



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

**Mr Jean-Yves Le Drian
Minister of Defence of the French Republic**

**Lecture on
*Indo-French Defence Partnership: the Choice of Strategic Autonomy***

Friday, 26th July 2013

– This is a draft. The lecture as delivered by the Minister is the only valid version. –

Mr Director General of IDSA
Ambassador Sood
Ambassador of France
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and an honour for me to be able to speak before you. Five months ago, I was accompanying our President of the French Republic, Mr François Hollande, on his State visit to India. It was his first bilateral visit in Asia. For us, the choice had been made: India is a major priority of our diplomacy. We therefore desired to mark the 15th anniversary of the Indo-French strategic partnership, concluded in 1998, in a memorable manner. On the occasion of this visit, compelling words were uttered by both sides. They are all the more important as they reflect a profound political and human reality, and an exceptional trust between our two countries. Fifteen years – that's still adolescence. All indicators point to the Indo-French partnership growing further – in scope, in maturity, and in strength.

We share the same political vision. We share numerous common values: democracy, the rule of law, individual freedom, respect of fundamental rights and human rights. We are deeply attached to our national sovereignty and our strategic autonomy. We want peace and security in the world, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Our two countries consult each other on all major international issues. We do so in a spirit of mutual understanding, respect, trust, and even support, by taking into account our respective security interests. I can assure you that, apart from our Allies and European partners, there are few countries across the world with which we are prepared to go as far as we do with India.

Today, a tendency of diluting the concept of a strategic partnership has crept in with the loose use of words. I believe that with India, the concept has kept its full original meaning: because they trust each other, our two countries are moving forward together in intense cooperation in sensitive areas, such as defence, civilian nuclear energy, space, security and counter-terrorism.

Further, I would like to add that, in our two democracies, we are lucky that this exemplary relationship is firmly rooted in a political and popular support that goes beyond party lines. Continuity is therefore the rule. In France, as in India, we have witnessed political change and institutional situations that could be complex. We signed our strategic partnership in 1998, between a France whose President and government did not share the same political orientation, and Dr I.K. Gujral's United Front government, which was approaching the end of its term. Thus, it was the following Indian government, headed by Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee, that lay the foundations of this partnership, which was nurtured thereafter by the two successive governments of the current Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh.

I wish to pay special tribute to these three great Prime Ministers of India, who have shared the same vision of India's relations with France. For our part, three Presidents and three different political majorities have forged a similar policy vis-à-vis India with as much determination. This continuity is our strength. It will be pursued in the future.

This morning I held discussions with the Hon'ble Raksha Mantri of India, Shri A.K Antony, and we will meet again this evening to continue these in-depth talks. This is our third meeting in thirteen months.

As I also wish to meet the men and women who ensure India's defence, tomorrow I will travel to Gwalior to visit the Air Force Station. It is here that the Mirage 2000 squadrons supplied by France in the 1980s are based. They are currently being upgraded to bring them to the best current standards. I remember that these aircraft played a major role in the Indian victory during the Kargil war in 1999. Today is, in fact, the anniversary of this war.

As you can see, we thus have a solid foundation to go forward, particularly in the defence sector, and this gives me great pleasure.

The French Defence and National Security Strategy

I am also here today to present to the Indian authorities and yourselves, who represent the political and military community of Delhi, the main focal points of our new defence strategy. President Hollande, who, like his counterpart in India, is the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, has recently cleared the document that we refer to as the “White Paper on Defence and National Security”. The White Paper is available in English. It is the fruit of several months of deliberation and debate, which have brought together the State, researchers, political personages, economic stakeholders as well as contributions from our foreign partners, including India.

I would like to state that I find it perfectly natural to elaborate on principles, missions and means that we will be implementing over the coming years. This is also the sign of the development of our defence relation. India has a right to know how its French partner is organising its security and defence. Over the past few weeks, I have made presentations on the White Paper in Washington and London, the United States of America and the United Kingdom being, of course, essential defence partners. I have also addressed this matter during the Shangri-La dialogue in Singapore, as Asia bears major importance in our defence and security policy.

The previous White Paper dates back to 2008. Our strategic environment has since undergone deep transformation, and so has our economic environment. Two imperatives of sovereignty had to be reconciled: our strategic autonomy and our financial sovereignty, at a time when the threat level has not dipped but the crisis in Europe has weakened our public finances.

President Hollande has set the course: we will have a new military and industrial strategy that will guarantee our strategic autonomy. On an average, this accounts for a defence spending of 1.8% of France’s GDP till 2020, according to NATO norms. Despite the economic crisis, France is thus making the necessary effort to remain one of the major military powers of the world.

The framework of our action has a name: strategic autonomy. This is a permanent goal, which, in fact, we share with India. This is a principle that we apply in our relations with our NATO allies and European partners.

What does strategic autonomy mean for France? National sovereignty depends on the State’s autonomy of assessment, decision-making and action. This does not imply that we are cloaked in isolation or unilateralism. It is just the reverse. We intend to cooperate with our partners and our allies for the world’s security. We respect international law. This is both a choice and a necessity. But we intend to remain in control of our decisions and our actions with regard to defence and security.

The primary mission that structures our forces is, of course, the protection of French territory and people. This capacity for protection is inextricably linked to nuclear deterrence and external intervention. It has been enriched over several years now with a cyber defence posture that will grow increasingly.

Our independent nuclear deterrence capacity is based on a total of less than 300 nuclear warheads, which can be launched from two components: a permanent deep waters submarine component composed of four nuclear-propelled submarines equipped with intercontinental ballistic missiles; the other component, which is airborne, is composed of two squadrons of Mirage 2000N and Rafale

fighter aircraft. In the near future, all of these will be Rafale aircraft. The Rafale embarked on the nuclear-propelled aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle* can also contribute to nuclear deterrence.

This deterrence capacity protects France from all State-led aggressions or threats against its vital interests. It thus also guarantees our autonomy of action and decision-making, particularly countering blackmail attempts against our vital interests. It is strictly defensive and its use would be conceivable only in extreme circumstances of legitimate defence. It is the ultimate guarantee of the security, protection and independence of France. But it also contributes to the security of our Allies. Our nuclear deterrence applies the principle of strict sufficiency, France having never participated in a nuclear arms race. The reliability and safety of our weapons is ensured through a nuclear test simulation programme since our ratification of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

The intervention of our forces in a theatre of operations outside our national territory, i.e. force projection, provides France with the strategic depth indispensable for its security. As of today, we do not have a direct threat to France's land borders. But in today's world, our security does not stop at our borders. Moreover, our history has never stopped being mingled with that of the world. For us, this means protecting the French established outside France – sometimes in dangerous zones – defending our strategic interests and carrying out our international responsibilities in the service of peace and security in the world. In this regard, I would like to salute the Indian armed forces that are participating in essential peacekeeping missions under UN command, in several crisis-ridden countries, particularly in Africa and Lebanon, often paying the price of blood, as in Sudan recently.

France wants to leave no doubt on its resolve and capacity to act, and in conformity with international law. Our engagement against Al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorists in Mali this year has amply shown this. The priority zones for us are not only the European periphery, the Mediterranean basin, Sahelian Africa to equatorial Africa, the Arabo-Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, but also much farther in Asia, as recently recalled by our engagement in Afghanistan.

It is clear that, taking into account current threats, we no longer need massive capabilities as were deployed during the Cold War in the face of the Soviet menace. However, we do need robust, swift, mobile and professional means.

Over and above the capabilities that we additionally devote to the constant protection of French territory, we are thus ready to be engaged in stabilisation and crisis management missions in all their diversity, a total of 7000 men spread over three theatres of operations, along with the associated air and naval units.

While retaining the capacity to fulfil a part of our responsibilities in already existing theatres of operations, we also keep a joint force for major coercive action that is capable of first entry in a theatre of operations. Composed of around 15,000 land troops, this force can combine 45 aircraft and a carrier vessel battle group, which includes projection and command ships and a nuclear-propelled attack submarine. These are autonomous, equipped and trained capabilities for such theatres of operation, backed by performing equipment. This force will also incorporate reinforced intelligence and cyber defence capabilities as these are our priorities, as well as special forces, drones and mid-air refuellers for the air force. The White Paper is precise: in the event of an open crisis in Asia, France, in keeping with its international responsibilities, would contribute on the political and military fronts alongside its allies to respond to it.

Experience shows that in most situations, we would be led to act as part of collective multinational operations, associating our allies and our partners. France will be in a position to exercise the responsibilities of a Framework Nation with the associated command and control means. Of course, as a priority, we would be associated with our main NATO allies, or our European partners, whom we would like to see assuming increasing responsibility in defence matters. This is the orientation of the

initiatives that we are taking with them, by developing concrete projects in a pragmatic manner, to strengthen European defence strategy and optimise its use of financial resources in the defence sector.

Regarding military capabilities, properly speaking, I would like to underscore some of the priorities defined in our White Paper.

First, cyber defence. Already well identified in the 2008 White Paper, it has become a major priority. We are endowing ourselves with technical intelligence capabilities in this field to identify the source of the attacks, assess the offensive capacities of the potential adversaries, and be capable of countering them. These capabilities for identification and offensive action are essential for counterattacks. We will be earmarking considerable funds, with the organisation of cyber defence integrated with the armed forces, along with offensive and defensive capacities to prepare for and support military operations.

Another priority: intelligence. Knowing and anticipating is a must for assessing situations for ourselves and taking informed decisions. We will thus continue to develop our space capabilities, whether national or shared with European partners, with regard to signals intelligence and imaging. They should serve not only for the preparation and conduct of military operations, but also for deterrence, as well as when confronted with ballistic threat, which necessitates early warning capabilities.

In the background, we are, of course, reaffirming our industrial ambition. It is an integral part of our strategic autonomy. Over the course of decades, we have built a national industrial base as few countries have done. You have rightly pointed this out, Ambassador Sood, in your introductory address. It covers the main areas of activity. You know of the major French industrial groups: Dassault, Eurocopter, MBDA, Nexter, Safran, Thalès, and many more. They are all present in India. The economic situation in Europe is not satisfactory. But we will do our utmost to preserve and even develop our defence industry in this tough period.

The priority in this area for the decade to come will therefore be research and development. It will also be competitiveness and the strengthening of our industrial and technological base in both France and Europe. Equipping and modernising our armed forces will contribute to this goal.

Our ambition is clear. We intend to maintain the skills of French industry at a level of global excellence so that we can be in a position to continue developing new technologies and new types of armament, by incorporating all innovative technologies, both civilian and military. For this, technological monitoring and funding upstream studies are strategic. Exports, of course, are an important aspect of this industrial strategy. Enhancing cooperation in Europe will be encouraged, with the aim of developing specialised and complementary competitive clusters. I would like to add that this is what we can also do with India, if it so wishes. I'll come back to this later.

Threats for France and India

Our analysis has been conducted in a realistic manner. The defence policy that stems from it will enable us to tackle today's threats and prepare for those that tomorrow will bring. Some of these threats are known and immediate, such as terrorism and cyber attacks. Others are nascent but we can foresee them: that would be, for example, Iran if it were to become nuclear-armed. Our history has taught us that strategic surprises are always possible. Military surprise, with the emergence of an unforeseen threat, or political and/or economic upheaval, which drastically changes our security environment. Who could have foreseen or anticipated the 2008 and 2011 financial crises, or even the Arab revolutions?

Geography and history are such that India and France do not share the same security contexts. But globalisation, technological progress, the cross-cutting nature of current or impending threats are such that today we are more exposed to threats that are similar on several counts.

Further, Asia today is one of the most dynamic regions of the world. Its stability and growth have become essential to the prosperity of Western economies. The major French industrial groups have massively invested in Asia, especially India, where 350 companies hold a total investment stock of 18 billion dollars, accumulated over a few years. This trend will continue. Your stability and your security thus guarantee our economic interests.

But Asia's security and stability are not assured. The structures of collective security are yet to attain maturity. Our American allies have drawn their conclusions, with their "pivot" or "rebalance" towards Asia. We think that this can be a positive development. Our enhanced engagement in Asia, particularly with India, and in the adjacent zones of the Indian Ocean and the Gulf, are similarly oriented. The defence partnerships that we are establishing with numerous countries illustrate this: Japan, Australia, Malaysia, Vietnam. And, foremost, India, of course, but I'll come back to this.

For a ten-year timeline, we have identified three major types of threats.

First, what we call "threat of strength". They are always present and assume new forms. The resurgence of conflicts between States remains plausible. In this regard, some States pursue a power policy, and their growing defence budgets are a good indicator.

In the Middle East region – what you call West Asia – which is currently undergoing great upheaval, Iran is attempting to acquire the means that will enable it to possess nuclear weapons. This would be a threat to the stability and security of the Gulf, and therefore for those of all the countries depending on fossil fuel from this region. The most threatened States may use force to prevent this dangerous development, paving the way for the possibility of a large-scale crisis. Others will be tempted to embark on a nuclear arms guarantee race, which would trigger a grave proliferation crisis.

France has entered into defence treaties with several Arab States of the Gulf and established a permanent military base in Abu Dhabi with land, naval and air forces. It will fully contribute to the security of the Gulf if this region were threatened. But we still hope that Iran will understand that its refusal to negotiate sincerely will lead it nowhere, except failure and evermore severe sanctions. India, which has major interests in the Gulf, can play a very important role in this regard.

I mentioned threats of strength. Second, there are the "threats of weakness" of States. Some failing States can no longer discharge their responsibilities. This becomes a strategic phenomenon of a new magnitude. It is clear that terrorism becomes its first beneficiary.

This is true of Africa, and this is what justified our intervention in Mali earlier this year. The challenge went well beyond the safety of this friendly country. Europe's security would have been directly affected if Al-Qaeda had established a sanctuary in the Sahel. And this would have reinforced the entire international terrorist network, from West Africa to South Asia. After military victory, the country must now be stabilised and rebuilt. I would like to thank anew our Indian friends for their support in the entire combat phase and that which is opening up today. We are ready to share with India the military lessons drawn from this action against terrorism. High risks exist beyond Mali in the other countries of the Sahel region and the entire geographic axis that runs from Pakistan to the North Atlantic. In other words, in our opinion, we haven't seen the last of terrorism in this region.

This also holds for South Asia. I am, of course, referring to Afghanistan, where we were engaged for several years in extremely tough zones situated next to the Pakistani border. We have passed the baton to the Afghan forces when the situation on the ground allowed it. With the transition and the new

mission of NATO in 2014, a new phase will start when the Afghans will have to be in charge of their security. We will remain at their side, through civilian cooperation projects and the training of security forces. Their elections will take place in the same year. The Afghan authorities that will then emerge will bear a heavy responsibility. They will be able to count on the support of the friends of Afghanistan to ensure that terrorism and fanaticism do not regain foothold in this country whose people are seeking the path of peace and democracy.

And then, how can we not express here our concern regarding certain developments in Pakistan? Everyone knows that terrorists continue to be present in Pakistan and that international terrorist networks take advantage of certain relays. The alleged handlers of the Mumbai attacks still roam free. This concentration of terrorist elements is all the more worrisome as this is in a country armed with nuclear weapons. India's dispute with Pakistan over Kashmir sometimes serves as a pretext excuse for destabilising actions against you. In this context, France encourages dialogue between India and Pakistan as this is the only way to resolve these disputes.

I was mentioning threats of strength and the risks of weakness. Third, there are threats linked to globalisation, such as cyber attacks and piracy, which attacks what we call the "global commons". These are the two extremities of the spectrum: on one hand, criminal networks and powerful States controlling technologies that, in their hands, constitute threats for the whole world. On the other, groups using rudimentary but effective means, which threaten, for example, the security of sea routes that are essential for the global economy. France and India are cooperating positively in this matter.

Here, I would like to stress on the security of cyberspace. Our States, our societies, our economies are today largely alive due to digital infrastructure. Often ill-protected, they are targets of hacking for spying purposes. Even more serious is the fact that these attacks now aim to destroy or manipulate through remote control. Infrastructure that is vital for the functioning of our societies and our States – even that of weapons systems – can be targeted. States and criminal networks are behind these attacks. Let's state things as they really are: cyberspace is now a full-fledged battleground. Information is methodically collected to make large-scale attacks possible in a situation of conflict. Attacks could paralyse entire sectors of a country's activity or economy and lead to a disaster. Such attacks could hence constitute real acts of war. We must protect ourselves and be prepared to identify the assailants and respond to them. The cooperation between close countries that share the same values in this matter is necessary. The 2013 French White Paper fully recognises this situation and therefore draws the consequences. And, in this regard, I am delighted that during the State visit, we initiated a new Indo-French dialogue on cyber security, which was recently implemented.

France and India: a defence cooperation for our strategic autonomy

I would like to dwell on the important place that India occupies in our White Paper. This place is important because we consider that, apart from our closest Western and European allies, there is no other country that is mentioned in the same terms in various contexts. The White Paper highlights India's economic emergence, and the privileged bilateral relation, enshrined in the strategic partnership established in 1998, which enables us to cooperate in areas that involve the major interests of the two countries. In the South Asian region, India appears to us as a factor of stability. And, as you know, we support the reform of the United Nations Security Council that would make room for new permanent members, which would include India.

The defence relations between our two countries go well beyond the 1998 strategic partnership, even if it constitutes the current framework of our defence relations, along with the 2006 defence agreement.

I am, of course, referring to the French soldiers in India, who in the 18th and the early 19th centuries, shared their know-how, and fought alongside Indian princes, among others, against the British. I would

also refer to Tipu Sultan, the Scindias of Gwalior – a city that I will visit tomorrow – and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The history of the world would have been different if the outcome of the wars had been different. But the world has long changed; the British quit India in 1947, and have now become our closest defence partner in Europe.

During World War I, thousands of Indian soldiers came to fight on European battlegrounds, particularly on French soil, for France's freedom. On the occasion of the anniversary of the War's outbreak, France will pay special tribute to these Indian soldiers in 2014. This morning, I was extremely moved when I bowed at India Gate. My thoughts also turn to the French citizens in former French trading posts in India – Puducherry, Chandannagar, Karikal, Mahe and Yanam – who fought and lay down their lives during the two World Wars and other military operations in which France had been involved. Our armed forces still have a good number of French from India amongst its ranks, where it brings honour to France as well as India, from where they originate.

Since India's independence, our defence cooperation took a new dimension, of course. During the first few years of the Indian Republic, France was among its first defence partners for both army and air force. In 1953 – so that's exactly 60 years ago – Dassault signed its maiden agreement with India for supplying the Toofan/Ouragan aircraft. Since, there have always been Dassault aircraft in the Indian Air Force uninterruptedly. And there are pretty strong chances that this will continue for several decades, as you know. When the time comes, I think we could cooperate on establishing a place commemorating Indo-French military relationship.

Today, we are pursuing a protean military cooperation. Its ambition is even greater as our mutual trust is very high, and we are two nations that wish to preserve their strategic autonomy while simultaneously desiring peace.

Together, we regularly conduct land (Shakti), naval (Varuna), and air joint exercises (Garuda). Year after year, with the exchange of officers between our military academies, our armed forces are learning to know each other, working in tandem, exchanging their skills. The exercises have become more substantive. I have suggested that a major aero-naval exercise be conducted in the Indian Ocean, with the nuclear-propelled aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle* and the ships that the Indian Navy would like to deploy. We will shortly be pursuing in France the mountain combat army exercises that were initiated in the Himalayas in 2012, and we are organising a major air exercise in India, which would include – obviously for us – the deployment of the Rafale. In the long term, if the international situation required us to act jointly and our two countries so decided, we could thus be better prepared.

Our industrial and technological cooperation are on the right path. They attract a lot of attention. The DCNS company is currently building six Scorpene submarines at the Mazagaon Docks shipyard (MDL) in Mumbai, with complete transfer of technology and extremely important cooperation with the Indian industry. Several other countries have chosen the Scorpene to develop their submarine fleet.

The first submarine will be launched in 2014. I visited the Mazagaon shipyard in February 2013. I observed the progress of the project, the devotion and competence of the Indian and French teams that have been working together since 2005. In the near future, in MDL, India will possess a performing asset for eventually building additional submarines.

French manufacturers are currently also working on upgrading the Mirage 2000 fleet that India acquired in 1980. At the end of this upgrade, the aircraft will match the most modern standards and continue to be in service for many more years. I will visit Air Force Station, Gwalior tomorrow to meet the Mirage squadron officers and pilots.

For the future, as you know, we have several major projects underway, which were reviewed by President Hollande and Prime Minister Singh in February, and which I went through with Minister Antony this morning. These projects are making good progress.

Of course, the MMRCA project is the priority. At the risk of disappointing you, I will not be announcing the date of signing the contract. I would like you to know that the negotiations are going on well and I have full confidence. There will be a framework Indo-French intergovernmental Agreement for this contract, which will provide all the necessary guarantees of the French State.

I would like to tell you that by selecting the Rafale on the merits of its quality and its price, India has made the best choice. Obviously, I can't say otherwise, but she will not regret it. Presented at the Bangalore Air Show again this year, it is a splendid omnirole aircraft, which has proved itself in Afghanistan, Libya, Mali and elsewhere. It will ensure India's security in the decades to come. France guarantees the transfer of technology. The aircraft will be given all the upgrades that technological progress will permit over the course of years. Numerous Indian companies will benefit from the offsets laid down in the contract; and I know for a fact that they are actively preparing for this.

Beyond aircraft, an unprecedented industrial and technological cooperation that has been commenced will be pursued between our two countries. Young engineers and technicians will be trained. Our companies will be used to working together and will be able to do so for other industrial projects. And all of this is happening in a true spirit of partnership, mutual respect, as our two countries are capable of when they have a joint project.

In February, Prime Minister Singh and President Hollande had mentioned the forthcoming finalisation of another important project: the SRSAM, a short-range missiles system that we are developing together between the DRDO and the French company, MBDA. This is important because this is again a case of co-development. Both our countries will thus shortly marshal their energies and talents to build a new missile.

The MMRCA, like the SRSAM, will show that our defence relation is soaring. It is in the same spirit of co-development in which we take up other projects in India, at more or less advanced stages, be they light helicopters, artillery, PCS, submarines or other types or missiles.

To sum up, the underlying principles of this defence cooperation are well-established today. I think we can define them as follows.

France and India have embarked on a long-termed partnership, which is strategic in nature. France is drawing all its consequences. Our defence dialogue between our armed forces are held – like the strategic dialogue – in a spirit of mutual understanding, respect, trust and support, taking into consideration our respective interests. This is a point that we wished to reiterate with Mr Antony in the joint press release published this morning.

It is obvious that we have gone beyond the client-supplier relation. Our cooperation projects should further improve our respective industrial and technological bases in the defence sector and contribute to strengthening the security of both our countries.

In this perspective, France is prepared to initiate joint co-development and co-production projects, which once we decide on together, would include, in the future, exporting the equipment produced in third country markets.

Similarly, France is ready to share an increasing level of defence technology, in connection with the development of joint projects.

In the same logic of partnership, France assures India of the continuity of supplies for acquired equipment.

Complying with our laws and national interests, we are prepared, when the time comes, to encourage investments in the defence sector, which the companies concerned may desire to make.

French defence companies respect French law on the prohibition of corruption. This seems obvious, but I think it's better to recall this because all countries do not have the same conception of their obligations.

France encourages India to come closer to international export control regimes, such as the MTCR for missiles and the Wassenaar Arrangement for Conventional Arms, with a view to adhering to these.

Strategic autonomy is at the core of our defence policies and our diplomacies. It is obvious to me that our defence relation must bolster it. I would like to make a wish: in a few years, thanks to the all the cooperation being initiated today, France and India will feel stronger, safer, closer to each other, having together strengthened their strategic autonomy. We could then be proud of the work accomplished.

I would like to conclude with a personal anecdote. I was born in rue des Indes (India street), in a city called Lorient (The East). The city was so named after the ship "Soleil d'Orient" (The Sun of the East), which would go to India in quest of porcelain and textiles. So you see, India is in my DNA.

Thank you.