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French security management and the integrated approach to national security in the contemporary security environment

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Abstract

France started major reforms in the security sector in 2008 with the White Paper, which contained the guiding principle for numerous changes which occurred from 2008 to 2022. During that period, France suffered several serious terrorist attacks and experienced crises which tested the effectiveness of the French national security system. The National Security Review presented in 2022 reiterates the determination from 2008 and describes six strategic objectives whose coordinated enforcement constitutes an integrated approach to national security. The strategic objectives pointed out in NSR 2022 encompass a plethora of intertwined and complementary military and non-military actions undertaken by numerous holders. Such a massive security system is coordinated by a wide and complex network which enables the integration of multiple actions at horizontal and vertical axes into a single activity under the authority of the President and the Prime Minister. At the same time, the strategic objectives are threatened by hybrid warfare, which is perceived as a strategy of foes (states and non-state actors) who combine military and non-military tools in order to achieve political aims at the expense of the national interests of the Republic. This research aims to test the general hypothesis that the French integrated approach presented in NSR 2022 is well adapted to the contemporary security environment and consistent with and complementary to the EU and NATO security policies while the security system of the French Republic is structured and managed in a way that ensures an integrated approach to national security. The French integrated approach, the structure of the security system and its management were described and explained in order to test the hypothesis.

Keywords:

The Fifth French Republic; the National Security Review; Integrated Approach; Security Management; Hybrid Warfare.

Article info

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France presented its National Security Review 2022 ([SGDSN 2022](#)) as the result of the strategic shift which happened after the onset of the war in Ukraine. However, it would be wrong to consider the NSR 2022 only from this perspective. The NSR 2022 represents the continuity within the wider process of restructuring the entire security architecture of the Republic, which started in 2008 with the White Paper. From 2008 to 2022, France suffered several serious terrorist attacks (Toulouse 2012, Paris 2015, Nice 2016, Strasbourg 2018) and experienced crises (Migrant crisis 2015, War in Ukraine 2022) which tested the effectiveness of its national security system. The new security architecture was put to the test under the worst circumstances, allowing the security management to identify structural problems and make improvements.

The NSR 2022 contains insight into the security environment. Furthermore, it reiterates security determinations expressed in previous strategic documents (2008, 2013) and the strategic review (2017) and identifies the national strategic objectives whose coordinated enforcement constitutes an integrated approach to national security. Hence, the scientific problems were defined through the following questions:

1. Is the French integrated approach presented in NSR 2022 adapted to the needs of the contemporary security environment and in alignment with the security policies of NATO and the EU?
2. Is the French security system structured and managed in a way that ensures an integrated approach to national security?

The subject of this research is the national security system of the French Republic. More specifically, this research aims to look into the capability of security management to ensure national security in a contemporary security environment. The general hypothesis behind this research is that the integrated approach presented in the NSR 2022 is well adapted to the needs of the contemporary security environment and aligned with the security policies of NATO and the EU. In addition, the security system of the French Republic is structured and managed in a way that ensures an integrated approach to national security. The French security system has structural elements which are responsible for the implementation of its strategic objectives in key domains of the security policy. These elements are managed, coordinated and/or assisted at every level of security management with bodies or individual posts which have adequate competence, enabling the integration of their actions at the horizontal and vertical axis into a single activity under the authority of the highest executive authorities. The scientific goals are to provide a detailed description and analysis of the French security policy, examine its strategic approach and the capability of the French security system to enforce an integrated approach with a particular focus on security management.

Integrated Approach and Countering Hybrid Warfare

Hybrid warfare, hybrid threats and hybrid strategies were presented in the NSR 2022 as threats to national security. According to Robert Walker, who first used this term, hybrid warfare is a combination of conventional and special operations which has the characteristics of both and lies in the interstices between special and conventional warfare, wherefore countering hybrid warfare depends on the existence of hybrid forces which can act in both domains ([Walker 1998](#)). However, Franck Hoffman is credited with getting this theory widely used in the security and political discourse. In a similar manner, Hoffman describes hybrid warfare as a unique combination of threats which incorporate a full range of different modes of warfare employed simultaneously and whose significance transcends a blend of regular and irregular tactics ([Hoffman 2007, 2009 and 2018](#)). This blend of conventional, unconventional and irregular tactics blurs the line between war and peace and makes the military term “hybrid warfare” and the more neutral term “hybrid threat” equally suitable for this phenomenon.

“Hybrid warfare evolved from an essentially military concept to one that potentially embraced all the instruments of state power” ([Wither 2023, 7-8](#)). It tends to exploit societal vulnerabilities and undermine order, peace, normal functioning of the institutions, and trust in the government. Wigell describes this as a *wedge strategy* whose “idea is not to confront the target overtly, but to weaken its resolve by covert means of interference calibrated to undermine its internal cohesion” ([Wigell 2019, 262](#)). Hence, Hoffman stated that resiliency is the first step in countering hybrid warfare ([Hoffman, Neumeyer and Jensen 2024](#)), whereby resilience is generally understood as “the ability of an entity to overcome adversity” ([Jungwirth et al. 2023, 17](#)). The main hurdle in achieving resiliency in case of a hybrid attack is the absence of awareness that one threat (e.g., propaganda) is coordinated with another threat (e.g., terrorism) and that both are a part of a wider action (e.g., political coup). This results in partial and isolated institutional responses or the absence of any response to a threat(s). For that reason, “it is essential that the main security tools work in a fully integrated way” ([Pardini 2019, 7](#)) in order to eliminate vulnerabilities at home and provide a coordinated response to any kind of threat that comes from inside or abroad. In the core of such, “comprehensive security thinking is functioning civil-military cooperation as well as other cross-cutting cooperation formats, in particular public-private, political-practitioner, and social science-technology” ([Smith 2019, 17](#)).

“EU has increasingly started to emphasize the notion of resilience” ([Wigell, Mikkola and Juntunen 2021, 6](#)) as an important element in developing a whole-of-society (WoS) approach to countering hybrid threats. On the Council of EU initiative, in 2016, the European Commission presented the *Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats*, which “encouraged a whole-of-society approach, with 22 areas for action, to help counter hybrid threats and foster the resilience of the EU and the Member States. It enabled a holistic approach to countering threats of a hybrid nature by

creating synergies between all relevant instruments” (European Commission 2016, 3). Hybrid Centre of Excellence was established in 2017 as a non-profit organization promoting a whole-of-government and WoS approach whose participants are EU and NATO members. In 2023, the Comprehensive Resilience Ecosystem (CORE) was developed with the aim of strengthening societal resilience through the interconnection of 13 domains (including military, diplomacy, intelligence, economy, and cyber). In these domains, actors use tools to counter hybrid activities, ensuring the protection of seven key foundations of democratic society (Jungwirth et al. 2023). “In March 2022, the Council of the EU presented the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence in which it announced the establishment of the *EU Hybrid Toolbox*, which should bring together all civilian and military instruments which are suitable for countering hybrid threats. In the Strategic Concept (NATO 2022), NATO announced the enhancement of global awareness and readiness to act across all domains and directions using military and non-military tools in a proportionate, coherent and integrated way to respond to all threats” (Mirković 2024, 98).

NSR 2022 perceives individual threats to national security as elements of adversaries’ hybrid strategy which have “shown their impact on multiple theatres” (SGDSN 2022, 12) stating in its introduction that “globalized hybrid warfare” demands an approach to national security which is “consistent with and complementary to” the EU Strategic Compass and Strategic Concept. The French integrated approach to national security has its roots in White Paper 2008, which pointed the “need to define over-arching strategies integrating all the different dimension of security into a single approach” (President of the Republic 2008, 56). That was a guiding principle for numerous changes in the security sector which happened between 2008 and 2022. NSR 2022 just reiterates that determination and describes six strategic objectives whose coordinated enforcement contributes to an integrated approach to national security. These objectives reflect the idea of resiliency since they encompass a plethora of intertwined and complementary military and non-military actions, undertaken at home and abroad, in peacetime, in case of crisis or war, by numerous holders. Strategic objectives are empowered with legal obligations related to national security and defence, which are imposed on almost every executive department, making this approach truly whole-of-government.

According to the NSS 2022, intelligence services should provide a robust information foundation to support the decision-making process of the highest authorities. Moreover, they should serve as support for other executive departments. The Ministry of the Armed Forces is responsible for nuclear weapons. It also directs three intelligence services, advises and assists the civil authorities in the cases of major crises and deploys armed forces abroad in order to support the interests of the Republic. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs presents French interests at an international level and collects information within its competencies in order to inform the highest executive authorities. The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for internal security (civil protection and the protection of public law and order) along with independent

bodies responsible for cybersecurity. The ministers responsible for justice, economy, budget, health, environment, transport, energy, and industry have certain obligations according to the Defence Code (Code de la Défense) related to national security and defence. The coordination of such a massive security system is performed by a wide and complex network which enables the integration of all the mentioned actions at horizontal and vertical axis into a single activity under the authority of the highest executive authorities. In addition, the NSR 2022 insists on the “nation’s involvement” and synergy between the people and the officials, making this approach a whole-of-society approach.

The Strategic Level of French Security Management

The 1958 Constitution established the Fifth French Republic as an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic, organized on a decentralized basis with the semi-presidential political regime. The French “semi-presidentialism (or dual executive)” was based on two old traditions of personal leadership and parliamentarianism” (Appleton 2009, 3). The President ensures due respect for the Constitution, proper functioning of the public authorities, the continuity of the State and guarantees national independence, territorial integrity and due respect for Treaties (Const. Ar. 5). “Article 5 gives the President the right and the duty to intervene in the political process regardless of the composition of the parliamentary majority” (Appleton 2009, 28). “On this basis, he may invoke the extraordinary powers he holds under Article 16” (President of the Republic 2008). Furthermore, the President is the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces (Const. Ar. 15) and presides over the higher national defence councils, committees (Const. Ar. 15) and the Council of Ministers.

These competencies of the President gave him “a certain margin of interpretation” (David 2004) which led to a presumption of the President’s “reserved domain in the areas of national defence and foreign affairs. However, the Constitution is far from categorical on this issue” (Pateman and Geoffroy 2024). Under the influence of De Gaulle and direct suffrage for the post, in the early years of the Fifth Republic, the President imposed his authority as dominant. However, with the White Paper published in 2008 and the series of reform laws and decrees which were passed after 2008, the position of the Prime Minister was strengthened, especially at the expense of what was known as the ‘reserved domain’ of the President.

The Prime Minister is appointed by the President (Const. Ar. 8) but reports to the Parliament “for the various policies contributing to national security: defence, domestic security and civil security, economic security, foreign policy etc.” (President of the Republic 2008, 244). The Prime Minister directs the actions of the Government related to national security; he/she is responsible for national defence and ensures the coordination of the defence activity of all ministerial departments. Furthermore, the Prime Minister prepares and coordinates the actions

of public authorities in the event of a major crisis ([Code de la Défense](#), Ar. L1131-1). Moreover, the Prime Minister makes regulations and appointments to civil and military posts and if the need arises, he/she deputizes for the President as the chair of the Council of Ministers and higher councils and committees ([Const. Ar. 21](#)). On his/her proposal, the President appoints the members of the Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers determines and conducts the policy and has at its disposal the civil services and the armed forces ([Const. Ar. 20](#)).

The President and the Prime Minister are supported by the Defence and National Security Council (the Council). The Council was established in 2009 “as a consequence of a strategy in which national strategy is federating and mobilizing objective of government action” ([President of the Republic 2008](#), 242). It is a body at the highest level in which respectable members can address all the aspects of national security and determine priorities and directions in general or in specific domains of national security policy, creating the integrated framework for the decision-making process for the President, the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers ([Code de la Défense](#), Ar. R*1122-1, Ar. L1111-3). The permanent members of the Council are the President, the Prime Minister, the Minister for the Armed Forces, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of the Economy, Finance and the Recovery, the Minister Delegate for Public Accounts and the Minister of Foreign Affairs ([Code de la Défense](#), Ar. R*1122-2). The Council of Ministers sets the Composition of the Council.

Within the Council, there are the National Intelligence Council (NIC) and the Nuclear Armaments Council (NAC) ([DNSC 2024](#)). The NIC defines strategic directions and priorities in intelligence affairs. Its permanent members are the President, the Prime Minister, the directors of intelligence services and the National Intelligence and Counter Terrorism Coordinator. The NAC defines the strategic orientations of the nuclear deterrence program. Its permanent members are the President, the Prime Minister, the Minister for the Armed Forces, the Armed Forces Chief of Staff, the Delegate General of Armaments and the Director of the Military Applications Directorate at the Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission ([Code de la Défense](#), Ar. R*1122-6, Ar. R*1122-7, Ar. R*1122-9 and Ar. R*1122-10).

The constitutional and political positions of the President and the Prime Minister are complementary and intertwined. However, the French dual executive system produces systemic vulnerability. In situations when the President and the Prime Minister do not belong to the same political majority, a situation called cohabitation arises, and it can lead to ‘reciprocal neutralization’ or a blockage of the executive power. Nevertheless, the reforms made in the past decade shifted the balance of power in the domain of national security in favour of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers, while the President still has a personal influence in the Council, the right to decide on the use of nuclear weapons and the right to dissolve the Parliament and terminate the mandate of the Government.

The Coordinating Level of French Security Management

“The coordinating management is composed of a network of managers whose tasks are to organize, coordinate and control the enforcement of the strategic objectives in a particular administrative area” (Mirković 2024). At the coordinating level of the French security management, the post with the most competencies is the *Secretary General for Defence and National Security* (Secretary General). He “assists the Prime Minister in the exercise of his responsibilities in matters of defence and national security”; chairs and coordinates interministerial bodies; prepares interministerial regulations on national security; contributes to the adaptation of the legal framework relating to intelligence services, etc. ([Code de la Défense](#), Ar. R*1132-3).

The Secretary General has at disposal the *Secretariat General for Defence and National Security* (SGDSN 2024). SGDSN is a robust and complex interministerial body formed in 2009, which was placed under the authority of the Prime Minister with the task to assist in designing and implementing security and defence policies ([Code de la Défense](#), Ar. R*1132-2, D*1131-1; (SGDSN 2024). It has a complex structure with numerous duties, organizational units and attached bodies, whereby some have operational character. SGDSN is the secretariat to the Council and other higher councils and committees (e.g., the Nuclear Policy Council). It prepares the Council’s meetings and later “monitors the execution of decisions taken by the Head of State and, to this end, ensures liaison with the relevant ministerial departments” (SGDSN 2024). The Secretary General, accompanied by a small group of associates, performs this SGDSN’s role.

Under the authority of the General Secretary there is the *Interministerial Control Group* (GIC) which collects requests for the authorization of use of information gathering techniques from all intelligence services and submits them to the *National Commission for the Control of Intelligence Techniques* (CNCTR) for opinion and later to the Prime Minister for approval ([Code de la Sécurité Intérieure](#), Ar. L821-1). CNCTR is an independent administrative authority created by the French Intelligence Act 2015, which represents the government’s reaction to the Charlie Hebdo shooting, as an oversight authority which ensures “that the actions of the French intelligence services across the country comply with legislation” (CNCTR 2024). Furthermore, CNCTR gives opinion to the Council of Ministers whose services, other than the first circle intelligence services, may use information-gathering techniques ([Code de la Sécurité Intérieure](#), Ar. L811-4). CNCTR comprises “two members of the National Assembly, two senators, two members of the Council of Ministers, two senior ranking judges from the Cassation Court and a technical expert specialized in electronic communications” (Mastor 2017, 718).

The *National Cybersecurity Authority* (ANSSI) is responsible for the enforcement of the national cybersecurity strategy. ANSSI proposes to the Prime Minister the “measures intended to respond to crises affecting the security of information

systems of public authorities and regulated operators. It coordinates Government action and animates the national ecosystem" (SGDSN). ANSSI was founded in 2009 and it is attached to the SGDSN and subordinated to the Secretary General ([Décret no. 2009-834, Ar. 2](#)). An *Ethics and Scientific Committee*, also attached to the SGDSN, is responsible for monitoring the activity of the *Vigilance and Protection Service against Foreign Digital Interference* (VIGINUM). VIGINUM is the "technical and operational service of the State responsible for monitoring and protecting against foreign digital interference" ([VIGINUM 2024](#)) on digital platforms. Other SGDSN's units and bodies are the Institute of Advanced National Defence Studies (education and science); The Directorate of State Protection and Security (crisis management and data protection); The Department for the International, Strategic and Technological Affairs; The General Administration Service and the High Commissioner for Atomic Energy.

The second most important position at the coordinating level of security management is the *National Intelligence and Counter-Terrorism Coordinator* (CNRLT Coordinator). The CNRLT Coordinator coordinates "the general activities of the intelligence services" ([CNRLT Coordinator 2024](#)) and particular intelligence coordination related to counter-terrorism. He performs its duties assisted by "the *National Coordination of Intelligence and the Counter-Terrorism Coordination* and, within it, the *National Counter-Terrorism Center*", which were formed in 2017 and "placed under the authority of the CNRLT Coordinator" ([Décret no. 2017-1095](#)). The National Intelligence Coordinator is responsible for the implementation of the national intelligence strategy and serves as the President's adviser on national intelligence matters. As a permanent member of the NIC, he provides a direct link between the President and the security services and vice versa and "transmits the instructions of the President to the ministers responsible for these services and ensures their implementation" ([Premier Ministre 2018, 7](#)).

As the National Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, he participates in the process of determining priorities related to the counter-terrorism system and, alone or through the NCTC, coordinates counter-terrorism efforts. NCTC is a task force established in 2017 that is specialised in intelligence sharing between "intelligence services, police and judicial authorities" ([Nunez 2021](#)). This unit is under the direct authority of the President, and it "has been created to ensure that the intelligence services truly cooperate" ([Jarry 2017](#)). The CNRLT Coordinator is engaged in the inspection of intelligence services, which are conducted by the *Intelligence Inspectorate* (ISR). ISR is under the direct authority of the Prime Minister, who appoints its members after consulting the CNRLT Coordinator. For each inspection, the Prime Minister determines the mandate and the composition of the team responsible for carrying out the inspection. The Secretary General of the ISR proposes the mandate and the composition to the Prime Minister after consulting the CNRLT Coordinator ([Décret no. 2014-833](#)).

The Operating Level of French Security Management

The Ministry of the Armed Forces

The Minister of Armed Forces, as the head of the Ministry, is at the operational level of security management. He is “responsible within the Government for defence policy for which he is accountable to Parliament, along with the Prime Minister” (President of the Republic 2008, 243). The Minister has at his disposal the Armed Forces (Army, Navy, Air and Space forces), the National Gendarmerie and three intelligence services. Armed Forces are subordinated to the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, who assists the Minister in his duties related to the use of forces and serves as the military advisor to the Government. He is responsible for the operational use of forces and ensures the command of military operations. The Chief of Staff has the authority over the Chiefs of Staff of the Army, Navy, and Air and Space Forces who prepare units for operational use ([Code de la Défense](#), Ar. R*3121-1 and Ar. R*3121-3). The National Gendarmerie is an autonomous armed force, and its General Director in military competences of the Gendarmeries is subordinated to the Minister of Armed Forces.

In case of an interruption of the regular functioning of public authorities which leads to the simultaneous vacancy of the Presidency, the Presidency of the Senate and the functions of Prime Minister, the responsibility and powers of defence are automatically and successively devolved to the Minister of Armed Forces and, should that fail, to the other ministers in the order indicated by the decree establishing the composition of the Government ([Code de la Défense](#), Ar. L1131-4).

The territorial organization of national defence is based on Defence and Security Zones (DSZ), which serve as a framework for civil and military defence coordination ([Code de la Défense](#), Ar. R*1211-1), which enables its integration. All Departments as administrative districts of the Republic are organized into six DSZs along with the Paris DSZ ([Ministere des Armées 2024](#)). The DSZ are also established for overseas territories ([Code de la Défense](#), Articles from R*1211-1 to D1212-16). The Prefect of the DSZ is the prefect of the Department where the capital of the DSZ is located. He/she is a delegate of the Minister and serves as a civilian authority that is responsible for the organization and coordination of all non-military tasks and missions related to defence and civil protection. Each DSZ also has a General Officer who exercises the responsibilities of a military advisor to the Prefect of the DSZ and coordinates military efforts in the DSZ. The General Officer is placed under the direct authority of the Chief of Staff, and in case of an armed attack, by the decision of the Prime Minister, he becomes the supreme commander (operational commander) of either the entire DSZ or part of it. The General Officer has a military representative in each Department who serves as a military advisor to the prefect of the Department for the exercise of his/her defence responsibilities. The National Gendarmerie has its own territorial organization. However, its commanders in their respective regions assist the Prefect of the DSZ and departmental prefects in all matters concerning the

civil defence missions. Furthermore, the Gendarmerie provides a specialized unit (Nuclear Weapons Security Gendarmerie) for ensuring governmental control over nuclear weapons.

The Ministry of the Interior

The Minister of the Interior, as the head of the Ministry of the Interior, is at the operational level of security management. The Ministry of the Interior “is responsible for preparing and implementing internal security and civil security policies that contribute to national defence and security and, as such, is responsible for public order, the protection of people and property, and the safeguarding of installations and resources of general interest within the territory of the Republic” ([Code de la Défense](#), Ar. L1142-2; [Code de la Sécurité Intérieure](#), Ar. L111-1). The Minister has available joined units, such as the intelligence service (DGSI), which is directly subordinated to the Minister, and organizational units of the Ministry such as the Secretariat General, the National Police, the National Gendarmerie and the Prefecture of Police.

The Secretariat-General is headed by the Secretary General – Senior Defence Official, who is the first assistant of the Minister in managing the Ministry. He is the general manager who coordinates and leads the action of all services, except for those falling under the management of the National Police and the National Gendarmerie. He/she is in charge of the protection of national defence secrets and ensures the security of information systems ([Décret n. 2013-728](#), Ar. 3). The National Police is responsible for police missions and tasks which are prescribed in the [Code de la Sécurité Intérieure](#), Ar. R411-2. It is headed by the General Director, who is directly subordinate to the Minister. In performing police duties, the National Gendarmerie is under the authority of the Minister of the Interior. As a police service, it is supposed to ensure public safety and order in rural and peri-urban areas. It contributes to the intelligence mission of public authorities, the fight against terrorism, and the protection of the population and it also performs the duties of the judicial police ([Code de la Sécurité Intérieure](#), Ar. L421-1). The Command of the Ministry of the Interior in Cyberspace as a service with national jurisdiction is attached to the Director General of the National Gendarmerie ([Décret n. 2013-728](#), Ar. 7).

The Prefecture of Police, headed by the Prefect of Police, is formed under the authority of the Minister for the territory of Paris and three more departments. The President, on the proposal of the Prime Minister and the Minister for the Interior, appoints prefects as the State’s representatives in the Departments ([Décret n. 2022-491](#), Ar. 1). The Prefect of Police and departmental Prefects lead and coordinate the entire internal security system in the Prefecture/Department. Furthermore, the Prefect of Police is responsible for the security of the three airports in Paris and performs the function of the Prefect of the Paris DSZ ([Code de la Sécurité Intérieure](#), Ar. L121-1 and Ar. L122-5). The mayors, within their competences, may entrust the municipal police officers with duties in matters of prevention and monitoring of

good order, tranquillity, security and public health ([Code de la Sécurité Intérieure](#), Ar. L511-1).

Other departments with responsibilities in defence matters

National security and defence are considered to be an intergovernmental effort, with the Minister of the Armed Forces and the Minister of the Interior as leading powers at the operational level. Nevertheless, the [Code de la Défense](#) prescribed the obligations for other ministers in terms of preparation and execution of national defence and security measures. The Minister in charge of the economy takes the measures which guarantee the continuity of economic activity in the event of a major crisis and ensures the protection of the economic interests of the Republic. The Minister responsible for the budget manages and coordinates services which perform customs control, providing constant revenues to the budget. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, both individually and through the network of diplomatic services, presents the priorities of the security and defence policy at the European and international level, secures allies and partners and leads defence and security cooperation. The Minister of Justice ensures the continuity of judicial affairs and international judicial assistance, especially in cases of criminal offences against the fundamental interests of the Republic. The Minister of Health is responsible for the resilient health system, the protection of the population against health threats, as well as the care for victims. The ministers in charge of the environment, transport, energy and industry are each responsible within their competences for controlling natural and technological risks, transport, energy production and supplies, and infrastructure, meeting the needs of defence and national security and, in all circumstances, ensuring the continuity of services ([Code de la Défense](#), Ar. L1131-1; L1142-3; L1142-4; L1142-6; L1142-7).

The first circle of French intelligence services

Intelligence activities are performed by the intelligence services, which act under the authority of the Government and in accordance with the guidelines determined by the NIC ([Code de la Sécurité Intérieure](#), Ar. L811-2). Six intelligence services represent the first circle of the French intelligence and together with the CNRLT Coordinator and the Intelligence Academy they constitute the French intelligence community ([Code de la Défense](#), Ar. R*1122-8). These services are subordinated to the ministers of the respective executive departments, while the CNRLT Coordinator is responsible for their coordination, having the same function as the director of intelligence community in the US.

The Directorate-General for External Security (DGSE) was established in 1982 and attached to the Minister of the Armed Forces. Its internal organization was set by the Order from 12 July 2022. Its core mission is the collection of information related to national security abroad in order to inform the highest executive authorities. It is under the control of the Director – General who defines the strategy of the DGSE which is in line with the guidelines of the NIC and the instructions he/she receives from the President, the Prime Minister, the Ministry of the Armed Forces

and some other members of the Government (DGSE 2024). *The Military Intelligence Directorate* (DRM) is established within the Ministry of the Armed Forces in order to meet intelligence needs of the Chief of Staff and other authorities, agencies and commands of the Ministry as well as the needs of the other relevant government authorities and agencies (Décret no. 92-523, Ar. 1-2). DRM functionally coordinates the intelligence resources of the Army, Navy, and Air and Space Forces (Ministere des Armées 2024). Its internal organization was set by the Order from 30 March 2021. *The Directorate of Intelligence and Defence Security* (DRSD) is a counterintelligence agency established in 2016 which was “placed at the disposal of the Minister of the Armed Forces to exercise his/her responsibilities for the security of the personnel, information, equipment and sensitive sites” (Code de la Défense, Ar. D3126). It acts home and abroad in order to protect the forces (force counter-intelligence), the defence industry (economic counter-intelligence) and cybersecurity from any kind of hostile interference (Ministere des Armées 2024).

The Directorate-General for Internal Security (DGSI) was established in 2014 by Décret No. 2014-445 as an active unit of the National Police under the authority of the Minister (DGSI 2024). It is an intelligence service with general competencies which performs its missions on the territory of the Republic. “The DGSI’s missions consist of combating all activities that could constitute an attack on the fundamental interests of the Republic. It is responsible for preventing and suppressing activities inspired, initiated or supported by foreign powers or organizations and likely to threaten the security of the Republic” (Premier Ministre 2018, 15). The Counter-Terrorism Coordination Unit, which ensured the counter-terrorism collaboration of all services and police units, became in 2009 a department inside the DGSI (Olech 2022, 72). The DGSI also exercises judicial police tasks under the conditions laid down in Article 15-1 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Décret No. 2014-445).

The Financial Intelligence Service (Tracfin) was established by the Décret in 1990 as a coordination unit of the General Directorate of Customs and Indirect Taxes (DGDDI) which is “responsible for processing intelligence and taking action against clandestine financial circuits” (Décret 1990, Ar. 1). Through time, Tracfin has become an independent financial-intelligence unit headed by the Director and attached to the Minister of Finance (Code Monétaire et Financier, Ar. D561-33) with primary obligations related to the fight against money laundering and the financing of terrorism (Code Monétaire et Financier, Titre VI, Chapitre Ier). *The National Directorate of Intelligence and Customs Investigations* (DNRED) is the only intelligence service established by the minister’s Order. It is a national authority attached to the DGDDI within the Ministry of Finance (Arrêté du 29 octobre 2007, Ar. 1). “The DNRED implements the DGDDI’s policy of intelligence, controls and the fight against major customs fraud. The investigations carried out and the files produced in these areas constitute important sources of intelligence, some of which can be opportunely used in the fight against terrorism and radicalization” (Premier Ministre 2018, 21). It operates through the network of internal organizational units,

departments across the Republic and French customs attachés whose expertise covers nearly 60 countries.

Operational management in the cyber domain

Security in the cyber domain was highlighted in the NSR 2022 as an important aspect of national security. Except for the organizational units in the ministries and intelligence services, there are bodies at the operational level which are responsible for general or specific aspects of cybersecurity. ANSSI is a national cybersecurity authority which performs its mission through sub-directorates for operations, expertise, strategy, and administration. One part of the Sub-Directorate for Operations is CSIRT-FR as a technical and operational body which deals with cyber incidents, manages and coordinates all of the sub-directorate's activities related to cyber incidents and defines the CERT-FR development strategy. VIGINUM was established by the Décret No. 2021-922 and attached to SGDSN in order to provide the Secretary-General with powers "enabling him to identify foreign digital interference operations on digital platforms which are likely to harm the fundamental interests of the Republic, to analyse their effects and to lead and coordinate at the interministerial level the protection of the State against such operations" ([Décret No. 2021-922](#)). In other words, VIGINUM is established in order to suppress psychological-propaganda activities on the Internet. The head of the VIGINUM is appointed by the decree of the Prime Minister on the proposal of the Secretary-General ([Décret No. 2021-922, Ar. 4](#)). *Classified Interministerial Information Systems Operator* was established by Décret no. 2020-445 and attached to SGDSN. "Its main mission is to develop and deploy in an optimal manner, in all places and at all times, the classified means of communication necessary for the President of the Republic and the Government, as well as between the President of the Republic and foreign heads of state or government" (SGDSN).

Conclusion

France started major reforms in the security sector in 2008 with the White Paper, which paved the way for a comprehensive and integrated approach to security which meets the requirements of the rule of law on one hand and the demands of the contemporary security environment on the other. The NSR 2022 reiterates strategic determinations expressed in previous strategic documents and identifies the national strategic objectives which should be achieved through an integrated approach to national security. In the introduction of the NSR 2022, the President identified "globalized hybrid warfare" as a major security challenge to freedom and emphasized the need for a national approach that is consistent with and complementary to the EU and NATO security policies. Both the EU and NATO announced readiness to act across all domains and directions using military and non-military tools in a proportionate, coherent and integrated way to counter hybrid warfare as a wedge strategy whose idea is to weaken and undermine the internal cohesion of the society.

This is the reason why resiliency should be the first step in countering hybrid warfare, and it is also why the main security tools must work in a fully integrated way in order to eliminate vulnerabilities at home and provide a coordinated answer to any kind of threat that comes from inside or abroad.

The French integrated approach presented in the NSR 2022 has its roots in White Paper 2008 which pointed out the need for the integration of all the different dimensions of security into a single approach. NSR 2022 describes six strategic objectives whose coordinated enforcement contributes to an integrated approach to national security. These objectives reflect the idea of resiliency because their achievement encompasses a plethora of intertwined and complementary military and non-military actions, at home and abroad, in peacetime, in case of crisis or war, by numerous holders. Strategic objectives are strengthened by legal obligations related to national security, which are imposed on almost every executive department, making this approach truly whole-of-government. In addition, the NSR 2022 insists on the nation's involvement and the synergy between the people and the officials, making this approach a whole-of-society approach. The results of the research confirmed that the French integrated approach presented in NSR 2022 is well adapted to the needs of the contemporary security environment and is in alignment with the security policies of NATO and the EU.

In the second part of the research, the French security system was analysed in order to provide an answer to the question of whether it is structured and managed in a way that ensures an integrated approach to national security. The national security and defence policy of the Republic is determined at the strategic level. The Council determines the priorities and directions in general while NIC and NAC do so in specific domains of the national security policy, creating a framework for the decision-making process for the President, the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers. The implementation of strategic objectives and tasks is performed by intelligence services, the Ministry of the Armed Forces, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior and ministries responsible for justice, economy, budget, health, environment, transport, energy and industry which have obligations related to national security and defence in accordance with the Code de la Défense.

The coordination of such a massive security system is performed by a wide and complex network which enables the integration of all of the mentioned actions at horizontal and vertical axis into a single activity under the authority of the President and the Prime Minister. At the coordinating level, the entities with the most competences are the Secretary General, as a general coordinator because he assists the Prime Minister in the exercise of his responsibilities in matters of defence and national security, and the CNRLT Coordinator who has a special coordination function due to which he performs his coordination function only in intelligence and counter-terrorism matters and also serves as the President's advisor in these matters. Based on the research results, it was concluded that the security system of the French

Republic is structured and managed in a way that ensures an integrated approach to national security. Thus, the general hypothesis of the research was confirmed.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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