

Foreword

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Dear Reader,

Welcome to *Vortex*, the French Air and Space Force's brand-new professional journal. This is not, in fact, the first time that the French Air Force has held such a journal. Old-timers will remember *Forces Aériennes*, published between 1946 and 1971. Younger readers may recall *Penser les Ailes Françaises*, which contributed to their reflections in the early 21st century.

In this day and age, as the French Air and Space Force (the FASF) regularly trains to project itself all over the globe, the time may have come to launch a new impetus, which can be read in both French and English by airmen of all nationalities. Primarily intended for air power professionals, this journal hopes to contribute to intellectual reflections on the use of aviation in war. In broader terms, it also wishes to reach those who are interested in such topics, whether members of other armies, industrialists, academics, journalists, analysts, or simply the curious-minded. The idea is to put forward a set of articles that will present the conceptual and operational issues that airmen face, in terms understandable by all. As for air warfare, reflections surrounding conflicts, which are fueled by United States, are ever evolving. American concepts generally find their way across the planet with a slight delay, until it reaches allies that adapt them and rivals who try to counter them. The scene is beyond doubt very lively. It is therefore necessary to design a space in which our readers can gather to update their knowledge and stimulate their thinking.

Along with a will to render them more accessible, we also wish to take part in these debates on air power and elevate them with the voices of all those who think they can contribute, primarily airmen. In France, as elsewhere, they do not always have the reputation of being great intellectuals. Favoring their lustrous machines over books, spiteful tongues would allege that they thrive more in mastering advanced technologies than in the writing of scholarly articles. Ok for Top Gun, but drop *Il dominio dell'aria* for now... However, we are betting that there is a community of airmen out there ready to put their thoughts in writing and share their practices. Maybe all

they were missing was an arena to do so. We are offering that *Vortex* be that arena, to broadcast their ideas and put them to the test of the air power community at large.

For us, however, there is nothing worse than staying in conquered land and wallowing in the same standpoints. That is why we are also more than happy to receive contributions from other experts wishing to support or develop the debate. They are all welcome, regardless of their profession or nationality. This is why the Editorial Board is made up of equal numbers of serving and retired Air Force officers and civilian experts from the university and the think tank community. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their involvement.

Thus, *Vortex*, as a journal, aims to reach a French and more international readership, via an editorial line focusing on the operational aspects of air power which is open to all experts of the field. But what exactly does this involve?

Vortex is structured in five different parts: a case study, some varia, a historical article on the French Air Force, an interview with an air strategist and book reviews. This frame will probably evolve as *Vortex* grows, with the addition or removal of certain sections, but we will strive to stay true to this initial spirit.

This first issue already veers from this structure, as its first article welcomes an opening courtesy of the French Air and Space Force's Chief of Staff, General P. Lavigne. We must first pay tribute to him, along with his former collaborator, General E. Autellet, for making this adventure possible. Next, we must thank him for setting an example by sharing with us his vision of the use of air and space power for the average yet ambitious nation that is France. We hope that he will inspire French airmen to also take up writing.

For this first issue, the Editorial Board has chosen as the focus of its main section the topic of *Multi-domain/multi-champs (MDMC)*, better known as Multidomain (MD) outside our borders. There were two main reasons to the Committee members' choice. The term has flooded military literature, hence the importance of understanding both the reasons to its success and comprehend what it implies. The FASE, like the other French forces, is in the process of absorbing it by producing a doctrinal corpus. It may be relevant to reinforce this process by providing some reflections as part of a non-institutional framework.

The case study begins with an article by J. C. Noël, presenting a short genealogy of the term. As opposed to some preconceived ideas, this term is much more than a buzzword. It summarizes a number of considerations

that have been on the table for some forty years and could still be developed further. V. Turret describes the way the Russian and the Chinese reacted to this new American concept. Given their specificities and their strategic cultures, they are developing their own conceptions rather than settling for defensive or wait-and-see attitudes. General Péna, who takes part in the doctrinal work on MDMC, then describes the principles guiding the FASF's action in the area of C2.

Space, into which the FASF has just extended its organic prerogatives, is also an essential part of the thinking processes within MD. Three articles are therefore devoted to this theme. First comes P. Steininger, who explores the links uniting sky and space. These are somewhat tenuous due to the physical difference between the two environments, though they could get closer thanks to the potential development of an aerospace plane. Next, X. Pasco sums up over 75 years of military activity in space. His conclusion is close to that of G. Penent, who tackles this issue more specifically: there has never been and probably never will be a war in space... at least in the short and medium term. Lastly, the "Free speech" section suggests some brief reflections about MD.

The "Varia" section is composed of three very different articles. First, P. Grasser offers us his very informed and discerning view of the recent Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The use of loitering munitions made headlines, heralding a new era in the art of war. The article presents a more nuanced standpoint. F. Morilhat then proposes a very accomplished reflection on the ethics of air power. He describes the moral consequences of these engagements, as airmen's kinetic actions are now initiated further and further from their targets, in contrast with traditional modes of action. Finally, D. Pappalardo discusses the catch-22 that reappears each time air forces are engaged in counterinsurgency conflicts: should fleets be upgraded through the acquisition of aircraft specifically designed for this purpose?

Each issue of *Vortex* will publish an article about a glorious or tragic page of the French Air Force's history, to shed light on an event and to show how our elders reacted to the quandaries they were faced with. This time, S. Rookes will evoke France's early use of helicopters during the Algerian War and demonstrate that the knowledge that was developed inspired the Portuguese and Rhodesian military when they were also faced with insurgency a few years later.

Each issue will also invite a famous airpower thinker to let him express his point of view, both to get better acquainted with the man behind the thinker and also, of course, to discuss his theses. What more obvious choice for this first issue than J. A. Olsen, the most prolific author on the topic of air power over the last two decades? I would like to thank him sincerely for

having agreed to take part in this exercise which is quite unique within our discipline. I hope that this article will encourage readers to delve into his abundant and fascinating work.

Lastly, four reviews of articles or books close this issue. Three French authors have center stage, demonstrating a certain elation in France on the topic of air power.

The success or failure of *Vortex* depends, of course, on the team that conceives and nurtures it. This team, made up of enthusiasts, is only small for now. Many defects will have made their way into the making of this issue. But it is a learning curve, and our goal is to improve *Vortex* with every new issue. *Vortex's* fate is also in your hands. We are eager to receive your comments, advice and possibly your suggestions for articles. To do so, please do not hesitate to contact us at vortexlarevue@gmail.com.

We wish you an excellent reading and hope that you will accompany us as far as the adventure of *Vortex* will carry us.