



On February 14th, 2022, in the Oury amphitheatre of the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, the Chairman and CEO of MBDA (Matra BAe Dynamics, Aérospatiale Matra Missiles and Alenia Marconi Systems), Éric Béranger, spoke for our fifth thematic conference on "mastering effects by mastering technologies: the challenges of strategic autonomy in Europe". With his long experience, both in the space business and in numerous managerial positions at France Telecom and Société Générale, Mr. Béranger introduced the company he now chairs, one of the leading defence companies in Europe. MBDA, born of Franco-British cooperation in the field of missiles, is indeed a French and European flagship. It was also a successful example of European industrial integration in its sector; post-Brexit, the group's multi-nationality was maintained with an annual turnover of some 3.5 to 3.7 billion euros.

Focusing on the necessity of preserving a French and European defence industry, Éric Béranger stated that "defence is at the service of the nation. And at this stage of the growth of European defence, without the nation, defence has little future. The French DTIB (Defence Technological and Industrial Base) is a guarantor of sovereignty for our defence, but it is also an asset for our economy and for the performance of our national industry, both military and civilian. This industry represents 25 billion euros in annual turnover, 200,000 jobs and 4,000 companies. The French DTIB also consolidates our country's international prestige through cooperative programmes and exports. France is a privileged partner for many countries that value the quality of the aeronautical and defence equipment it produces, and the political safeguards associated with their sale. Our foreign policy can thus be based on a triangle: diplomacy, armed forces and a DTIB. An active foreign policy is essential to develop partnerships and ensure that our security interests and the autonomy of our supplies and choices are respected. "Partnerships are especially essential when you are a middle power like France. A strong DTIB is a tool for sovereignty in two ways: as a capability, to maintain full autonomy in the design and use of weapons systems, but also because it can be used to achieve international cooperation objectives and strategic partnerships. The export issue is vital to the consolidation of the French DTIB. It is even more so for MBDA. Exports constitute 50% of the company's turnover. MBDA is the only non-US Western company that in its missile sector offers French and foreign armies (Land, Air, Navy) a diversified range of products representing all the solutions available on the world market.

With 12,000 employees, including 5,000 in France, MBDA is a solid, high-performance company capable of meeting the technological and industrial challenges of the future. In the 21st century, the transformation of armed conflicts places a major emphasis on missile systems. Éric Béranger first recalled the significance of deterrence for our defence. MBDA is the group that supplies France with the airborne nuclear delivery system, today the ASMPA and tomorrow the ASN4G. He then stressed that since the foundation of MBDA in the 2000s, through a merger between Matra and BAe Systems,

the company has been entrusted with the definition and production of the most effective conventional missiles created on European soil (air superiority missiles, deep strike missiles, cruise missiles, etc.).

Multi-nationalism MBDA is a deeply integrated group. Its Executive Committee is comprised of English, Italian and French members. However, MBDA sometimes operates in a compartmentalised approach on strictly national programmes (such as deterrence programmes), and sometimes on programmes carried out in cooperation between different countries.

The constant technological advancement of weapon systems is a prerequisite for our defence, but also for the industrial and commercial competitiveness of the company. Among the various challenges that must be met include the development of directed-energy weapons (lasers), which are added to the family of missiles, and the production of hypervelocity missiles (evolving above Mach 5, between 5,000 and 6,000 km/h), such as those already developed by the Russians (Zircon) or the Chinese. At such a speed the time of reaction of an enemy's missile defences is so short that its response is almost impossible. Confronted with robust anti-aircraft defences, it is necessary to synchronise several effects, such as jamming, countermeasures, stealth, and decoys.

The technological race is imposing inter-state collaborations at the European level. MBDA is leading a Europe-wide consortium to respond to calls for proposals from the new European Defence Fund. Indeed, it is essential to be able to deal with the threat of hypervelocity, ballistic and manoeuvring missiles, and hypersonic gliders. The Aquila programme and its interceptor projects, which were part of a Twister system, consisted of an early alert from Space and a special interceptor which also could be hypersonic. Mr Béranger also emphasised the importance of future technologies such as quantum technologies, which he believes will rapidly gain prominence in three areas: detection, telecoms, and cryptology.

To conclude, Eric Béranger stressed that innovation is at the heart of MBDA's concerns, and he insisted on the fundamental importance for France to retain and maintain the surface area and skills of its DTIB. Without the DTIB, there is no security. France is the only European country to have a full DTIB and a fully equipped army model.