CHAPTER ONE

THE FRENCH NUCLEAR POLICY: ITS INCEPTION AND RATIONALE

1.1 French Threat Perception in the Aftermath of the Second World War

The end of the First World War saw liquidation of the four well-entrenched imperial systems in Europe such as the Habsburg, Ottoman, Romanof and German. The post first world war multipolar system that emerged was ideologically oriented in three streams, the Western allied democracies, the Soviet Communist system, and the axis powers comprising the fascist, the Nazi and authoritarian regimes. The end of the Second World War saw collapse of axis power bloc. There occurred a new power equilibrium in Europe. The old traditional actors were replaced by the new actors and as a result, there emerged a bipolar structural global power system. The gravitational centre of global power shifted either to the periphery of Europe, such as the Soviet Union or to outside of Europe, the USA. From among the European powers, Germany had been defeated hands down, therefore its fate depended upon the allied powers. In any case it was partitioned while the eastern part, the GDR, was integrated with the Soviet bloc, the Western part, FRG with the US led Western bloc.

From among the traditional allied powers, France, even though, following the end of the Second World War, became a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and also obtained occupation zone in Germany, yet it felt somewhat amiss in the new post-war European setting. There is no gainsaying the fact that Britain even after withdrawal from India and other colonies, was counted as a prime Western power, next to the US within the Western bloc. But this was not the case with France. So France was

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determined to regain its major power position in European politics. It had suffered humiliation at the hands of Germany thrice since 1871. After the Second World War, it had to formulate its defense strategy, so as to avoid another military fiasco, whether in confrontation with Germany or with the USSR, a new super power of the Communist bloc.

In this regard, Edward Morse makes observation:

The change in the French international position after 1871 represented a momentous and stark discontinuity in international political history. It reversed the relative power of France and Germany on the western extremity of the European continent and transformed the structure of the balance of power in Europe as it had been known for two centuries. 2

Another important change that occurred after the Second World War was the changing nature of war. The invention of the atom bomb and its destructive power brought a new turn to the pattern of war. Most of the European nations then found themselves in different power equations.

France, from among the continental powers, faced threat from different parts of the world. There were threats to French vital interests in different world regions. Any country that posed a threat to the self-perceived national or vital interests was considered the enemy. According to the ordinance of 7th January 1959, the first of the three goals of the country's defence policy was "to defend France's national interests, which are its population, its territorial integrity, its economic resources, its means of communications and its citizens abroad". At the same time, France must ensure protection of its strategic interests at the international level while contributing to prevent conflicts, maintain or re-establish peace, and guarantee respect of international law and

2 Edward L. Morse, Foreign Policy and Interdependence in Gaullist France (New Jersey, 1973).
democratic values in the world. And finally, to work for the development of European construction and stability on the European continent. 3

Essentially, France faced two types of threats: one was against its physical existence, and the second was against its status as a major power in the world. Its threat perception was two-fold, one on historical account from West Germany, and the other from communism in the Soviet Union. The fear from Germany was putative; if it in course of time became so powerful as to overwhelm France. Germany's demographic salience as well as its industrial strength was far superior to that of France. Therefore, to maintain her security, France had to rely on Anglo-Saxon help. Expressing French fear of West Germany, an eminent French politicologue, Francois Mauriac once said, that with divided Germany, the French have to sleep with one eye open, and with united Germany they will have to sleep with both eyes open. 4

Secondly, against its status as a major power, it faced a threat not only from Germany and the Soviet Union, but also, in some what far-fetched way from the U.S. as well. The loss of French status as a major power was accounted for by four factors according to Saul K. and Irina Padover: (1) France's own reduced importance, as expressed in the words of de Gaulle as "the fall of France, as she rolled down from the crest of history down to the deepest hollow of the abyss". 5

(2) Decline of Europe and Germany in particular,
(3) Emergence of Soviet Union as the 'foremost continental power'

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3 Home page- 'France in the world', MEA on the Internet, April 1996.
(4) Rise of the U.S. as the supreme power in the post-war global system.\textsuperscript{6}

In the aftermath of the Second World War, French political and military planners saw two future threats to French security in the form of the Soviet Union and West Germany. To counter the threat from Germany, the Dunkirk Treaty was signed between Britain and France in 1947. Later the Western Union was formed to confront the Soviet threat under the Brussels Pact in 1948.\textsuperscript{7}

Explaining the French psyche in a better perspective for understanding the French perception of the enemy, General Ailleret (Chief of Army Staff) wrote in an article,

For a long time now, we in France have been accustomed to having a favourite possible enemy, and sometimes even such a favourite as to be, the in fact, only one. Having been England for many years, this enemy was more recently the German Reich".

But, he adds further,

After World War II, our main former enemy, Germany, had disappeared. That country, crushed and occupied, would need a long time to repair the extensive destruction which it had brought down upon itself as well as upon others. For the moment at least, it was no longer the dangerous enemy which it had been. But exactly at that time, another equally dangerous threat seemed to appear on the horizon, to the east of Europe with the rise of Stalinist imperialism. Having already swallowed up half of the continent, it seemed ready to conquer the rest and it certainly had the means to do so, even with conventional armaments only. Faced with this visible danger, our country again found one of those favourite enemies, of a special kind, against whom her defences had to be organised.\textsuperscript{8}

The French considered Germany as the principal threat to French hegemony in Europe. The French search for primacy in Europe and domination was checked by Britain and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{6} S.K. Padover and Irina Padover, "France: Setting or Rising Star?" \textit{Headlines Series}, no.81, May/June 1950, p.55.
\item \textsuperscript{7} D.N. Schwartz, \textit{NATO's Nuclear Dilemmas} (Washington D.C., 1983).
\item \textsuperscript{8} General Charles Ailleret, "Directed Defence", \textit{Survival} (London), vol.10, no.2, February 1968, p.38.
\end{itemize}
West Germany. In protecting British economic and political interests, Britain had often helped in checking the influence of a single power from becoming too dominant on the continent, whereas Germany curtailed France from becoming the undisputed leader of Europe.\(^9\) For a long time, France controlled European affairs politically as well as militarily till the industrial revolution appeared on the horizon. Technological advances made by Germany during this period reversed the trend. This crucial lack on part of France was badly felt by General de Gaulle before the Second World War. It was this technological disadvantage that led to France's worst defeat and brought a total change in the world political scenario.\(^10\)

The development of railroad networks and new forms of communication, in addition to changes in weaponry brought about by mass-produced steel, made possible levels of destruction that had been unprecedented. In addition, the mobility of armies was greatly increased, as was the ability to direct them from greater distances. Both kinds of changes served to revolutionize more traditional conceptions of both space and time, so that security could be measured less in terms of time needed to prepare for defense against attack. The unification of Germany at the geo-strategic centre of Europe transformed its systems and ended permanently the pre-eminence of France.\(^11\)

The emergence of a strong Germany at the centre of Europe brought changes in the strategic thinking of France on whether it should be defensive or offensive. French energies were concentrated in the selection of a method to face a formidable enemy on its eastern border before the war. After the war, French energies were devoted to dismember Germany, the principal challenger to its security or bring it under the control of the alliance.

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10 Edward S. Morse, n.2.

But international constraints made the dismemberment of Germany possible only to a limited extent. As in the case of the aftermath of the Korean war in 1950, inconsistencies could be seen in the alliance’s policy regarding Germany. Differences existed over the issue of the self-sufficiency of Germany and depriving it of its industrial potential so as to pay reparations.\(^\text{12}\)

To eliminate the German threat, the strength of Germany had to be reduced and a division of Germany if possible was sought. As General de Gaulle wanted to see France at the centre of a new order in Europe.\(^\text{13}\) He wanted to separate Saar, Ruhr and Rhine, the backbone of German industrial strength, from Germany. But the British did not accept this division. The General’s Russian visit in December 1944 reflected the French urgency to check German aggression with the help of the Soviet Union. A treaty of alliance and mutual assistance was signed between Joseph Stalin, the Soviet Chief, and General de Gaulle, the President of the French Provisional Republic, on 10 December 1944. The Oder-Neisse line was tentatively recognised as Germany's eastern frontier. On 9 June 1948, General De Gaulle requested the French National Assembly to reject the London communique seeking unification of the three German zones occupied by the western powers. But all these plans of General de Gaulle ended in a fiasco, (as was the situation in 1950, when the Korean War forced the western allies including France to agree to the need to remilitarise West Germany to check the emergence of another and a common enemy, the Soviet Union).

Soviet control of the eastern European countries in 1947 prompted the western European countries along with the U.S. to draw a plan for the strategic defense of


Europe. Having been completely devastated by the war, western Europe was totally defenceless against any Soviet aggression, which had emerged as a very strong nation after the war. The U.S. plan to withdraw its forces from Europe after the war reverted into a defence pact between the west-European nations and the U.S. in the form of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. It was through this treaty that the U.S. committed itself to European security.

The Prague coup and the Berlin crisis created a cleavage between France and the Soviet Union. The failure of the Moscow conference in 1947 brought France into the western camp. The status of Germany was discussed at Yalta in February 1945, and the issue of its partition was addressed, but in May 1945, Stalin rejected its dismemberment. At the Potsdam conference in August 1945, the Oder-Neisse line was recognised by Britain, the US and the USSR, as the border between Poland and Germany. The French absence at both these conferences evoked the French need to reclaim its great power status in world politics.

In the absence of sufficient conventional forces to counter the Soviet threat, the U.S. relied on its nuclear arsenal. But this American nuclear monopoly was ended in 1949 with the Soviet nuclear explosion. Consequently, efforts to rearm Germany were made by U.S. after the Korean crisis in 1950, to rectify the inequality of conventional defence and to emphasise non-nuclear defence of Europe. The U.S. inability to fight a decisive ground campaign was exposed by this crisis. Though the Korean crisis resulted in enhancing the strategic and tactical importance of nuclear weapons, the increasing significance of conventional forces in NATO was put forward by the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, testifying before a Senate hearing in early 1951:

Without adequate army forces on the ground, backed up by tactical air forces, it would be impossible to prevent the over-running of Europe by the tremendous land forces of the police states, no matter what air and sea power we could bring against them... it takes army troops on the ground to repel air invasion on the ground.\textsuperscript{15}

However, the American effort to rearm Germany raised alarm in some European capitals, especially in France. Fear of German revanchism came to the fore.\textsuperscript{16} The key factors that dominated the issue were: the inadequacy of the U.S. conventional defense could be compensated by German armed forces; the Germans wanted to restore their sovereignty, hence they were not ready to relinquish command over their armed forces and; the explosion of the nuclear bomb by the Soviet Union in 1949 not only broke the American nuclear monopoly but it also weakened its position in defending its allies. On this issue, the French ambassador to the U.S., Herve Alphand, underlined the French concern clearly,

"As far as we are concerned, we had no intention to promote, propose or accept the rearmament of Germany."\textsuperscript{17}

During the debate to decide Germany's rearmament and its participation in the defense community, nuclear parity was established between the two great powers. But the superiority in conventional defense of the Soviet Union forced the U.S.A. to include Germany into the defense of Europe. The Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles presented the doctrine of 'massive retaliation' - which was, that any Soviet aggression in the American sphere of influence would be punished with atomic weapons.

\textsuperscript{15} U.S. Congress Senate: Committee on Foreign Relations and Committee on Armed Services, \textit{Assignment of Ground Forces of the U.S. to Duty in the European Area}, Hearing 82, Congress 2 session (Washington, D.C., 1951).

\textsuperscript{16} D.N. Schwartz, n.7.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Le Monde}, 8 August 1950.
The anticipation of an atomic war in Europe created more anxiety among the Europeans. The need, therefore, to have conventional defense brought Germany into the forces. The French were once again fearful of German military revivalism.

In 1955, Paul Reynaud had pinpointed to the situation that, the EDC would have provided American aid for the allies. Due to the defeat of the EDC that aid would go to the new German army with its staff and army college.¹⁸

But the French military officers resisted the EDC on the grounds that the French army may lose its identity. The Indo-China conflict along with other colonial engagements had taken their toll on the French army. The Treaty could weaken the position of the French army and would lead to German domination of Europe, simultaneously weakening the French overseas commitments. There were fears that Germany would become a nuclear power as well.¹⁹

The points of dispute on part of the French were preservation of the national identity of its army and development of an independent nuclear programme. On 24 August 1954, French proposals to preserve the independence of its nuclear industry were rejected at Brussels.²⁰

The EDC Treaty was concluded on 26 May 1952. Its signatories were France, West Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries with an aim to establish an integrated armed force. It was a supranational organ led by the supreme allied commander in Europe. In August 1954, the EDC was defeated.²¹ Radical Socialists like Edouard

¹⁸ Le Monde, 26 July 1955.


²⁰ Wolf Mendl, n.9, pp.23-31.

²¹ Guy de Carmoy, n.1, pp.34-40.
Herriot, however, regretted the decision of France. This decision meant "the end of France... a step forward for Germany... a step backward for France."\textsuperscript{22}

The departure of Joseph Stalin from the Soviet politics in 1953 came as a relief to both the blocs. The tension relaxed between the two blocs and France felt the need to co-operate more with its neighbour, i.e., West Germany, instead of fearing it.

The turning point then came in the form of the Suez crisis in 1956. The Suez crisis brought the utility of the American nuclear credibility into question, along with its reliability to support the interests considered vital by the Europeans. The conciliatory American attitude towards Britain after the Suez fiasco resulted in French resentment towards the U.S. Thus German effort to eliminate discrimination against itself existed in NATO and to rectify its second-class status, it inclined itself towards France.\textsuperscript{23} The Sputnik developed by Russia was the first earth-orbiting space satellite, that not only established Soviet technological superiority over the U.S., but revealed the latter's vulnerability to Soviet attack. With the launching of the Sputnik by the U.S.S.R., Germany lost its faith in the American capability to defend Europe. Simultaneously, Adenauer faced a dilemma about adopting an anti-Soviet stance as he was aspiring for German unification. In order to realise German dreams, the most appropriate strategy seemed close co-operation with the U.S. by joining the NATO. But the Sputnik launch and the Britain's privileged relationship with the U.S. brought Germany closer to France while also saving the German soil from becoming an arena for a nuclear war between the two super powers. Another development that took place as a result of the crisis of 1956 and 1957 was the lack of conviction about relying on the American nuclear

\textsuperscript{22} Richard Basnet, \textit{The Alliance} (New York, 1983), p.162.

\textsuperscript{23} D.N. Schwartz, n.7, pp.59-60.
guarantee to defend Europe against Soviet aggression. France decided to go ahead with
developing its own nuclear weapons. As the Minister of Defence, Bourges Maunoury
said in 1956:

A number of years hence... an army not vested with atomic weapons will
be an outmoded force... The option which we face is not between classic
weapons and nuclear arms, but between the possession of the latter and
the abandonment of the national defense....

The intrusion into Czechoslovakia in 1948, the Berlin crisis, the Korean crisis
in 1950, the Indo-China fiasco in the mid-1950s, and the Suez crisis, declared the
emergence of the Soviet Union as a new threat to western countries, i.e., the U.S. and
western Europe. Though the Soviet Union was not regarded as the enemy that Germany
earlier was, for a status-conscious France, the Soviet Union was a means to get the U.S.
to be more agreeable to French demands. During the war years in the early 1940s,
General de Gaulle felt that beneath a cordial facade existed a ruthless Soviet policy. The
Franco-soviet pact for mutual assistance was signed on 10 December 1944, which was
a result of the French reaction to its alienation by the U.S. and Britain during that
period. It had dawned that in future to counter the Soviet threat, Anglo-Saxon help would
be required. After the crisis in Greece, communism was considered a major threat
to the west European countries.

France was always sensitive toward its position in Europe. First, it was Germany
that toppled it from its primary position in European politics. Then it was the Americans
who replaced Germany to fill the vacuum created by its defeat in the Second World War.

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Both France and Germany were unable to face the potential Soviet threat that loomed large on their eastern border.\(^{27}\)

The exclusion of France from the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, which shaped post-war Europe, helped it in arriving at a decision to regain its pre-eminent position in the world. As de Gaulle wrote in his Memoirs, "France is not France without its greatness.\(^{28}\)

The events of the war had demonstrated that France was no longer the mistress of its destiny. The French were all too aware about their dependency in defending their country against a powerful enemy. They could not rely on the allies for their defence.\(^{29}\)

This mistrust regarding seeking allies' help was reflected in de Gaulle's views:

"... We must not forget that we are alone among foreigners; for the allies are foreigners. They may become our enemies tomorrow."\(^{30}\)

To achieve greatness for France in the world, possession of the nuclear bomb was regarded as an essential element of national defence. Assessing the effect of the U.S. nuclear bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, France decided to possess it, since without it, French defence would be incomplete. Giving legitimacy to French possession of the nuclear bomb, the French nuclear scientist, Prof. Frederic Joliot had declared that:

\(^{27}\) Yalta (February 4-11, 1945) and Potsdam (July 17 - August 2, 1945) added injury to the insult. In France, Yalta was the symbol of a world system run by the two superpowers. At Potsdam, the Big Three agreed once again on the principles that would guide the four victorious powers in their joint administration of Germany.


\(^{29}\) Wolf Mendl, n.9, p.69.

"France can legitimately claim the knowledge of the secret of atomic energy because she is the country which has given birth to developed nuclear physics." 31

Despite being a loser in the Second World War, Britain kept occupying an important position in the Alliance. The pact to share nuclear know-how was signed between the U.S. and Britain. 32 And France was denied this privilege that was granted to Britain. Reacting to this American discrimination, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, then Minister of Defence, in a press conference on 22 November 1957 had said that:

"For France, for Europe to accept discrimination in the matter of weapons and especially atomic weapons, would be equivalent to self-condemnation to permanent decadence". 33

Germany gave up its claim to possess nuclear weapons in its Paris agreement in 1954. 34 Finally, under the Brussels Treaty of 1954, i.e., Western European Union,

- Germany was recognised as a sovereign state in domestic and foreign affairs, though the stationing of the allied forces continued.
- Germany decided against manufacturing atomic, biological and chemical weapons on her territory.
- Germany renounced the use of force for its reunification.

The emerging Russian threat to Europe and breaking American monopoly over nuclear weapons and delivery systems galvanised the French to develop nuclear weapons.


33 As quoted in Lawrence Scheinman, n.24, pp.188-9.

The development of Sputnik proved to be the final nail in the coffin of the nuclear debate in France. The credibility of the American willingness to defend Europe in the wake of a nuclear threat to its own territory came under scrutiny.

The need to equate the inequality of conventional forces between the U.S.S.R. and the western alliance was felt after the Korean crisis in the 1950s. The crisis demonstrated the non-viability of the atomic bomb as the U.S. nuclear monopoly was broken by the U.S.S.R. by its first nuclear bomb explosion in 1949 and the establishment of a parity.

To fill the conventional forces gap, on 16 September, 1950, the Atlantic Council declared its agreement to enable Germany to contribute to the establishment of western European defense.\textsuperscript{35} To strengthen the European forces, rearmament of Germany was considered necessary. As stated earlier, the European Defence Community Treaty was signed by France, Germany, Italy, and the Benelux countries, which aimed at institutionalizing European defence, and integrated armed forces. But the thought of a rearmed Germany gave sleepless nights to the French. The common view that was held by the Frenchmen was that it would limit France’s independence. According to General de Gaulle, ‘EDC would deprive France of one of the most important attributes of sovereignty: the armed forces.’\textsuperscript{36} The EDC was rejected by the French National Assembly in August 1954 and the accession of Germany to NATO was accepted.

The second tenet to establish the great power status was the possession of colonies (empire). During the war, France was the only country that was occupied by the enemy but its colonial empire was intact. After the French defeat in 1870, the French

\textsuperscript{35} Guy de Carmoy, n.1. p.33.

\textsuperscript{36} F. Kersaudy, n.25, p.423; Guy de Carmoy, n.1, pp.33-39.
government committed the army to the conquest of a vast colonial empire as an undertaking designed to demonstrate that, despite the defeat, France still had a role to play in the world.37

But conclusion of the Second World War brought a message of independence and liberation for the Asians and Africans under the French control. Contrary to its policy of independence for metropolitan France, despite being a champion of liberty, equality and fraternity, wanted to keep on occupying its colonies. The colonies that brought resources to France to strengthen its claim of being a great power, not only provided France with natural resources, i.e., raw materials but manpower and bases (for military purposes) as well. The years 1945-63 were especially notable for the contraction of Europe and the retreat from empire.38 The colonial expansion was aimed at achieving the means of demonstrating and augmenting the glory and power of the state, while keeping geo-political gains—such as strategic, demographic, economic, and symbolic values of colonies—in mind.39

In Indo-China, in a way the French were replaced by the Americans in 1956. The post-war contraction of Europe left a vacuum which was filled by Chinese and Russian communism. But the defeat at Dien Bien Phu exposed chinks not only in the armour of

37 France (New Delhi: La Documentation Francaise: Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres, Embassy of France, 1995)
French security but in the political fabric also. It came as a major turning point for national defense. 40

1.2 French Colonial Misadventure: French Defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954

Amidst all the contradictions regarding the French policy to acquire nuclear weapons, came a blow in the form of the French defeat in Indo-China in 1954. In the light of the Indo-Chinese war, the U.S.S.R. was perceived as the "major threat and the locale of the threat was Europe". 41 The defeat in Indo-China caused further serious decline in the morale of the French army. "The military felt seriously out of touch with the nation unable to exercise its civil prerogatives; a genuine inferiority complex had set in." 42 Complexities with regard to British sharing of decision making with its nuclear capability increased, and it also strained France's relations with NATO in military matters.

War ravaged France had to withdraw from its colonies, as they increased its economic difficulties. After the Second World War, France started retreating from its colonies or was rather forced to withdraw either after military defeat or because of economic constraints. In 1954, it withdrew from Indo-China, in 1956 from Suez because of pressure from the US as well as the USSR, and from Morocco and Tunisia, under pressure of the Third World at the UN. But France got stuck in the quagmire of Algerian crisis 1954 onwards. It was also the time when France was having serious differences

40 For full details see Alfred Grosser, n. 26, pp. 129-53.
42 Kelly, n. 34.
of opinion with its ally, i.e., the U.S. The U.S. extended support to the demand of the French colonies to gain national independence.43

The effect of the Indo-China war created an atmosphere favourable to an atomic programme, as well as for the containment of communism in Asia. In the midst of the crisis surrounding the attack at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 by the communist Vietminh forces, the French government had sought American military assistance in the form of air support. Despite favourable response from Admiral Radford, head of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and John Foster Dulles, U.S. Secretary of State, the negotiations fell through and Indo-China was lost to France.44 This reluctance on the part of America to help France out of the crisis caused a serious concern about the reliability of the U.S. aid in case American security interests are not affected in the crisis. In other words, the question arose as to whether the U.S. would help France in a crisis where only French security or its vital interests were involved.45 For the French, Vietminh and Ho Chi Minh were not more than pawns in Moscow's struggle for global supremacy. Later, Indo-China became a part of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and communist China against the U.S. and its allies.46 At the same time this war proved to be a heavy burden on the French economy as well; the expenses came to be around two billion dollars per year, that was more than what France received from the U.S.47


47 ibid.
Simultaneously, this defeat in Indo-China highlighted the shortcomings of the French conventional military forces. During the Fourth Republic's rule, the debate began on the efficiency of the mass army of citizen soldiers or highly trained professional forces. Developing the atomic bomb was not very high on the agenda for security of the Fourth Republic until that time. As for the American position on Indo-China, Treverton has explained that, "the United States could not foresee the circumstances in which she would need European support even beyond Europe and lacking the foresight, had calculated that an expanded relationship with Europe would only constrain her flexibility." Two years later, when the French cabinet adopted a resolution arguing that France 'deserved to receive support without fail in Indo-China from her allies', it was unsuccessful in receiving American help for the exhausted garrison at Dien Bien Phu.

The Indo-China war made politicians think twice about their nuclear policy. At this juncture, Pierre Mendes-France came to power. He took two most remarkable decisions: one was to start the decolonisation process, not because of the defeat in Indo-China but because it was becoming burdensome to the French economy to maintain these colonies and secondly, the realisation of the futility of American support. In October 1954, Pierre Mendes-France set up the Committee of Nuclear Explosives (CEN) which was attached to CEA. But his aim was the direct course of French atomic research toward "the scientific, industrial and economic domains, and avoid undertaking work of a

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50 ibid.
51 H.S. Chopra, n.4, p.228.
military nature without economic utility. The *Commissariat a l' energie atomique* (CEA) was established in October 1945 by an ordinance by General Charles de Gaulle, President of the French Provisional Republic for development of atomic energy in the area of science, industry and national defence as well.

Henri Becquerel, Marie and Pierre Curie and Frederic and Irene Joliot-Curie were the chief scientists responsible for the French nuclear programme in the early 20th century or even before that. Later, Frederic Joliot-Curie, discoverer of artificial radioactivity and who led research teams to work on the neutron bombardment of uranium and the concept of chain reaction, helped France to start the development of the atomic energy programme. He proudly said,

"France can legitimately claim the knowledge of the secret of atomic energy, because she is the country which has given birth to developed nuclear physics".

Though Joliot-Curie was accused by the U.S. government of communist connections and was forced to resign, he criticised the U.S. secrecy over nuclear know-how. He wrote:

I consider it very dangerous, as I have already said, the position taken by the U.S. during recent talks, because keeping the secret of the atomic bomb appears as a means of pressure.

But the bomb debate was generated by the military officers in the Fourth Republic because of their continuous exposure to fights and wars, and the difficulty they were facing in holding the country together with the casualties they were suffering. In order

52 ibid.


54 H.S. Chopra, n.4, pp.223-4.

55 ibid.; and Ordonnance No.45-2563, n.53, pp.16-18.
to boost their sagging morale they held the atomic bomb as a necessary measure. As Scheinman observes that,

Guidance and direction for the nuclear policy came not from the French Parliament, but from a small dedicated group of administrators, technocrats, politicians, and military officers, whose activities centred on and emanated from the CEA. This group exhorted successive governments to at least prepare the ground work for an eventual decision to create an atomic arsenal, and their persuasiveness increased in direct proportion to the decline of French influence and prestige in the international environment.56

General Ailleret too was an ardent supporter of the atomic armament.57

After these developments, Mendes-France, the Prime Minister of France in 1954 raised two questions - after his inter-ministerial meetings with Pierre Guillaumat and Francis Perrin of CEA - relating to the state of French atomic development and how much time France will take to manufacture an atomic bomb and a nuclear power submarine", and the second was, “How soon must the government make a definite decision for a military programme in order to achieve the objectives stated?”58

Then came the idea of force de frappe and the man who was the originator of the idea was General Paul Ely, who became Chief of Army Staff after his return from Indo-China. He included both nuclear weapons and conventional weapons in his idea of the strike force. His argument was, “France should have the capacity to operate anywhere in the world to meet different kinds of threats at different kinds of levels”.59

56 Lawrence Scheinman, n.24, p.215.


58 ibid.

The Committee appointed by Ely gave these ideas after studying strategic questions and the atomic bomb -

French national nuclear force could augment the amount of deterrence available to France and the west by increasing the number of nuclear centres of decision in the Alliance, thus multiplying the uncertainty facing an enemy contemplating an attack. Such force would remain in the context of the Atlantic alliance and would be a part of NATO's nuclear capability. But at a time when the American pledge to defend Europe was becoming less certain as the Soviet gained in intercontinental capability, a French nuclear force would, it was thought, reinforce the deterrent balance by allowing less room for errors in judgement by the Soviet adversary on the extent of the American commitment to European defense. A French force, albeit, a small one, could bring nuclear weapons immediately to bear to counter a Soviet attack. This would increase stakes involved and force the Soviet Union to face a possibility of a larger nuclear conflict from which the U.S. could not hold itself aloof.60

This research bore the fruit of success for those who laboured to get it off board - two decisions were taken - one was “to begin research work on a long-range missile programme,” though it was thought that France was only in the initial stages where development of the missile is concerned and foreign help was suggested; the second was to construct the first prototype of the Mirage IV aircraft, to fill the gap in a future nuclear arsenal until these missiles are ready. The first prototype of Mirage IV was flown in 1959. This plane was envisaged as a tactical aircraft with a nuclear capability. Its range was extended to fulfil long-range strategic missions under the Fifth Republic.61

Struggling with the idea whether to have or not to have atomic weapons, France entered into another imbroglio that proceeded this debate further. And this crisis was the Suez where France met one more fiasco.

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60 Ordonnance No.45-2563, n.53, pp.44-45.

61 ibid.
1.3 Diplomatic Fiasco over the Suez Crisis

In the past the Suez held a key position in European military-strategic politics. It was especially very important for British maritime interests. It was called the "imperial lifeline" due to its vital geographic situation at a point that links three continents together i.e., Africa, Asia, and Europe. Not only that, it was located in the middle of the giant pumping station of Arabian oil. It had enormous economic and industrial importance for European countries, especially France and Britain.

For France the Suez represented a symbol of pan-Arabism that caused a great deal of trouble for it in its management of Algerian affairs. During the early 1950s, Egypt nurtured Arab nationalism on its soil and provided the necessary support and supplies to Algerian rebels in their fight against France for Algerian independence.

In later years, the Suez became important to the U.S. for its policy of containment of communism in the Middle East. The Suez crisis also came as a litmus test for France and the Atlantic alliance to know to what extent the Europeans could rely on the U.S. nuclear guarantee, in areas where its interests were not involved.

Relations between France and the U.S. were embittered by the uncooperative attitude of the U.S. government in French overseas affairs. The question that came to the fore as a result of the U.S. government's reluctance to give assistance in the crisis that was outside the NATO area, was whether the U.S. will commit itself or not in these crisis? The war in Suez came to an end due to two reasons: one was the fear of the

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Russian atomic bomb attack without being countered by American retaliation and the second was the fear of losing American goodwill.  

But for France it was the American unwillingness to join the allies in a crisis that mattered. Simultaneously, the lack of strong conventional forces was felt along with the increasing role of nuclear weapons. The nuclear weapons had more political significance than military value.

Militarily, the experience of Suez did not support the rationale of a weak nuclear force, but politically and emotionally it strengthened its appeal. Particularly so, when France was shaken less by the Russian menace than by a sense of being deserted by the American ally.  

As such, differences in interests came to be established between the U.S. and its allies. The French nuclear debate was catalysed by the Suez affair. Two important questions were raised: one, whether the possession of nuclear weapons is a guarantee to secure its vital interests in the military area, because in the crisis Britain despite being a nuclear power (though a smaller one compared to the U.S. and the Soviet Union) met the same fate as France - then a non-nuclear power; and secondly, whether the American nuclear guarantee is credible or not and how far the allies could trust the U.S. for its help in a crisis. These questions further prompted the French to develop nuclear weapons on their own.

At the time of the Suez affair, the French leaders (first the government and the Parliament) came to realise to what extent France would be at the mercy of the Russians in case she was abandoned by the Americans. The Suez affair clearly showed the Parliament members the profound

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64 Wolf Mendl, n.9, p.106.

65 Ordonnance No.45-2563, n.53, p.36.

66 H.S. Chopra, n.4.
divergencies between American and French policy in the Mediterranean and Africa and the necessity of acquiring an atomic arsenal if France was not to be compelled to align her policy with that of the United States.67

De Gaulle regarded the Suez affair as an opportunity to maintain an independent military establishment in France.68 According to General Ely, “France must be able to operate militarily in the world at large.... she must plan and provide for a means of atomic retaliation, ready at any time to thwart an adversary.”69 To achieve this he suggested the “organization of French forces, to include a capacite de dissuasion, consisting of strategic air force and nuclear submarines....”70 At a meeting of the Comite de Defense Nationale on 30 April 1957, the creation of a nuclear force was decided. And the motive was to restore France’s status among the great powers.71 The Suez fiasco not only jolted France out of its assumption of maintaining the great power status in the world but exposed the impotence as well.

The withdrawal of France and Britain under the pressure of the U.S., the Soviet Union and the U.N. was considered a major diplomatic defeat for France as it had an adverse impact on the entire Arab world.72 Expressing the feeling of isolation of France after American ‘betrayal’, a CEA official Bertrand Goldschmidt said:

“An autonomous defense based on national nuclear equipment, appeared to many as the only response to the defeat and humiliation (that France had) undergone... its hostility to atomic armament, a result of its


68 David Schoenbrun, n.62.

69 Wolf Mendl, n.9, p.104.

70 ibid.

71 ibid., p. 105.

72 Guy de Carmoy, n.1.
European passion, was transformed immediately into a definite interest.  

Again the strain in relations between the U.S. and France increased after the Suez crisis. But this time France's relation became strained with Britain also, as in the following years the U.S. made special efforts to get close to the U.K. in maintaining its links with Europe. The controversial McMahon Act was amended during the Presidency of Eisenhower to share nuclear secrets with Britain as it already possessed nuclear know-how.  

And this privileged position given to Britain by the U.S., shadowed U.S. relations with France as any kind of nuclear knowledge was denied to the latter. The reason behind the U.S. reluctance to share nuclear knowledge with France, was the communist connection of Frederic Joliot-Curie, the first director of the Commissariat de l'énergie atomique (CEA).  

Therefore, Guy Mollet, the French Socialist Prime Minister, in 1956 was left with no other choice but to follow the path to develop the nuclear defence of France by France itself. Felix Gaillard, the Prime Minister in the Fourth Republic in 1958, gave an interview to a special correspondent of the U.S. News and World Report on 3 January 1958, expressing the French feeling of betrayal, "France has the feeling of being treated as a subordinate partner, it is evident that this will lead France...... to undertake her own effort."  


74 Alfred Grosser, n.26; Guy de Carmoy, n.1.  

75 Alfred Grosser, n.26, p.172  

76 H.S. Chopra, n.4; Alfred Grosser, n.26; Guy de Carmoy, n.1; Ordonnance No.45-2563, n.53; Wolf Mendl, n.9.
Gaillard was the man responsible for making general announcement about the aspirations and the intention to have nuclear weapons. French nuclear plan was also justified on the ground that, "atomic weapons are the weapons of the future and those nations which lacked atomic nuclear capability would be relegated to the status of a satellite." In 1957, with the launching of Sputnik, the Soviet Union enhanced its capability to deliver nuclear weapons on enemy territory. And doubts about the credibility of the American nuclear guarantee grew further among European allies. France started wondering whether the U.S. was working fast enough to catch up with the U.S.S.R. In order to overcome these anxieties about their defense and the American guarantee, France decided to strengthen NATO's nuclear defense.

Thus the Suez crisis resulted in the French resolve to have independent defense of France in the form of nuclear weapons, since during this crisis the Soviet Union used the nuclear deterrent as a threat for the first time. Another outcome was the idea of a more integrated Europe.

The Algerian war was the persistent point of dispute between the U.S. and France. Under the treaty of NATO, Algeria was considered a part of France and its defense as well. Later France treated it as its internal affair. The French attack on Suez to restrict Egyptian interference in Algerian affairs took place with prior consultation with the U.S. After the Suez war came to an end by American injunction, de Gaulle charged: 'the Alliance had become an American protectorate of sorts.' Above all, the Suez crisis proved to be very vital for the French nuclear policy.

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78 Guy de Carmoy, n.1.
1.4 Adverse spill-over effect on the Algerian crisis - Resolution of the crisis in 1962

Desire for glory and the mission to civilise the uncivilised world gave birth to colonisation of the world by the Europeans. Later, the need for raw materials in the aftermath of the industrial revolution made Europeans intent to retain their control over these colonies and this resulted in serious friction among them. The chief economic functions of these colonies were:

- to supply raw materials for the manufacturers;
- to provide markets for manufactured goods;
- to be a secure place of investment for its commercial enterprise.

The war time necessities forced colonisers towards the economic and industrial development of the colonies. Consequently, demands were made for national independence and self-government on part of the colonies.\(^{79}\)

At one time before the Second World War, the empire of France was bigger than the mother country; but after the war France not only lost its colonies, the effort to preserve them proved to be a great burden on the already strained French economy. In order to lighten the burden on France's economy, Pierre Mendes-France, the Prime Minister of France declared the withdrawal of French forces from Indo-China. The war in Suez proved costly for France in two ways, diplomatically as well as economically. The economic constraints forced France to concede many of its aspirations, in different spheres such as political, economic and military.

The French army was also struggling for a respectful position after being badly defeated in Indo-China after the Second World War and its reduced importance in the

\(^{79}\) David Thomson, n.43.
wake of the development of 'weapons of future'. By the beginning of the Suez crisis many French colonies, particularly in Indo-China had become independent. 80

With the withdrawal of the French army from Indo-China in 1954, the decolonisation process had started. Emboldened by the French diplomatic fiasco in Suez in 1956, the Algerian nationalists also aspired for independence. The Algerian crisis delivered the last major blow to the existence of the Fourth Republic and to the morale of the army. The war of independence turned into a violent civil war between Algerian Muslims and French colonial settlers. In the French constitution, Algeria had a special status, and was regarded as an extension of France. 81

On 13 May 1958, Algeria was the scene of riots by the French colons. The French were completely divided over the issue to grant independence to Algeria. From the Prime Minister Pierre Mendes-France (1954) to the first Prime Minister of the Fifth Republic, Michel Debre (1958), Algeria was denied independence as a separate state. 82 During the Algerian crisis, army officers in France held governments of the Fourth Republic responsible for their colonial defeats. Reverses in Algeria further strengthened military resistance against Algerian freedom (Almost half of the French army was stationed in Algeria). On the other hand schism between France and the U.S. grew wide when arms were delivered to Tunisia by the U.S. and Britain and these arms changed hands from Tunisians to Algerians, who were fighting the French.


82 David Schoenbrun, n.62.
Secondly, the U.S. and British offer to intervene in the Algerian crisis after Tunisia asked the U.N. to help it (the French bombed Tunisian village Sakhiet-Sid-Youssef on the Algerian border on 8 February 1958 on the basis of harbouring Algerian insurgents). For French colonials, "the good office mission" of the U.S. and Britain to mediate between Algerians and the French was a direct interference in the French affairs. The National Assembly regarded "the good office mission", a preparation for complete liquidation of all French positions in North Africa and that America was after sub-Saharan oil.83 The debates took place in the National Assembly under the government of Prime Minister, Felix Gaillard.

Another divide came in between the Leftist and nationalist policy makers. The Socialists and the Communists put forward a plan through the Constitutional committee for a federal union based on the voluntary adhesion of self-governing states.84 On the contrary, the National Council of the Resistance called for "an extension of the political, social, and economic rights of the native and colonial populations without questioning French sovereignty over the empire."85

De Gaulle was one of the opponents of decolonisation, but he did not wish to keep it by force. In order to gain allegiance of the African countries, de Gaulle put forward proposals to extend civil and political liberties and introduce administrative and political decentralisation. Ideas like 'autonomy' and 'self-governance' were rejected at the Brazzaville Conference in 1944 and more emphasis on French federal union was

83 ibid.; Guy de Carmoy, n.1.
Colonial empire was important for French and allies' requirements for military bases during the Second World War. Later it became a territorial basis for restoring independence of France itself. The Algerian crisis spelled doom for the French Republic itself, which induced General de Gaulle to grant independence to Algeria on 18 March 1962 as a result of negotiations at Evian.

The idea of defensive defense was changed into offensive defense by de Gaulle. He declared that:

power no longer lies in territory but in economic expansion; that decolonisation is an unavoidable phenomenon of our time and that this phenomenon is not a misfortune for France but an excellent opportunity.

The Algerian crisis became a platform for de Gaulle to fulfil the other aspiration he had for France. He wanted France to be a nuclear power. But the belief of the French about French status as a great power became a bit doubtful as it was difficult to fight alone, and to prove its status in the nuclear age. Raymond Aron, renowned social scientist felt awed by the Soviets and Americans at the end of the Second World War. And de Gaulle thought that France can be a great power only when it possessed nuclear weapons: “Without nuclear armaments France would be unable to defend itself, and thus pursue a foreign policy strictly geared to its own interests”.

In order to counter the U.S.-British sharing of nuclear know-how and the U.S. discrimination towards France, de Gaulle decided to go it alone and stressed on

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87 De Gaulle, n.38; Hansen, n.80, pp.38-40.
88 ibid.
89 Elie Kedourie, n.81, p.49; David Schoenbrun, n.62.
indigenous defense of France. 90 For updating France's national defense control and decisions over the strategic forces of France, that will make even national nuclear strike force a French one.

On 3 November 1959 in a speech at the High Military School, President of the Fifth Republic General de Gaulle said:

The defense of France must be French... If a nation like France has to go to war, it must be its own war, its efforts must be its own... she must defend herself on her own and in her own way. 91

The idea of French strategic force was put forward by General Paul Ely: a panoply of strategic and atomic weapons, complete with delivery system. 92

The first nuclear explosion by France took place on 13 February 1960 at Reggane base in the Sahara. It resulted into an opposition of nuclear weapons by the French military officers in Algeria, who demanded that France should renounce the atomic bomb and accept the Atlantic integration in return for American aid in preserving Algeria. 93

The war in Algeria drained large proportions of French military resources and hampered French freedom of manoeuvre in a world dominated by the strategic equilibrium between Russia and the U.S. A military coup threatened the French republic. Therefore nuclear weapons came as a welcome change to turn "the soldiers away from the theology of revolutionary war." 94

90 Ordonnance No.45-2563, n.53, p.88; Alfred Grosser, n.26, pp.168-70.
91 Major Addresses and Press Conferences of de Gaulle as quoted in Kohl; Le Monde, 6 November, 1959.
93 Mendl. no.9, pp.106-7.
94 ibid, p. 110
Balance between conventional and nuclear weapons was maintained and this was reflected in the first Five-year plan for defence in 1960-65. The French armed forces were organised in three tiers:

- the *force nucleaire strategic* (FNS);
- the *force d’ intervention* (renamed as the *force de manoeuvre* in 1964); and the third was
- the *defense operationale du territoire* (DOT).

Force de manoeuvre was to defend French frontiers and for NATO operations as well as⁹⁵ to defend the French community interests overseas. These forces consisted of five mechanised divisions, plus one light division together with necessary naval and air forces. *Defense Operationale du territoire* was meant for internal defense and consisted of hundred regiments.

The whole plan came under the shadow of economic crisis created by the Algerian war. Due to economic crisis, the second plan for defense in 1964 got severely affected. Only three fully armoured divisions equipped with AMX tanks and two equipped with other hardware could be delivered to the *force de manoeuvre*.

DOT too was reduced to only 25 regiments and one alpine brigade. Conventional forces got less attention, but the long-awaited highly trained professional force⁹⁶ got priority over the army of mass-citizens, supportive of nuclear forces. Wolf Mendl described it precisely: after 1970 the main object of the navy was to protect nuclear submarines, and air defense was to cover the strategic nuclear forces and the *force de

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manoeuvre and the force of interior was to defend the conventional powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs).  

Despite the colonial engagement, Europe was at the centre of the French defense policy that concentrated on the two issues: one was that French forces would be used by the U.S. and Britain; another was the lack of commitment on part of Britain and the U.S. in case war broke out on the European continent between the Soviet Union and the Western Alliance. Again the fear of occupation worried the French. The loss of Frenchmen and the declining birth rate enhanced this fear. They believed that they are being slighted by the U.S. and Britain not only in Western Europe but in the world as well. The weakness of the French forces and their dependence on American material accentuated the feeling of inferiority in relation to the allies. The experiences of the Second World War made France insist more on close co-operation of the U.S. and Britain for the defence of France and the European continent, even after the formation of the European army.

Keeping in mind the limited armed forces and unreliability of Anglo-American military help, France decided to develop nuclear weapons, so that it feels secure by threatening to inflict unacceptable damage on the aggressor. The crisis of Indo-China and Algeria invoked the debate about the type of defense, as to whether it should be conventional based on highly professional armed forces or nuclear based on armed forces backed by strategic and tactical weapons.


99 Wolf Mendl, n.9.
1.5 Dissatisfaction with the NATO Support in the French Colonial Engagements:

During its colonial ventures France had heavily relied on its conventional forces to establish its control over the colonies. But every failure in fulfilling its mission forced France to rethink about revamping its army.

The poor showing of the U.S. in the Korean War in 1950, which was also the first test of strength between the two nuclear powers together with American reluctance to intervene in the Indo-Chinese crisis, forced France to re-evaluate the viability and credibility of U.S. dominated NATO defense of Europe. These colonial wars brought French attention to the altered nature of war primarily, and the Anglo-American commitment for European security. But even more reason for dissatisfaction was the dominance of the U.S.-British duo on the decision making power of the NATO on nuclear weapons.

The idea of using American nuclear deterrent to check Chinese in the Indo-Chinese crisis was checked by the Congress and the British government that further exacerbated French relations with the U.S. and Britain. The French frustration was increased by the fact that despite its superior equipment and air power, it was not able to maintain its influence and control in its colonies. Realising the need to improve its attacking power the NATO council decided in 1955 to use nuclear weapons in case of an emergency by arming the NATO forces with tactical nuclear weapons.

This important future defence planning for NATO could not materialise because of the McMahon Act which prohibited the American government from sharing its nuclear weapons.


knowledge with any other non-nuclear country. The Act was enacted in 1946 before the Soviet Union had the nuclear bomb. The Act was modified to stop NATO from using nuclear weapons against conventional attacks. This modification of the McMahon Act gave France another chance to justify its claim to have nuclear weapons. They also realised that France would not be able to compete with Britain to acquire equal status in the Western Alliance.

 Earlier the idea was that "since the U.S. possessed nuclear 'umbrella' furnished as the destructive power with intercontinental range- which was also an effective deterrent, the other countries would be obliged to supply certain quantities of conventional forces, whose modern armaments would as far as possible and preferably be manufactured in the U.S.A...."102 But this system made other European countries totally dependent upon the U.S. This fear was further expressed by General Ailleret,

 That defense of France therefore have been entrusted entirely to the U.S., and the French forces would, if the necessity arose, have been engaged by the decisions of American generals and not of the French leaders acting upon the instructions of our government. Our forces thus become species of French sharp-shooters in the American armies, integrated into a system of which we would have formed one of the primitive parts.... France would thus have lost, together with her autonomy in defence, her actual independence.103

 The French helplessness over the control of its own forces under the command of NATO is best shown during the Algerian crisis. There French forces were under the command of NATO. The constraints on distribution and number of French forces were felt acutely. In order to stand by its great power status and to play a role in world affairs France had to send its forces to different parts of the world. Its participation in the

102 Ailleret, n.8, p.39.

Korean crisis, and in the involvement in Indo-China with its commitment to establish peace in Algeria resulted in complete division of its armed forces.  

For its inadequate fulfilment of the requirement of the forces in the NATO defense command, Henry Kissinger, then a Harvard professor, accused France of shirking its responsibility to fulfil its military obligation to the Alliance forces.

... France wanted to have the best of both worlds; it wished to play a principal role in allied councils, but without assuming the responsibility for effective defense. It desired to remain a great power, while following a policy of minimum risk.  

In France, the idea of minimum deterrent was used more often than in other countries. It meant that an American presence on French soil was not required.

The lever that was used to control European allies by the U.S. was its economic aid. Harold Wilson revealed this U.S. hand behind the curtain control button:

More and more American aid is being voted on conditions which involve British acceptance of American strategic decisions, and control not even by Congress, but by Pentagon.  

The agreement between the U.S. and France concerning aid for mutual defense was signed on 27 January 1950.

Despite West German inclusion to increase number of conventional forces, NATO forces were far behind than their Warsaw Pact counterpart. The division of allied forces was directed more to integrate German forces than confronting the threat from the Soviet Union. These allied forces in Europe were controlled by an allied commander-in-chief, who was an American. The SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander in Europe) was given

104 Alfred Grosser, n.26, p.154.  
106 Harold Wilson, Place of Dollars, as quoted in Alfred Grosser, n.26, p.161.  
complete authority to choose the place to station these forces and about the mode of their getting supplies. This control and direction was applied more to West German forces than to the French (whose majority of forces were in Algeria).

Meanwhile in 1954 under the Paris accord, West Germany decided to build guided missiles, magnetic mines and bombers only if the commander-in-chief of NATO demanded it and two-thirds majority of the Council of West European Union agreed to it also and decided against nuclear weapons, either bacteriological or chemical weapons on its territory. But to balance the imbalance of conventional forces, atomic weapons were regarded necessary. In October 1954, General Gruenther (commander-in-chief of NATO, and friend of President Eisenhower), expressed inequality of “conventional” battle:

We have determined that our strategy in centre requires the use of atomic weapons, whether the enemy uses them or not, and we must use atomic bombs to redress the imbalance between their forces and ours to achieve victory.\textsuperscript{108}

It was this massive inequality of conventional forces of the Western Alliance that resulted into friction between the U.S. and France. Being anti-imperialist, the U.S. added complexity to the already deteriorating relations between the two. During Indo-China crisis, France lost some of its best army officers.

The army units that came under the command of NATO were removed from Algeria. With the reluctance of the U.S. to help France in colonial crisis management, differences between the allies grew. Differences over the issue of “vital interest” once again appeared in the defense debate of France. It lost heavily in its colonial wars,

economically, militarily and politically. At one moment, during the Algerian crisis, its very existence was at stake.

NATO’s refusal to help France in its North African conflicts brought disappointment to the alliance’s wartime co-operation, and U.S. arms supply and ammunition to Tunisia and Morocco further estranged the relationship between the two allies.\(^{109}\) On the contrary the alliance’s forces were sent to Lebanon without prior consultation with France. Not only this, the French demand for joint decision making was also rejected by the U.S. President. The domination of the U.S. and Britain over NATO was opposed by France. De Gaulle, while, maintaining his position on the basic principles of international alliances, said:

> The alliance even if regional as in the case of NATO, must be universal in its operation. And it must be based on the principle of ‘co-operation and independence’ so that French interests in Africa, in the Pacific and in the Caribbean could be safeguarded.\(^{110}\)

This problem of structure of NATO’s decision making command and question of privileged relationship between the U.S. and Britain sowed the seeds of future discord.

These colonial wars, that forced France to assign a substantial portion of her economic and military strength to her overseas territories, also increased her financial dependence on the U.S., that it requested of it. It also diminished France’s position within the alliance and in Europe. There were ideological differences between the collective defense of the western bloc and the French resistance to decolonisation. The right of self-determination, an integral part of the democratic ideal was resisted by the French. The colonial policy of France was an antithesis to the idea of a united Europe.

\(^{109}\) Le Monde, 6 November 1957.

In other words, to remain a great power, France pursued objectives that were too ambitious for her limited resources. And its differences with the allies were on the issue of French defense which was identified with the defense of western Europe by France.

1.6 Pierre Gallois’ Concept Validating Small/Medium Power Nuclear Deterrence

Dethroned from its great power status, the dependency for its defense on its allies, the widening gap of the conventional forces between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. brought by the destruction of immense man-power in Europe after the Second World War, the disillusionment with American nuclear guarantee against the U.S.S.R. and the increasing capability of the communist Soviet Union in nuclear weapons, made France more and more uncertain and suspicious of American nuclear capability to compete with the Soviets.

Further, the American betrayal in helping in its colonial engagements, expanded the rift between the two. After its colonial engagements got over, France concentrated on developing an independent defense programme for itself. Total subjugation of France during the Second World War had left deep scars on the French psyche. Though initially France concentrated more on a popular army based on conscription or on professionals, but later its experience with the allies in its colonial affairs as well as in sharing of new technology in the military area embittered France and it decided to go on to develop its own nuclear weapons. Once again the idea of regaining French grandeur was affixed to the nuclear programme to gain public sympathy for it.

Wartime destruction and financial constraints forced France to develop a nuclear arsenal that was much smaller than that of its contemporaries - the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. In 1947, its military potential in conventional weapons was very low. In 1958,
it had an army that was well-trained in guerrilla warfare, but it had fewer armoured divisions than West Germany, who contributed the largest number of troops for NATO’s central front. Unlike West Germany, France failed to make the most of the limited resources of a second-rate power within the western alliance. This was another blow to the French ambition to be a great power. It aspired to retain its glory.

Any political entity that is endowed with a will to aspire to survive, continues to exist. Its first objective is security. But power or force, the means to obtain security, can become an end in itself. Glory based on pride can, in turn, become a well-defined objective.

Added to this idea are three goals -

the material conquest of space and men, the conquest of the spirit in the form of an ideological victory. Depending upon the time and place, space and men can be elements either of security and power, or of insecurity and weakness. Glory is elusive because it is subjective: ‘Accomplished facts will never appease the doubts of whoever aspires for glory.’

At this juncture, General Pierre Gallois, nuclear strategist of France reviewed the on-going strategic debate on the question of having nuclear weapons. The focus was shifted from conventional forces to nuclear deterrence. Pierre Gallois and Andre Beaufre were the key players of this strategy of deterrence. In his writings, General Gallois wrote:

that establishment of a ‘balance of terror’ between the super powers meant that the credibility of the U.S. guarantee to defend Europe had been greatly reduced. It was therefore axiomatic that middle powers such as France should not rely on military alliances and should possess their own nuclear forces to enhance their national security.

111 Essence of the analysis done by Raymond Aron, of the eternal objective of French foreign policy in Paix et guerre entre les nations (Paris, 1962) pp.82-86 as given in Guy de Carmoy, n.1, pp.174-89

According to Pierre Gallois, nuclear proliferation was "inevitable"..., the greater the degree of international stability through deterrence. He also kept important geographical factors in mind, relevant for French defence policy. He said:

France has a specific role to play in the nuclear age which is defined by the conventional position and the limited resources at her disposal to defend the security of that position.113

His proportional deterrence meant

a small national atomic force designed for use in a 'massive retaliation' strategy, which has a deterrent value against a potential great power aggressor nation, since the consequences such a force could inflict on the great power would exceed the value to the latter of taking over or destroying the small or medium-sized state. Thus 'The thermonuclear force can be proportional to the value of the stake it is defending.'114

This principle of proportional deterrence was regarded valid in case a small atomic power is safe from a surprise attack, and if a medium-sized power is ready to get annihilated rather than surrender. He further elaborates that in wake of a balance of terror between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., no country would risk a thermonuclear war to protect another but only to defend its own territory; and that middle-power states therefore must possess their own national nuclear forces to protect their security... and that military alliances no longer have meaning. This way Gallois' suggestive abolishing of alliances by his principle of proportional deterrence leaves no role for America in European politics.

Gallois argued that "in the atomic age no state can depend upon another for defence" and the sanctuary that has to be defended is only the national territory.115 But


114 ibid., and two essays by Gallois in Pour ou contre la force de frappe (Paris, 1963); see also David Schwartz, n.7.

115 ibid.
General André Beaufre criticised Gallois about the need for the alliance. For Beaufre, alliances are necessary to avoid the danger of international instability that could be caused by nuclear forces. He favoured nuclear forces in the control of national governments, "co-ordinated within some form of alliance work." He proposed that two committees be formed in NATO to co-operate on targeting and on general contingency planning or crisis management." But despite all his efforts, he could not explain the 'co-ordination', on which basis differences among allies existed.

Raymond Aron, another eminent strategic thinker, political and social scientist, analysed the principle of nuclear deterrence: whether France should have it or not, and if yes, in what way. Like other strategic thinkers and being a Frenchman, he opposed Anglo-Saxon monopoly of nuclear weapons and supported French claim to develop one of its own. He was in favour of a European nuclear force. He argued that this way, nuclear deterrence gives France an option, both in the field of technology and the military. And above all, it secures an uncertain future, in case the U.S. decides to withdraw its forces from Europe and go into isolation once again. What will France do then? So instead of being too dependent it should develop one's defense for itself.

General de Gaulle adopted the doctrine of Gallois but minus his extremism. For him 'proportional deterrence' was to remain a central part of French strategic thinking. For de Gaulle it was immaterial to match the nuclear capabilities of the U.S. or the

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116 André Beaufre, "Le problème du partage des responsibilités nucléaire", *Stratégie* (Paris), July-September 1965, pp.7-20; see also *Deterrence and Strategy* (London, 1965) and Introduction to *Strategy* (London, 1965); see also Guy de Carmoy, n.l.

117 ibid.

U.S.S.R., but "once reaching a certain nuclear capability.... the proposition of respective means has no absolute value." What was important was the capability to survive an enemy's first strike and inflict an unacceptable degree of damage on an aggressor by way of retaliation.

It took centuries to build a nation like France but it took less than a century to destroy it completely. It was completely devastated by the war and the casualties were its status, economic and political structures, setbacks to its military ventures in the colonies which were fast slipping out its grip, aggravating its miseries. The emergence of Germany on the European continent has cost France gravely but in the game of power, Germany too had suffered enormously. And the global balance of power existed between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Despite its feeling threatened ideologically from the U.S.S.R., France could not disengage itself from it. Communism had emerged as a major threat to western civilisation. In the absence of the capacity to play the role of a major actor in world politics, France aspired to be a balancer. It wished to share decision making powers about the control and use of nuclear weapons which resulted in serious difference with its allies.

The pre-war experience left France with bitter feelings towards its wartime allies. It had a love-hate relationship with them. In order to maintain its position on the continent, as well as to possess nuclear weapons for justifying its major power status, France needed the co-operation of its allies. Nuclear weapons which proved to be the peacemaker in the world, were used by France politically to get even with the U.S. and the U.K. The advent of nuclear weapons completely changed the scenario of world politics. Not only did it bring independence to more than half the world, it also gave France a potential power to control its relationship with its allies and other nations.
Nuclear weapons proved to be more diplomatic than military weapons; the development of these weapons had a great influence on intra-alliance relationship. It led to French withdrawal from the military command of the NATO and resulted in a rift between the allies. Throughout the nearly two term presidency of General de Gaulle the relations between France on the one hand and the U.S. and the U.K. on the other remained strained.