives. **The issue of thresholds becomes central**, useful for controlling escalation without giving up the defense of national interests.

The document also highlights the extension of fields of confrontation. **If in the past conflict was concentrated on land, sea, and air, today it extends to space, cyberspace, seabeds, the electromagnetic spectrum, and the informational environment.** In these areas, hybrid strategies develop that combine military and non-military means, direct and indirect actions. **According to the French vision, the armed forces must be able not only to counter them but also to dominate them while respecting their principles.**

Hence the ambition to build a military tool ready for high-intensity conflict but already active in the competition phase. **The declared objective is to bend the adversary's determination by imposing favorable power relations.**

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France's Operational Priorities Between Innovation and Alliances

To achieve this result, the document identifies some organizational priorities. **The first is intellectual and operational agility**, that is, the ability to anticipate, react quickly, and impose the pace of initiative. The second is digital transformation, considered decisive for operational command and the overall efficiency of structures. **Added to this are experiments, realistic simulations, and war games**, essential tools for strengthening preparation and resilience.

The French strategic vision is then articulated in three main axes. **The first concerns the strengthening of the military community**, considered the fundamental resource of the armed forces. **The second axis aims at developing capabilities consistent with multi-environment and multidomain superiority.** The third transforms training into a direct component of operational credibility, also with partners and allies.

On the international level, France confirms its anchorage to alliances and supports greater European strategic autonomy. **The document emphasizes the importance of having more weight in the EU and NATO** to strengthen collective effectiveness. **The doctrine outlined by Burkhard shows a France ready to move along the entire spectrum of conflict.** In the season of hybrid threats, **deterrence alone is no longer enough.**

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