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Nuclear Futures, Utopias, and the Case for a Renewed 'Strict Sufficiency'

Benoît Pelopidas

The return of war to European soil, coupled with indifference on the part of the United States toward protecting its Allies, has considerably altered the security landscape in Western Europe. Confronted with two superpowers in possession of the world's largest nuclear arsenals, a growing number of observers and political actors believe Europe must substantially reinforce its defence capabilities. In France, nuclear deterrence is regularly advanced to highlight Paris's strategic importance on the global stage and, in a context of heightened aggressiveness from Moscow, in addition to the potential reintroduction of military service announced at the end of November 2025, there has emerged a marked inclination to expand the national nuclear arsenal, so as not to fall behind in the arms race.

In the view of Benoît Pelopidas, there is nothing automatic or necessary in the need to increase the size of the nuclear arsenal or participate in the arms race. In this article, he identifies and rectifies three false, but commonly accepted notions which make such necessity of rearmament look obvious: (1) that these weapons provide protection, when ballistic missiles made such protection impossible over six decades ago; (2) that the size of existing nuclear arsenals is necessary for deterrence, which

is historically incorrect and ignores the emergent deterrent potential of conventional weaponry; and (3) that the possession of nuclear weapons is beneficial in all possible futures: on the contrary, it is irrelevant in some and harmful in others. Thus, the type and level of nuclear armament that is deemed desirable stems from subjective bets on the future, which need to be made explicit in the strategic debate. After clarifying these three points, Pelopidas invites France and Europe to take the multiple threats they face into account instead of focusing on one only and not to address each in isolation. He argues that this is particularly important given the carbon footprint of the arms race and its effects on the perceived desirability of nuclear weapons. He therefore proposes a redefinition of 'strict sufficiency' as a criterion for determining the appropriate dimensions of national defence infrastructures, beyond the singular focus on nuclear forces. This proposal could guide French and European public policy, as well as their diplomatic proposals to other nuclear-armed states, with the support of constituencies concerned about the effects of climate change.

Rethinking the Pooling of Climate Risks

*Marine de Montaignac
and Alice Robinet*

In view of the procrastination and slow progress around international

action on climate change, confirmed at the last Conference of the Parties (COP30) at Belém in late November 2025, it is highly probable that the frequency and intensity of climate catastrophes will continue to increase in France. Recent years have shown that there are very few French regions, both overseas and at home, to escape these kinds of risks: cyclones, mini-tornadoes, severe flooding, heatwaves, forest fires, coastal erosion etc. regularly make media headlines. And these extreme climate events produce substantial material and human damage, pushing the current insurance system to the limits of its ability to cope. Though the French model is particularly collective and solidarity-based, the preconditions for its effective functioning probably deserve re-examination.

This is what de Montaignac and Robinet do in this article, drawing on the research by the Haut-Commissariat à la Stratégie et au Plan (French High Commission for Strategy and Planning). After reviewing the context (increased claims/losses) and explaining precisely how France handles the indemnification of natural catastrophes, the authors examine the prospects for the system in the period to 2025. Given the vulnerabilities identified and the very unequal impact of natural catastrophes, depending on the geographical locations and social groups affected, they argue that the system of insurance provision should be overhauled. Three scenarios are presented for stronger preventive action and a better pooling of climate risks: a slight increase in state regulation of the climate-risk insurance market; the state acting as backstop for all climate risks; or the state providing insurance against those risks as part of a climate-related Social Security programme.

Millennials, a Generation Lost in Transition

Monique Dagnaud

The outlook for the second quarter of the 21st century, which begins in this year of 2026, is not at all reassuring: war and geopolitical tensions have returned to Europe, concern for the environment and the campaign against climate change seem to be losing momentum, and the French political scene has been mired in deadlock for more than a year and a half. In such a climate, it can feel difficult to view the future with optimism—especially for the younger generation, whose sense of unease is increasingly highlighted in the media. So how do French millennials view themselves and the great issues of our time?

The sociologist Monique Dagnaud has been studying this Generation Y for several years, most particularly the 25-39 age group. Drawing on a series of surveys, she outlines its main characteristics in this article, presenting a portrait of a highly critical generation with deep ecological concerns, a sense of downward social mobility and very different aspirations from previous generations, particularly in relation to work. This can all be summed up in a desire to see wide-ranging socio-economic change: a form of 're-set'. While the analysis focuses here mainly on the most highly educated segment of this cohort (those with master's-level degrees and beyond), roughly one quarter of the group, it is worth noting that, in a context of steadily rising educational attainment—and assuming that this section of youth already occupies or is likely to occupy something akin to leadership positions in the country—understanding what drives them is essential and provides insight into the

issues to be prioritized as part of a future political agenda.

Neurotechnologies and Children's Rights

UNICEF's Recommendations

Grégory Aimar

Early in 2026 French parliamentarians may be called upon to examine a bill, first submitted to the Assembly in November 2025, aimed among other things at banning children under 15 from social networks and establishing a 10 pm-8 am digital curfew for those aged 15-18. After years of leaving these decisions to parents, whose level of information or competence in respect of social networks is very uneven, the authorities are trying to regain control and establish regulations to protect the young. In the same vein, UNICEF (the United Nations agency for children) published a report in the summer of 2025 warning of the risks associated with advances in neurotechnologies and their potential use on children. Grégory Aimar has read this report and presents its main elements here, setting them in the context of the competition between 'tech giants' in these emerging markets. After briefly outlining the scenario-based fictions employed by UNICEF to illustrate both the potential opportunities and possible dangers of the unregulated use of neuro-technologies on children, he warns of the risk that reality may ultimately 'surpass both fiction and reason' in this area. The International Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1989—a positively ancient era when it comes to the developments that have since taken place in information technologies and neuroscience. The time has perhaps come for updated regulation

to prevent the applications derived from those technologies being used by—or on—children.

Working Conditions and Health in France

The Current Situation and Future Challenges

Michel Héry

When examined over the long term —by comparison, for example, with the situation at the height of the Industrial Revolution— working conditions in France appear to have improved significantly over time (reduced working hours, a rest day on Sundays, paid leave, recognition of the difficulty and dangers of certain occupations etc.). These advances, combined with broader public health prevention measures, have significantly increased life expectancy. They do, however, mask significant disparities between sectors, occupations, types of worker etc. Furthermore, the 2019-2020 Covid crisis, the spread of information technologies, and pressure on personal support services, among other factors, have highlighted or thrown up new issues around the impact of working conditions on the health of the working population (musculo-skeletal disorders, psychosocial risks etc.).

While some risks have diminished over time, other pathologies and stress factors have emerged, and, as Michel Héry notes in this article, work now kills far more people in France than cars. How have physical constraints and exposure to occupational hazards evolved, as well as the relationship to stress and management? What impact might the spread of digital technology and automation (with other corollaries, such as teleworking and the gig

economy) have on health, workplace accidents, and mortality? These are some of the questions explored in this article, using a series of indicators spanning several decades—an analysis prompting careful consideration of all the social costs likely to result from the current or future transformation of certain work processes.

Is EU Enlargement Still Possible?

Jean-François Drevet

Since its creation in 1957 around an initial six countries, the European Community (the present European Union) has regularly expanded to encompass new states, rising to a total of 28 in 2013 when the last country joined (Croatia). Though the figure fell back to 27 with the UK's departure in 2020, the Union still has 10 candidacies under consideration, each pending for different lengths of time—the oldest, that of Turkey, dating back to 1987. However, with Russia's invasion

of Ukraine, the geopolitical context has drastically changed within just a few short years, raising new questions about the appropriateness of further EU expansion.

Jean-François Drevet updates us here on the 10 pending candidacies (Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Ukraine, Moldavia, Georgia and Turkey). In so doing, he points out the sensitive issues that the new borders would raise for the EU (particularly with Russia) and the specific circumstances of each candidate. He also stresses their divergences over EU foreign policy, warning of the risk that adherence to the standards of freedom and democracy required for accession may fall by the wayside, with new members potentially disrupting the Union's institutional functioning (much as Hungary does today). Against this backdrop, can EU expansion still be pursued under the current rules? Should these not be amended at the very least, or alternative forms of regional cooperation considered instead? ■

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