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by
P. Lellouche
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Pierre Leillouche

Introduction

Is French defense policy about to change?

Will France abandon the Gaullist doctrine of national sanctuarization in favor of more direct involvement in the security of Europe as a whole?

These questions have been repeatedly asked both at home and abroad since President Giscard d'Estaing came to office in 1974. They take on a new sense of urgency today following the intense controversy which has erupted in France in recent weeks involving the future role of France in the defense of Europe. The publication last month of a book by French military officers advocating a "European defense" as well as the public statements by prominent Gaullist officials in favor of a nuclear cooperation with Germany have triggered a new national debate. Both the Gaullists and the Communists have already reacted very violently, claiming that these various proposals constitute a betrayal - carefully orchestrated by the President himself - of the principle of national independence and that they signal a shift of French policy towards reintegration into NATO. In response to these attacks, the Government has insisted that France was pursuing an independent defense policy and that the various statements made by individual French citizens did not represent France's official policy.
This debate can only be expected to develop in the near future given the fact that the Parliament is to review the 5 year defense program law (1977-82) this fall and that crucial financial choices involving the modernization of the nuclear deterrent will have to be made very soon (the defense budget will also come under discussion before the Parliament in the next few weeks).

Under the traditional Gaullist doctrine of national sanctuarization, the Force de Frappe would only be used if the French territory is itself subjected to an attack. Hence the idea of "sanctuary" which the aggressor cannot reach without being "punished". By contrast, "enlarged sanctuarization" entrusts the Force de Frappe with a wider geographical and therefore political scope. This doctrine implies that the French deterrent would also protect France's immediate neighbors (i.e. German), and that an attack against the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) would trigger a response by France.

When looking at this situation, French experts are divided as to the significance of the current debate in terms of the future evolution of French defense policy. One school of thought argues that the present controversy has been artificially inflated by the press and that "things will go back to normal" (i.e. to the traditional defense policy of the Fifth Republic) very soon. The political agitation which can be witnessed at the moment is simply one more outburst of the political warfare which has opposed Gaullists and Giscardians since 1974, but its real consequence on French defense policy will be minimal at best.

The other school of thought - to which this writer belongs - views the current debate as a further step in a wider historical evolution of French defense posture in the post-Gaullists era.
In particular, it is the thesis of this paper that despite strong resistance from her internal political system, France simply cannot escape the inevitable adaptation of a defense posture designed twenty years ago to the present realities of the international security environment.

In essence, French defense policy today is actually caught between two conflicting forces:
- the forces of inertia deriving from the inherently unstable and deadlocked domestic political system of the "Giscardian Republic": as will be shown later, the political sensitivity attached to defense issues in France, combined with this domestic political situation act like a "freezing" mechanism which tend to effectively prevent any substantial evolution of the official defense policy away from the principles inherited from the Gaullist era. Hence the tendency of the Giscardian presidency to move with the greatest ease in the defense area and to avoid making clear cut choices on both the doctrines and the hardware.

- Conflicting with this internal inertia, French defense policy is also subjected to forces of change which are essentially external. These involve the increasingly rapid changes of the international security. The need to maintain the credibility of the Force de Frappe in the face of an increasingly rapid Soviet military build-up, the need to compensate for the decline of the credibility of the resulting German nervousness, all this tend to lead France to a more active involvement in the security of Europe. Such a move would obviously entail a drastic reorientation of French defense policy away from the traditional line of the Fifth Republic.
The question therefore, is not whether French policy will change in the future: indeed, as will be shown later, it has changed since 1974. Rather, the problem is to determine the pace of future evolution and the scope of these changes. These of course will depend on the evolution of both the domestic political system in France as well as on the changes occurring in the international security environment, particularly in Europe.

I-Inertia: The politics of defense in the Giscardian Fifth Republic

1- The background: Defense and the French political system

Perhaps more so than in any other Western country, domestic political considerations have always played a fundamental role in shaping French defense policy. Of all Government activities, defense carries the greatest ideological significance in a country whose political system has traditionally been sharply divided between rival ideological groups.

This characteristic is not new, nor is it specific to the Fifth Republic. The fall of Blum's Popular Front Government in 1938 on the question of the defense budget, the profound debate on the European Defense Community (EDC) in 1954 give ample evidence of the very great politicization of defense issues in France. The same is true under the Fifth Republic: it is seldom remembered today that De Gaulle's decision to build the Force de Frappe in 1958 triggered a very intense political controversy at the time. In effect, without the remarkable stability of his regime between 1958 and 1968, De Gaulle would not have been able to carry out the nuclear weapons programme, which in
its first decade required considerable financial and technological efforts.

The historical relationship between the domestic political system and the country's security policy is a highly complex one. One characteristic stands out however: it is the fact that defense is so political an issue, as to constitute an ideological borderline in itself, but a borderline which does not always coincide with the basic division of French politics between Right and Left.

Defense is the one area where traditionally the Right and the Left have been deeply divided internally: whereas in most other areas of public policy, the normal political equation is the opposition between Left and Right, defense issues split the country into two different camps.

On the one hand a "nationalistic" camp, an odd couple comprising since the Fourth Republic the Gaullists and the Communists and, on the other hand, a more "European" or "Atlantist" camp (to use Gaullist terminology) composed of the liberal center right parties (now the Giscardians) and the Socialists.

It should be emphasized that this division manifested itself as early as 1954, during the EDC debate at the National Assembly: in a sense, therefore, the French political system has not really "digested" the EDC problem, which is in fact coming back today as a result of increased concerns in Europe about the Continent's security. Thus, behind the smokescreen of an apparent consensus of all four major parties on the Force de Frappe, one is really facing a fundamental break between two radically opposed visions of French security.
For both the Gaullists and the Communists, the security of France means the security of France alone. Thus, both groups find themselves united—though for different reasons—in their rejection of the Atlantic Alliance and their fundamental reluctance to call the Soviet threat by its name.

By contrast, both the Giscardians and the Socialists view the defense of France as inherently linked to the defense of Europe and therefore to the Alliance with the United States. There is in this group a variety of schools of thought, with some emphasizing the US and NATO as the primary means for the defense of Europe and others who think that Europeans themselves should pool their resources in order to take the problem of their security in their own hands.

2- The dilemma of defense in the post-Gaullist era

This peculiar political environment is the key to understanding French defense policy in today's Fifth Republic. The dilemma of the "Giscardian Republic" is that the political system is actually built on two negative coalitions, in which the adversary relationship within each group (i.e. Gaullists versus Giscardians and Communists versus Socialists) is as great as the opposition between the two coalitions themselves.

For the Government of President Giscard d'Estaing, the problem therefore is to rule the country without breaking up the "majority" coalition, which in turn would trigger a national crisis. Hence the present tendency of the French political élite to evaluate each new policy decision made by the President, not on its merits, but on the degree of acceptability of such policy to the Gaullists.
In some areas, the President's freedom of maneuver is quite comfortable (i.e. trade and economics policy in general); in other areas however the rigidity of the system is such as to make the orthodoxy with earlier Gaullist principles the overwhelming criterium, and indeed the condition for avoiding a political crisis.

Defense is precisely the most sensitive of such areas. It is so not only because of the historical reasons mentioned earlier, but also because the Force de Frappe and its resulting foreign policy orientations (the withdrawal for NATO's integrated organs and the policy of détente with the USSR) are widely regarded as the single most important symbols of the Fifth Republic as a whole. Indeed, national defense and its corollary national independence are the very sources where the Gaullists derive their own identity and legitimacy as a political entity.

3- Deadlocks

In practice, this system produces a certain number of "taboos" such as the principle of "superiority" of the Force de Frappe as compared to the conventional forces, the non-integration in NATO, the principle of universal military service, all of which must be respected by the new President. Failure to do so would trigger a major crisis within the Government coalition, which in turn would precipitate the whole country into an open political and institutional crisis.

Hence a tendency on the part of the Government of President Giscard d'Estaing to carefully avoid taking direct initiatives or decisions which could trigger a major political battle on defense issues, and to insist upon the "continuity" of its policy with the doctrine inherited from De Gaulle.
The only instance where such a precaution was not taken was in 1976 when the concept of "enlarged sanctuarization" was announced officially by the highest French authorities (6). But this initiative met with such an intense opposition from the Gaullists that it was quietly discarded from later official statements (7). Indeed, by 1977 (the year before the crucial legislative elections of March 1978), Giscard seemed to have dropped his short lived "doctrine" altogether.

Similarly, this political environment also goes a long way in explaining why President Giscard d'Estaing, after much talk about improving the conventional forces at the expense of the nuclear deterrent, finally decided, under strong pressure from the Gaullists, to build a sixth strategic nuclear submarine, in late 1977 ... a few months before the March elections.

Domestic considerations also explain to a large extent France's reluctance to take part in 1977-79 in the transatlantic debate on SALT, Theater Nuclear Forces (TNF) modernization and generally in European security issues as a whole. Until recently, France succeeded in insulating himself from the intense political activity in and between Washington, Bonn, London and Brussels. France carefully avoided taking part in the neutron bomb controversy, and similarly refused to participate in NATO's Special Group on TNF modernization. To be sure, this voluntary silence was dictated in part by foreign policy issues (detente with the USSR, France's on integration in NATO) but they were also closely linked to the domestic situation as evidenced by the flurry of Gaullist and Communist protests following Giscard's attendance at the Guadel-
oupe Summit. Significantly, on return from Guadeloupe, the President repeatedly stressed his decision not to participate in the SALT III negotiations. As a result, the overall attitude of Giscard's presidency towards superpowers arms control has turned out to be generally faithful to Gaullist principles, with a qualified acquiescence to SALT II, to the extent that this agreement does not interfere with France's independence, and a clear rejection of any French participation to negotiations involving the national deterrent (SALT III).

With this background, the impression one retains from French defense policy in recent years is one of frustration. It is as if the new presidency of Giscard d'Estaing had wanted to innovate in the defense area, by injecting new strategic concepts and new military relationships, but had been gradually frustrated in its attempts by the sheer weight of inertia of the French political system.

In essence one is therefore drawn into a vicious cycle: on the one hand, a major shift in defense policy away from Gaullist orthodoxy would surely precipitate a major political crisis in the country; but on the other hand, the experience of the last few years tend to show that such a shift would not be possible without a prior reshuffling of the political alliances in France.

This does not mean however that French defense policy is condemned to a total freeze as long as the domestic political context will remain unchanged. In spite of the rigidity of the political system, the institutions of the Fifth Republic grant the President a formidable power in shaping the defense policy, which is his "domaine reserve". As a result, some of the ideas of President Giscard d'Estaing have
found their application in practice.

This is the case in particular of the policy of "stabilization" in the Third World which Giscard publicized as early as 1975 (9). This policy, which emphasized the need for highly mobile intervention forces, distinct from the classic "corps de bataille" of the French Army, was aimed at preserving France's economic and energy security from Soviet destabilization in Third World regions. The repeated interventions in Africa, the involvement of French troops in Lebanon, have, in the last few years, provided the most spectacular illustration of the new President's defense preoccupations (10).

But, when compared to the overall defense policy of the country, these changes though spectacular are in fact marginal; after all, the interventions in Shaba did not put into question the sacro-sanct Force de Frappe. And although both the Gaullists and the Communists showed little enthusiasm for Giscard's African "stabilization policy," they could live with it provided that the cornerstone of the Gaullist heritage, namely the national deterrent remained the key element of the country's defense policy and that it remained the priority item on the defense budget. And on both counts Giscard did satisfy these demands: the Sixth submarine has been taken, and the President's commitment to the nuclear force has been repeatedly stressed in recent months.

Thus to the extent that French policy has evolved since 1974, it has done so in a very gradual and incremental way, and only in so far as it did not jeopardize any of the essential "taboos" of the Fifth Republic's defense posture.
If one considers Giscard's "stabilization" policy as a new policy, one must realize that it has been merely added to a preexisting body of doctrines and means, but that in no way has it been substituted for the earlier security posture. The same is true for the closer relationship between France and various NATO organs which has manifested itself since 1974. The cooperation of French Forces with NATO though improved has been carefully limited so as to avoid any impression of "reintegration" of France in the Alliance (11).

II - Change: Towards a new French defense policy?

Based on the above analysis, it would seem difficult to expect a substantial evolution of French defense policy in the near future, beyond some marginal adjustments.

Yet, there are grounds for such an evolution, though significantly, their origin is to be found outside France, i.e. in the changing international security environment, rather than in France itself.

To be sure, if France were to be left alone, i.e. without any interference from international events, the defense policy would most probably succumb to the natural inertia of the domestic political system.

France, however, does live in a "real world" which is changing very rapidly. And her security is affected by these changes.

This "pact of life" is increasingly sinking in among French experts and officials, despite the efforts of both the Gaullists and the Communists to try and insulate the country's "sanctuary" from the rest of the world.

The realization that the international environment surrounding
France's security has profoundly changed in recent years has triggered an in depth debate in the French defense community.

Interestingly enough this debate has been going on, behind the scenes, since the mid-1970's, and in a sense the current political outburst which can be witnessed at the moment is simply the extension in the open of the discreet process of reappraisal which has developed among the French defense community.

1- French perceptions of the changing international environment of France's security

Despite the apparent stability of France's official policy since the mid-1970's, French perceptions of the international security environment have undergone a very substantial evolution, at least in two areas.

The first area is the realization - as early as 1974-75 - that France's security is not only threatened by the "East" but also by the destabilization of certain key countries in the "South." This has led to a very active defense policy in this area, long before other Western nations launched similar efforts. As noted earlier, this is the area where the evolution of France's policy since 1974 has been the more visible (12).

More important in terms of its potential impact on the overall policy inherited from the Gaullist era, is the change which has gradually developed in French perceptions of the European security environment.

It must be emphasized at the outset that the very fact that French analysts do worry about European security is in itself a new
phenomenon. Indeed, for many years (from 1958 to the Ottawa Declaration of 1974) French policy was built on the notion that France's security was separated from the security of her European neighbors. To recognize the link between French security and European security was (and remains so in some quarters) a taboo, because the latter is in turn function of the US nuclear guarantee afforded in the NATO framework.

This link between French security, European security and American nuclear guarantee is now, however, generally accepted by most French analysts. It has been best summarized by Jean-Louis Gergorin's formula:

"France has signed with her allies the Ottawa Declaration which establishes the complementarity in terms of objectives between the independent deterrents of France and of NATO; this leads us to follow closely the credibility of the flexible response doctrine even if this doctrine is not ours. If it is indeed vital that our deterrent should always remain credible, it is also desirable that NATO's should not weaken" (13).

The trouble, however, is that for most French analysts, NATO's deterrent has lost a great deal of credibility in recent years, essentially as a result of the lacunas of US security policy vis-à-vis Europe and the Soviet Union. In the French view, these lacunas are visible in at least three areas: 1) the decline of US role and leadership in the world as a whole; 2) the US relationship with the USSR and SALT; and 3) the US policy with respect to NATO and Germany in particular:

a) French perception of the US role and leadership in the world.
When looking at today's America, the French have some interesting mixed feelings.

On the one hand, if it is true that post-Watergate and post-Viet-Nam America has ceased to be the "gendarme of the World", this in itself is not something necessarily negative for France. The more "modest" America of the late 1970's whose commitments are limited to Europe (and Japan) is no longer the "abrupt" and insensitive leader of the past which simply ignored French sensitivity and whose global ambitions and overly strong leadership could also drag the Europeans into some dangerous neo-colonial adventures.

To a certain extent therefore, what others - including many in the US - may see as a "declining" America, the French tend to perceive - as far as they are concerned - as a healthy and quite normal historical evolution towards a multipolar world. Obviously, such an evolution has the advantage to provide France with a greater "room" to act on her own in world affairs. It also carries the additional benefit of permitting a more harmonious relationship with Washington.

However, and this is the other side of the coin, although the French feel more comfortable in their own bilateral dealings with today's America, they are at the same time disturbed - like other Europeans - by the evolution of the overall balance of political-military power between the superpowers, a balance which is increasingly seen as favoring the Soviet Union.

In other words, while the French are satisfied with today's more balanced French-American relationship, there is also the disturbing feeling that this new situation may be partly due to US weaknesses
In Europe and elsewhere, rather than to a conscious change on the part of American policy makers.

This first problem area, i.e. the vision of a "weakened America" has been given a great deal of attention in French media. Contrasting with what is increasingly perceived as a continuous expansion of Soviet power both in Europe and in the Third World, the US is viewed as essentially unable to act militarily abroad, leaving the "job" to be done by others (i.e. the French in Africa). In certain instances even, the US was seen as being literally bullied around (Iran, Afghanistan, the Carter's visit to Mexico). Reinforcing the views just mentioned there is also a very widespread feeling that the Carter Administration is simply not very professional in the foreign policy area. Like many others, the French are confused by the various and often conflicting views expressed at the highest echelons of the US Government, by either Brzezinski, Vance or Young. Moreover, some obvious mistakes (Iran, Neutron Bomb) only serve to confirm the feeling of amateurism which is often attached to the current Administration.

The repetition of conceptual and tactical errors, the poor timing of most US moves end up creating a very disturbing picture indeed. This is all the more so when all these errors take place at a time of growing Soviet power both in Europe and elsewhere.

b) French perceptions of US-Soviet relations and SALT

The French have always felt uncomfortable with superpowers' detente and arms control. In the 1960's (and up until SALT I), the French saw detente as an informal "entente" between the superpowers aimed at sharing the government of the world in a duopolistic fashion. Similarly, the SALT process - the most concrete and symbolic evidence
of this duopoly - was seen as a potentially dangerous phenomenon, particularly for the security of Europe. Writing in 1971, the then defense Minister Michel Debré expressed these fears in the following terms:

"These negotiations, aiming to limit the arms race and minimize the risks of a major confrontation between the two superpowers, must have the support in principle of the entire world. They seek to limit their defense budgets and to guarantee their own security, thanks to the balance that has at least been struck because of the risks that would be run by both sides in the eventuality - by now unthinkable - of a direct nuclear confrontation. But in fixing the strategic situation in accordance with their vital interests, might not the two superpowers create new dangers in theaters that for them are secondary?

In such cases, might not their confrontation, perhaps by way of intervening states, become actually less improbable, being confined within limits set in advance?

Can Europeans help wondering whether their territory may not become a secondary theater of war for the superpowers?

While the SALT negotiations proceed, some people raise the possibility that the United States may disengage from Europe and reduce its forces there. Such a disengagement would be part, of course, of an attempt to set up an equilibrium that would be less costly for the two superpowers. Does this not risk that if the SALT negotiations succeed, the situation in Europe will tend to be less stable?" (15)

Following the signature of the 1972 SALT I Agreement, the French
reactions became somewhat less negative. Déteinte had not erased all issues between the superpowers, and experience had shown that the "duopoly" had not succeeded in totally ruling the world. Moreover, on purely military grounds, French analysts noted that the ABM Treaty was indeed useful for France, and that the US despite unequal numerical ceilings in the Interim Agreement retained a clear qualitative superiority over the Soviet Union. As for the coupling issue, French analysts concluded—like most of their American counterparts (16)—that SALT I did not affect European security nor the US nuclear guarantee to Europe (17). On its part, the French Government noted that "SALT I did not include any provision limiting in any way the freedom of action of third parties" (18). The Force de Frappe being fully safeguarded, the French could therefore afford to hail SALT I as "an important contribution to the establishment of a climate of détente and cooperation in the world" (19).

Since Vladivostok, and in particular since the beginning of the new SALT III "Euro-strategic" debate in 1977-1978, French perceptions of US policy with respect to both the USSR and arms control have slowly been evolving towards a much less positive assessment.

Part of this evolution is due to the way in which the US has been handling its relationship with the Soviet Union. As noted earlier, the French have been confused with the existence at the very top of the Carter Administration, of two diametrically opposed visions of USSR (Z. Brzezinski's and Cyrus Vance's) leading to two distinct sets of policies in respect to Soviet-American "détente".

The other set of reasons explaining growing French concerns about
the US and SALT involves the evolution of the strategic balance since Vladivostok and its consequences for Europe. Although French analysts remain a lot more discreet than their German or British counterparts in criticizing the US for "sacrificing Europe to SALT" (20), there is increasing awareness that the overall central balance has been slipping since 1974 in favor of the USSR (21).

In spite of the French Governments carefully qualified support for SALT II (22), most French analysts (and media) have been openly negative in their assessment of the agreement. Indeed, to the knowledge of this writer at least, there has not been in the French press and strategic literature a single positive judgment of the Treaty. The striking fact is observers as different in their political opinions as Raymond Aron (23) or Pierre Gallois (24) have severely criticized the Treaty as dangerous for European security.

Essentially, SALT II is seen as reflecting a central strategic balance which is progressively shifting in favor of the Soviet Union. And even if this evolution is not perceived as directly affecting US security (even if there may be a question about ICBM vulnerability) (25), these changes are seen above all as adversely affecting the credibility of US guarantee to Europe.

These French concerns about the consequences of the evolution of the central balance are reinforced by the fact that in French view, it is the central balance which is the key to coupling. Conversely, the so-called "Euro-strategic balance" concept is unanimously rejected by French analysts as misleading and dangerous for the Europeans; indeed this concept is the very symbol of decoupling.
The link between SALT II and SALT III is also viewed negatively by French analysts: the limitation of theater nuclear weapons within SALT III is seen as affecting the validity of the NATO doctrine protecting France's neighbors and as a potential source of continuous difficulties between the US and Europe (26).

Adding to these concerns there is also the feeling that the US does not really know what to do about modernizing its own strategic forces, and how to go about redressing the central balance. This, in French eyes, is clearly evidenced by the B-1 decision and the M-X indecision (27).

c) French perceptions of US posture in Europe

With this background of a weakened America, which also appears to be declining in its strategic relationship with the USSR, French views of US policies in Europe are bound to be rather skeptical to say the least.

The first worry involves German-American relations, or rather the way in which the US has been dealing with the FRG. To be sure, this is a relationship that has never been totally satisfactory to the French. Indeed the German issue has been in the past at the heart of many a quarrel between Paris and Washington. The US-German relationship does in fact pose a dilemma to the French: on the one hand, when relations are fine between Bonn and Washington, the French are prompt to denounce a "Washington-Bonn Axis" (28). On the other hand, when the FRG appears too edgy as a result of US hesitations and awkwardness, the French are worried by a possible reemergence of the "German problem" and would prefer a stronger leadership on the part
of the US (29).

At present, French concerns clearly belong to the second category. Seen from France, both the Enhanced Radiation Weapon (ERW, so-called Neutron Bomb) and the TNF issues illustrate very disturbing evolution on the part of the US towards a kind of "no-leadership" posture, the consequences of which are seen in France as extremely disturbing. The feelings of insecurity which have emerged recently in Germany as a result of the decline of US credibility raise the specter of either a "Finlandized" Germany looking for reunification or of a Germany eventually deciding to insure her security by herself, i.e. through a national nuclear deterrent. Both eventualities are obviously very unpleasant for France...

Adding to these concerns about Germany, French analysts regard the evolution of US military policy towards NATO as a further proof of the inevitable process of "decoupling" between US security and European security.

The US insistence in increasing NATO's conventional war fighting capability, as well as NATO's defense spending in this area, the US focus on small "clean" tactical nuclear weapons and on Precision Guided Missiles (PGM) systems are all seen as parts of a global strategy designed to essentially cut any automatic line between the defense of the European theater and the use of American central systems (30).

What all this means in concrete terms can be summarized as follows:

- the new situation of the central strategic balance has deeply affected the credibility of US nuclear guarantee to NATO, which is at a very minimal level.

- as a result, the US is trying to remove any automatic link
between the European theater and the use of its central systems by both:

+ raising the nuclear threshold as far as possible through a policy of reinforcement of conventional defense, and
+ dividing nuclear weapons for a war fighting purpose in Europe, not as a link to the US central systems.

2- Implications for French policy

Given the declining credibility of the US nuclear guarantee to Europe and the shifting central and theater nuclear balances in favor of the Soviet Union, what are the implications of this evolution of future French defense policy?

1) Continuing the same policy of "la France seule"
2) Sharing the French nuclear umbrella with other European powers.
3) Reintegrating NATO.

Of these three options, the third can be immediately eliminated. Not only would it make no military sense to return into NATO precisely at a time when NATO's deterrent is seen as having a minimal credibility, but also there is no single political party in France favoring such an option.

What is left therefore is a choice between "National" defense and "European" defense, a choice which is precisely at the core of the current debate in France:

a) La France Seule

Given the new international security environment the "national" option - though politically the easiest in view of French domestic context - may not be as effective as in the past in insuring French
security and in promoting French diplomatic objectives.

The main flaw of this policy is that it is founded on an illusion, namely the artificial separation between the security of France and the security of her European neighbors. While this illusion had no practical significance as long as France's neighbors were effectively protected by the US nuclear umbrella, the consequences are quite different in a situation where the US is less credible.

The practical consequences for France are twofold:

- France's nuclear umbrella is now effectively the only umbrella protecting the country, which means that it must remain credible against the USSR, at whatever costs may be necessary.

- France must face the prospect of an increasingly insecure Germany which could be tempted to solve her security problem through national means. This could not only trigger a breakdown on the European Community (with the resulting political and economic consequences) but also increase the security threats of France.

At present, despite much talk in France about the "German" problem from both Gaullists and the Communists, few are those who actually perceive the long-term consequences of the current French policy which consists in building up a Franco-German "couple" in all political and economic sectors except security. With respect to the latter, the French simply let the Germans to work out "their" problems with the Americans, although at the same time, the French are increasingly doubtful of the capacity of the US to effectively protect and deal with Germany.

This is obviously one major problem area for the future, which
unfortunately is seldom thought about in France.

The other new issue raised by the continuation of the "national" defense policy is money. Under De Gaulle and Pompidou France managed to support armies (the conventional forces and the Force de Frappe) though this was recognized by French officials to be a "tour de force" (31). Under Giscard d'Estaing, and in much more difficult economic situation, France is now to finance three armies (including the "intervention force" created by the President). Adding to the problem is the fact that the increasingly rapid technological arms race between the superpowers poses new problems with respect to maintaining the credibility of the national deterrent. New problems of obsolescence, vulnerability and penetration must be solved. Proportionally to the US and the USSR this requires enormous financial and technological commitments on the part of a medium sized nation such as France. Despite considerable efforts in this direction and a substantial increase of the defense budget which has recently been decided (32), it remains to be seen whether such efforts will be sufficient to insure an effective modernization of the national deterrent in order for it to retain a minimum threshold of deterrence as against the USSR.

b) The "European solution"

In view of the increasingly difficult issues described above, many in France argue that the only solution for preserving the country's security in the future lies in a European solution. Only through the pooling of their financial and technological resources would the Europeans be able to build a credible deterrent; moreover, in the absence of a solidarity at the security level, Europe will never develop as a fully integrated entity.
We shall refrain from discussing the details of the various proposals which are under consideration in France - and in Europe - (i.e. nuclear cooperation between France and Germany, the UK, or both), nor shall we enter in the traditional dilemma between political and military integration.

Even if we consider these European "solutions" at their most modest levels (i.e. a gradual technical and financial cooperation between say, France and the UK), one should realize the enormous difficulties which would have to be addressed. With respect to cooperation with the UK, it is seldom remembered that the respective nuclear deterrents of the two countries have now reached very different stages of technical development. While such cooperation was perhaps feasible in the early 1970's, enormous technical and financial issues must now be resolved, even if politically, there seem to be some interest on the part of the Thatcher Government for such cooperation.

With respect to Germany the problem is essentially political. Not only is the FRG constrained both by international agreements and by the USSR in obtaining nuclear weapons, even with French help, but it has shown in the past a clear reluctance to embark into any such cooperation at the expense of NATO and German-US relationship. History shows that every time Germany has had to choose between France and the US, it has chosen the latter.

**Conclusion**

The general conclusion which can be derived from the preceding analysis does indeed seem rather bleak.

Not only does France's domestic political system preclude any rapid and substantial evolution of French defense policy, but the changing international security environment while pressing for an
adjustment of France's policy to present realities also seems to lead to inextricable problems: The continuation of a purely "national" policy does seem increasingly unsatisfactory given the financial and foreign policy constraints involved. But, at the same time, the prospects for a "European" solution also appear to be remote at best.

Given these internal and external constraints, what then can one expect of French defense policy in the future?

Our own assessment is that the future of French policy will be primarily a function of the evolution of the credibility of the US commitment in Europe. Should the decline of this credibility (both perceived and real) be allowed to persist, then the evolution which began in 1976 with the concept of "enlarged sanctuarization" will also continue, probably in a more forceful way, as a result of the European security gap which, somehow, France now has to compensate for.

"This however, does necessarily entail a drastic break with the traditional security policy of the Fifth Republic, such as a decision to return into NATO. Nor does it imply the establishment of some new "European Defense Community" in which French, British and German forces would be fully integrated".

Most likely, future French policy will gradually evolve towards a "mix" of the earlier "national" policy with some kind of involvement in Europe. In particular, this policy will probably include the following elements:

- Implementation of a forceful but costly program of modernization of the nuclear deterrent (the success of the program will depend on the state of the economy in the next decade and on the ability of the Government to take key decisions, involving perhaps a substantial decrease of conventional forces in order to free funds for the atomic
- a more active involvement in European security issues, though outside NATO, perhaps in the form of a closer direct relationship with Germany and the UK. Eventually this could lead in the long run to some nuclear cooperation with the UK at the technical level and at a latter stage with the FRG.

- Finally, a diplomatic effort aimed at stabilizing the military situation in Europe, in the form of arms control (essentially confidence-building measures) proposals. On the other hand, France will persist in her rejection of SALT III and of similar negotiations susceptible to include the national deterrent.
NOTES


7. Ibid.


10. LELLOUCHE and MOISI, Ibid.

11. Witness, for example the fact that France refused to join the Brussels based "Eurogroup" on conventional weapons cooperation, which she considered as too closely linked to NATO. France did
join however in 1976 the "Independent Program Group", which is composed of the same countries of the Eurogroup, but operates from Rome.

12. This evolution is discussed at length in LELLOUCHE and MOISI, "French Policy in Africa ...", op cit.


19. Ibid.


23. Op cit (Note 21); see also by ARON, "Vienna Summit was a non-event", International Herald Tribune, 2 July 1979.


25. GERGORIN, op cit.


27. ARON, "La Démission Américaine", op cit.


29. For a summary of these concerns, see Raymond ARON, "RFA: La Tentation de l'Est", L'Express, 21-27 April 1979.


32. Early last month, the President announced that the defense budget for 1980 will be increased by 15% over that of 1979, reaching a total of 88,590 million Francs. Given an inflation rate of about 10%, this means an increase of 5% in real terms (2% above NATO's guideline).