Chapter II

French Nuclear Policy.
France carried out her first atomic explosion at Reggane in February 1960. Before further analysing the French effort which is a contemporary event, it may be stated at the outset that it is not susceptible to the same kind of appraisal as is possible for events which belong to more remote periods. In the fast changing world of today it is difficult to discern with certainty the relative importance of events and it may perhaps be left to the historian of the Twentieth Century to pass judgment on the French nuclear deterrent.

Background of the Nuclear Policy.

In order to have a proper perspective of the present development of the nuclear deterrent, it is necessary to trace its evolution since the time when it was first conceived. It goes back to earlier than 1939, in fact, France could be said to be one of the pioneers in atomic research. However, a significant and real beginning of the atomic effort was made in 1945 when an atomic energy programme was initiated by the provisional Government under General Charles de Gaulle. It was the establishment of the C.E.A. or "Commisariat a l' énergie atomique" and it stressed that the "work should be concerned with research into the use of the atomic energy in the fields of science, industry and national defence." (1)

1. Le Monde, 1 November 1945
The High Commission for Atomic Energy was headed by Mr. Joliot Curie and the policy objective of France was stated to be peaceful application of the atomic energy and not bomb.

The CEA's task was to initiate the development of the programme and during the years from 1945 to 1950, it worked to lay the infrastructure for the industrial and military exploitation of atomic energy. The first reactor became operational in 1948 and intensive prospecting for Uranium was begun in French territories. In the other areas where it was available, it was controlled by Britain and the United States. After 1950, the decision to build plutonium producing piles was taken. As enormous funds would have become necessary for this purpose, the attempts to arouse the interest of the Defence Department seem to have been made. (2)

The next stage in the development was the launching of the first Five Year Plan in 1952. In 1955, the Ministers for Atomic affairs, Armed forces and Finance signed a protocol to provide for financing of the Atomic programme from the budget of the Defence Department. The second Five Year Plan of 1957 included the preparations for

the first explosion and the production of enriched Uranium. (3) The real significance of this plan lay in its indication that France intended to become a thermonuclear power. (4)

Debate on the development of atomic energy.

As the Atomic energy programme progressed, in France itself from 1954-55 reactions and repercussions to it grew—eventually giving rise to an atomic debate. It became sharp when the objective of the programme was discussed. From 1954 to 1957 the successive Governments in France maintained that "work in the field of atomic energy was as necessary for its peaceful development as for its military potential" as stated by Mr. Pierre Mendes-France. (5)

This position was vehemently debated by some other leaders of the Fourth French Republic. Among others, these included two succeeding Prime Ministers after Mr. Mendes-France. Mr. Edgar Faure (during the

period from Feb. 1955 to January 1956) who was a radical and Mr. Guy Mollet (From February 1956 to May 1957) who was a socialist, both of them opposed the militarisation of the nuclear programme. "Mr. Edgar Faure was constantly opposed to the creation of the French Atomic bomb, although he favoured nuclear knowledge for other military ends" (6) (as stated on April 13, 1955).

The statements he made did not fail to give rise to contradictions. The two following statements of Mr. Edgar Faure indicate the vacillations on the subject. At his Press Conference of April 14, 1955, he declared:

"Nous avons décidé d'éliminer les recherches consacrées aux utilisations de caractère spécifiquement militaire. Nous nous limiterons donc à des utilisations civiles. En conséquence nous n'entendons pas, consacrer d'études à la création d'une bombe ou d'une autre bombe." (7)

But Mr. Faure seems to have modified this later in the statement which he made on April 21, 1955

when he declared:

Nous voulons que la France devienne une grande-puissance atomique, et dans cette phase initiale de développement, nous entendons mettre l'accent sur tout les possibilités pacifique qu'offre l'énergie atomique en matière des réalisations industrielles. Notre position ne signifie d'ailleurs pas que la France renoncerait à utiliser éventuellement pour sa défense des moyens qui resulterait du développement des recherches et des installations atomique." (8)

The position of Mr. Guy Mollet was not different from that of his predecessor. In his investiture speech he expressed stronger opposition to the development of atomic energy for military ends. (9)

But after six months, he was compelled to admit that the terms of the Euratom agreement did not cause any delay in the study and manufacture of the bomb. (10)

Translation — "We wish that France become a great atomic power and in this initial phase of development we intend to put the accent (stress) on all peaceful possibilities which are open to atomic energy, in the industrial field. Our position, however, does not indicate that France will renounce the utilization in contingency, for her defence, of the means which will grow out of the development of these researches and atomic installations."


Among the other leaders of the Fourth Republic, (Prime Ministers) Mr. Maurice Bourges-Maunoury (July 1950 to August 1951) and Mr. Felix Gaillard, (August 1951 to June 1953) were ardent advocates of the programme since 1949. According to Maurice Bourges Maunoury the possession of the atomic weapon was indispensable for France's national defence. Mr. Gaillard as the last Prime Minister of the Fourth Republic had signed the order for all the preparatory measures for the first atomic explosion in 1960. The explosion was as a matter of fact carried out. Among those who assisted in the development, Mr. Jacques Robert is considered to be the "Technical father of the bomb." General Albert Buchalet (who was appointed to the Commissariat's Bureau d'Études Générales in March 1955) became responsible for the first French atomic test. (11) Contradictory nature of the official attitude on the subject was in fact, the result of the peculiar character of the Governments under the Fourth Republic. In the Cabinets there were noticeable, divided counsels, clash of objectives and lack of coherence in policy. However, the fact that it was the high officials who made and executed policies in the

midst of the divergences that prevailed in the different wings of the coalition cabinets, helped to determine the continuity of the policy. It was admitted for the first time officially in 1957 that the military programme of the atomic energy was to be undertaken as a policy. In this decision such high officials as Generals Buchalet, Levaud, and Alleret played an important part.

The issue continued to evoke greater interest after 1954-55 and began to be hotly debated. There were arguments for and against the manufacture of French atomic weapons, put forward with equal vehemence. In September 1955, La Nef (a monthly) published a study by Father Dominique Dubarle and Mr. Charles Ledard. Ledard argued that without atomic weapons France would have to accept an inferior position and that it would be subject to the atomic blackmail by the enemy, unless she called for help. Further he wrote: "by possessing this atomic armament with the resolute intention of using it only in the case of deliberate attack, the French forces will bolster the security and stability of a world in precarious equilibrium." (12) Father Dubarle stood against the military atomic weapons with the Christian argument of

Mr. Faure that France does not want to take part in any activity threatening all the people with death. "French grandeur" could be served much better by renunciation than by an immoral and undignified scramble to enter the atomic competition.

While some of those public debates concerned themselves with the moral aspects of the nuclear weapons policy, debates in Parliament appeared to reflect political considerations and preoccupations.

At this stage of its evolution those who argued for the manufacture of the atomic bomb contended that it was necessary as a symbol of national rank and prestige, a justification for demanding more voice in the Western policy and strategy, as an instrument of political bargaining and as a threat of capability to retaliate, where France chose to retaliate. The opponents stressed the moral aspects and put accent on such utilization of the atomic energy as would be beneficial to the economy. They further argued that it would need inordinately huge expenditure merely to be able to possess a few bombs not of the latest type and power. There was also the Nth country problem which could be avoided only by deciding not to produce the bomb.

The important impetus towards militarisation of the atomic programme is seen to have been given by the
pressures from the military. The original position of Mr. Joliot-Curie in 1949-50 came to be hotly debated as the cold war advanced. In the early years after 1945, even Gen. de Gaulle's stress was on the peaceful uses of atomic energy. In 1945 when the CEA was set up, the motives of the provisional Government of de Gaulle, behind its establishment were said to be "independence and greatness of France and her mission in the World." (13) Nature of the cold war and experiences in Korea made the armed forces uneasy over strategic dependence. The question of the reliability of the American deterrent arose when the United States failed to intervene at the critical stage in the Indo-Chinese War. The French defence minister began to think of the programme. From 1954, many military leaders like Col-Ailleret, Capt. Maurin etc. advocated the use of nuclear weapons in preference to the conventional arsenal.

The concept of defence policy in France has been undergoing change, however, since 1945. After that year, the element of dependence on the protection of the United States came in. The French defence policy had two aspects. As a colonial power, it had responsibilities in the world and in the years after 1945, the French army had engaged itself in a number of unsuccessful campaigns in

the overseas territories. As a continental power she had an apprehension that in case of a future war she would be called upon to provide canon-fodder for her allies, as it happened during the first war. The second preoccupation arose from her experiences during 1940-44 that in a possible future contingency also, the allies might abandon the continent and plan to liberate it later. The military leaders therefore, concluded that it was indispensable for France to have her own nuclear defence.

The military leaders were also contending that France's interests and her position in the Western Alliance could not be safeguarded without the possession of up-to-date weapons. The arguments of the pro-bomb policy advocates were supported by their contention. Doubts regarding the reliability of the American deterrent began to be expressed more frequently. Further, the attitude of the French military towards Britain and the United States changed to some extent as a result of the struggle over the European Defence Community. In the immediate post-War years, it was the objective of French policy to keep Germany under check and with this view attempts were made to revive the Franco-Russian alliance. When the principle of German rearmament was conceded after 1954, the French thought it better to take it as inevitable and sought a compensation of atomic weapons (which were denied to Germany under the terms of the Paris and London Agreements}
of 1954) to minimize its effect.

When, therefore, the demands for a French Atomic force were put forward they implied (1) that dependence on the United States' protection which was taken for granted since 1945 was to be discontinued; and (2) that it conflicted with the integrated European Defence policy of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. This was a departure from the traditional policies and, therefore, the year 1954-55, when such revision of the policy was contemplated it marked a turning point in the French thinking on defence. In these circumstances, the impact of the Suez expedition of 1956 was that it demonstrated to the French military forces that strategic dependence on the United States was futile. After the Suez disaster, French strategists concluded that France could never have military independence until she possessed a minimal nuclear stock pile.

The experiences of the second world war had a great impact on the French people and on the morale of the armed forces. During the War years and the subsequent colonial conflicts, French military faced more defeats than victories and this gave rise to a sense of national humiliation. The objective of French Foreign Policy in post-war years was recovery and independence. Independence in foreign and other policies could not be conceived without the capability of an effective defence
potential and it provided an important argument to the pro-bomb advocates. Britain's possession of nuclear weapons became a further argument. However, while the bomb-enthusiasts were pressing their case to the Government to speed up the atomic programme, Britain herself found that she would have to give up the atomic arms programme in an impasse as a result of economic and technical difficulties. (14)

The sense of humiliation referred to earlier was felt in other spheres also. Before 1939 the French were among the pioneers in atomic research. During the war years they had participated in the joint efforts of Britain and Canada but the American attitude of indifference and suspicion deeply wounded the French susceptibilities. Already after July 1944, the French scientists were pressing General de Gaulle to launch an atomic programme. By 1957, the differences in the various attitudes were considerably reduced and the decision to fabricate the bomb was made under the Fourth Republic, Nuclear Policy under the Fifth Republic.

At the end of 1958 when General de Gaulle came to power under the Fifth Republic of France, the situation was already set to a large extent. Gen. de Gaulle

continued the same policy and in 1959 he obtained consent for his weapons policy.

Opinions of the military experts and writers on military strategy supported the strategic analysis which considered France's possession of the nuclear weapon as an essential national need. They argued that the weapon which guaranteed the security of western Europe was controlled by the United States and Britain - two powers which are not European. It was, therefore, considered necessary that European powers themselves individually or collectively should hold powerful atomic arms in order to discourage aggression.

In 1945 when the CEA was established, it did not appear that the objective of military application of atomic energy for national defence was upper-most in the mind of Gen. de Gaulle and other promoters of the CEA at that time, although "National Defence" was stated to be one of its objectives. (15) Later in the changed circumstances Gen. de Gaulle foresaw that the French atomic capability had to be much bigger than what he had imagined it to be. In his Press Conference of November 4, 1959 he pointed out that as it was possible to destroy France from any spot in the world, it was necessary that French forces must be made capable of acting anywhere in

the world. In analysing the reasons for which he considered that France must possess nuclear weapons, other than and apart from the preservation of the independence of France and her greatness, he evoked four possibilities in his Press Conference of November 10, 1959. He said,

"Who can say, for example, whether some sudden advance in development particularly in the field of space rockets will not provide one of the two camps with such an advantage that its peaceful inclinations will not hold out? Who can say whether in the future, if basic political facts should change completely, as has already occurred on the earth, the two powers that would have a monopoly on nuclear weapons might not make a deal with each other to divide the world between them? Who can say whether, should the occasion arise, while each side might follow a policy of not hurling its devices at the principal adversary, so as not to be threatened by them itself - who can say whether the two rivals might not crush others... And who can even say whether the two rivals, as a result of some unforeseeable political and social upheaval, will not come to the point of uniting?" (16)

On October 9, 1959 he declared that without her own nuclear force France would "no longer be a European power, a sovereign nation but simply an integrated satellite." (17)

General de Gaulle's political thinking has been centred around his concept of "nation" and "national


sovereignty." A jealous concern for safeguarding national sovereignty has all along been his preoccupation and his concept of the defence of France emanates from these ideas and from his concept of the grandeur, mission and greatness of France. To him "nation state" is the political reality in the present world and the policies should be based on the recognition of this fact. The interest which France expressed in arrangements similar to the bilateral arrangement between Britain and the United States, independent of NATO was politely declined on the ground that it would undermine the whole concept of collective security. In his Broadcast on May 31, 1960, President de Gaulle said,

"In order that it become even-more so, France must have her role in it, and her own personality. This implies that she too must acquire a nuclear armament, since others have one, that she must be sole-mistress of her resources and her territory, in short, that her destiny, although associated with that of her allies, must remain in her own hands." (18)

It was on similar grounds viz. his dislike of integration and his determination to equip France with her own weapons, that General de Gaulle refused the formula of Defence Secretary T.S. Gates. The Gates plan of April proposed that the missiles (i.e., Polaris) were to be put in the custody

of national forces and the nuclear war heads under the United States Control. The decision to fire them by bringing the two together would be taken by the supreme commander of the Alliance.

Further, at his Press Conference of September 5, 1960 the French President stated that the defence of France which while carried out jointly with other countries must have a "national character" and be under national responsibility. He said,

"Furthermore France feels that, if atomic arms are stocked on her territory (which was sought for by General Norstad for a long time) they must be in her hands, considering the nature of these arms and the consequences that their use would have. Of course, France cannot leave her own destiny and her own life at the discretion of others." (19)

In this connection, one has to remember that the French nuclear programme was already launched before 1958. After that year when general De Gaulle took over power, he became the staunch advocate and vigorous executant of the French nuclear force. He pursued with determination the course he envisaged for France. There was the British example closeby. If Britain was entitled to the possession of nuclear weapons, why was not France entitled?

And what was the strategic reasoning behind the United States supplying aid to the development of the British nuclear programme, when the United States repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to come to the defence of Europe even with thermo-nuclear weapons in case of need? And why did Britain, when she took this commitment solemnly, feel the need of providing herself with the means (i.e. nuclear weapons) of her own defence? All these considerations impelled the French leaders to go ahead full speed.

But the process was not smooth and without difficulties. The Government's nuclear weapons programme encountered the stiffest opposition in the legislature apart from the opposition of the extreme left outside, and from the other NATO allies, particularly, the United States.

In October 1960, Prime Minister Michel Debré outlined to the National Assembly the armament programme expected to cost £1000,000,000. Apart from the considerations of cost on which ground, most of the political parties in the National Assembly except the UNR opposed it, there had been other reasons also. According to some, this programme would have the effect of weakening France's relations with her allies in the NATO, particularly the United States. Those who were advocates of European unity and military integration in NATO, found that this
programme of national defence would put these objectives in jeopardy. Premier Debré pushed the bid for atomic force and tried to impress upon the Assembly that it would not diminish France's fidelity to the strong alliance although he also reminded them of President de Gaulle's criticism of the North Atlantic Alliance's purpose and structure. He declared an atomic striking force is an essential part of France's policy "to defend the nation and to participate in a Union of European nations in close alliance with the West." (20)

The opposition's reaction was expressed among others of by former Premier Guy Mollet, the socialist leader. Mr. Michel Debré accepted certain minor amendments and presented the Bill in the form of vote of confidence, a test of confidence in the Government. The angry opposition responded with a motion of censure on the Government plan for the national nuclear deterrent project.

The Prime Minister fought hard to reply to the charges made by the opposition that Gen. de Gaulle's plan for a national nuclear deterrent would lead to France's isolation from her European and Atlantic Allies. Mr. Debré replied that the isolation of which the opposition

spoke or with which the government was threatened was a figure of the rhetoric used with a view to force the government to abandon their positions. According to him it was necessary to hold firm on the positions, in the national and international spheres. He said, "one cannot say 'amen' to everything that is demanded of us or suggested to us." (21) The former Socialist Prime Minister Mr. Guy Mollet, hit at the basis of the policy. His criticism raised problems of a fundamental nature. He claimed that the present policy would result in France's isolation and an isolated nation cannot defend itself. The Atlantic Alliance was, therefore, all the more necessary. The present nationalist policy, he declared, would disrupt European integration and, therefore, would lead to the risk of the recreation of the German danger. The progress of the French nuclear force would inevitably lead to German demands for nuclear weapons. He pleaded for the maintenance of the American military presence in Europe, contending that the only real protection for Western Europe was the United States' global nuclear power. Finally, he asserted "Nothing must be done which reawakened the old isolationism" in the United States. (22)

The radical leader Mr. Edgar Faure presented nearly the same arguments.

The censure motion against the Government was eventually defeated. Out of a total of 480 members of the Assembly, 207 deputies voted against the government. It was not of great significance however. In case the Government had been defeated, President de Gaulle had constitutional power to dissolve the National Assembly and call for a popular referendum to approve the policies. Since he enjoyed great popularity in the country, he could count on people's support and this was seen as a limitation on the legislators.

The French Government was undeterred by the internal opposition of the legislature and the opposition from outside and from the major NATO ally, the United States. In the earlier stages when the French atomic programme was projected, France, it seems, expected aid in the development of her nuclear programme from the United States similar to that which the United States had given to Great Britain. While the reasons themselves of the United States' opposition to an independent French nuclear deterrent will be examined later, it would suffice in the present context to see why the United States declined to provide such aid. After the decision to manufacture nuclear weapons was made, the French Scientists foresaw that they were in a position to produce plutonium
bombs of a primitive type but the production of the thermonuclear weapons depended upon the availability of enriched uranium 235. As it was not readily available, efforts to produce it were undertaken and in 1960, it was expected that these efforts would be successful after six years. A search for it in the French territories had already begun more than a decade ago because elsewhere, where it was available, it was controlled by Britain and the United States and they raised its price to artificial levels. It was expected that French objectives would be speedily attained if the United States' help was available.

The United States' policy in the matter was conditioned by the McMahon law enacted in 1946 which stipulated that the United States could give aid to an ally in the production of nuclear weapons only if that ally has already made the required scientific advances by its own efforts in that direction. Upto 1958 the nuclear weapons secrets were guarded. After 1958 assistance to Britain's nuclear weapons efforts was given because they had made some progress so as to qualify for aid under the Mac Mahon Act and because they claimed special consideration which was based on an old association i.e. collaboration of the second world war period. Similar assistance was asked for by France and it was not given on the grounds of restrictions imposed by the McMahon law.
Later, help to build an atomic sub-Marine was promised to France when Mr. John Foster Dulles was Secretary of State but this pledge was revoked later presumably on the ground that it would lead to a German demand for nuclear weapons. As a matter of fact, Dr. Adeneuer's Government in West Germany had denied any intention to possess nuclear weapons and therefore, the United States' argument would not have had relevance over a very long period.

This subject seems to have been discussed by the then President Kennedy at a meeting with Secretaries Mr. Rusk, Mr. McNamara and Mr. Mc George Bundy, when the matter regarding France's attitude towards Britain's entry into the Common Market was raised. Some Secretaries strongly opposed the idea of giving nuclear assistance to France and the matter was shelved for the time being. This however, led to peculiar reactions in other quarters. At this time, the "Times" of London (Sunday Edition) wrote that anyway France was going to do what she intended to do. But the United States' refusal to give France atomic help would result in France closing the common Market to Britain although the United States would like to see Britain enter the European Economic Community. (It however, appears that the French veto was not entirely the result of the United States' withholding nuclear secrets from France which they gave to Britain. The reasons for the veto were different and various.)
The argument of the London "Times" was not supported by other considerations. The United States' refusal to assist France in the nuclear programme rested on fundamental differences in the strategic concepts of the United States and France. Britain's entry into the European Economic Community (assuming that it cannot be obtained by giving nuclear assistance to France) was not likely to change the French Government's views. (23)

The philosophy of the McMahon Act, it appeared to the French, was abandoned by the Administration of the then President Kennedy and this led to some resentment in France. Later, Washington appeared to modify to some extent its policy and persuaded the Congress to approve some qualified aid. In February 1963, it stated its intention of asking the Congress legal authority to sell plutonium to France for fuelling an atomic power plant which was being developed by the French Atomic Energy Commission. (24)

President Kennedy recognized in 1963 that France was a nuclear power that could then qualify for assistance from the United States under the Act. But it seemed,


other considerations loomed large in his attitude. This is evident from his remark: "The problem really goes to the organization of the defence of the West and what role France sees for herself and sees for us. And what kind of co-operative effort France etc. and the non-nuclear powers of NATO could join in." (25)

During the period any final decision in the matter does not appear to have been taken. The interpretation of the McMahon Act seems to have been under consideration only and it continued to be a matter of concern to the executive. The question viz. at what stage of the nuclear development of France would the MacMahon Law not forbid the President to pass on American secrets to France began to be asked.

It was probably evident to the French Government after 1960, that the United States was not likely to give help in the nuclear programme. Help or no help, the French Government was convinced about the necessity of the French nuclear deterrent and its objective and they seem to have pursued it with determination by their own efforts. Time and again, General de Gaulle and his ministers reaffirmed the political and strategic necessity for France to possess a nuclear deterrent capacity.

It is necessary to examine closely the French pursuit of a national deterrent in disregard to all opposition to it. First, the NATO was formed in 1948 to protect the free countries of Western Europe. After nearly more than a decade, the circumstances changed. The threat to the security of Western Europe was not considered to be imminent. A relaxation of tensions seemed to have been ushered in. A balance was seen to have been reached between the two great powers when both the powers developed massive thermonuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missiles. According to persons considered to be experts on the subject, this ruled out the prospect (at least in the near future) of a thermonuclear confrontation between the superpowers as both realised that it would lead to mutual destruction. A question to be considered in this connection is what were the reasons which impelled the French to politically boycott the strategic balance and to create their own national deterrent. Why was the Western i.e. the NATO strategy, unacceptable to them? What was the French strategic doctrine as now evolved and in what way was the possession of an independent national deterrent expected to sustain it?

**Concept of National Interest and Nation:**

These questions can be answered when we bear in mind that after 1958 when Gen. de Gaulle came to power he
gave a different direction to the French policy. Behind this, underlay his concept of nation and national sovereignty. Nation state to him was the only reality as far as political life of a country was concerned and, therefore, guarding the national sovereignty was uppermost in his mind. From this, followed the consequence that defence of the Nation viz. France was also to have a national character as against an integrated European or NATO defence. The differences based on this interest are basic and no compromise could be conceived or worked out in relation to these. In order to defend her sovereignty France must have, according to him, a national force and if this force is to be meaningful and effective it must be equipped with nuclear arms. This has been the basic idea and from it emanated Gen. de Gaulle's dislike of any ideas of integrated defence. He told the United States' Congress in his speech on April 25, 1960 that "France recommends that disarmament and relaxation of tensions be accomplished by agreements to supervise and prevent the use of "the vehicles of death, missiles, planes and ships." (26)

But so long as this was not achieved, France must make atomic arms. Gen. de Gaulle explained his views as follows:

"So far as defence is concerned, France believes that defence has a national character. France intends that if by misfortune atomic bombs were to be dropped in the world, no bombs should be dropped by the Free World without her agreement and that as far as her own territory is concerned, no atomic bomb shall be launched without France having decided it herself." (27)

At his Press Conference of September 5, 1960 he declared that France would call for a revision of the NATO Treaty to widen its field of application, to give special responsibility to the United States, Britain and France and organize Western Defence on a basis not of integrated forces but of national forces. (28) General de Gaulle further said at the same Press Conference:

"Everything is commanded by the Americans, it is the Americans who dispose of the utilization of the principal arms, that is to say atomic." Apart from the fact that the United States was no longer the only effective power as in 1949, his refusal to accept the United States'
leadership arose from a belief in France's position in the world. He believed, France is great and that she must control her destiny and, therefore, the subsidiary position of the French commanders was annoying to the French. It was de Gaulle's conviction that the United States' withdrawal from the continent of Europe was inevitable and, therefore, France and Europe must prepare for their own defence.

The French aspirations for a nuclear deterrent capability and the Europeans' suspicions about the reliability of the United States' deterrent and uneasiness about the lack of American direction were not without reaction in the United States and also in the NATO. NATO strategic concepts began to undergo major review. On January 15, 1961, the then President Eisenhower stated that the revised military plans for NATO would recognise, it was expected, the changes that have taken place. A plan to strengthen NATO politically was prepared and it proposed the creation of a nuclear deterrent force within NATO and under that organization's own command. It envisaged supplying to the North Atlantic Alliance a fleet of Polaris missile submarines. It also recommended the strengthening of the NATO forces in Europe in order to meet limited war against the Soviet Union. This plan was prepared by Mr. R.R. Bowie, Director of the Centre for International affairs at Harvard University. Its under-
-lying concept was that limited war is more likely than nuclear war even in Europe. Originally, however, the idea of a NATO nuclear force had come from Gen. Lauris Norstad, the Supreme Allied Commander in March 1960. He proposed for a basic pool of atomic weapons with an equal voice (to all members) in the control of these weapons. On February 8, 1962, General Norstad declared, that any large scale attack on an Atlantic Alliance country would "probably be transformed in a short time into an atomic war." In order to prevent or impede this transformation to an atomic war Gen. Norstad said "it is necessary to have a combination of conventional and atomic weapons that is to have a balanced capacity that gives the ability to respond to conventional arms with conventional arms and to nuclear arms with nuclear arms." (29)

The NATO Secretary-General, Mr. Stikker was of the opinion that it was necessary that Europe be accorded a larger share in the nuclear defence. This he tried to impress upon the United States. He stated:

"Europe of 1963 is not the Europe of 1949. If the European partners are to make a greater contribution to common defence, I think it follows that they must have a greater share in determining how this defence is to be conducted and thus sufficient access to the facts and considerations which govern the defence policy of the strongest partner - the United States." (30)

Till the sixties, the nature of NATO's military force was the strategic concept of the sword and the shield, the former being the United States' nuclear power and the latter being the air and ground forces in Europe. It was also generally recognised that Nato's air and ground forces in Europe will have to employ tactical nuclear weapons in the event of any large scale attack. But the tactical and strategic nuclear weapons were supplied by the United States which had a veto power on their employment. Now it was proposed that Nato have both a conventional and a nuclear capability and that the nuclear weapons under Nato control should be used only with Nato's political approval. Nato would have a "sword" of its own. This was expected to give Nato some collective deterrent capability and to halt the independent force trend started by France. This plan was beset with numerous difficulties in its structure etc. A further difficulty was to obtain congressional approval for relinquishing custody of nuclear weapons.

This plan failed to get France's approval. Nonetheless, the revision of military policy for Nato continued to be discussed under the Kennedy Administration because the changed circumstances which necessitated its consideration continued to exist. The idea now prevalent was that Western Defensive strategy should evolve around the United States being the primary if not the sole custodian of nuclear weapons. The idea of sharing control
with the Allies had however, been put down. Suggestions were made to apply the Marshall Plan formula to the problem of atomic weapons but they were abandoned as premature. The next concept of the revision of military policy in Washington has been that the Western Allies should increase the size, effectiveness and mobility of their conventional weapons in order to raise the "threshold of violence." President Kennedy in his address to the Congress on the United States' role in the struggle for freedom stated:

"To meet the changing conditions of power and power relationships have changed, we have endorsed an increased emphasis on Nato's conventional strength. At the same time we are affirming our conviction that the Nato nuclear deterrent must also be kept strong. I have made clear our intention to commit to the Nato command for this purpose the five polaris submarines originally suggested by President Eisenhower with the possibility if needed of more to come." (31)

The proposal to ask the Nato countries to strengthen their conventional forces arose from the United States' concept of "pause". What this concept meant was that an attempt would be made to interrupt hostilities and to try to obtain a political or diplomatic settlement of the conflict before making the use of nuclear weapons. "A threshold of violence" would be established which the

aggressor would have to cross before the Western defence employed nuclear weapons. The conventional forces, it was contemplated should be so strong as to hold off an initial attack in order to create an interval for diplomatic activity. According to the French experts this concept is not strategically sound. The French strategists read into the proposals the unwillingness of the United States to risk their own destruction for defending Europe or any country like France.

The United States' proposals seemed to be based on the idea that a limited war rather than a nuclear war was possible in Europe. This has also been a controversial concept. The United States retained exclusive control over its atomic arms by law and by policy even in circumstances where their vehicles i.e. planes, missiles are worked by an ally. According to the thinking in Britain and the United States, the best way to insure against nuclear war was to restrict the number of nations that possess or control nuclear weapons.

Another aspect of the United States' nuclear strategy objected by the French was the exposition by Mr. McNamara in his speech to the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, which envisaged that after an attack, upon the Alliance, the principal objective of Western defence should be the destruction of enemy's military forces and not his population. He added, however, that if an enemy launched
a massive surprise attack on allied civilian centers the Alliance must have, "sufficient reserve and striking power to destroy an enemy society." (32) The French strategy experts have taken exception to these theories. The arguments, according to them, are not valid because the United States itself being vulnerable, there would be hesitations in the U.S. to launch a full-scale nuclear war for the defence of Europe.

**French Strategic Theory:**

Thus, the French strategic policy differed from that of the United States in two most important aspects:

(i) it stressed independence from the United States;
(ii) while the American strategy at this time tried to become flexible i.e. aiming to direct their force on military targets, the French strategic planning stressed the counter city strategy i.e. to make cities, not military sites, the target of the atomic force. This was so because according to Mr. Pierre Messmer, French Minister of Defence, France did not possess vast means as did the giant powers, and, therefore, France could have the choice only of "demographic" (viz. centers of population and industry) targets and only this choice would be of value in dissuading an enemy from attack. (33)

Mr. Messmer emphasised that the French nuclear

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force would be a central factor in French defence policy for years. It was stressed to have been indispensable for the development of Europe. He stated: "If Europe has to exist it must have a defence policy and nuclear arms" (34) and that European defence could be constructed around French nuclear force. The French Government intended to limit the expenses for conventional forces in the belief that no long war can now be fought in Europe, in the changed circumstances without recourse to nuclear weapons.

The uneasiness caused in Europe by the American intention to retain final control over deployment and firing of nuclear weapons has been explained by another French strategist General Pierre M. Gallois. Mr. Gallois wrote:

"It seemed to the Europeans that the new American defence policy aimed at reserving any possible use of nuclear weapons for the defence only of the continental territory of the United States (According to the views expressed by General Taylor) and that they would defend other areas of the world, including continental Europe, with forces without nuclear weapons. Meeting during the summer of 1960 to draw up the mainlines of a more prudent foreign policy than that of John Foster Dulles, a number of American experts came to the conclusion that Europe should be defended conventionally in the first place, and that if in the last resort, it were to be given nuclear support, this should be placed solely under American control, with the weapons deployed at sea and no longer on land in Europe, where they were "provocative" in peace time and much too vulnerable in time of war." (35)

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The French do not deny altogether that it would be possible to have more effective weapons more quickly by achieving some sort of an allied nuclear force and that it would also reduce the chances of German possession of atomic force. But such a European force, the French contended, could not be formed until such time as a European political authority or government which was capable of deciding on the use of Atomic weapons came into existence. There did not exist a United Europe at present and there would not be one for some time. They further believe that no military programme can be the basis for evolving a United Europe. The French diplomats told President Kennedy that "setting up an allied nuclear force before the establishment of a European Government that aspired to partnership with the United States amounted to putting the cart before the horse." (36)

The French further maintained that an allied nuclear force in which the United States participated would not be useful from the point of view of the requirements of self-defence. France was, therefore, determined to have her own national nuclear force, like Britain. No important country they argued, could have a credible military defence without the capacity to threaten nuclear war.

The French insistence on the possession of their

own nuclear deterrent has resulted from other strategic considerations also, which motivated them. The credibility of the United States' protection was already put into question by many strategists along with the French who doubted whether the U.S. will use atomic weapons to defend Europe. According to Mr. Alain Peyrefitte, the French Minister for Information, the French doubts about the American intentions were not so important although he had stated as his opinion that the United States had never given an unconditional guarantee to defend Europe; the problem lay elsewhere - it was that the Soviet Union also doubted whether the United States will make atomic war for the defence of Europe and this was one of the basic reasons for France's desire to possess her own nuclear force. Further he said, peaceful co-existence consisted of a "balance of terror", which existed "between" the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. but not between the Soviet Union and Western Europe. "When there was agreement on complete and controlled disarmament France would be glad to scrap her force." (37) France needed it for better security against possible aggression. In 1963, officials of the French Government were, however, careful to point out that de Gaulle had full confidence in President Kennedy's willingness to defend Europe but what the attitude of the

succeeding President's would be remained a question mark.

Mr. Alain Peyrefitte speaking before the Association of Parliamentary Press on 27 June 1963, stated:

"Who can guarantee today what the successors to President Kennedy will decide in fifteen years, or what the American people will think in fifteen years? If France ever considered herself protected by the United States to such extent that she did not need to prepare for her own defence, it is probable that she ceased to exist, in as much as the defence of a country is the soul of her existence. France would have wished in 1914 to have the United States at her side but the U.S. came only in 1917. France would have wished in 1939 to have the U.S. on her side but the U.S. came to her side only in 1941. Hence it is necessary for the survival of the country that France should have a control of the means of her defence." (38)

Expression of differences regarding the American strategic policy is seen not only among Frenchmen but among some Americans also regarding the implications of Mr. McNamara's speech at Ann Arbor. Thus Mr. Arthur, I. Waskow (author of "Limits of Defence", Member of the Senior staff of the Peace Research Institute) wrote that counterforce strategy intends the thermonuclear destruction of missile

and bomber-bases, but not of population centres.

"To the degree that the strategy is aimed at saving lives and not merely supporting the Institutional interests of one of the armed forces, it may seem laudable. But the practical results of such a strategy would be disastrous for America and world security... In short counterforce strategy would actually result not in counterforce war but after a few hours of thermo-nuclear exchanges in total thermonuclear war. It would destabilize the situation and make preemption more likely in time of crisis." (39)

This criticism however, has not gone unchallenged. According to Mr. George Fielding Eliot the real point of Mr. McNamara's speech is that only the United States can employ the strategy of effectively destroying enemy's nuclear capability. He clearly implied that the United States possessed reliable information regarding the location of the Soviet missile bases and can target them for immediate destruction. On the other hand the U.S. nuclear capability i.e. the Polaris submarines are invulnerable to surprise destruction. It did not appear possible that the latter argument could have been challenged. Some of the European countries declined to participate in the Polaris-fleet, because they wanted to possess their own weapons (and not because they appeared to question the invincibility of the Polaris submarines).

The United States' stress on strengthening conventional forces and the doctrine of counterforce strategy was opposed not only by the French but by some German leaders also like Mr. Franz Joseph Strauss, a former Defence Minister of the Federal Republic. (40)

President Kennedy's statements of May 10, 1962 had presumably the objectives of reassuring the allies and halting the independent nuclear capability begun by France. The new concepts were not, however, likely to get as they did not get, the concurrence of France. Gen. Norstad had also put forward a plan for a Nato nuclear force in the hope that it would induce France to cease fabricating atomic arms and prevent the possibility of a nuclear race among the allies. But France could not be so persuaded and the proposal raised the problem of control (by fifteen) which has remained unsolved. General de Gaulle never supported the creation of multinational nuclear forces. According to him, it is a practical impossibility to devise a system of control which will be suitable to all the partners and at the same time sufficiently flexible to set the force in motion quickly in an emergency period. President de Gaulle's refusal to accept

multinational forces and to co-operate in integrated defence was due to other factors also. His basic stand that no nation can depend upon another nation's goodwill in the matter of nuclear weapons was strengthened when the United States decided to abandon the "skybolt" airborne nuclear-missile project which it had agreed to give to its very close ally, Great Britain. Apart from the technical merits of the case its outright scrapping was very disappointing to Britain and significant to others. The firm manner in which the Kennedy administration handled the situation in the Cuban affair had also a considerable impact. While Gen. de Gaulle praised the firm attitude, he drew his own conclusions from the incident viz. that the United States was able to act because it had the power (i.e. nuclear power), therefore, if France were ever confronted with a similar situation, she must have the means to deal with it, without having to depend on anybody or asking for somebody's permission. The French remembered that in the Cuban crisis, they were only "informed" rather than "consulted". Further, the French Government remained convinced that in the coming 10 years the United States will disengage from its commitments in European defence. It was pointed out, they were already doing so in Turkey and in Italy. The assumption was that in case of American withdrawal from Europe, the small French nuclear force would be
so employed (i.e. to detonate a war) that the United States would be forced to use its nuclear power.

President Kennedy took up this subject in June 1961 when he visited France, during his discussion with the French President. General de Gaulle is stated to have revealed his reasons why France desired active participation in the planning and control of the use of major strategic nuclear weapons, not only in Europe but anywhere in the world. As the United States' unwillingness to share or relinquish control was made plain by Mr. Kennedy, no progress on the proposals was possible at that time. There was an impasse. The French position remained what it had been from the beginning. France was ready to do all that was necessary in the Atlantic Alliance. "We reject", Gen de Gaulle said in September 1963, "anything in the Atlantic Alliance that would order the disposition of French forces or assume responsibility for our defence." (41)

The United States' desire to see Nato possess an independent nuclear deterrent was made known repeatedly, either in the form of offers of the Eisenhower Administration (which had been shelved for the time) or Secretary of State Herter's variation that the United States should

create a nuclear deterrent force in Nato under the control and custody of American officers who would act on joint orders from Nato headquarters. How to manage this force was however, never clarified. It was left to the allies to work out. The central problem in these plans was how a decision could be reached by fifteen members. If there are fifteen voices or "fifteen fingers on the trigger" in the control of nuclear weapons, how could a unanimous decision be reached in an emergency situation? The problem of fifteen fingers on the trigger had been the insoluble X in the nuclear equation. A situation might arise the West German Chancellor said on Nov. 16, 1961 in which an "immediate decision had to be taken when the fate of all could be decided in one hour and the United States President could not be reached." (42) This was also France's objection and they, therefore, wanted independent nuclear capability. The French suspected that the idea of a multilateral force was not practicable for the same nationalistic reasons for which the European army failed and that it would only serve to rouse the German desire for a national nuclear deterrent. No progress towards a multilateral deterrent was possible and in the opinion

of F.W. Mulley, it could "not be expected towards fashioning Nato into an integrated military and political alliance until the nuclear weapons nettle is firmly grasped." (43)

But the nuclear defence theory based on counter-force was soon dead due to the opposition in Europe principally from France and England. The fact that the United States wanted to retain full control over the alliance's atomic weapons or over their use led to unfavourable reaction. According to General Pierre Gallois, the new defence concepts indicated that the Kennedy Administration had abandoned the former U.S. military doctrine that "any attack against any territory of Nato would result in nuclear reprisal." (44) He further said that in basing defence strategy on Polaris submarines the United States is now turning to an "anti-city" form of reprisal instead of attacks to destroy the Soviet nuclear weapons bases.

When it became evident that the American strategy could not be made acceptable or impressed upon Europe, the United States' policy was modified so as to maintain

interdependence. President Kennedy's declaration of interdependence implied full equality between Europe and America. However, the United States was not ready to accept any European nuclear force which was not dependent on her. Opinion in the United States was, however, turning towards the idea that it was unavoidable that West Europe obtained the right to share in decisions on the use of nuclear weapons. Dr. H.A. Kissinger, former military adviser to President Kennedy and the present adviser to President Richard Nixon, said that he "believes" that the new strategy included the right for the European partners in the Nato to have a choice in the nuclear weapons." (45)

Although the Kennedy Administration reaffirmed on several occasions its assurances regarding defence, the United States' policy tried to seek a more balanced and "flexible" defence. This implied that a choice would be available in the use of defence means according to circumstances, that would permit the possibility of a "limited war" as in Korea and would avert the local clash transforming itself into a full atomic war. A consequence of this strategy was the stress on increase in Nato's conventional forces. It was also stated at this time that the United States did not intend to withdraw

its forces from Europe but wanted to reduce the burden due to the difficult balance of payments position. This aroused suspicion in Europe that the United States would try to escape an atomic attack leaving Europe in the cold for conventional battle and it strengthened the impetus to build up national nuclear forces. Another factor which aroused European and French susceptibilities suggesting a change in the United States' attitude towards the defence of Europe, was the premature retirement of Gen. Luris Norstad, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe and the appointment of General Taylor in his place. Although General Taylor tried to reassure the Europeans that his appointment was not the result of any change in the U.S. policy and strategy the suspicious could not be lulled fully. The attempt to change the emphasis of policy could not be concealed. Later, Gen. Taylor also supported the counterforce policy defined by Mr. McNamara in June 1962. It had already become known that Gen. Norstad's ideas differed from the concepts of the Kennedy Administration. It was also stated that the transfer of Ambassador Gavin from Paris was intended to persuade General de Gaulle to accept the United States' atomic policies.

The French position regarding nuclear weapons and France's determination to become a nuclear power finds its very clear exposition in President de Gaulle's speech of January 14, 1963. He implied that the United States was
not a European power and, therefore, France could not rely on an exclusive American protection in case of a crisis in Europe, hence France must possess an independent atomic force. He said,

"One cannot overestimate the service, happily passive, which the Americans during this period and in this manner rendered to the liberty of the World. But with the growth of a comparable Soviet Nuclear Power, it became inevitable that in case of nuclear war there would be frightful perhaps mortal destruction in both the countries. In these conditions no one in the world and especially in America could say if, where, when, how and in what measure American nuclear weapons would be used to defend Europe." (46)

He acknowledged that American arms continued to remain the guarantee of world peace and this was demonstrated in the Cuban Crisis when the American determination to use them, if necessary, was pronounced. But this was no reason why France should not have her own nuclear weapons. It was indispensable for France, according to him, to continue to build up nuclear power even though it may be of a very small size by comparison with the atomic giants. Referring to the wide criticism in the United States of the French effort as a wasteful, ineffective duplication of the American effort he said, "the monopoly appears to him who holds it to be the best possible system." (47)

He referred to the fact that in 1945 two bombs sufficed to end a war. He added further,

"I do not want to evoke here the possibilities in which Europe could suffer nuclear actions that would be localized, but whose political and psychological consequences would be immense unless there is a certainty that retaliation to that extent would be immediately unleashed. I only want to say that the French atomic force from the very beginning of its establishment will have the sombre and terrible capacity of destroying in a few seconds millions and millions of men. This fact cannot fail to have, at least some bearing on the intents of any possible aggressor." (48)

Thus the reasons of France's determination to possess nuclear weapons have been clearly and emphatically stated by the General at the resonant Press Conference. Two concepts are seen to lie behind the position of Gen. de Gaulle. One of them was that it was assumed that the United States was trying to get Britain into the EEC with a view to bring the common market under Anglo-American control and the other rested on the idea that the United States might spare its territory in case of a Soviet Rocket attack on Europe, by keeping herself aloof.

He stated:

"Who can say what tomorrow will bring? Who can say that if in the future, the political backgrounds having changed completely - that is something that has happened on earth - the two powers (the United States and the Soviet Union) having the nuclear monopoly will not agree to divide the world? Who can say that the occasion arises, the two while each deciding not to launch its missiles, so that it should itself be spared, will not crush the others? It is possible to imagine that on some awful day Western Europe should be wiped out from Moscow and central Europe from Washington? Who can even say that the two rivals after I know (not) what political and social upheaval, will not unite?" (49)

The semi-official French Military Group in Paris gave expression to similar fears - "this is indeed a strange alliance in which the most exposed allies are dispossessed of a part of the means to assure their security through an accord concluded over their heads between the principal ally and the principal adversary." (50) The inevitable conclusion from all these considerations was that France must have its own national nuclear force. The French nuclear deterrent although it would be very small, would halt the prospective aggressor and act as a triggering deterrent. The possession of nuclear weapons


was expected to give France greater voice and to increase
the security of herself and that of Europe. In a television
speech, General de Gaulle declared in April 1963:

"In the centre of the tense and
dangerous world our principal duty is
to be strong and to be ourselves.
Atlantic Alliance is indispensable in
the face of the Soviet power, but
France intends to remain, "her own
Master". Our country perpetually
threatened once again finds itself
faced with the need for the most power-
ful weapons of our times." (51)

The importance which France attached to the
nation's military independence, which rested on nuclear
force was stated again in Gen. de Gaulle's speech of
September 28, 1963 in the most clear terms. He said
the question for France is whether:

"the means of dissuasion and the
economic activity that is a by-
product of the nuclear programme
is to be hers to dispose of or whether
we will turn over to the Anglo-Saxons
all our chances of life and all our
chances of death and certainly of our
economic possibilities of tomorrow.
We have decided without in any way
renouncing our ties with our Atlantic
Allies, to have as they do, the means
to defend ourselves... and to assure
ourselves of the knowledge and accom-
plishment that without doubt command
the future." (52)

51. Gen. de Gaulle, Radio-Television Speech of April 19,
1963, Text (French) in L'Année Politique en France

France's allies in the Nato particularly the United States has been of course opposed to the creation of an independent French nuclear deterrent. This policy, as we have seen was made known from the beginning. The United States' opposition was due to the fact that independent national nuclear capabilities would frustrate Nato's defense policies and contradict the American objectives towards the West. It is interesting to note that United States' views on nuclear policy and strategy had all along been shared by West Germany. Dr. Adenauer had tried to persuade France not to pursue a policy of possessing an independent atomic capability. He had also reaffirmed West Germany's determination not to enter the nuclear race. When Mr. Erhard became West German Chancellor, the German support to the United States' policy for European defence and strategy became more emphatic. He did not like the idea of the French President that France's nuclear force would strengthen France's claim to leadership of Europe. Further he did not agree with the idea that an individual State belonging to the Alliance could protect itself in isolation nor that it could protect Europe by itself. The United States' criticism of the French effort has been vehement and it has pointed out that independent nuclear policies involved many dangers such as proliferation of weapons, accidental, explosion etc. The
only effective protection for Europe according to the U.S. thinkers was the gigantic American nuclear power and it was therefore, futile for others to try to develop independent nuclear power. West German Government also shared these views. It is only in the mid sixties that this U.S. position was to some extent modified. Out of suspicions regarding the reliability of American nuclear protection arose the situation that countries like France began preparing for their weapons. In order to halt the French atomic efforts and to reassert the U.S. position the United States offered to nuclearize Nato. The core of the U.S. proposal was that it would create an independent atomic naval force of submarines equipped with Polaris missiles for the Nato alliance. The United States as has already been seen, desired to retain control of the decision to use nuclear weapons. Earlier, under the Eisenhower Administration the idea of a conventional war in Europe was ridiculed. Mr. Eisenhower had stated that they were certainly not going to fight a ground war in Europe and, therefore, he had sought to reduce the U.S. forces in Europe. His administration placed reliance on deterrence of aggression through overwhelming strength in strategic nuclear weapons. This view came to be revised, the next administration, stressing the increased role of conventional forces because of the argument that the
Soviet Union may not believe that the West would enter into a nuclear war. Although, the stress was thus shifted to conventional forces, the United States was aware that the final deterrent and the ultimate defence of Western Europe remained the atomic weapons, but the fact that the United States wished to retain final control over these made all the difference to the Europeans.

The United States administration repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to defend Europe by using all possible means including the thermonuclear weapons. It was, therefore, not necessary they pointed out, for the European allies to go in for independent nuclear capabilities. Such efforts the United States asserted, tended to disintegrate the Western alliance, which the Communists desired as the first priority.

President Kennedy sought thus to make absolutely clear the firm American commitment to the full defence of Europe. He asked the allies to state their ideas on an effective defence and to intimate what they were prepared to contribute towards it.

The U.S. he asserted, believed in an effective Nato nuclear capability but he emphasized the strengthening of Nato's conventional forces. The underlying idea of the Administration was seen to have been that the Western strategy should evolve around the United States as the first even if not the sole custodian of nuclear
weapons. Even the proposals to share nuclear control with allies were pushed aside, there was no doubt therefore, that allowing independent capabilities like those envisaged by France was vehemently opposed. President Kennedy held the view that helping France to build up her own nuclear force was contrary to the Community interest of the Atlantic Alliance. In this opinion the Nato Alliance and the steps taken to implement the same provided adequate security to Europe and the United States. He, however, later recognized the fact that France had become a nuclear power and was qualified for receiving assistance under the Atomic Energy Act.

The modern nuclear development is so complex and so expensive that only the United States, according to the U.S. experts was best able to have it for the requirements of the West. In comparison with the United States' contribution to Europe's nuclear defence, France's effort to form a modern nuclear force, according to American experts, can at best be a miniature one.
Mr. McNamara stated in his speech to the Michigan University in Ann Arbor on June 16, 1962 that:

"relatively weak national nuclear forces would not be sufficient to perform even the function of deterrence. It has been argued that economic recovery's success reduces Europe's need to rely on the United States to share its defences; (due to) the increasing vulnerability of the United States to nuclear attacks makes us less willing as a partner in the defence of Europe, that nuclear capabilities alone are relevant in the face of the growing nuclear threat and that independent national forces are sufficient to protect the nations of Europe. I believe that these arguments are mistaken... In our view the effect of the new factors in the situation both economic and military, has been to increase the interdependence of national security interests on both sides of the Atlantic and to enhance the need for the closest co-ordination of our efforts." (53)

The American belief and ideas behind Mr. McNamara's speech were resented in France. His reference to independent nuclear capabilities was probably directed to France.

It appeared from the reactions in France that they were not willing to any compromise with the idea of exclusive United States' control on the alliance's nuclear defence, they might perhaps have considered a truly European force

in order to solve the difficulties. Only two days earlier the French Foreign Minister - Mr. Couve de Murville had stated in the National Assembly, "We are the first to realise that the (French nuclear) effort would not be sufficient to guarantee our security and that of Europe in construction. There is among the different factors - the national, the European, the American - a division to make and a new balance to establish." (54)

In the opinion of Mr. Raymond Aron who is not known to be an adverse critic of the Western Alliance any successor to President de Gaulle would be compelled by the force of public opinion to continue the nuclear programme. But the French nuclear policy in the American view tended to have a disruptive effect on the Nato and it annoyed not only the then Administration but those like Mr. Dean Acheson, who was one of the principal architects of the Nato. Mr. Acheson argued, Europe must depend on the United States nuclear power since it does not have sufficient power to balance that of the Eastern Europe controlled by the Soviet Union. He pointed out, it was difficult to believe in the concept of de Gaulle that even after forcing the American presence across the Atlantic, it would

be possible for him to call for their aid by using his nuclear force to start a war. Such a doctrine according to Mr. Acheson would be suicidal. He said, "since the power of the United States to shape the inevitable for De Gaulle is immense the United States should remain calm. Gen. de Gaulle cannot have both the Europe of his conception and the Treaty of his conception, because the hazards to the United States are too great." (55) The former Secretary made a further point that:

"France's military position is very weak vis-a-vis the U.S.S.R. and is likely to remain so for a considerable period. The financial burdens (of the proposed French nuclear force) might well reverse the happily strong economic position which it has only just attained after so many years of internal and external strain and drain." (56)

Further the U.S. experts pointed out that if several countries possessed nuclear weapons the problem of their control would become more difficult and also the problem of providing safeguards against accident. There would also arise the danger of nuclear weapons being used either too early or too late. According to some other officials, if the United States supplied or allowed nuclear weapons to allies, there was the danger of the Soviet Union proliferating in a similar way, the weapons, among its allies.

This would again increase the possibility of accidental use. Apart from the validity of each of these arguments the United States position on non-proliferation of atomic arms among the allies and retaining their control to herself seemed firm.

None of the above arguments was accepted by France and the French nuclear programme proceeded according to schedule. France's determined attitude caused concern to the Kennedy Administration in view of the problems it would create for the Western Defence Strategy. In the United States policy and strategy, France occupied a position of importance due to her location in Europe etc. as a member of the Atlantic Community and Western Alliance. Strategic differences with France were, therefore, bound to be very serious for the U.S. policy and these were taken up for discussion during the Kennedy - de Gaulle meeting of June 1962. No possibility of bridging the gulf between the two points of view on this problem was in sight at that time. While France was not prepared to risk its safety to the atomic decisions of the United States, the United States' view of the stability of French politics seemed to have prevented France from getting control over the nuclear bomb. The United States policy did not deviate from the assumption that avoiding atomic proliferation was the only way out of the difficulties.
Since, the years after 1945 the United States actively participated in the recovery of Europe, the basic concepts behind the Marshall Plan; North Atlantic Treaty Organization became part of the United States' foreign policy. The pursuit of this policy demanded the maintenance of cohesion in Nato and the suppression of independent nuclear capabilities (such as that of France); otherwise over the long run, it would eventually mean a reversal, of that policy itself. Evidently, the United States' opposition to France's nuclear force was sharp and vehement.

Mr. Klaus Knorr, Director, Princeton University's Center of International Studies had opposed the concept of the United States aiding France in the sphere of nuclear weapons on the ground that the French Government wanted to use the French national force as a lever whenever the French policy differed from that of the Allies. He wrote, "Obviously there can be no such thing as little indivisibility...surely an army which has displayed so shocking a degree of disobedience to and rebellion against its Government is an exceedingly poor risk as a custodian of nuclear weapons." (57)

Eventually, however, when the French nuclear force became a fact the United States had to recognise it.

After the recognition the United States' policy sought to integrate the French force in planning, training and exchange of information. The opinion in favour of strengthening conventional forces is stated to have been shared by most of the professional nuclear war strategists in America. They believed that the danger of nuclear war could be reduced if the conventional forces were greatly strengthened. According to the opinion of Mr. Cresson H. Kearney, Senior Research Analyst, at the Hudson Institute, this view is held not only by the American strategists but also by some Europeans, like Mr. Raymond Aron.

The French atomic programme was not limited to one weapon but they intended to develop it in all its aspects. If the French could develop long range strategic systems, they would have according to the U.S. experts, the unilateral national power, to launch a nuclear hit against the enemy. The U.S. therefore, felt that the French force would result in increasing world's instability and therefore, its political instability and that, it was not important from the military point of view due to the smallness of its size and limitations.

The technical argument advanced by the U.S. strategy experts in order to discourage the French effort was that it was outmoded, because it depended on winged-
air-craft rather than on missiles. France lost no time in contradicting the argument. To the American professional experts, the French strategy however, appeared to be highly theoretical. They claimed that the U.S. knew precisely how they would respond in any circumstance. France did not. French plans were on paper only. The numerous American objections have at times forced France to explain their position to the United States. Mr. Herve Alphand assured the U.S. regarding French strategy, "France would proceed with the development of a national nuclear force but it could be combined with the similar forces of her Allies before all, with the gigantic force of the United States." (58) In retrospect, the forces are never seen to have been combined, but they were co-ordinated at a later date in spite of the fact that the U.S. first disbelieved in France's capacity in making a bomb and secondly that French nuclear bomb will proliferate and break up Nato. As regards the French, they knew that a war between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. would be a nuclear war which both did not want and liked to avoid. Hence any war in Europe would be a conventional, localized conflict. France did not want the latter type in Europe.

and this purpose would be served, they argued, by the possession of a national nuclear deterrent.

So far as the United States was concerned the U.S. was prepared for only two courses, either the establishment of an allied nuclear force (this was expected to circumvent independent nuclear capabilities like the one of France) or to accept Europe's dependence (as at that time) on the American nuclear power as satisfactory.

In France itself many technicians and scientists connected with the nuclear programme were reported to have doubted France's ability to build nuclear weapons that would be taken as a serious threat by the Soviet Union. The French had great difficulties in developing a delivery system comparable to that of the great powers and in developing the hydrogen bomb.

Governor Rockefeller whose views on European nuclear policy differed from those of the Kennedy Administration held, however, one view in common. "Under any policy" he said, there are risks but the greater risk was the existence of several nuclear capabilities in the absence of a realistic and solidly agreed upon arrangement for control and employment." (59) He was critical also

of the Kennedy Administration's policy itself. He had proposed that the Western European nations should set up a combined European nuclear force that would work in a real partnership with that of the United States and that the U.S. should help it by selling to it, not by making grants of the required nuclear materials. He said:

"the Kennedy Administrations' programme would cause a crazy quilt of nuclear forces within Nato and the very proliferation it claims that it seeks to avoid. The result would not be a grand design but a prescription for Chaos." (60) These views were said to have been shared by Dr. H.A. Kissinger also. At a Princeton University speech the under secretary of State Mr. George Ball, put the same argument more emphatically. He said,

"The kind of multilateral force, I have described has much to commend it. Not only is it the best means of dealing with the nuclear problem in the present political framework; it is also a means of promoting gradual and constructive evolution within that framework. The Multilateral force would offer the great advantage a further opportunity to work toward greater unity in Europe and closer partnership between Europe and the United States." (61)

60. Ibid, 26 April 1963.

This was the result of the fact that the Allies were not likely to tolerate the exclusive U.S. control of nuclear weapons indefinitely and that the multiplication of national nuclear forces was full of many dangers.

_Credibility is a very important factor in any sound deterrent strategy._ The enemy must believe in what the adversary says he will do. In the strategic differences between the United States and France, France does not believe the United States would risk its cities and territory in order to defend Europe and thinks that the Soviet Union also does not believe in it. The United States does not believe what Gen. de Gaulle says viz. the small French atomic force is intended to strike at the Soviet Union, and the U.S. experts think the Soviet Union, also does not believe in it. Nobody seems to believe in anybody else.

The role of General de Gaulle in the French Nuclear Force.

Finally it is necessary to examine the charges made by the critics that General de Gaulle has converted the French nuclear programme to purposes for which it was not intended and that the French nuclear force has been his conception and creation. On the other hand, it has been maintained by others that growth of France as a nuclear power has been the result of a continuous process which evolved since the time when the CEA was established and it was already conceived under the Fourth Republic.
What the Government of the Fifth Republic has done is that it gave a wider shape of the 1945 Plan and vigorously executed it.

It can be stated that the Fifth Republic inherited the French nuclear programme from the Fourth Republic. But the Fourth Republic itself had inherited the same from the provisional Gaullist Government. When the CEA was established in 1945 its purpose was to have been as mentioned before research "into the use of atomic energy in the fields of science, industry and national defence." Its military application was not seen to have been considered important at that time. Although national defence has been one of the considerations behind the setting up of the CEA, the objective of providing atomic bombs, was not in view.

Still, the atomic policies of the Fourth and the Fifth Republics are not very different. Under the Fourth Republic the policies of the Government were influenced by Gaullist Ministers, although the leading advocates of a French nuclear programme belonged to various groups. They included radicals, some generals of the army, European integrationists etc. Some other radicals, Socialists and some political groups, opposed to Gen. de Gaulle, opposed it and preferred that the nuclear defence should be left to the United States.

However, these two opposing viewpoints were brought together by many factors which I have mentioned
earlier, such as the U.S. unwillingness to allow the European allies control over the nuclear weapons, failure of the Suez expedition etc. And then the decision to make the bomb was made. Behind the decision was the feeling among most political groups that France should not be left in the cold again. Most political groups had a share in the decision regarding militarization of the French atomic programme. But there is one difference which could be noticed in the attitudes of the Fourth and Fifth Republics. The Fourth Republic did not think of an independent French force but rather one which would be coordinated and integrated with Nato forces. The conception of General de Gaulle under the Fifth Republic has been different, as has already been seen; there is no place for an integrated Nato in his policies, because he conceives of the French nuclear force principally as a means towards an independent foreign policy and the essential guarantee of protecting French national interests. It, therefore, seems that Gen. de Gaulle endorsed the nuclear policy of the Fourth Republic. It was already invented before he came to power. Mr. C.L. Sulzberger wrote, "It ante-dated de Gaulle and may post-date him." (62) In this

connection the New York Times wrote:

"President Kennedy warns that myths even distract the realm of foreign affairs. A myth (now to be explored by Mr. Rusk, Secretary) we invented ourselves that France's current nuclear policy is a Gaullist invention and that it will fade when (Gen)' de Gaulle retires. This policy was in fact conceived nineteen months before de Gaulle took power." (63)

It further wrote about the U.S. anxieties regarding the possibilities of a European nuclear force bigger than the French force and not under the U.S. control, being ever set up. The French policies, however, did not show any such plan, in fact de Gaulle found that the two preceding Governments of Gaillard and Pflimlin had initiated secret talks with West Germany and Italy for collaboration in the production of nuclear weapons. These were stopped by De Gaulle.

The French Nuclear Force - an appraisal.

In spite of all opposition, the French Nuclear force became a fact and France came to be recognized as a nuclear power. In order to judge the significance of French nuclear power it is necessary to look into some qualitative and quantitative aspects of the French deterrent. In 1963, the French plans revealed that they would have 50 Mirage IV bombers, fighter and fighter

bombers with nuclear weapons and three submarines equipped with Polaris type missiles. Subsequently, additions and changes have been made and the French hope to improve and strengthen this deterrent and make it formidable by 1970. The French nuclear programme since that time has been trying to catch-up with the most modern developments in the field.

In a general way, the nuclear forces of the two super powers dwarf the French deterrent. The French nuclear force has been called a "baby" vis-a-vis the forces of the two giants in the field. It has been criticized on technical, strategic and political grounds bringing into question or rather challenging its effectiveness. An important drawback of the French nuclear force, it was pointed out in 1963, was that the French were not in a position to develop suitable delivery vehicles; similarly they could not make progress towards miniaturization of weapons. This was the difficulty experienced by the British also and ultimately they gave up the attempt to procure an independent deterrent.

Further, some strategists argued that the French nuclear force is not invulnerable. When the enemy finds the threat of this small force, it will be tempted to wipe it out by preemptive attack. The bases from which the French nuclear force would operate could again be only few and the enemy may be tempted to destroy all of them. In
the case of Nato, it has numerous bases from which it could operate and, therefore, the Nato force was not so vulnerable. Again, in view of the rapid development of anti-aircraft rockets like that of the SAM III of the Soviet Union, the extent to which the French air borne deterrent would be effective has been doubted by strategists. A small nuclear force can be used by automating the response to the aggression and thereby without leaving any possibility of preventing the war. The danger of accidental war also increases as has already been pointed out.

The grounds on which the professional U.S. strategy experts opposed the development of the French nuclear force have already been seen viz. that the independent French nuclear deterrent would jeopardize their Western strategy (counter force) etc. They pointed out also to the danger that if this independent power attacks enemy cities and the enemy if unable to locate the source of this fire, would not hesitate to destroy the cities and bases of all other allies also.

The French, it seemed, hoped to build a triggering and attritional deterrent. It might not be so powerful as to destroy the enemy but it was expected to do severe damage and put on the enemy the additional burden of strain to meet the deterrent. The French Foreign Minister Mr. Couve de Murville had already recognized, as has been seen earlier, the limitations of the French
nuclear effort, in his Assembly Speech of June 13, 1962. In this regard, the Minister of the Armed Forces of France, Pierre Messmer wrote, "The nuclear weapon does not permit France to become one of world's giant; but it does permit her to be a quantity to be reckoned with as soon as her vital interests are at stake." (64)

When the French effort was attacked in the U.S. the French had pointed out emphatically that the nuclear force could obstruct a Soviet invasion of Europe. When the French nuclear deterrent was ready, according to France, the Soviet strategists would have to take into account the possibility that a conventional attack would immediately be responded with nuclear reprisals by France which was in the front-line. This could lead to starting a nuclear war. The Soviet strategists would have thus to reckon with the French nuclear force before contemplating a conventional attack on Western Europe. This was considered to be a new element added by France to the balance of power and it seems to be very near the truth.

The fifth French Republic thought above all of France and French national interest. That was not all. The French leaders have an image of Europe and in the construction of this Europe they seem to assign an important place

and role to France's nuclear deterrent i.e. that Europe's defence could be built around the French deterrent. A French secretary of State Michel Habib Deloncle speaking to the Council of Europe in Strassbourg said,

"When Europe's political structure has been strengthened it will be necessary to outline how France's nuclear effort can be utilised by all the European nations for common defence. The fact that France has already progressed some distance along this road opens the possibility of revising for the benefit of Europe the balance of "cost and responsibilities within the Atlantic Alliance." (65)

The French ideas have invited the same criticism which they levelled against the United States' nuclear protection to Europe. If France could not rely on the U.S. guarantee of nuclear protection, how could her European Allies like West Germany and others be asked to rely on the French guarantee? The solution might possibly in such a case, depend upon the shape that would be given to the common defence of the Europe of France's conception, and, on the chances of realisation of such a Europe, and, therefore, at the present moment the French nuclear force has a national relevance.

Strategically as a national nuclear capability, the French nuclear force will be able to do, it seems, what

the French leaders claim it could do. Although the logic behind the French strategic theory seems irrefutable, its significance may depend upon the assumed situations arising. It has influenced and altered significantly NATO's policy of Western defence in NATO but a complete break had not been possible till the end of the period under consideration (even till this time). Its independence from the U.S. nuclear force necessarily implied technical deficiencies. But these problems seem to have led the French towards the consideration of a European deterrent. There were numerous proposals for bringing about arrangements regarding the scientific and industrial integration among the Western allies such as France, West Germany, Benelux countries etc. At that time (in 1964) these were however, in the embryonic stage and there was no noteworthy progress or achievement. In the December 1964 meeting of the NATO ministerial conference, a reconciliation between the French and American points of view seems to have been brought about. Different factors in the world probably influenced the situation. France expressed her willingness to co-ordinate the targeting of the French "force-de-frappe" with the American strategic system. At this time the French strategy seemed to be linked with the Western strategic system.
While there was consistent opposition from the United States Administration for an independent French nuclear force, some independent thinkers welcomed the French project, in 1960, for instance, on the ground that it added greatly to the strength of the free world's collective defence. According to them it was not the mere acquisition and possession of a nuclear force by France that was the real concern, it was rather Gen. de Gaulle's attempt to use the French nuclear capability as a lever to force a reorganization of the North Atlantic Treaty alliance, into an old fashioned coalition; in order to build up Europe's own defences when the United States might withdraw from Europe.

In the changed context of the European political situation, when the possibility of confrontation whether conventional or nuclear, seems to have been ruled out by strategy experts and political leaders, the diminutive French force could be said to have been more important politically than militarily during the period.