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# Expanding Army Cooperation Between the United States and France in the Indo-Pacific

France defines itself as a “nation of the Indo-Pacific” (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2019a). Approximately 1.6 million French nationals live in the region, mainly on Réunion Island and Mayotte in the Indian Ocean and New Caledonia, the Wallis and Futuna Islands, and French Polynesia in the Pacific Ocean (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2019a).<sup>1</sup> More than 80 percent of the French exclusive economic zone (EEZ), the largest in the world after the United States’, is in the Indo-Pacific region (Macron, 2018; French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2019a). But while France has long been present in the region, the inclusion of the Indo-Pacific in French strategic priorities is fairly recent. French President Emmanuel Macron officially launched France’s Indo-Pacific Strategy during his speech at the Garden Island military base during his May 2018 visit to Australia, endorsing the term *Indo-Pacific*, which had been in use for several years by such key regional actors as India, Japan, and the United States (French Government, 2021).<sup>2</sup> Since then, France has published various documents outlining its overall strategy (French Government, 2021), its defense strategy (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2018a; 2019a), and its partnerships in the region (MEAE, 2021a). France has also reinforced its defense diplomacy, developing tighter strategic partnerships with Australia, India, and Japan. In November 2020, it created the new position of Ambassador for the Indo-Pacific Region.

## KEY FINDINGS

- The United States and France could cooperate further to increase dialogue and information-sharing, engage in more combined partnering with other countries, and broaden their common participation in exercises and training in the Indo-Pacific.
- The Five Eyes plus Two countries (Australia, Canada, France, Japan, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States) intelligence sharing format could be expanded in the region.

France’s definition of the Indo-Pacific extends from the eastern shores of Africa to the west, making it much more expansive than the U.S. definition of the region, which stops at the “western shores of India,” keeping it fully within the area of responsibility (AOR) of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) (U.S. Department of Defense [DoD], 2019). France maintains a military presence of approximately 7,000 personnel in five military bases located in

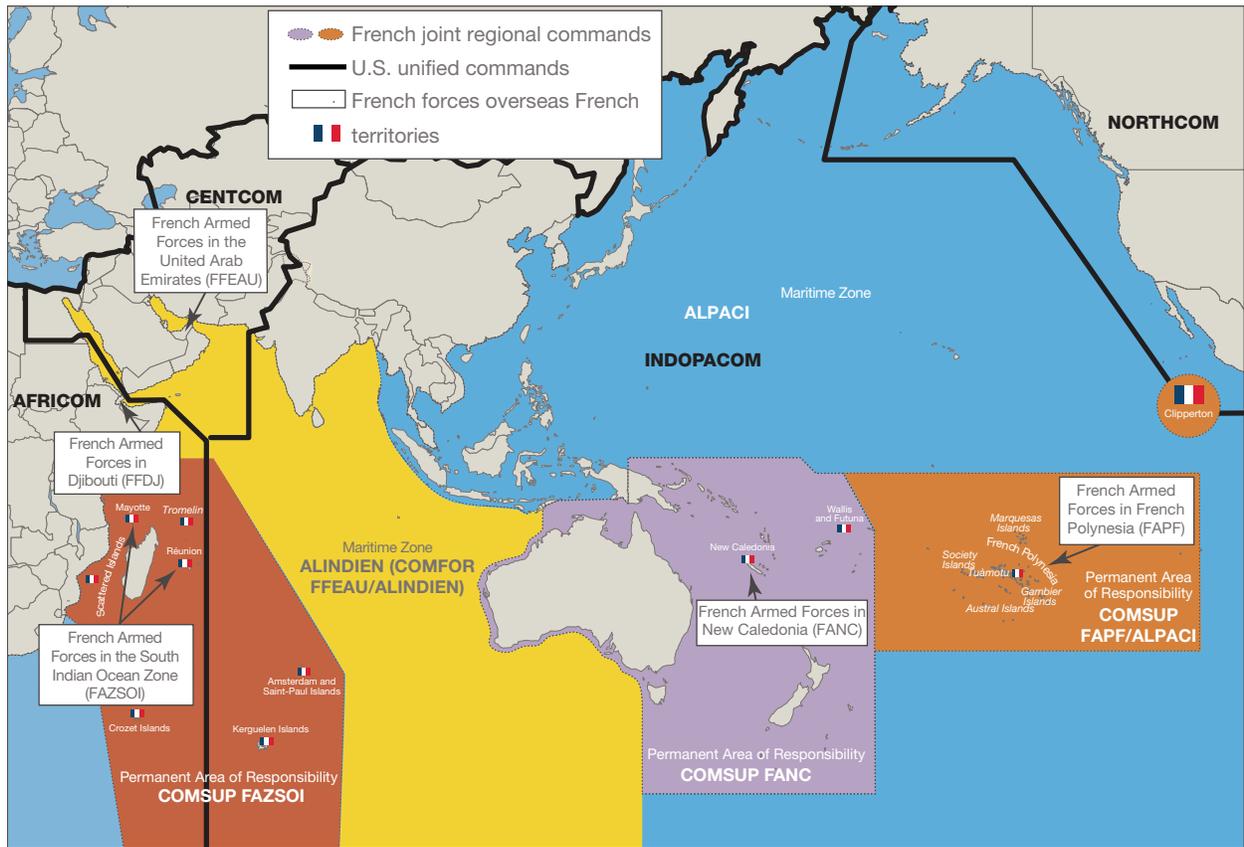
## Abbreviations

AOR	area of responsibility
ARC21	Jeanne D'Arc 2021
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUKUS	Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (trilateral security partnership)
B2M	Bâtiment multi-mission
BATRAL	Bâtiment de Transport Léger
CDEC	Centre de doctrine et d'enseignement du commandement (Center for Doctrine and Command Teaching)
CHODS	Chiefs of Defense Symposium
CRIMARIO	EU Critical Maritime Routes Indian Ocean
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
DIO	Operational Instruction Detachments
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
EU	European Union
FANC	French Armed Forces in New Caledonia
FAPF	French Armed Forces in French Polynesia
FAZSOI	French Armed Forces in the South Indian Ocean Zone
Five Eyes	Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States
Five Eyes plus Two	Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States, plus France and Japan
FRANZ	France, Australia, and New Zealand
HADR	humanitarian assistance and disaster response
ISEAS	Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
IUU	illegal, unreported, and unregulated
RIMaP-NC	Régiment d'infanterie de Marine du Pacifique-Nouvelle Calédonie
RIMaP-P	Régiment d'infanterie de Marine du Pacifique-Polynésie
SFAB	Security Force Assistance Brigade
UAE	United Arab Emirates
USARPAC	U.S. Army Pacific
USINDOPACOM	U.S. Indo-Pacific Command

French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Réunion, Mayotte, Djibouti, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to support its strategic priorities in the region, the first of which is to “defend and ensure the integrity of [France’s] sovereignty, the protection of [France’s] nationals, territories and EEZ” (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2019a). French forces in territories that belong to France (French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Réunion, and Mayotte) are called *sovereignty forces*, and French forces located in foreign countries with which France has basing agreements (Djibouti and the UAE) are called *presence forces*. Figure 1 shows the location of French territories and forces in the Indo-Pacific and their respective AORs. Of France’s five joint regional commands in the region, the two that include large maritime zones are the

French Armed Forces in the UAE for Joint Commander French Armed Forces in the Indian Ocean and the French Armed Forces in French Polynesia (FAPF) for the Joint Commander French Armed Forces in the Asia-Pacific region. Both are led by French Navy officers. The French Forces in Djibouti are led by an Air Force officer, and the French Armed Forces in the South Indian Ocean Zone (FAZSOI) and the French Armed Forces in New Caledonia (FANC) are led by French Army officers (Tenenbaum, Paglia, and Ruffié, 2020). To provide some degree of alignment with the U.S. definition of the Indo-Pacific region, this report will focus on the French presence and activities in the Pacific Ocean and include limited references to the French presence and activities in the Indian Ocean.

FIGURE 1  
 French Overseas Bases in the Indo-Pacific Region



SOURCE: Adapted from French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2019a.

NOTE: AFRICOM = U.S. Africa Command; ALINDIEN = Joint Commander of the French Armed Forces in the Indian Ocean; ALPACI = Joint Commander of the French Armed Forces in the Asia-Pacific; CENTCOM = U.S. Central Command; COMFOR = French Force Command; COMSUF = French Superior Command; INDOPACOM = U.S. Indo-Pacific Command; NORTHCOM = U.S. Northern Command

The United States often seems to overlook France as an Indo-Pacific power. A 2020 report from the Congressional Research Service describes France’s role as “modest” and puts it on par with the United Kingdom, which has only a token permanent presence on land (Brunei) and none on the sea, although it recently announced its intention to deploy on a permanent basis two offshore patrol vessels to the region (Barry and Decis, 2021; Dolven and Vaughn, 2020).<sup>3</sup> The 2019 DoD Indo-Pacific report mentions France in the “Other Allies” category, alongside the United Kingdom and Canada (DoD, 2019). In this report, I explore the commonalities between the U.S. and French strategies in the region; outline the region’s key French military and security cooperation

activities, including shared activities with the United States; and suggest ways that the U.S. Army can further engage France in the region to develop mutually beneficial cooperation activities.

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## The United States and France share the similar objective of maintaining stability and the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific.

between June and October 2021 (Interviews, 2021).<sup>4</sup> As mentioned, this report generally adopts the U.S. definition of the Indo-Pacific and as a result will focus mostly on the French forces that fall within this definition (FANC and FAPF). However, references to other French forces will be made when relevant to discuss French engagement with its partners in the region and U.S.-French cooperation activities.

### **U.S. and French Defense Strategies in the Indo-Pacific Are Largely Aligned**

The United States and France share the similar objective of maintaining stability and the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific and plan to do so through their engagement with their allies and partners in the region. The DoD Indo-Pacific strategy notes, for instance, that “Through our military-to-military engagements, the Department of Defense will continue to encourage China to engage in behaviors that maintain peace and stability in the region and that support—rather than undermine—the rules-based international order” (DoD, 2019), and one of France’s strategic priorities is to “assist in maintaining strategic stability and balances through a comprehensive and multilateral action” (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2019a). For both countries, this objective plays out in three key areas: keeping China’s ambitions in check, maintaining and promoting free access to commons in the region, and preventing nuclear proliferation.

In July 2021, French Foreign Minister (and former Defense Minister) Jean-Yves Le Drian described the United States and France as having a “convergent analysis” on China and highlighted the risks to regional stability created by the exacerbation of China’s ambitions and aggressiveness (Le Drian, 2021). The 2019 U.S. DoD *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report* notes that China “seeks Indo-Pacific regional hegemony in the near-term and, ultimately global preeminence in the long-term” (DoD, 2019). Similarly, the 2021 French *Strategic Update* highlights China’s growing defense budget and military capabilities and its “new ambitions in terms of power projection” (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2021a). This report also defines China as a “systemic rival’ for the EU [European Union]” and “an economic competitor and sometimes an important diplomatic partner” (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2021a). Le Drian, however, underlined France’s desire to avoid a systematically confrontational posture with China (Le Drian, 2021), echoing France’s definition of its own role in the region as one of a “mediating power in an inclusive Asian Indo-Pacific area” that can “propose an alternative aimed at promoting a stable, law-based and multipolar order” (MEAE, 2018a).

A second point of convergence between the United States and France is the promotion and protection of free access to the region’s commons: The United States lays out its “Vision and Principles for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (DoD, 2019), and one of France’s strategic priorities in the region is to “maintain a free and open access to the commons, in cooperation with our partners, in a context of global strategic competition and challenging military environments” (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2019a). While France does not have a program equivalent to the DoD Freedom of Navigation program, it regularly sends ships through the Taiwan Strait and into the South China Sea more broadly, and in February 2021, French nuclear attack submarine SSN *Émeraude* crossed through the South China Sea (Vincent, 2021; Seibt, 2021). In April 2019, China accused French frigate *Vendémiaire* of entering its territorial waters, resulting in diplomatic tensions between the two countries (Guibert and Pedroletti, 2019). In response, during a visit to Singapore, French defense

minister Florence Parly stated that French vessels would “continue to sail more than twice a year in the South China Sea” (Parly, 2019 [author’s translation]).

Another key strategic objective shared by France and the United States is the prevention of nuclear proliferation in the region (DoD, 2019; French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2019a). France is engaged in air and maritime operations as part of a coordinated effort with the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and South Korea to enforce United Nations resolutions 2375 and 2397 on North Korea (MEAE, 2019; Interviews, 2021; Vavasseur, 2021). DoD’s *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report* describes the Japan-based and USINDOPACOM-led Enforcement Coordination Cell that deconflicts the activities and operations of all participating nations as “an important facilitator of transparent collaboration between our allies and partners at sea and in the air” (DoD, 2019).

## France Promotes a Stronger European Union Involvement in the Region

In addition to these shared objectives with the United States, an important objective of France is to promote a stronger involvement of the EU in the region. (It is worth noting that France tends to focus on EU involvement in the region rather than considering the EU’s involvement in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization frame.) This effort is part of France’s broader intention to make the EU a more active and capable defense and security actor (Lefebvre, 2021). As the only EU country with a permanent presence in the region, France can provide military support to EU actions, while the EU brings diplomatic and financial means beyond France’s (Interviews, 2021). The EU—and several of its member states—have already launched various initiatives in the Indo-Pacific region (Brattberg and Le Corre, 2019). Examples include the “strategic partnership” established by the EU and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in December 2020 and the extension in June 2020 of the EU Critical Maritime Routes Indian Ocean (CRIMARIO) I—an information-sharing mechanism for maritime domain awareness

in the Indian Ocean—to Southeast Asia through CRIMARIO II (European Union External Action Service [EEAS], 2020; Gachie Vinson, 2020; Morcos, 2021b). Germany and the Netherlands supported France’s efforts to publish an EU strategy for the Indo-Pacific, which was released in September 2021 (Morcos, 2021b). Germany has stepped up its engagement in the region, participating for the first time, in April 2021, in a “2+2” (Defense and Foreign Affairs Ministers) consultation with Japan and plans to send a frigate to the South China Sea (German Federal Foreign Office, 2021; “German Warship to Sail Through South China Sea, Officials Say,” 2021).

The EU’s security and defense priorities in the region align with the U.S. and France’s and include—among other priorities—a focus on the protection of critical maritime routes and the expansion of its security and defense dialogue across the region. The EU also highlighted the importance of “a meaningful European naval presence in the Indo-Pacific . . . for the future” (EEAS, 2021). A 2021 Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS)–Yusof Ishak Institute survey shows that the EU is fairly well-regarded as an actor in Southeast Asia. To the question, “Who do you have the strongest confidence in to provide leadership to maintain the rules-based order and uphold international law?” the EU scored higher than any other offered option (including the United States and ASEAN) for all ASEAN countries surveyed except Singapore and Vietnam, which ranked the United States first (ASEAN Studies Centre and ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2021). In that same survey, the EU also comes first, just ahead of Japan, as a “third party” or “most preferred and trusted strategic partner for ASEAN” to “hedge against the uncertainties of the US-China strategic rivalry” (ASEAN Studies Centre and ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2021).

## France and the United States Share Many of the Same Partners in the Region

One common way that both the United States and France intend to reach their strategic objectives in the region is through cooperation with partners and allies. France’s priority to “contribute to the security

of regional environments through military and security cooperation” (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2019a) echoes the U.S. National Defense Strategy’s mention of the need to “expand Indo-Pacific alliances and partnerships” and the DoD *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report’s* Second Line of Effort: Partnerships (DoD, 2018; DoD, 2019). Both the United States and France engage in the whole spectrum of security cooperation activities with allies and partners, from exercises to military sales and high-level exchanges. France is engaged in eight strategic partnerships (Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, and Vietnam) and has defense agreements with four more; however, the defense agreements (with Djibouti, the UAE, Kuwait, and Qatar) take place outside the Indo-Pacific as the United States defines it (Lechervy, 2019). During his visit to Australia in 2018, President Macron highlighted the importance of the relationships among France, Australia, and India—describing a “Paris-Delhi-Canberra axis” as “absolutely key for the region and our common objectives in the Indo-Pacific area” (Guibert and Pedroletti, 2020; “Macron Wants Strategic Paris-Delhi-Canberra Axis amid Pacific Tension,” 2018). However, France quickly moved away from this “axis” to advocate instead for an “inclusive” partnership strategy that seeks tighter relationships with Japan and, to a lesser extent, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore and maintains existing ties with Pacific island countries such as the Cook Islands and Vanuatu (Guibert and Pedroletti, 2020).

## Australia

Relations between France and Australia were chilly for many years, due in part to France’s continued nuclear tests in the Pacific. The termination of these tests in the 1990s created the opportunity for a rapprochement, and the two countries signed a defense cooperation and status of forces agreement in 2006 (Morcos, 2021a). That same year, they signed an agreement “regarding the exchange and reciprocal protection of classified information,” followed by a Joint Statement of Enhanced Strategic Partnership (Government of Australia, 2017) and a Mutual Logistics Support Agreement allowing both countries to use each other’s military bases “during combined

exercises, training, operational deployments, unexpected events or other cooperative efforts” (Government of Australia and Government of the French Republic, 2018). France and Australia have also been increasing the pace of their joint activities. During its 2020 to 2021 deployment in the region, the French attack submarine *SSN Émeraude* made a stopover in Perth.<sup>5</sup> France was an observer to Australian-U.S. Exercise *Talisman Saber 2021* and planned to participate in the exercise in 2023 or 2024 (Interviews, 2021; U.S. Army Pacific Public Affairs, 2021). However, relations between the two countries have chilled considerably after the announcement in September 2021 that Australia was pulling out of its \$35.5 billion contract, signed in 2019, for 12 new French-built submarines that were to be delivered to Australia over the next 30 years and the announcement of the new trilateral security partnership by Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (AUKUS) (“Australia Signs \$50 Billion Submarine Contract with France After Two-Year Squabble,” 2019; Gould, 2021). As of late 2021, the French Ambassador to Canberra, who was recalled at the time of the AUKUS announcement, had returned to office, but it is too early to know how these tensions, which the French Minister of Foreign Affairs described as a “stab in the back,” will impact the relations and activities between France and Australia in the Indo-Pacific (Darmanian and Sheftalovich, 2021).

## India

Although France’s strategic partnership with India began in 1998, this relationship has significantly deepened over the past few years and includes armament cooperation, particularly with the joint development of, and transfers of technology related to, Rafale fighter jets; a Provision of Reciprocal Logistics Support agreement that allows the Indian Navy to use French naval bases in Réunion, the United Arab Emirates, and Djibouti; and, most recently, a space agreement for the setup of satellites that will improve maritime surveillance in the region (Tenenbaum, Paglia, and Ruffié, 2020). In March 2018, following the visit of President Macron to India, both countries outlined their shared perception of threats in the Indian Ocean, from maritime traffic security to the need to protect freedom of

navigation and combat climate change (Government of France and Government of India, 2018). In 2019, France and India held their largest ever maritime exercise, Varuna (Guibert and Pedroletti, 2020). This rapprochement with India resulted in France making the political decision to end its defense cooperation activities with Pakistan (“France Says Arms Sale to Pakistan Held Up,” 2010; Interviews, 2021).

## Japan

France’s defense relationship with Japan broke new ground in 2013 when the two countries signed a joint statement and a cooperation road map, both of which included a defense and security dimension (Hornung, 2020). Described as an “exceptional partnership” in the Japan-France joint statement, this relation is strengthened by regular 2+2 ministerial meetings and agreements on technology transfer (in 2015) and logistical support (in 2018) (Hornung, 2020; Pajon, 2018). In 2017, France and Japan also agreed that they would conduct joint exercises alongside the United States and the United Kingdom in the region (Hornung, 2020). In 2019, France participated for the first time in a combined (naval) exercise with Japan, the United States, and Australia (“U.S., France, Japan and Australia Hold First Combined Naval Drill in Asia,” 2019). That same year, France and Japan updated the 2013 road map, which calls for—among other defense-related issues—increasing interoperability between their respective forces, common participation in exercises, and cooperation in humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR) operations and exercises (Hornung, 2020). In March 2015, they also signed an agreement to increase joint research and development of defense equipment, although this cooperation remained, as of late 2021, fairly limited (Hornung, 2020).

## Other Partners

Besides these three key relationships, France also has partnerships and cooperation activities—from defense consultations to training and arms sales—with numerous other states in the region, only a few of which will be mentioned in this report. France’s engagement with Vietnam, for instance, has increased gradually since the signing of a stra-

tegic partnership in 2013. Following a visit of Vietnam’s Secretary General of the Communist Party to France, and the visit of French Prime Minister to Vietnam in 2018, the two countries issued a joint declaration that called for, among other points, a deepening of their defense relations, particularly with regard to military education, peacekeeping training, defense equipment, maritime and air security, and military medicine (French Presidency, 2018). In 2019, a French frigate made a stopover in Ho Chi Minh City (Guibert and Pedroletti, 2020). France and Vietnam hold regular consultations on various issues, including defense, and share similar views on the importance of freedom of navigation and respect for the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (MEAE, 2018b; MEAE, 2021a).

In addition to Australia, India, Japan, and Vietnam, France also includes New Zealand, Indonesia, East Timor, Malaysia, Cambodia, and South Korea among what it calls its “main defense partners” (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2018a). France also has sustained relations with countries it describes as “other defense partners”—for instance, France signed a defense agreement in 2016 with the Philippines, where the Vendemiaire frigate made a stopover in March 2018 (Parameswaran, 2018).<sup>6</sup> Finally, France has a historic relationship with a number of Pacific island countries. New Caledonia and the FANC have sent Operational Instruction Detachments (DIO)—small ad hoc units in charge of operational training—in Fiji, Tonga, Papua New

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France is engaged in strategic partnerships with Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, and Vietnam.

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Guinea, and Vanuatu (Interviews, 2021). French Polynesia and New Caledonia are members of the Pacific Islands Forum. In July 2021, President Macron further emphasized the importance of these countries for France by launching a new initiative against illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing—the South Pacific Coastguard Network—to help South Pacific nations address “predatory” fishing in the region (“France, South Pacific Nations to Combat ‘Predatory’ Fishing as China Extends Reach,” 2021).

## French Army Missions and Forces in the Region

This section focuses on French Army missions and assets in the region in addition to the two French permanent forces that are located in the Indo-Pacific according to the U.S. definition of the region—the FANC and the FAPF.

### Missions

French Army assets in the Indo-Pacific constitute an *enabling force* (*echelon précurseur*) that can be reinforced by additional forces in case of a crisis, starting with the “emergency national force” (“*échelon national d’urgence*”) deployable from outside the region in 48 to 72 hours (Interviews, 2021). French Army forces

contribute to three permanent missions and two “crisis” missions of French overseas forces more generally. The three permanent missions are crisis prevention and intelligence collection; protection of French territory, nationals, and interests—for instance, by combating illegal fishing in the French EEZ, or disposing of unexploded ordnance in such territories as New Caledonia, that do not have these capabilities; and presence in and contribution to stability in the forces’ AOR through various activities ranging from military cooperation to support to peacebuilding activities (Haut-Commissariat de la République en Nouvelle-Calédonie, 2021; Tenenbaum, Paglia, and Ruffié, 2020). The two “crisis missions” are to “conduct, participate in or support” emergency assistance operations (first crisis mission) or military operations (second crisis mission) in their AOR (Tenenbaum, Paglia, and Ruffié, 2020). The majority of France’s 11 overseas regiments consists of Marine Troops (Troupes de Marine), a combined arms entity that has traditionally constituted, along with the French Legion, the core of French expeditionary forces.

Partner engagement helps support both permanent and crisis missions. For instance, the France, Australia, and New Zealand (FRANZ) framework, established in 1992, allows these countries to coordinate and deconflict such emergency assistance operations when states in the region send out requests for HADR. French cooperation activities fall in two categories: structural cooperation and operational cooperation. Structural cooperation includes education activities, support, and training in relation to the foreign military sales program; defense institution building; advice to joint staffs, defense ministries, or governmental entities; and, to a lesser extent, technical expertise for small projects (Interviews, 2021). Operational cooperation includes, more broadly, any training designed to increase the operational capabilities of a partner nation. Between 2018 and 2021, the French Army was engaged in structural cooperation missions in Cambodia and Vietnam and in operational cooperation missions in Bangladesh, the Cook Islands, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vanuatu.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, a unique activity of the French Army is its adapted military service, which provides professional training in a military environment to approximately 6,000 volunteers aged 16 to 25.

A large majority of these volunteers find jobs or other professional training opportunities within six months of the end of the program—a fairly good outcome considering the high levels of unemployment that plague most of France’s overseas territories (Laurey and Patient, 2019). The adapted military service is also a way for the French Army to signal to partners in the region that its competences extend beyond the warfighting domain to support local populations (Interviews, 2021).

## French Armed Forces in New Caledonia

The FANC are the main French force in the Pacific Ocean, with approximately 1,450 Army, Navy, and Air Force personnel (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2020b). The FANC’s Army presence consists of a marine infantry regiment (Régiment d’infanterie de Marine du Pacifique-Nouvelle Calédonie [RIMaP-NC]) comprising a motorized infantry company, an airborne infantry company, a joint company, and a reserve company (Tenenbaum, Paglia and Ruffié, 2020). Thirty percent of its personnel are *permanent*, meaning that they are deployed in New Caledonia for two to three years, while the other 70 percent are in New Caledonia for only a four-month long mission (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2021c). The RIMaP-NC also manages a Nautical Commando Course (Centre d’instruction nautique commando).

In its area of operation, the FANC engage primarily with Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands that have an army or a police force with a military component: Tonga, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and Vanuatu (Interviews, 2021). Australia is the primary partner of the FANC in the region. FANC’s land forces routinely intervene alongside Australia’s in HADR efforts in the region, within the FRANZ framework. In June 2017, the FANC initiated the first meeting of the military intelligence services of Oceania (Oceania Directors of Military Intelligence Meeting), with the participation of France, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Tonga, Fiji, and Papua New Guinea. These meetings, which focus in large part on China’s activities

in the region, are now annual, and Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and East Timor have joined the initial participants (Interviews, 2021). Since their land component is substantially larger than the French Armed Forces in French Polynesia’s, the FANC are a key point of contact for relations between France and the U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC), including for the participation in the Croix du Sud exercise, a large-scale and joint exercise that focuses on HADR scenarios that takes place every other year in New Caledonia (Interviews, 2021).<sup>8</sup>

## French Armed Forces in French Polynesia

The FAPF, located in the French territory of Tahiti, represent a smaller presence (1,180 military personnel) than the FANC, yet their AOR is extensive. The commander of the FAPF is also the Commander of the Pacific Ocean maritime zone, which extends to Alaska and Chile to the east, the Strait of Malacca to the west, and parts of Antarctica to the south. The size of their zone of operations and the small size of the islands where the FAPF are located help explain why the force has favored air and maritime assets over land ones. The FAPF’s Régiment d’infanterie de Marine du Pacifique-Polynésie (RIMaP-P)—which was dissolved in 2012 before being reinstated in 2015—has two deployable combat companies, a logistics company and a maintenance company (Interviews, 2021). It is also in charge of a tropical warfare and training center (Centre d’aguerrissement et d’instruction tropicale d’Océanie) located in Faaone, Papeari, and the Phaeton Bay in Tahiti (Tenenbaum, Paglia, and Ruffié, 2020).

The FAPF are the main point of contact for bilateral relations with the United States in the region. They engage with USINDOPACOM and all of its service components and with the U.S. Coast Guard and Joint Interagency Task Force West, which focuses on counterdrug activities (Interviews, 2021). In 2021, for instance, FAPF Commander Admiral Jean-Mathieu Rey represented the French Joint Staff Commander at the annual Chiefs of Defense Symposium (CHODS) organized by USINDOPACOM (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2021d). However,

relations with USARPAC are limited, partly because the FANC's land component is larger than the FAPF's (Interviews, 2021). The FAPF are also the main point of contact for bilateral relations with Japan. France regularly sends officers from RIMaP-P to Japan for HADR exercises (Interviews, 2021).

## French Forces in the South Indian Ocean Zone

While the FAZSOI do not fall within the U.S. definition of the Indo-Pacific region, they are the main element of France's presence in the Indian Ocean and include more personnel (2,000) than either of the two French forces in the Pacific Ocean. Located in Réunion and Mayotte—both French territories—FAZSOI's land forces include a Marine infantry paratroopers regiment and a detachment from the French Legion in Mayotte. The FAZSOI are involved in the relationship with India, although this relationship tends to focus more on naval and air cooperation activities than land ones (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2020a).<sup>9</sup>

## The U.S. and French Armies Have a Sustained Cooperation in the Region, with Some Limits

Numerous cooperation activities of all types—from combined exercises to high-level exchanges—already take place between U.S. and French armed forces in general and between their armies in particular. France participates in a substantial number of defense and security dialogues in the region, many of which also include the United States; the 2019 DoD *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report* underlines that “France shares our emphasis on developing a network of strategic partnerships, contributing to the building of a regional security architecture, and engaging in multi-lateral dialogue platforms” (DoD, 2019). As an example, France and the United States participate in the Australian Joint Heads of Pacific Security initiative, which had its inaugural event in Brisbane in October 2019 and includes defense, police, and customs and immigration officials (Australian Department of Defence, 2019; Interviews, 2021). Another example of

note is the Southwest Pacific Initiative, which involves the Five Eyes countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States) plus France and Japan (Five Eyes plus Two). Led by the United States and Australia, with substantial USARPAC involvement, this initiative aims to coordinate the actions of these seven countries vis-à-vis Pacific Islands states (Interviews, 2021).

Another key area of cooperation is the participation in multinational exercises. In April 2021, for instance, Quad members (the United States, Australia, India, and Japan) participated for the first time in the French La Pérouse naval exercise (Flippin, 2021; Pajon, 2021). France participates in Rim of the Pacific exercises and in the Pacific Partnership deployments (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2018a). France and the United States also participate in smaller exercises, such as Tafakula in the Southwest Pacific, which included in 2019 about 100 military personnel from the United States (Nevada National Guard and the U.S. Marine Corps), France (FAPF), Tonga, Australia, and New Zealand (Logan, 2019). French-led multinational exercises relevant to the U.S. Army include the Equateur command post exercise that is organized every other year by the FANC; it prepares the ground for Croix du Sud the following year and sees regular U.S. Army participation (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2019b; Overson, 2017).

Additional exercises of note include the joint training of French Rafale fighter jets and U.S. F-22 Raptors in Hawaii in July 2021, following an exercise of the Rafale in French Polynesia that “simulated forced entry into disputed airspace” (Olson, 2021). The French air group also included two A400M transport aircraft and one A330 refueling aircraft (Olson, 2021). This exercise reflects an increasing focus, for French armed forces, on preparing for high-intensity conflict. Former Chief of Staff of the French Army General Thierry Burkhard, who regularly advocated for preparing the French forces for such contingencies, became Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces in July 2021 (“The French Armed Forces Are Planning for High-Intensity War,” 2021; French Army, 2020; Interviews, 2021). Another event of interest was the first joint exercise of U.S., French, and Japanese troops on Japanese soil (Jeanne D’Arc 2021 [ARC21]), which took place in May 2021 and played out a scenario

consisting of retaking an island (Colombo and Yamaguchi, 2021). On the French side, the exercise included legionnaires, marine troops, and Army engineers (Coronel, 2021; Mesmer, 2021). This exercise allowed participants to practice interoperability, with a single staff for the three countries (Interviews, 2021).

U.S.-French cooperation is particularly strong in “under the threshold” activities that affect the safety of the populations and their environment, as in exercise Croix du Sud. The 2018 exercise, for instance, included more than 2,000 personnel from Australia, Chile, the United States, Fiji, Indonesia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the United Kingdom, Tonga, and Vanuatu (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2018b). In addition, the United States and France participate—with Australia and New Zealand—in the Pacific Quadrilateral Defence Coordination Group that assists 15 Pacific island countries in combatting IUU fishing. USINDOPACOM’s representative in the group is the U.S. Coast Guard, while the FANC ensure France’s participation in the group’s operational missions (DoD, 2019; French Navy, 2021).

However, cooperation between the U.S. and French armies in the region appears to be somewhat limited in comparison to the scope of U.S.-French activities taking place in other regions (e.g., Europe and Africa) or French activities with other services (e.g., Navy and Air Force) in the Indo-Pacific. Cooperation—not with the United States in particular, but more generally—is also constrained by the overall size of France’s footprint in the region.<sup>10</sup> Since 2010, the number of military personnel deployed overseas has been cut by 25 percent, and equipment is fairly limited (Tenenbaum, Paglia, and Ruffié, 2020). For instance, the small number of military transport aircraft limits opportunities to train militaries of other nations—whether by sending French forces to that nation or bringing the nation’s trainees to New Caledonia or French Polynesia. Equipment deployed overseas tends to be older than equipment in continental France, and updates have, in some cases, further constrained capabilities. For instance, the CASA CN-235 that replaced the C-160 Transall has half the capacity of its predecessor in terms of number of passengers (Interviews, 2021; Tenenbaum, Paglia, and Ruffié, 2020). Amphibious operations capabilities are similarly limited now that the small Bâtiment

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The Indo-Pacific is lower priority than other regional strategic areas. Europe, Africa, and the Middle East all come before the Indo-Pacific in the French Ministry for the Armed Forces’ 2021 *Strategic Update*.

de Transport Léger (BATRAL) landing ships (which provided a vehicle beaching capability) have been replaced with Bâtiment multi-mission (B2M) patrol ships. B2M also have less fire capability and capacity for the number of personnel it can transport compared with BATRAL (Interviews, 2021; Tenenbaum, Paglia, and Ruffié, 2020).

Overall, there are no clear plans to increase the French military presence or assets in the Indo-Pacific. Current emphasis is on getting the French Army to further its ability to conduct high-intensity, conventional warfare, and preparation for such contingencies requires large deployments that are hardly practical when considering the geographic distance between France—where these troops would come from—and the Indo-Pacific locations—where such activities would take place (Interviews, 2021). Although the end of Operation Barkhane in the Sahel could potentially mean that more French forces will be available for the Indo-Pacific region, any such redeployments would take time, and France might keep a sizable training presence in the Sahel (Interviews, 2021). In addition, the Indo-Pacific is lower priority than other regional strategic areas. Europe, Africa, and the Middle East all come before the Indo-Pacific in the French Ministry for the Armed Forces’ 2021 *Strategic Update*, as was

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France's historic presence in the Indo-Pacific region in its territories and the extensive economic zone surrounding them provides French forces with a granular understanding of the region's geography, climate, populations, and language.

the case in previous strategic documents (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2021a). The Indo-Pacific, overall, will likely retain the current baseline French military presence with occasional additions to respond to a disaster or to take part in exercises focused on interoperability (Interviews, 2021). This means that, for the foreseeable future, France will continue to allocate limited resources over a very large area of operation, which might limit what it can do in terms of DIO and other cooperation activities with partner nations, exercises, or even liaison positions. It will also likely keep France mostly engaged in the part of the Indo-Pacific theater that is closest to its military bases—the south and southwest Pacific, rather than in the areas closer to China—although France's recent exercise with Japan shows that it can also deploy far from its bases when needed. However, with the current French resources in place in the Indo-Pacific, there are still multiple ways to increase the extent and pace of cooperation activities between the U.S. and French armies.

## France-U.S. Cooperation Could Be Strengthened Through Various Means

### Increased Intelligence and Information-Sharing

France's historic presence in the Indo-Pacific region in its territories and the extensive economic zone surrounding them provides French forces with a granular understanding of the region's geography, climate, populations, and language. Permanent personnel are deployed for two to three years with their families and get to know their environment (Interviews, 2021). Furthermore, the French Army makes an active effort to promote *interculturality*, defined as the ability to integrate how partners operate and think into one's approach to cooperation activities (Interviews, 2021). A dedicated organization within the French Army, the *État-major spécialisé pour l'outre-mer et l'étranger*, is in charge of troops' interculturality readiness before they are deployed overseas for short-term missions or for operations (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2021b).

Such knowledge and close contact with populations is particularly important to track China's growing political, economic, and possibly military influence in the region. For instance, in Kiribati, China plans to refurbish a former U.S. military airstrip and to develop a port for containers (Barrett, 2021; Singleton, 2021). Both Kiribati and the Solomon Islands broke off their diplomatic ties with Taiwan in 2019 to join China's large-scale infrastructure development project, the Belt and Road Initiative ("China Eyes Increased Ties with Kiribati, Site of Space Tracking Station," 2020; Guibert, 2021). China is also funding numerous infrastructure projects in Vanuatu, including a wharf that could potentially be used by Chinese military ships.<sup>11</sup> More generally, the geographic distance between French and U.S. bases in the Indo-Pacific results in complementary knowledge of the physical and human terrain of this region and provides opportunities for information and intelligence sharing. As mentioned earlier, the FANC initiated annual meetings of military intelligence services of Oceania in 2017 (Interviews, 2021). France also participates in the USINDOPACOM-led Indo-Pacific Intelligence Chiefs Conference that takes

place every year (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2018a). The USARPAC-established Southwest Pacific General Officer Board, which makes decisions pertaining to the Southwest Pacific Initiative and meets every quarter, could be another forum of choice. It provides participants with a common operating picture of the region and should eventually lead to joint activities in yet-to-be-defined priority areas (Interviews, 2021). This forum is structured along the Five Eyes plus Two format, which USINDOPACOM chose for a follow-up meeting to the 2021 CHODS, and which could potentially be extended to other forums for increased intelligence sharing (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2021d).

At the operational level, the FAPF and USARPAC could further develop their relationship (Interviews, 2021). Increasing their interaction seems an indispensable first step toward more cooperation between the two armies. A French liaison with USARPAC might be an option, as the only French representative with USINDOPACOM in Hawaii is from the Navy. However, coordination and planning for joint activities should not take place only between regional commands—especially because France’s tradition as a highly centralized state means that most decisions are made in Paris. The Indo-Pacific could become a key agenda item for the meetings that take place biannually at the French Army Staff/International Relations Bureau (État-Major de l’Armée de Terre/Bureau des Relations Internationales) with representatives from the U.S. Army, and which tend to focus on U.S.-French activities and exercises in Europe and Africa. A French liaison to USARPAC would inject more army equities into existing Indo-Pacific communication and cooperation channels, and making the Indo-Pacific a key agenda item for annual meetings would bring more of an Indo-Pacific perspective to existing Paris-based communication channels between the French and U.S. armies.

## Combined Partnering in Third Countries

Working with France on *combined partnering* (defined as common security cooperation activities for the benefit of a third country) in the Indo-Pacific

potentially offers several opportunities for the United States. A 2021 survey of ASEAN countries shows that while “China’s militarization and assertive actions in the South China Sea,” and its “encroachment in the exclusive economic zones and continental shelves of other littoral states” are the two biggest concerns of ASEAN member states (62.4 percent and 59.1 percent of respondents, respectively), a China-U.S. confrontation comes in third place (45.2 percent) (ASEAN Studies Centre and ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2021).<sup>12</sup> Trilateral or multinational engagements—particularly with a country like France that insists on recognizing China as a partner in some domains—could be attractive to countries that seek to eschew the “United States or China” choice and could be more acceptable politically and diplomatically to the ones that fear retaliation from China if they appear too aligned with the United States (Interviews, 2021; Lin et al., 2020). One option, recommended by a 2020 RAND study, is to initiate pilot projects that would have the United States and select allies develop five-year joint security cooperation plans—for instance, a U.S.-Australia plan in Indonesia or Malaysia or a U.S.-Japan plan in the Philippines or Vietnam—in which other allies, including France, might participate (Lin et al., 2020). A separate, trilateral U.S.-France-Australia joint security cooperation plan might also be a possibility in some of the Pacific island countries with which both France and Australia have strong relations, although such an option appears less likely in the aftermath of AUKUS.

U.S.-French security cooperation activities focusing on gray-zone rather than kinetic threats might also be more palatable for countries that fear retaliation if China perceives them as hostile. France’s exchanges with Singapore on disinformation issues, for instance, help counter Chinese influence and increase Singapore’s security while allowing Singapore to maintain what it deems an acceptable relationship with China (Interviews, 2021). This type of engagement is also more attractive to countries like Japan that have constitutional limitations on what they can do with their armed forces and to countries that do not have a military, which is the case for several Pacific island countries. Given the U.S. and French armies’ expertise in counterinsurgency, there might also be opportunities to cooperate on this issue

to support partner countries like the Philippines that face such concerns.

The U.S. Army could also potentially join initiatives that seek to build positive relations with partner nations and their populations, such as the Castor operation conducted annually by the FANC alongside the Vanuatu army, that focus on infrastructure projects. In 2018, for instance, the FANC renovated an elementary school and installed solar panels to power a potable water-pumping station (New Caledonia Government, 2018). Operation Castor, while small (roughly 40 French Army engineers deployed for a month), is another example of combined partnering, having on at least one occasion included New Zealand as a participant (Interviews, 2021). Joint U.S.-French activities in the region could potentially include the U.S. National Guard through the State Partnership Program (as of 2020, there were 13 partnerships between various states' National Guards and countries located in the USINDOPACOM AOR) (U.S. National Guard, 2020).

Countering Chinese influence requires providing partner countries with security cooperation activities that address their most pressing concerns—such as IUU fishing, disaster prevention and resilience, or climate change impacts, for Pacific island countries—that might otherwise be addressed by China. Countering climate change is a priority for island states, who are particularly vulnerable to its impacts (Interviews, 2021). This understanding of the broader security and strategic implications of climate change in the region is shared by the United States and France: USINDOPACOM's Pacific Environmental Security Forum is defined as a “program to explore solutions to environmental security issues throughout the Indo-Pacific region,” largely through capacity building and partnering in the region (Pacific Environmental Security Forum, undated), and France's strategy for the Indo-Pacific includes a mandate to “extend cooperation to environmental security” (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2019a). USARPAC and the French military could collaborate on the issue of the security and resilience of military infrastructures in the region—an issue in which both countries have a high level of expertise—or on disaster preparedness (Interviews, 2021).

More broadly, U.S.-French joint activities to help Pacific island countries increase their resilience to disasters and assist with their response when disasters do occur could help support U.S. objectives in the region. The FANC deploy at least once a year for HADR missions, with the French Army playing an important role in clearing and reconstruction (Interviews, 2021). Joint interventions with USARPAC and increased HADR cooperation in third countries could not only help build the relationship between the U.S. and French armies but also build goodwill within Pacific island countries at a time when China is trying to extend its own influence and when the severity of disasters will only increase (Interviews, 2021).

Joint U.S.-French cooperation in third countries could involve the 5th Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB), based out of Joint Base Lewis-McChord. The 5th SFAB's focus on the Indo-Pacific (as of February 2021, its three deployments had been in Thailand, India, and Indonesia), the small size of its teams, and the knowledge areas it covers make it particularly suitable for partnering with small allied units—for instance, France's DIOs—to undertake common cooperation activities in third countries (Brading, 2021). Another avenue for cooperation could be through USARPAC's Task Force Oceania, which sends small teams consisting of active military, reserve, and National Guard personnel to Pacific states to identify needs that the U.S. Army can assist with—for instance, improving infrastructure or creating opportunities to produce electricity and water more resiliently (Interviews, 2021). Task Force Oceania teams could partner with French DIOs for needs that could use their complementary expertise.

Finally, assuming some of the tensions raised by AUKUS subside in the near future, Australia could be a third partner in some of these efforts, particularly in activities in Pacific island countries. The United States, France, and Australia share similar concerns about the rise of China's influence in the region and already conduct numerous joint exercises and operations countering illicit activities (Morcos, 2021a). The United States and France could partner with Australia to further the objectives of Australia's Defence Cooperation Program that best align with their own.

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## Exercises and Training

Exercises allow France and the United States to prepare for the various contingencies that could take place in the Indo-Pacific, from gray zone actions to open conflict. The broadening of some existing exercises in which both the United States and France participate; additional participation from U.S. ground forces in French exercises or the participation of French ground forces in U.S. exercises; and the extended use of, and joint training in, French facilities in the region all represent opportunities for an increased pace of activities and building of interoperability between the U.S. and French armies. U.S.-French cooperation in exercises could also open up to additional allies and partners. For instance, the Croix du Sud exercise could continue to include new participants, as it has done with Indonesia. Such new participants might include Malaysia and Vietnam, both of which are concerned with China's perceptions that they might be too close militarily to the United States. (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2018b).

A different—and complementary—approach would be to replicate the current interaction among the FANC, FAPF, and USARPAC as seen in Croix du Sud in a new multinational, joint exercise focused not on HADR but on other types of contingencies, which includes counterinsurgency and stabilization missions (Interviews, 2021). USARPAC and the French Army could also increase their involvement in exercises focusing on retaking an island, such as ARC21. Although the U.S. Marine Corps is generally seen as the partner of choice for this type of exercise, the Army also has capabilities to operate in that space and could see its involvement increase. This could include building a relationship between, on the French side, the 9th Marine Infantry Brigade (the French brigade focused on amphibious operations) and the U.S. Army (Interviews, 2021). Such exercises not only prepare militaries in the region for worst-case scenarios but also signal to China the growing interoperability of U.S. allies and partners in the region (Interviews, 2021). France's planned participation in Talisman Sabre will similarly contribute to building the relationship among the U.S., Australian, and French armies.

These exercises could benefit from existing French military installations in the region; French

The FAPF's location in French Polynesia complements U.S. bases farther north and east; meanwhile, the FANC are well positioned for exercises with Australia and New Zealand.

and U.S. bases could support temporary deployments and exercises (Interviews, 2021). The Nautical Commando Course (New Caledonia) and the Tropical Warfare and Training Center (French Polynesia) are regularly used by French partners' ground forces for exercises (Interviews, 2021). The FAPF's location in French Polynesia complements U.S. bases farther north and east; meanwhile, the FANC are well positioned for multinational exercises with Australia and New Zealand. However, the status of New Caledonia presents uncertainties. The third independence referendum that is planned to take place in December 2021 could raise tensions on the islands regardless of its outcome (Interviews, 2021). The second and most recent referendum on this issue, in October 2020, gave supporters of keeping New Caledonia a French overseas territory a narrow win ("New Caledonia Referendum: South Pacific Territory Rejects Independence from France," 2020). In the long term, an independent New Caledonia might still allow the FANC to remain in their current locations on the island—as a "presence force" rather than a "sovereignty force" (Azzam, 2018; Interviews, 2021). However, in the near term, the political uncertainty around New Caledonia potentially creates challenges to planning training activities and exercises between France and its allies and partners.

## Conclusion

The United States and France could cooperate further to increase dialogue and information-sharing, engage in more combined partnering with other countries, and broaden their common participation in exercises and training. The U.S. and French armies could benefit from higher levels of cooperation that would leverage France's permanent presence in the region, knowledge of the area, existing partnerships with other regional actors, and proficiency in the entire spectrum of operations from stabilization to high-intensity conflict. An extension of such activities should also come as part of a strategy on how U.S.-French relations can best move forward in the region. This supposes some efforts to maintain or even improve the coherence between old and new initiatives, ensure proper coordination between the different organizations involved, and improve the joint and/or whole government component of these activities (Interviews, 2021). One final issue to keep in mind when considering U.S.-France cooperation in the Indo-Pacific is the disconnect between how each country defines this region geographically. This disconnect can create limits and missed opportunities, particularly as it relates to the western border of the region. For France, the Indo-Pacific includes the Eastern Coast of Africa all the way up to Djibouti. This subregion is particularly important to India—a key U.S. partner.

Concrete steps for the U.S. Army to increase its cooperation with the French Army could include the following:

- Develop further Five Eyes plus Two formats for some types of intelligence sharing in the region.
- Explore the possibility of having USARPAC or USINDOPACOM host a French Army liaison to provide a French Army perspective.
- Make the Indo-Pacific a more prominent agenda item in the biennial meeting between the French Army Staff/International Relations Bureau and U.S. Army representatives.
- Develop and execute U.S.-French army security cooperation activities with third countries with a focus on countering gray zone activities, supporting infrastructure development and resilience, countering IUU fishing, aug-

menting disaster prevention and resilience, and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

- Develop the relationship and explore the possibility of joint activities between the French Army components of the FANC and the FAPF and the U.S. Army 5th SFAB and Task Force Oceania.
- Broaden some of the existing exercises in which the FANC, FAPF, and USARPAC participate, such as Croix du Sud, to additional partners.
- Increase involvement of USARPAC with the French Army in exercises focusing on retaking an island, such as ARC21.
- Take advantage of French facilities in the region for joint training.

Extending the U.S. vision of the Indo-Pacific to the western Indian Ocean is also particularly critical when it comes to monitoring and containing China's rising influence. China's opening of a military base in Djibouti in 2017—its first overseas base—raised concerns for both the United States and France and could prompt both countries to reinforce the relations between their own bases in Djibouti, for instance, or engage in common infrastructure projects in Djibouti to secure Western countries' access to the region in the long term (Interviews, 2021). Coordinating action across the Combatants Commands “seams”—in this case, U.S. Africa Command, USINDOPACOM, and U.S. Central Command—can prove critical to providing the United States with a more comprehensive action in the broader Indo-Pacific and facilitate joint actions with France across a region that represents a strategic priority for both Washington, D.C., and Paris.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Other French territories in the region are Clipperton Island, which has no permanent inhabitants, and the French Southern and Antarctic Lands (Terres australes et antarctiques françaises), which together have fewer than 20 permanent inhabitants (Terres australes et antarctiques françaises, undated).

<sup>2</sup> France, Australia, and India appear to scope the Indo-Pacific region in comparable ways (Regaud, 2021, p. 12). This term replaced the previously more-commonly used term *Asia-Pacific* (Gaulme, 2019, p. 12).

<sup>3</sup> These patrol vessels are “to be joined by Type-31 frigates in the future” (UK Royal Navy, 2021).

<sup>4</sup>Two of these interviews were with the same French defense official but were conducted four months apart.

<sup>5</sup>Another stopover was in Guam. See “French Navy Sends Message with Long-Range Sub Patrol in S. China Sea,” 2021.

<sup>6</sup>The “other defence partners” category includes a wide range of countries, from Papua New Guinea to Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, Bangladesh, and others (French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2018a, p. 9).

<sup>7</sup>This list of missions only pertains to the French Army. Other services conduct their own cooperation missions (French Army briefing, unpublished).

<sup>8</sup>The FANC organize Croix du Sud (live exercise) in even years and Equateur (command post exercise) in odd years. Every other year, the FAPF organize a much smaller HADR-focused exercise named Marara.

<sup>9</sup>On cooperation with India more broadly, see Centre de documentation de l'École militaire, 2018.

<sup>10</sup>For a list of French military equipment permanently deployed to the region, see French Ministry for the Armed Forces, 2020b, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup>This concern was expressed by Australia in particular. See Bohane, 2018.

<sup>12</sup>These results show important differences across countries; see ASEAN Studies Centre and ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2021, p. 25.

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## About This Report

*The research reported here was completed in February 2022, followed by security review by the sponsor and the U.S. Army Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, with final sign-off in December 2022.*

This report documents research and analysis conducted as part of a project entitled *Examining the French Army's Approach to Operational Risk*, sponsored by the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-8, U.S. Army. The purpose of the project was to examine common interests between the United States and France in the Indo-Pacific, existing French partnerships in the region, and opportunities for bilateral or multilateral cooperation between the U.S. Army and the French Army.

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