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New, high-tech military equipment is expensive to buy because its performance is improved; it must meet new needs; its quantity is reduced. Besides, procurement programmes show cost overruns. Meanwhile, French national budgets – as the British one – is tightened. Will France be able to afford new, high-tech, expensive military equipment over the long run? Indeed, such weapons entail economic and tactical-military issues.

On the economic side, expensive equipment mobilises a bigger share of the budget, leaving less money for other expenditures. As a result, services compete for money to meet their specific needs; trade-offs are required among equipment & workforce; it leaves less room for manoeuvre to face hazards. A possibility is to reduce quantity order and spread deliveries but both measures increase costs at the end of the day. Another one is betting on exportations to reduce unit costs. As with any bet though, you can lose: France is buying more Rafale airplanes than it would like so that Dassault covers its expenses. Besides, such a strategy might feed a global arms race.

Now let us turn to the military-tactical impacts. Such high-tech equipment delivered with a dropper are not in sufficient quantity to meet both domestic and operational needs. Moreover, a single loss has a bigger impact since fleet is reduced. Some even fear skills might be loosed. In addition, such modern equipment takes time to be brought into service, which compels to anticipate future needs decades ahead – an impossible task. At the same time, their electronic components experience rapid obsolescence, which raises maintenance issues and disturbs the stated goal to standardise equipment.

True, external factors including global competition and interoperability constraint urge states such as France to ask for high-tech equipment, but their disadvantages in a difficult financial situation question such a choice over the long run.