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ARTICLE



From transformation to adaptation: analysing the Spanish military change (2004–2020)

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ABSTRACT

In 2019, the Spanish Defence Staff launched an “adaptation” process to adjust the structure of the force and its catalogue of military capabilities up to the year 2035. It replaced the “transformation” that had guided the country’s defence planning from 2004 to 2018 to develop the future armed forces model envisaged in the 2003 Strategic Defence Review. This article begins by analysing the transformation process and its main effects on the evolution of the Spanish military and the reasons behind the drive to adapt. It then goes on to explain its main components and objectives, and concludes by scrutinising the main factors that may condition its development.

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Introduction

In 2019, the Spanish Defence Staff (EMAD) proposed an “adaptation” process to prepare the military for the future operating environment. It replaced the “transformation” begun fifteen years earlier to develop the future armed forces model envisioned in 2003 by the *Strategic Defence Review* (SDR). Proposed at the peak of the Revolution in Military Affairs and related to the modernisation of materiel and the adaptation of the national defence and military organisation to the 21st Century, transformation was affected by the financing of weapons acquisitions, a lack of continuity, and the economic crisis. However, it modernised defence management, systematised its planning, increased Spain’s military harmonisation with NATO, and consolidated a joint approach in all stages of military processes.

Based on the lessons learned from transformation and the effects of the economic crisis on defence planning, the current process of adaptation is aimed at guiding the development of long-term capabilities up to 2035. Unlike the previous transformation – based on a SDR endorsed by the main political parties and regarded as a defence priority from 2004 to 2012 – adaptation has been formulated by the military elite with no political mandate or support. Indeed, political factors, the on-going modernisation cycle, or the financing of weapons acquisitions may compromise its development.

Bearing those elements in mind, this article describes the background to this adaptation, analyses its components, and exposes the factors that may compromise its development.

The legacy of transformation

The idea of a continuous adaptation of the armed forces began in 2019 with the presentation of the *Operating Environment 2035* (OE2035) (Estado Mayor de la Defensa [EMAD], 2019). However, its foundations, such as the consolidation of the Joint Force as a template for defence planning, the reform of defence planning, the creation of a centre dedicated to concept development and experimentation (CD&E), and the redefinition of military transformation, were laid years before. These coincided with the consolidation of the future armed forces model to be accomplished by 2015, the progressive deceleration of transformation, and the paralysis the Spanish military suffered when the past economic crisis began.

Originally conceived as a process of “*dynamic and permanent adaptation to the circumstances and needs arising from the strategic situation of each moment*” (Presidency of the Government 2004, 5), transformation began in 2004 to develop the SDR’s 2003 future armed forces model.¹ Like other European countries (Galbreath 2014; Dyson 2010; Boyer 2004), Spain combined the United States and NATO’s transformational agendas – based on the consolidation of joint action, the improvement of interoperability among Allies, the expeditionary role, and the development of new military capabilities (Hamilton 2004)² – with the specific conditioning factors affecting Spain. These included the culmination of Spain’s integration into NATO’s military structure, the completion of professionalisation and military career reforms, and the modernisation of weapons and materiel (Presidency of the Government 2004; Colom-Piella 2016).³ Moreover, the start of the transformation process coincided with a period of intense regulation that adapted the basic national defence criteria set out during the political transition from dictatorship to democracy and provided a legal framework for the transformation.

Ratified as a defence priority in 2008 and 2012,⁴ transformation modernised the armed forces’ conception, vision, and organisation, increased their modularity, mobility, sustainability and firepower, and improved Spain’s military harmonisation with NATO (Colom-Piella 2016). In addition, capability-based planning, a joint approach to planning and conducting operations or forecasting techniques, learned lessons analysis and CD&E processes to support military innovation were adopted.

Despite these achievements, transformation began to lose momentum. The impact made by arms modernisation, the limited support it gained between 2008 and 2012, and the economic crisis led to an impasse. By linking the future armed forces model to materiel modernisation,⁵ the Ministry of Defence (MoD) assimilated transformation with the acquisition of the so-called *Special Armament Programmes* (SAPs) foreseen in the SDR (Ministerio de Defensa 2003: Annex F).⁶ Some of them (*F-100* frigates, *EF-2000* fighters and *A-400 M* transports) had been in progress since 1996, whereas others (*Tiger* and *NH-90* helicopters, *S-80* submarines, the *L-61* assault ship, *Pizarro* infantry combat vehicles, *Iris-T* and *Taurus* missiles or command and control systems) were launched shortly afterwards. This modernisation cycle was completed with other projects not

foreseen in the SDR, such as the *A-15* logistics vessel, a fifth *F-100*, 155/52 artillery systems, *Maritime Action Vessels*, *Spike* anti-tank missiles, and helicopters and seaplanes for the Military Emergency Unit. The financial viability of these acquisitions depended on a sustained increase in military spending. The economic crisis demonstrated the optimism of this approach and laid the foundations for subsequent adaptation.

Likewise, although considered a priority between 2008 and 2012, transformation received little political support and poor military leadership.⁷ Both the 2008 NDD and the policy statements of the minister of defence underlined its relevance by relating it to jointness, materiel modernisation and maintaining a stable defence budget.⁸ However, in reality, transformation was used to explain the changes in Spain's approach to defence since the end of the dictatorship and the orientation of the military towards security and peacekeeping tasks.⁹ Perhaps this was due to the minister's political profile (Navajas 2018, 274) and her security-based concept of defence,¹⁰ the absence of a real transformational agenda¹¹ and her inability to manage the economic crisis.¹² The lack of leadership demonstrated by those appointed to promote transformation may also explain this paralysis.¹³

Either because of its subservience to the minister, its limited strategic vision¹⁴ and lack of determination to promote change by overcoming resistances within the services¹⁵ or because of the economic crisis, the Defence Staff contributed to the inertia of the transformation process.¹⁶ Without political leadership to promote the process, and without high-ranking officers influencing civilian authorities and promoting change within the military, the process came to a halt. Moreover, this lack of support coincided with the beginning of the economic crisis, which demonstrated the financial unfeasibility of the 1996–2008 modernisation cycle, collapsed the planning process, and paralysed transformation. However, several transformational milestones were also achieved, and the foundations for adaptation were laid.

Although the modernisation budget reached €11,000 M between 1996 and 2008, contracts were signed for €36,500 M (Dirección General de Armamento y Material 2008). Of these, €27,000 M corresponded to the SAPs, for which the Ministry of Industry advanced €15,000 M to manufacturers for their development and production, while the MoD established a payment schedule up to 2025 (Tribunal de Cuentas 2016). Conditioned by sustained budget increases and manufacturer liquidity, this model kept the defence budget artificially low while satisfying the Maastricht convergence criteria because its accounting entries were delayed until the delivery of materiel. As some weapons systems were delivered, the industrial pre-financing dried up, and the budget was reduced, the MoD faced the non-payment of the 2010 and 2011 annual instalments and the approval of extraordinary credits to cover the bills between 2012 and 2015 (Fonfría 2015). Since 2017, the budget has increased by 30% to cover the remaining debt, and its payment has been delayed until 2031 (Pérez et al. 2017).

The economic crisis also paralysed defence planning. Budget cuts, allocations for operations reductions (used to complement other budget items), the impossibility of paying SAP bills, the operating costs of the new systems (acquired with no assessment regarding on-going maintenance), and the impossibility of planning and allocating resources demonstrated its unsustainability (Colom-Piella 2017; Calvo 2011). This prevented the execution of the 2009–12 cycle and forced the 2013–16 cycle to be redefined,

using the concept of Joint Force to determine critical capabilities and define military organisation (Torres 2014, 45).

Paradoxically, it was at this juncture that several transformational objectives were achieved. They also laid the foundations for the current process of adaptation. To minimise the effects of the crisis, the MoD used transformation to justify streamlining the structure of the force, consolidating jointness, and prioritising available resources to ensure deterrence, defence, force projection, and support to civilian authorities (Presidency of the Government 2012).¹⁷ Drawn by the 2012 NDD, those objectives resulted in three transformational milestones: the development of the Joint Force concept in 2014, the creation of the *Joint Concept Development Centre* (JCDC), and the reform of defence planning in 2015.

Firstly, the consolidation of the joint structure. Major progress was made following the approval of the SDR: the role of the CHOD was strengthened; an operational structure was created to employ forces in operations; a defence staff capable of planning and conducting joint operations was organised; the first joint doctrine was published; and a rapid reaction force was formed. In 2013, the Special Operations and Cyber Defence Commands were created and, a year later, the Joint Force was established.¹⁸ Under the CHOD's command for employment in operations, this force serves to steer defence planning, prioritise capabilities, set personnel competencies, and guide military adaptation (EMAD, 2018a, 57–59).¹⁹

Secondly, the establishment of the JCDC. Devoted to the “*study of new operational concepts that support the enhancement of military capabilities*” (Art. 12.4 of *Defence Order 166/2015*), this centre replaced UTRAFAS, which had guided transformation between 2005 and 2015. Divided into three areas – analysis and foresight to identify operational problems, CD&E to explore solutions, and joint-combined doctrine to guide military deployment – the JCDC might play an important role in steering adaptation.²⁰ Since its conception, this centre has developed joint doctrine, matured concepts (cyber defence, counter-unmanned air systems, Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD), multi-domain operations and cognitive environment),²¹ and coordinated the preparation of the OE2035 to guide military adaptation.

Thirdly, the reform of defence planning. *Ministerial Order 60/2015, which regulates the defence planning process* (MO60/2015), replaced the capability-based enacted in 2005 to support transformation (Arteaga and Fojón 2008). It helped strengthen a joint approach to capability development,²² improve the management of resources, and harmonise national planning with NATO and EU cycles. However, the experiences of the 2005–08, 2009–12 and 2013–16 cycles, together with the effects of the economic crisis on military programming, contributed to its revision. This revised order pursued three objectives: improve the identification of future capabilities and their short and medium-term development; consolidate the Joint Force as the main reference for the process; and strengthen the links between capability planning and resource programming to guarantee force sustainability (Colom-Piella 2017). In addition to simplifying procedures, strengthening the joint definition of requirements, and scheduling the commencement of the planning cycle, MO60/2015 also stresses the definition of long-term force objectives to orient capability generation and guide short and medium-term resource programming. These three objectives were essential in framing adaptation.

In short, transformation – originally conceived as the means for developing the SDR’s future armed forces model and adapting the basic criteria of Spanish defence to the 21st Century – came across several stumbling blocks. Its equation with military modernisation, its employment to justify largely unrelated processes, and the limited political support it received could provide lessons to be learned when developing the current process of adaptation. Unlike the former process of transformation, adaptation has been proposed by the military leadership inspired by NATO’s *Long-Term Military Transformation* (LTMT) programme. However, it bears some similarities with transformation: it aims to guide long-term planning but it can occur in a strategic vacuum, with little political support, unstable financial scenarios, and compromised by modernisation programmes that do not necessarily meet the future needs of the armed forces.

Adaptation

Defined as “*the ability to change in order to continue advancing towards a different environment [...] applying gradual, intentional adjustments that are considered necessary in order to fit the context*” (EMAD, 2019a, 69),²³ adaptation as an innovation strategy was raised in the OE2035 innovation strategy for the Spanish military. Focused on the survival of the organisation in the future environment rather than transformation itself, this process should inform long-term defence planning and guide it in the medium and short terms. Although adaptation was launched in 2019, its foundations were laid with the establishment of the Joint Force as the template for defence planning and the *de facto* redefinition of the military transformation that begun in 2015. The expiration of the SDR’s application horizon, the reform of defence planning, the *Geopolitical Trends Project* to anticipate future strategic challenges, and the issuance of a new joint doctrine led to a redefinition of transformation and the enabling of adaptation.

The horizon for the application of the SDR ended in 2015 without having developed any new revisions to guide Spanish defence. Although the 2012 NDD proposed “... *to carry out a Strategic Defence Review*” (Presidency of the Government 2012, 7) to assess the country’s defence and establish broad guidelines to steer this policy for a decade, it was never developed. From 2016 to 2020, there was neither political defence guidance nor any ministerial document to guide such planning.²⁴ This political apathy towards defence issues, together with growing domestic political instability, may explain the military authorities’ interest in using adaptation as a guide for long-term planning.²⁵

In this sense, MO60/2015 decouples the start of the planning cycle from the approval of a DPD to schedule its start and avoid the problem that a lack of political direction may compromise its development.²⁶ It also emphasises the relevance of long-term planning by establishing a *Long-Term Force Objective* (EMAD 2018a, 52). Presented together with the *Objective of Military Capabilities*, which sets out the capabilities to be developed for the current planning cycle, this work aims to guide the definition of long-term needs and the development of sustainable short and medium-term capabilities.²⁷

To support long-term planning, the *Geopolitical Trends Project* was launched in 2017 and culminated two years later with the presentation of the OE2035. This comprehensive study appeared to be inspired by the Allied LTMT programme. Designed to improve insights into the future security environment in which NATO might operate, this study, conducted every four years by Allied Command Transformation (ACT), is composed of

the *Strategic Foresight Analysis* and the *Framework for Future Alliance Operations*. The former scrutinises global trends and their potential security effects, whereas the latter uses these findings to extract their military implications. They do not establish force requirements or identify military capabilities but they can inform Allied planning and guide national strategic studies, operational environments, and planning cycles (Allied Command Transformation [ACT], 2017, 7). In the case of Spain, although the *Panorama of Geopolitical Trends Horizon 2040*, drawn up by the *Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies* and involving broad participation from the academic sphere and civil society, established the strategic framework, the OE2035, led by the JCDC, with participation practically limited to the MoD, identified its potential military effects.²⁸ These findings justified adaptation and will guide long-term planning.

Finally, in 2018, a new joint basic doctrine was presented. In line with MO60/2015, the *Joint Doctrinal Publication 01A* (PDC-01A) ratified the value of long-term planning to guide the definition of requirements and the development of capabilities. More specifically, it defined defence planning as a process to design a Joint Force “... based on effective and sustainable capabilities and on a balance between the Concept of Employment, Structure, and Funding” (EMAD, 2018a, 52), with transformation as its reference. Defined as “a process of innovation that, led by CHOD, and sustained and endowed with the necessary human, material and financial resources, makes it possible to adapt military capabilities to the foreseeable evolution of employment scenarios and anticipate future strategic challenges” (EMAD, 2018a, 55), this new interpretation of transformation is aligned with NATO’s approach and evolved into adaptation following publication of the OE2035.²⁹

Formally, it bears many similarities to the 2018 *Framework of Future Alliance Operations*, especially regarding vectors of instability, military needs, and the future characteristics of the Joint Force. However, its content and structure seems to be inspired by the *Future Operating Environment 2035*, prepared by the British Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre.³⁰ Like NATO’s counterpart, it does not identify capabilities, but it supports defence planning by informing the *Concept of Employment of the Armed Forces* with which the cycle begins (EMAD, 2018b, 8) and the definition of the *Long-Term Force Objective* that completes it.³¹

The OE2035 focuses on establishing “the necessary characteristics that the Spanish Armed Forces should have by 2035 to adapt to future scenarios of employment of the Force following criteria of viability and sustainability” (EMAD, 2019, 10). Like other studies of this nature, it outlines a complex, dynamic, uncertain, ambiguous, and potentially dangerous environment which, depending on the confluence of numerous political, social, economic, informational or technological factors, will have important effects on the design and use of force.³²

Combining the security objectives set out in the *National Security Law 36/2015* with the geographical areas identified by the 2017 *National Security Strategy* and the catalogue of missions set out in *Organic Law 5/2005 on National Defence*, the OE2035 extracts three operational contexts³³:

Defence of national territory, areas of sovereignty, and priority interest areas.^{34]}

Projection of external stability.

Support for internal security and support for State action.³⁵

The strategic trends identified, and the operational contexts established should guide the definition of the force structure and the catalogue of military capabilities³⁶ and identify the main domains of adaptation. Carried out according to the criteria of feasibility (adjust force objectives and capability catalogues to the available resources), sustainability (guarantee their readiness and sustainability) and efficiency (achieve strategic objectives with optimum resources), it aims to compose a balanced, affordable, effective and modern future force. Its development will encompass all dimensions of Military Capability:

Materiel (supporting research in disruptive technologies, their development at national and multilateral levels, and the acquisition of advanced systems capable of maintaining military edge against potential adversaries and interoperability with allies).

Infrastructures (increasing their efficiency, modularity and environmental sustainability while reducing duplications).

Human resources (improving personnel recruitment and management, outsourcing non-essential services and integrating reservists).

Training (prioritising leadership, training, innovation, physical preparation and motivation of service members).

Doctrine (forecasting future scenarios to guide doctrine development).

Organisation (developing agile, flexible, distributed, and networked structures)

Interoperability (mastering joint, combined, and integrated actions with other instruments of national power).

The characteristics outlined and their effects on capability-generation will lead adaptation, a continuous, long-term innovation that should guide defence planning.³⁷ This will entail accomplishing several goals, such as improving strategic agility, reducing logistical footprint, optimising organisation, operation and maintenance costs, cultivating talent management, enhancing technological superiority, refining operations in cyber, cognitive and space domains, or increasing interoperability with other national and international actors (EMAD, 2019, 92–94).

In short, the OE2035 has codified military adaptation. Based on the principles of viability, sustainability, and efficiency, adaptation will guide the defence planning cycles under MO60/2015. By supporting the *Concept of Employment of the Armed Forces* with which each planning cycle begins, as well as the *Long-Term Forces Objective* that culminates that cycle, adaptation will affect long-term defence planning and medium-term resource programming. The characteristics of the future force and the guidelines for its adaptation should not only guide CD&E processes, industrial defence strategies and military programming, but also influence the reform of materiel acquisition and the redefinition of the MoD's competencies and functions.

Constraints on adaptation

Although the OE2035 may guide military adaptation, this blueprint was conceived at a time of political impasse and without a defence strategy to frame it, so it does not identify scenarios, prioritise risks, or establish a concept of operations to guide force design. In fact, the document circumvents aspects such as the strategic consequences of rising great-power competition and the erosion of security organisations for a middle power such as Spain, or the necessary choices and trade-offs to be made in the force

structure because of economic constraints and the costs of new technologies. In addition, the future scenario depicted bears numerous similarities with the current security environment, and several of the characteristics and requirements identified seem to be more related to the current situation than to future prospects. Some of those limitations may be resolved in its next revision, provided that the forthcoming 2021 *National Security Strategy* details threats and prioritises scenarios,³⁸ and the new *Concept for the Employment of the Armed Forces* defines a new strategy and concept of operations based on the guidelines provided by the 2020 NDD.³⁹

In addition, similarities with its Allied counterpart might be related to the emulation of NATO's LTMT programme, the maintenance of Spain's interoperability with Washington and Brussels,⁴⁰ or the lack of a strictly national agenda. But they could also be the result of a desire to use NATO's agenda as an external factor with which to justify to the political elites the need to undertake profound military changes and plan in the long-term.⁴¹ This possibility could be justified by the politico-strategic vacuum affecting Spain's defence from 2016 to 2020, the start of an investment cycle based on the procurement of systems that do not seem to satisfy future needs, and a budgetary uncertainty that compromises defence programming.

Firstly, regarding the political vacuum. Between 2016 and 2020, Spain has experienced its IX legislature (January-May 2016), X legislature (July 2016-March 2019), and a vote of no confidence in June 2018 that brought about a change of government. The new SRD projected by the 2012 NDD to guide national defence and military organisation was never developed. The government that emerged from the 2016 elections also failed to draw up a new NDD establishing defence guidelines for the term or a DPD to guide defence planning. In this period, marked by profound transformations in the global strategic environment, growing political instability, and a transitional defence planning cycle,⁴² it is unsurprising that the military authorities proposed the OE2035 to encourage adaptation.

Although this gap has been reduced with the issuance of the new NDD and DPD that will guide the current government's defence policy and frame the 2020–26 planning cycle, it does not mean that the MoD has fully accepted adaptation as an approach to guide long-term planning. Its military origin, the context in which it was carried out, and past disagreements between the political and military authorities of the MoD⁴³ are aspects that could hinder its acceptance. Despite the hints that might suggest the MoD has not endorsed adaptation – such as the minister's and the government's security and public safety-based approach to defence,⁴⁴ or the initial references to transformation as a synonym of weapons modernisation⁴⁵ – there are also other indicators that might indicate the contrary.

The NDD 2020 makes reference to adaptation, although not necessarily as a synonym for long-term innovation, as it is defined in the OE2035.⁴⁶ Although none of the guiding principles of the MoD mentions adaptation, some of the MoD priorities for this legislature appear to be aligned with several precepts of the OE2035 (materiel modernisation, capability development, acquisitions sustainability, budgetary stability, participation in multinational projects to solve capacity deficiencies, and support for national R&D).⁴⁷ However, only two of the nine objectives of the DPD that will guide the 2020–26 defence planning cycle tie in directly with the OE2035 objectives.⁴⁸ Furthermore, in May, *Royal Decree 521/2020, which establishes the basic organisation of the Armed Forces*, was

enacted. Its preamble states that “... it seeks the continuous adaptation of structures to the growing possibilities of new technologies” and contains several innovations with respect to its predecessor. It reinforces jointness by maintaining the Joint Force as the reference for force design and capability development and increasing the powers of the Joint Staff.⁴⁹ It also provides the framework for *Defence Order 710/2020*, which develops the basic organisation of the Joint Staff. This norm has strengthened the Planning Division to “... promote the transformation of the Armed Forces’ capabilities” (Art. 3.4) and established a Force Development Division. This new unit, which encompasses the JCDC, will be responsible for ensuring force readiness and interoperability among the services, strategic foresight, CD&E, and doctrine. These indications might suggest that the political leadership has understood the need for military changes, but it cannot be concluded that the MoD has accepted adaptation or understood its relevance.⁵⁰ Most of the political priorities and many of the guidelines for the new planning cycle support this. However, adaptation also seems to be seeping gradually into the MoD, perhaps due to mavericks in the military pushing the agenda, or because of legitimate political recognition of the need for military change.

Secondly, the modernisation cycle that commenced after a 10-year break due to the crisis.⁵¹ With an initial cost of 13,000 M€ and an application horizon up to the year 2031, five *F-110* frigates, 348 8×8 *Dragon* vehicles, twenty-three *NH-90* helicopters, 1,770 M€ extra for four *S-80* submarines, the modernisation of seventy-three *EF-2000* fighters and seventeen *CH-47* helicopters and the right to use two *Spainsat-NG* communication satellites for nineteen years will be acquired.⁵² This investment cycle might continue with the purchase of three *A-330MRTT* and four *C-295* MPA planes and thirty-six *H-135* helicopters.⁵³ A logistics vessel, new communication systems for the Army and twenty additional *EF-2000* (out of a possible total of sixty)⁵⁴ are also included in the immediate plans (Villarejo 2020).⁵⁵ These purchases could be part of the *Ave Fenix* plan, a project aimed at reducing the impact of the post-COVID-19 recession on Spain’s defence while supporting national industry by launching new military programmes and using part of the European funds to reactivate the defence sector (Carrasco 2020).

Classified by the ministerial authorities as social and military spending, these programmes seem to respond more to socio-industrial motives – maintenance of jobs, support for the sector, participation in international consortiums or military-technological development – than to purely military criteria (Colom-Piella 2019).⁵⁶ Moreover, they are aimed at renewing obsolete materials and modernising systems already in service, but they do not contribute to the development of new capabilities and barely support the precepts of the OE2035.⁵⁷ Factors such as bureaucratic politics and the inflexibility of procurement procedures, industrial considerations and the costs of innovation, the services’ interests in keeping their force structure intact, and the lack of parliamentary debate on Spain’s military in the future might explain this situation. Therefore, investment in those systems will serve to maintain existing capabilities at the expense of reinforcing or developing others, since their financing will extend, at least, until 2032 and will absorb the bulk of the modernisation budget.⁵⁸ Unless profound strategic debate is initiated, budget stability is attained, hard choices are taken, and trade-offs are made, this modernisation cycle will threaten the achievement of the OE2035 objectives and determine the force for the coming next decades.

Budgetary uncertainty is the final element that could jeopardise adaptation. Those programmes have been approved without a stable investment framework or a predictable economic scenario. Without a military programming law ensuring the acquisition and sustainability of materiel, those SAPs will continue to be funded through the system of deferred payments with industrial cash advances (Colom-Piella 2019). Payment will commence in 2022 with the delivery of the first systems, and the instalments will be payable for a decade at least, added to the outstanding payments for the 1996–2008 cycle (Calvo 2011).⁵⁹

The main lesson identified from the previous modernisation cycle – embodied in both the MO60/2015, codifying the planning, and the OE2035, guiding adaptation – was the need to ensure the sustainability and life cycle of materiel. With an economic horizon marked by the post-COVID-19 crisis, a political panorama that makes defence agreements difficult, and no programming law to provide the necessary financial stability to acquire and sustain materials, this modernising cycle may compromise defence planning (Colom-Piella 2019; Fonfría 2018; Torres 2014). Hard choices will have to be made, such as reducing the sustainability of existing systems to facilitate investment in new programmes, or trading force structure for sustainment.

Conclusions

The Spanish military in 2020 is the product of three major milestones broadly related to transformation: the 1996–2008 investment cycle that modernised military equipment, the 2003 SDR, which designed the future model of the armed forces as it is today, and *Organic Law 5/2005*, which adapted defence policy and military organisation to the 21st Century. Similarly, by 2035, the military could be the result of the adaptation launched a year ago and conditioned by the investment cycle initiated in 2018, and the decisions taken from now on. In this sense, both processes share certain parallels:

Both combine the emulation of the Allied agenda with Spanish needs. However, while transformation started out as a top-down initiative – a politically-led SDR that framed the future model of armed forces and drew the lines for this process – adaptation has begun with a bottom-up approach. Based on the lessons learned from transformation, adaptation underlines the need for long-term planning to develop a feasible, sustainable, and efficient future force. This initiative was devised during the 2016–20 political impasse, a period that also coincided with the start of a new round of modernisation and the termination of the 2016–22 planning cycle. Last June, the NDD 2020 was presented, establishing the basic lines of national defence for the present legislature and marking the start of a new planning cycle. None of the directive's guidelines or any of the DPD's objectives specifically mentions adaptation. However, several objectives of the OE2035 are present in these documents that will guide the 2020–26 planning cycle. Furthermore, some of the recent organisational changes seem to indicate a strengthening of long-term planning capacities. However, it cannot be said that the political elite has fully accepted the notion of adaptation. And if it does, it will probably be subordinated to the MoD political agenda.

This brings us to the second parallel: scarce political support. The SDR was a milestone in Spanish defence. Spearheaded by the MoD, this review established the future model of armed forces and framed transformation. Although the 2004, 2008 and 2012 NDDs

considered transformation a priority, it did not enjoy clear political support. Factors such as the minister's political agenda, unawareness of its relevance, the absence of public and parliamentary debate surrounding defence issues, the economic crisis, or the lack of leadership might explain why transformation experienced such a lack of continuity. Despite this, many of the SDR's objectives were met. Legal changes to modernise the basic criteria of national defence and military organisation are due to political support. The weapons systems that contributed to the development of new military capabilities are due to the modernisation cycle. However, the rest of the transformational initiatives – from the emulation of NATO's agenda and its adaptation to Spain's specific features to national doctrine development – cannot be explained on the basis of either bureaucratic or institutional factors. Perhaps, an explanation could be the presence of mavericks willing to drive change in the military. This hypothesis, which should be studied in future works, may elucidate the emergence of adaptation and anticipate its development. It is possible that this military-led process, which emerged during a political vacuum in Spanish defence policy, will not secure the political support of the MoD, apparently devoted to developing “the 21st Century military”. It is also possible that adaptation will be accepted by the political leadership at the expense of losing its original meaning. However, it is also likely that there will be more mavericks within the military willing to push this agenda forward. Since the start of NATO's military transformation in 2002 and that of Spain two years later, many officers have been socialised in the concept of transformation. Some, moreover, are reaching senior levels of responsibility. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that they will seek supporters both within and outside the MoD to drive change within the Spanish military. These issues must be explored in future works.

The dependence on materiel modernisation is the third parallel. While transformation was conditioned by the 1996–2008 modernisation cycle, adaptation may end up being linked to the cycle that began in 2018. The first cycle renewed obsolete materiel, brought Spanish military hardware up to NATO and EU standards (for example, the *Leopard IIE* replaced the heterogeneous tank force consisting of *M-48A5*, *M-60A1*, *M-60A3*, *M-60A3TTS*, *AMX-30ER1* and *AMX-30EM2*), and supported the development of new military capabilities. However, the second cycle – which began later than scheduled because of the outstanding debt of the previous modernisation cycle and the continued lack of a stable investment framework – may only serve to prevent the loss of existing capabilities at the expense of compromising the development of future capabilities. It remains to be seen what the impact of the post-COVID-19 crisis will be on military spending, how the *Ave Fenix* plan will be implemented to recover the national defence industry, and how, which and when the loss of capabilities will be prioritised and the rationale behind them. In any case, trade-offs between force structure, military capabilities, and sustainment will have to be made if Spain wishes to maintain a feasible, efficient, and sustainable future force as underlined in the OE2035. In the absence of clear politico-strategic guidance for the next-generation military, how will capabilities be prioritised?

This leads to the last major parallel: weapons financing. In both processes, major systems acquisitions are made via SAP to compensate for the MoD's lack of liquidity. This system of industrial pre-financing was introduced to modernise materiel without increasing defence spending and to comply with the Maastricht convergence criteria, because its accounting entry was delayed until the delivery of the materiel. However, its viability was conditional on a sustained increase in the defence budget and on

manufacturers' liquidity. The past economic crisis highlighted its unsustainability when the MoD was unable to meet the payments for delivered systems and had to renegotiate payment methods with contractors, increase repayment terms, reduce the number of systems to be acquired, or approve extraordinary credits. Thus, those SAPs that were supposed to be paid in ten years will not be financed until the next decade. Although these lessons learned have influenced the development of MO60/2015 and the OE2035, the cycle that began in 2018 repeats the same mistakes and creates new problems: the MoD still has to deal with the outstanding debt from the previous cycle; the bulk of the budget for modernisation for the next decade is already committed; no budget increases are planned to finance weapons procurement; and one of the first victims of the post-COVID-19 crisis may be the MoD budget. Harsh decisions will have to be made, any of which could have future operational and strategic effects.

In conclusion, adaptation is a military-led initiative aimed at developing long-term modern, efficient, and sustainable capabilities for the Spanish armed forces. This initiative seems to emulate NATO's *Long-Term Military Transformation* programme, tailored to the specificities of Spain and the lessons identified from transformation. Its development may be dependent on factors such as the lack of a comprehensive review of Spain's strategic priorities, the political agenda of the MoD, the growing gap between the desired capabilities and the available resources to develop and sustain them, or political and military unwillingness to face some critical decisions that will shape the military up to 2035.

Such questions, in addition to how transformation may inform adaptation, the parallels between both processes, the sources of Spanish military innovations, or the role of mavericks in driving the agenda for change, shall be addressed in future papers.

Notes

1. Led by the Ministry's political authorities, advisors, and members of parliament such as Jordi Marsal from the Socialist Party, the SDR was a milestone as it was the first (and only) comprehensive review of Spanish defence and military policy. Despite the involvement of Spain's scarce defence community, the change of government in 2004 (after a legislature marked by the breakdown of foreign policy consensus with the support of the Iraq war and the 3/11 Madrid bombings) suppressed further developments. The new government only endorsed the measures related to the CHOD's attributions and the organisation of the armed forces (Dulysh 2016; Colom-Piella 2016).
2. This broad transformational agenda was set out in the SDR. However, some of the specific indicators such as network centricity, effects-based operations or capability-based planning (Galbreath, 2004; Jasper 2009; Marquina and Diaz 2010) were established later. Spain also joined the *Multinational Interoperability Council*, deemed by Boyer (2004) to be an important factor for harmonising the transatlantic transformation. Specific research is needed, but the leadership of General Félix Sanz (Chief of Defence – JEMAD), Admiral José María Terán (Chief of the Joint Defence Staff – JEMACON) and Colonel José Enrique Fojón (Head of the Armed Forces Transformation Unit – UTRAFAS) and civilians such as Jordi Marsal (an historical member of the Congressional Defence Committee and renowned expert in defence issues) might help to explain how transformation took off. Lacking political leadership, facing bureaucratic inertia and no internal incentives to change, they could have used the SDR and NATO's agenda to promote the change in the Spanish military.

3. The 2004 *National Defence Directive* (NDD) linked transformation to the achievement of the future model of armed forces, jointness, technological innovation, acquisition of new weapons systems, professionalisation and a new military career (Presidency of the Government 2004, 8–9).
4. The 2008 NDD prioritised transformation as a means to define new capabilities, enable joint operations, and outsource non-essential services (Presidency of the Government 2008, 10). The 2012 directive stressed the need to undertake this process “... to tackle Spain’s growing strategic challenges, at a time of limited resources” (Presidency of the Government 2012, 6). The 2020 NDD asserts the “... Armed Forces must be capable of undertaking a constant adaptation and transformation to allow them to tackle multiple and changing threats and challenges” (Presidency of the Government 2020, 1). However, transformation seems to be synonymous with military modernisation (appearance of the Minister of Defence before the Congress of Deputies, 20 February 2020).
5. This association was originally made by the SDR. It also justified this modernisation to meet national needs and contribute to the capability requirements identified in the *Prague Capabilities Commitment* and the *European Capability Action Plan*. Those also served to justify the acquisition of these SAPs.
6. Justified by politico-strategic (national defence and military capability harmonisation with NATO and the EU), economic (their acquisition costs) and industrial needs (national technological development and workload for the sector), their funding was based on a system of industrial pre-financing (Fonfria 2015). This started with the granting of interest-free loans for the development of the system, a schedule of payments with MoD funds to the contractor when the system was delivered and their subsequent reimbursement of the cash advances to the Public Treasury (Pérez et al. 2017, 29).
7. This clashes with the minister’s apparent willingness to strengthen the UTRAFAS (Appearance before the Defence Committee of the Congress to report on the general lines of the defence policy, 30 June 2008). This could reinforce the hypotheses of the role played by mavericks in leading Spain’s transformation.
8. Inaugural speech by Carme Chacón (14 April 2008). Her first appearance before the Congressional Defence Committee and the 2008 NDD maintain those objectives (Presidency of the Government 2004, 10).
9. Speech “The transformation of the Armed Forces” (22 February 2011). Some ideas were already present in her inaugural speech, including Spanish integration into defence organisations, professionalisation, military education reform, weapons modernisation, incorporation of women into the military, participation in international operations, respect for the environment, and the culture of national defence.
10. Her willingness to create a “pacifist army” (Delafon 2008), the purchase of the LMV *Lince* vehicle justified for humanitarian reasons, or the refusal to consider Afghanistan as war (Cruz 2009) might support this claim.
11. Most of the objectives identified in the minister’s first appearance before the Defence Committee had already been implemented in the previous legislature. In addition, the chapter on “innovation” listed all the major weapons programmes of the 1996–2008 cycle, plus the acquisition of vehicles (*Lince*, *RG-31* and *Piranha III*) already undertaken in previous years. Other allegedly transformational objectives were professionalisation, military career reforms, the incorporation of women into the military, the culture of national defence, and respect for the environment. However, they cannot be classed as such.
12. However, at that time, the Secretary of State for Defence (SEDEF) warned of the financial unsustainability of the 1996–2008 modernisation cycle and tried to streamline the programmes and audit their costs. Paradoxically, he was also responsible for not meeting the 2010 and 2011 annual payment commitments (Tribunal de Cuentas, 2016).
13. The CHOD’s profile—critic of NATO and supporter of European defence initiatives and the reorientation of armed forces towards peacekeeping operations (González, 2018)—seemed to be in line with the minister’s security-based concept of defence. Later, general José Julio Rodríguez, joined the far-left party *Podemos*.

14. They were chosen to promote transformation, consolidate jointness, and improve the abilities of the military to conduct peacekeeping support operations (Sarrión 2008). However, it seems the profiles of JEMAD José Julio Rodríguez and JEMACON José Luis Lopez were not the best suited for these roles. Looking at their curriculums, they had no experience in strategic affairs, joint environments, doctrine development, or defence planning, and no academic or public records that could suggest they were interested in innovation or familiar with transformation and capable of understanding its implications. Although the minister underlined the technical profile of the CHOD (before his appointment he led the National Armaments Directorate), it seems they were managers rather than leaders. Those issues related to politico-military relations should be scrutinised in further research.
15. Although the joint doctrine was approved in 2009, institutional inertia might explain this outcome, since the preliminary works started years before.
16. Paradoxically, the Army presented its *Visión 2025*, a specific roadmap to guide its transformation. This might be an attempt at innovation through interservice competition within a framework of limited resources on account of the economic crisis.
17. The development of transformation might be explained by the confluence of certain key actors: a minister willing to rationalise the defence industry; a CHOD determined to withdraw weapons systems, immobilise materials and deactivate units to maintain force readiness; and the presence of José María Terán and Enrique Fojón (JEMACON and head of UTRAFAS when transformation was launched) as ministerial advisors. If validated in future works, this hypothesis could explain the relevance of leadership and the role of mavericks in explaining Spain's military transformation.
18. This force was unveiled in *Royal Decree 872/2014*. This regulation also created a *Joint Action Support Command*, reporting to the CHOD, to provide support to the operational structure in those issues. *Defence Order 166/2015* would develop this regulation by bringing under its command the operational medicine and communications and information systems authorities, the Spanish verification unit, and the national C-IED cell.
19. The Joint Force is the sum of all the active forces. Its core is composed of 27,000 troops (15,000 for immediate contingencies and 12,000 for permanent missions). In addition, there are 40,000 troops in various stages of enlistment and 53,000 support staff. Combined, they reach the 120,000 troops, which is the current strength of the Spanish military, out of a maximum of 130,000 troops set by the *Military Career Law 39/2007*. Although the minister of defence declared she would increase the volume by 7,000 troops, the post-COVID-19 economic scenario will likely prevent this increase (appearance of Margarita Robles before the Defence Committee of the Congress, 20 February 2020).
20. The JDCD was originally part of the Centre for Higher National Defence Studies. However, the *Defence Order 710/2020* integrates it in the new Force Development Division of the Defence Staff. In addition, the Army, through its *Office 2035*, and the Navy, through its *Innovation Office*, are also conducting these tasks.
21. Information taken from the JCDC website: <https://www.defensa.gob.es/ceseden/ccdc/index.html> [Accessed: 28 August 2020].
22. The Spanish approach comprises all the elements – materiel, infrastructure, human resources, training, doctrine, organisation and interoperability (MIRADO-I) – proposed by NATO except for “leadership and education”.
23. Both the definition and the aim of adaptation (guidance of long-term defence planning and more related to innovation or emulation) clash with the academically accepted definition, which tends to relate adaptation to a change in tactics, techniques and procedures – sometimes during war – because of new operational imperatives (Farrell et al. 2013; Murray 2011; Farrell & Terriff 20022002). Perhaps this is due to a misinterpretation of the original concept, an attempt to emphasise strategic imperative or organisational agility, or a manoeuvre to displace the concept of transformation.
24. The NDD is issued by the president of the Government and broadly outlines the defence policy for the legislature. It enables the minister of Defence to draft the *Defence Policy*

- Directive* (DPD), which contains precise instructions for defence planning. Prior to MO60/2015, the approval of a DPD was a necessary step to begin the planning process. Currently, they can begin with no specific political guidance, using the context provided by the existing NDD and DPD, such as the 2016 planning cycle. However, the issuance of the 2020 NDD entailed drafting a new DPD and the start of a new planning cycle.
25. Given that the redefinition of transformation as adaptation occurred between 2015 and 2019 and affected two ministers and two CHODs, this continuity might be explained by the work carried out by the last chief of UTRAFAS and the first head of the JCDC. This officer might be another maverick who sought to promote change in the military by taking advantage of growing political impermanence.
 26. Now, it begins with the *Concept of Employment of the Armed Forces* (CEAF). Prepared by the CHOD based on the NDD in force, it defines the strategic-military environment, the military's stance or the force's characteristics. Its release marks the beginning of the planning cycle. However, the 2020–26 cycle might follow a more traditional approach: the 2020 NDD providing the broad political guidelines, the DPD containing the precise instructions for planning, and the CEAF formally opening it.
 27. It should also guide the MoD technological innovation policy to prevent industrial interests from constraining the definition or development of capabilities. In this sense, the next *Technology and Innovation Strategy for Defence* should prioritise the R&D/Innovation of technologies identified in the OE2035 ([EMAD] 2019, 91).
 28. This might be indicative of the limited number of civilian experts in military affairs and its effects on the lack of debate, agenda setting and evaluation of public policies. Regarding the scarcity of experts and its impact on research agendas, see Bueno (2019).
 29. Paradoxically, in 2018, the Army presented the *Future Land Operating Environment 2035* without attending to these documents. This suggests the lack of coherence affecting national defence planning and the services' corporativism against jointness.
 30. This document was based on the *Global Strategic Trends Out to 2040* and intended to chart the characteristics of the future operating environment, extract its strategic implications, and inform the development of new military capabilities (Ministry of Defence 2015).
 31. OE2035 is to be reviewed every three years to synchronise its publication with the start of the planning cycles to reinforce its connection with defence planning ([EMAD] 2019, 17). Although the 2016 cycle should have ended in 2022, its termination in 2019 means that the 2020–26 cycle will be based on the current document.
 32. In addition to the drivers seen in other studies of a similar nature – erosion of Western military power, global instability, hybrid tactics and grey zones, A2/AD strategies, or new operational domains – the OE2035 also points out other conditioning factors. Spain's geographical location, energy dependence, demographics, territorial cohesion, or the limited resources allocated to technological-military innovation might put the country's autonomy at risk and compromise its interoperability with its allies ([EMAD] 2019, 19–42).
 33. The broadness of these contexts and its reliance on norms would appear to be due to the lack of a politico-strategic guide to determine defence priorities. In fact, the *National Security Strategy* fails to establish clear ends, ways and means, and there is no *National Defence Strategy* capable of translating them into the defence domain. In addition, the CEAF acts as a military strategy, but it is also compromised by a lack of political guidance. However, the “General guidelines and objectives of the defence policy” set out in the 2020 NDD seem to assume these contexts, also found in the definition of “national security” of the 2017 *National Security Strategy*.
 34. In the absence of a policy document clearly defining these areas – the *National Security Strategy* argues that Spain has global aspirations and does not prioritise any region (Presidency of the Government 2017, 37–53) while *de facto* prioritising Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Atlantic – the OE2035 maintains a calculated ambiguity, although one can assume they span the area from the Western Mediterranean to the Gulf of Guinea. The 2020 NDD has defined the European neighbourhood, Mediterranean, Western Sahel and the Atlantic Ocean as priority areas for its deployments (Presidency of the Government

- 2020, 10). However, the DPD – whose content is confidential – might focus on the Mediterranean, North Africa, and the Sahel (Fernández 2020, 12). Nonetheless, Spain might maintain its “flag approach” (Pedersen & Reykers, 2020) to NATO and EU operations to demonstrate its commitment but without any other rationale than showing the flag.
35. State action was originally identified in the SDR, enshrined in *Organic Law 5/2005*, and defines a capability area due to the impact of those daily missions on defence planning.
 36. The OE2035 does not determine capabilities. Consequently, these characteristics might be integrated into existing capability areas (preparation, command and control, combat power, situation awareness, projection, sustainability, survivability and protection, and contribution to State action). These derive from the characteristics of the SDR’s future armed forces model (Colom-Piella 2016).
 37. The definition of transformation included in *PDC-01(A)* is the same.
 38. Although the current strategy should remain in force until 2022, the government decided to revise it, arguing that the existing document did not consider the effects of COVID-19 (González 2020). On 30 October 2019, the procedure for the development of the new 2021 strategy was approved by the government. The 2020 NDD can also provide limited insights given the inherent constraints of this political document.
 39. The optimum scenario would be the development of a new SDR capable of orienting Spain’s defence and military policies for the next decade and framing the OE2035. However, there are no plans to do so.
 40. Emulation of the U.S. agenda to modernise the military while bridging the capability gap between Washington and the European allies was one of the factors conditioning transformation (). In this sense, the OE2035 makes several references to the U.S. third offset strategy, the military modernisation of other allies, and the capability gap that could arise between them (EMAD 2019, 81–82).
 41. There is another possibility: the desire to use NATO as a reference in capability development. Spain’s official stance considers complementarity between NATO and European security initiatives, but the different administrations tend to prioritise one or the other. The current government, which took office in 2018, is one of the main supporters of EU defence initiatives while putting NATO in a secondary role. In fact, the 2020 NDD states that “*The progress of the Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU is our main axis for the promotion of our interests and values.*” (Presidency of the Government 2020, 9). That entails active participation in the main EU defence instruments, such as missions and operations, permanent structured cooperation, or technological, industrial, and financial cooperation.
 42. The first planning cycle under MO60/2015 used the political guidelines from the 2012 NDD and began in the absence of a stable economic framework to cover the outstanding SAP payments, the launch of a new investment cycle, and expenditure commitments (1.53% or 2% of GDP) that were impossible to meet (Colom-Piella 2017). The 2016–22 cycle ended abruptly when the new ministerial authorities refused to sign the *Objective of Military Capabilities*. This situation – perhaps due to the status of the incumbent minister who took office in June 2018 as an acting minister only at the time, the impossibility of approving 2019 budgets, and the call for elections in April 2019 – prevented the execution of this cycle, which was flawed from the outset.
 43. There was a lack of trust between the CHOD (appointed by minister María Dolores de Cospedal in 2017) and minister Robles. He publicly warned of the operational and capability problems facing the armed forces (appearance of general Alejandro before the Defence Committee of the Congress, 29 January 2019). Months later, the minister did not sign the *Objective of Military Capabilities* presented by the CHOD, ending the planning cycle. There is also the possibility that the general bypassed the minister to present the document *Military Requirements 2019–24* to the king and the president of the Government (Rodríguez 2020). General Alejandro was finally dismissed in January 2020. Although the preliminary works for the OE2035 had already begun before, could this document be seen as a tool to drive the agenda of adaptation as an imperative?

44. For example, she initially advocated a reduction in defence spending in favour of health and education (EFE 2019) and asserted that the main threats looming over Spain were international terrorism, organised crime and cyberattacks (Robles 2020). Signed by the president, the 2020 NDD also stresses the risks related to climate change, disinformation, pandemics, and the economic crisis. In fact, some of its general guidelines and objectives contribute to this security or public safety-based approach (to increase trust in institutions and foster societal resilience, participation in the 2030 Agenda and support for safe schools and women, peace and security initiatives, and the use of empathy in solving conflicts).
45. More specifically, it seemed to be related to the investment cycle that began in 2018, the support of EU defence initiatives, and the promotion of military R&D (Appearance of Margarita Robles before the Defence Committee of the Congress, 20 February 2020). The 2020 NDD supports those objectives and emphasises Spanish participation in EU defence mechanisms, but it does not establish such relationships.
46. However, this does not mean that the MoD has accepted the idea or understood the concept. The preamble states that “... *the Armed Forces must be capable of undertaking a constant adaptation and transformation to allow them to tackle multiple and changing threats and challenges*” (Presidency of the Government 2020, 1). However, on the next page, it states that one of its requirements is the full integration of women into the armed forces, and one of its objectives is to attain the sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda.
47. See the minister’s appearances before the Congress of Deputies of 27 June 2018 and 20 February 2020 and “General guidelines and objectives of the defence policy” of the NDD.
48. Those are the development of the necessary defence capabilities to ensure the security of Spain and its citizens (DPD objectives 1 and 5). The rest of the objectives are effective multilateralism, contribution to stability, and progress in the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Sahel, development of a defence diplomacy plan, consolidation of collaboration mechanisms with other public administrations, equal professional opportunities for women, environmental conservation, and the promotion of confidence-building measures in defence and arms control (Fernández 2020, 12–13).
49. For example, the Joint Staff will integrate the *Joint Action Support Command* units and transform the *Joint Cyberdefence Command* into a *Joint Cyberspace Command*.
50. Institutional references to the development of a 21st Century military have increased since the enactment of the 2020 NDD. However, they seem more related to the minister’s soft-security approach to defence or weapons modernisation than adaptation itself.
51. In addition to these SAPs, twenty-four *PC-21 trainers*, 600–700 light vehicles and a *BAM-IS* underwater intervention ship have been approved.
52. These commitments were approved on 27 July, 7 September, and 14 December 2018.
53. Along with other commitments, this purchase is part of a plan to minimise job losses and promote the defence sector after Airbus announced major redundancies in Spain. This might also be partly compensation to Airbus for the appointment of the Spanish company Indra – which the government intends to turn into a national champion – as the national coordinator of the *Future Combat Air System* (FCAS) (*Comunicado Conjunto Airbus-Gobierno de España*, 30 July 2020).
54. However, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force raised the possibility of purchasing a 5th generation fighter in addition to the *Typhoon LTE* (Infodefensa 2020).
55. There are other short-term intentions ranging from rocket launchers, infantry fighting vehicles, a replacement for the ageing *Harriers* and fire-support vehicles for the Marines, to the modernisation of tanks, artillery and ASW helicopters.
56. Both the OE2035 and the 2020 NDD stress the relevance of multinational capability development and the strengthening of the national industrial base. However, the country’s participation in EU defence initiatives might be explained more by political and industrial reasons than military factors. In this sense, Spain not only belongs to the leading nations by fully supporting PESCO, participating in thirty projects and leading two. It has also joined the FCAS and the *European Patrol Corvette* (theoretically for the design and sale of the

product abroad), and entry into the *Main Ground Combat System* is under discussion. Despite their military-industrial relevance (specifically the FCAS, considered by the minister to be a “state project” in her appearance of 20 February 2020 because of its implications and financial cost), it is hard to find any governmental, parliamentary, or military document justifying their strategic relevance.

57. In fact, the *S-80* and the *Dragon* still support the SDR’s future model of armed forces.
58. In addition, these spending commitments allow the payments for systems already delivered to be rescheduled (Council of Ministers, 7 September 2018). If approved, other planned acquisitions could extend the payment term or increase the annual instalments. An outstanding analysis of Spain’s budgetary projections that might justify the necessity of the choices to be made in thinking about the future force can be found in Fonfría (2018).
59. The initial schedule of repayments for the 1996–2008 cycle also assumed a decade (Fonfría 2015), but it will take until at least 2031.

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