Chapter VI

Conclusions.
CONCLUSIONS.

At the end of the period of our study the divergence in the attitudes of France and the United States towards the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance and Organisation did not show any signs of mitigation. The French policy remained unchanged on all the points such as the pursuit of a policy of independent French nuclear capability, non-participation in the Nato exercises, assertion for France of an independent role. It was inevitable that Gen. de Gaulle's policies, which were inspired by his concept of nation and nationalism, which sought to restore France to a position of power and international prestige, came into conflict with the policies of the Nato led by the United States as the U.S. sought to have co-ordinated policies for all the member-states of the Nato. To the French, such co-ordination and integration of their country to the policies and objectives of Nato, dominated by the United States and which retained to itself the powers of making vital decisions (such as the control and use of nuclear weapons) was tantamount to the loss of their national sovereignty. France continued to pursue policies, suited to her national interest, though contrary to the policies of the Nato, without at any time overtly repudiating the Atlantic Alliance. There was, however, no possibility of United States' policies undergoing any changes because
the U.S. policies had evolved out of its commitment to Europe in post-war years and changing them would have amounted to the abandonment of the principles involved. In the U.S. view the situation did not demand such changes during this period. The loosening of the Atlantic Alliance, was, in fact, partly the work of time. French co-operation with the Nato was reduced to the minimum and the possibility of any amelioration in the attitudes of the two countries appeared remote.

II. France's possession of atomic weapons could be said to have contributed to the prestige of the country and enabled her to occupy the leading place in Europe during the period under consideration. But beyond this, it could not be said to have affected the existing situation regarding nuclear strategy between the principal nuclear powers of the world at that time - the United States and the Soviet Union. By reason of its size the French nuclear capability was diminutive. On the other hand, the possibility of nuclear confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union was ruled out because of parity that had come to be established between them. The French nuclear force was nevertheless significant; its significance lay in the political rather than in the military sphere.

III. Gen. de Gaulle's opposition to the political integration of Europe in the form of a supranational state
rested on his concept of nation and nationalism. To him, as also to many other political thinkers in Europe, the evolution of the different nation-states of Europe into a single supra-national state was impossible. At stake had been the position held by Gen. de Gaulle that the concept of nation and national interest could only be the basis of the state's internal and external policy and there could not be any other basis. According to another set of political thinkers, the nature of nationalism as envisioned in Gen. de Gaulle's concept has become out of date in the nuclear age of twentieth century and the unity of Europe has become, therefore, inevitable.

The issue has remained undecided; due to the persistence on the one hand of nationalism and jealous concern for protecting the national interests; on the other, of distinct signs towards a unity and uniformity (according to some thinkers, internationalism). The United States has all along continued to stress political unity and integration in Western Europe. A number of political thinkers in America believe in the possibility of a supranational state of the European countries. However, during the period under consideration, the possibility of evolving a single, politically United State of Europe, in which the nation-states surrendered their national sovereignty, did not exist.

The present trend is not the same as the nineteenth century nationalism; but it did not seem to have been that of
supranational state of the continents either during the period under consideration. Possibly the present was a transitional period. In many respects, the trend showed a tendency towards unity. The answer to the question whether this trend would eventually be so powerful as to sweep away the barriers of nationalism and tradition and the distinct cultures of the nation-states and would lead to a political unification of Europe, need, it seems, await passage of time.

IV. The Franco-German Reconciliation of 1963 represents a great advance over the past in so far as it has practically ended the historic hostility between the two peoples. It was made possible largely due to the efforts of and faith in the West-oriented policies of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. It was due no less to the attitude of General de Gaulle himself who based this policy on his own concept of Europe, of a Europe based on Franco-German solidarity. To West Germany, the way to Western Europe seemed to be through France though Germany found during the period much difficulty in making a choice between France and the United States. In spite of growing friendly relations between the two countries since 1958, the French policies, as far as they concerned the United States, Nato etc. sometimes put the Federal Republic in an embarrassing position. Due to the peculiar evolution of the Federal Republic in post-World War
II years, it seemed out of the question during the period under consideration, that West Germany would assume a position of independence from the United States. The French policies have during the period shown marked divergence from the Nato and from the U.S. policies; the French also aspired to assume an independent role. The United States had by and large supported this state of affairs and it did not object either to a Franco-German Reconciliation, within the framework of the North Atlantic Alliance. Had there been, however, the idea of a Europe led by France and Germany independent of the United States, and a Western Europe as a "third force" they would have found the American Government hostile to these ideas.

But this fact does not belittle the significance of what was achieved in the Franco-German reconciliation. What was brought to an end was the centuries-old hostility between the two peoples, not merely the change of opposing policies of two transient governments. In this sense, it does represent a great advance over the past. It has led to the opening up of potentialities.

The limitations on what the Franco-German Reconciliation might be able to achieve in various spheres are inherent in the limitations put on the Federal Republic in the post-war settlements. The complicated factors existing at present make the possibility of discerning the effects
and possibilities of the French-German treaty over a long period, dim and difficult.

V. The basis of Franco-American relations, since the time the thirteen colonies evolved into a United States of America has been friendship. The people of both the countries since that time have been followers of nearly the same principles. There have not been fundamental differences or opposition between the governments or the peoples of the two countries.

The French American relations, however, during the period had to be interpreted in a manner other than the traditional one i.e. they were treated as problematic after 1958-1959. The marked changes noticeable in the attitudes and policies of France towards the United States since the advent of the Fifth Republic were enunciated by the President of the Fifth Republic out of his regard for national interest in the political, economic, military and strategic spheres; but they arose largely as a result of the changed perspective of the European situation during the post-war years (important among the factors responsible for bringing about the change being the growth of thermo-nuclear weapons); they were also the result of growth. If it were not Gen. de Gaulle who came out with the ideas which led to divergences, perhaps somebody else would have done so. The problems that are said
to have been created by the Fifth French Republic were inherent in the situation, i.e. in the growth. Initially, it was the United States' policy after the termination of the hostilities, to materially support the reconstruction and development of Western Europe which transformed the situation. The process of growth commenced and continued and it could not be arrested at a certain stage. It was impossible at this time for anyone in Germany to focus attention on the new situation and talk of assuming a role of importance and independence from the United States. It was, therefore, left to the French. In his vigorous pursuit of nationalist policies, the historical realist, General de Gaulle succeeded in elevating France to a higher position.

The problem of Franco-American relations is not, therefore, a problem, conceived in personal terms, centering around the person of Gen. de Gaulle. As such, it will not be solved by his disappearance from the French political scene. The real problem is that of the relations between two countries which are unequals, a great power, the United States of America and a smaller nation, France, viewed not in the light of the cold-war relationship, but in the light of the changed situations beyond recognition to-day.