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# THE NUANCES OF FRENCH DEFENSE POLICY

by

PETER J. BERGER

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One of the most persistent and frustrating problems for US military planners is the evaluation of France's position in Western security arrangements. On such key issues as policy coordination or joint military preparations, it is virtually impossible to obtain an unequivocal French commitment. In part, this situation reflects the complexity of France's political orientations and the extent to which they influence defense policy. Force structure, doctrine, and alliance relationships all depend on a number of political criteria which are not always clear. The recent defeat of President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing by Socialist candidate François Mitterrand may well add to the lack of clarity. But, despite these difficulties, France can neither be ignored nor dismissed as an uncertain ally. From her point of view, an independent position appears logical and best corresponds to French security needs. Political considerations aside, France's weight in Europe is considerable, and by virtue of her armed forces she is able to contribute in a significant manner to Western security. That alone makes it imperative to understand French defense policy and the factors which contribute to its formation.

## BACKGROUND

France's withdrawal from the military arm of NATO in March 1966 presented that country with an extremely complex strategic

problem. Although she recognized the importance of Western Europe to her security, the extent to which she could commit her forces to buttress the security of her NATO allies was not clearly definable. To some degree this problem has remained unsolved because of the very isolation that she has experienced as a result of the termination of her military commitment to Western European collective security. Her seeming inability to define unequivocally the relationship of the rest of Europe to her own security has resulted in a lingering ambiguity in her defense doctrine. Having argued that NATO does not conform to Europe's needs, and yet unable to provide an alternative, the French, moreover, have tended to take a critical and rather negative view of things.

The zenith of this evolution occurred during the presidency of Georges Pompidou (1969-74). The official *White Book on National Defense*, written under the direction of Defense Minister Michel Debré in 1972, declared categorically that NATO's integrated structures no longer corresponded to the political and military situation in Europe. It went on to affirm France's "refusal of blocs" and argued in favor of a lessening of tension on the European Continent. As to France's role in the security of Europe, it was defined in a vague sense, the primary reference stating that the French deterrent heightened Western security indirectly by making sanctuary of French territory. And while the *White Book* mentioned France's

defense ties with the United States, the atmosphere of US-French security relations during that period was decidedly chilly.<sup>1</sup>

In 1969, the Chief of Staff of the French armed forces, General Michel Fourquet, asserted in a speech that, for the military at least, the priority in defense remained the threat of a Soviet and Warsaw Pact attack. This did not mean, however, that Fourquet was willing to call publicly for the reintegration of the army into NATO. His efforts were directed toward adopting an independent force posture to counter the dangers that the French armed forces were most likely to face. In doing so he described a strategic "model" which theoretically could be applied either in complete independence or in concert with NATO. The army was assigned the role of posing a "test" to determine whether the enemy was intent on continuing an aggression despite the risk of a strategic nuclear response. This permitted the French to use their armed forces against the enemy in response to the military situation without portraying them as an auxiliary of NATO.<sup>2</sup>

#### THE CURRENT SITUATION

The election of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing to the French presidency in 1974 gave France her first non-Gaullist leader since 1958. Theoretically, Giscard d'Estaing was not tied to the concepts of his predecessors and was free to set his own policy. However, early in his tenure of office, Giscard announced that he had come to the conclusion that the orientations formulated by de Gaulle were correct for France. Thus he discounted any fundamental change during his presidency. Nevertheless, Giscard's subsequent actions demonstrated that this declaration of fidelity was not total and that some aspects of French defense policy would be modified. Of course, additional modifications may well be made in the wake of Giscard's succession by Mitterrand, although Mitterrand has expressed no fundamental differences with Giscard's defense policy.

To a considerable extent, Giscard d'Estaing sought to provide a more balanced

defense effort. Part of this was natural, the strategic nuclear deterrent having reached a level of credibility where attention—and funds—could be turned elsewhere. Nevertheless, his decision in late 1974 to cancel the planned increase in intermediate-range ballistic missiles from 18 to 27 came as a shock to the Gaullists and was criticized bitterly.<sup>3</sup> This domestic political resistance did not prevent him from stating that the possession of modern conventional forces would increase French prestige and give it additional diplomatic leverage in dealings with her European neighbors. And beyond this, it became evident to an increasing degree that Giscard perceived a real need to end France's dependence on a single option, and that he would seek to provide a complete panoply of forces.

This aim was given theoretical justification in an address delivered by the Chief of Staff, General Guy Mery, in September 1975. Mery stated that nuclear weapons "did not have only a passive and inhibitive role, but are becoming more and more necessary to permit action by other means." In this he broke with the previously held idea that French security could only be guaranteed through the essentially negative action provided by a strategic deterrent which prevented a direct attack against French territory. For Mery, the army could not be only a cover for the strategic forces; he insisted that it was a necessity to possess conventional forces capable of intervening in brief but intense conflicts "which could be uniquely conventional."<sup>4</sup>

General Mery's remarks were not linked to any one geographic region, although they

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were interpreted as applying to crisis areas outside of Europe. However, in a second speech delivered in March 1976, the Chief of Staff examined at length the central problem of France's security zone. Mery prefaced his analysis with an evaluation of two contrasting concepts. The first, which he called "total sanctuarization," rested upon the theoretically absolute protection provided by a nuclear deterrent. It could only be applied to a limited area, loosely coinciding with a nation's borders. Mery rejected this as being inappropriate during a period of the extension of defense problems to a global scale. Moreover, he had the boldness to call into question the possibility of using a strategic deterrent independently of the military situation of France's allies, stating that he doubted whether "the national will existed to turn to a strategy of massive reprisals if all Europe had already collapsed around us."

The second concept, the alternative proposed by the Chief of Staff, consisted of the formal recognition of France's dependence upon the situation beyond its frontiers. For Mery, the most appropriate strategy was organized around a concept of "enlarged sanctuary." Within a zone comprising "Europe and its immediate approaches," France must be able "to intervene, while guaranteeing the inviolability of its national territory, with all or part of its forces." This statement amounted to an unequivocal rejection of the basis for France's restricting its contacts with NATO. French security could not be preserved through the "sanctuarization" of its borders and obstruction of NATO strategy. An effective consensus between France and her allies was imperative.

Since the adoption of the flexible response doctrine, it has been French policy to reject participation in a "forward battle" which, even if victorious, would leave Europe in ruins. Even if the military situation implied that the French Army would cooperate, to an unspecified degree, with NATO, it was French policy to leave this virtually unmentioned, so as to preserve the aura of complete independence. Mery ended this

public silence, stating directly that it would be extremely dangerous to remain aloof from an initial battle "during which, in fact, our security will already be decided." He did not, however, go so far as to suggest that France rejoin NATO or occupy a front-line position before hostilities. In this Mery retained the argument that integration was synonymous with subservience, and that it was not necessary for effective military cooperation.<sup>5</sup>

Since decisionmaking authority in French military affairs is concentrated in the hands of France's President, the confirmation of Mery's statements by Giscard d'Estaing virtually excluded their having been made in error or without official sanction. On 1 June 1976, Giscard criticized any doctrine based on the hypothesis that a single response to aggression could be sufficient. Although abstract, this was a clear allusion to the Gaullist policies of the 1960s and early 1970s. Giscard affirmed instead that the multitude of situations which might have to be faced militated in favor of a less rigid military structure. Furthermore, the President assigned to the French Army a mission which went considerably beyond that of a test. He stated that it was necessary for France to possess conventional forces capable of fighting.<sup>6</sup>

The most controversial comment made by Giscard concerned his view of the strategic relationship between France and Europe. Like Mery, he rejected the idea that France could avoid a war by virtue of its nuclear deterrent. He rejected this belief, stating that in the eventuality of a conflict in Europe "there will be only one zone, and the French zone will be, from the start, in the zone of battle which will be general." The importance of this declaration should not be underestimated; on a theoretical level, at least, it amounted to an acceptance of a conventional phase of battle and lessened the obstacles to increased cooperation with NATO.

The orientations defined in 1976 were not accepted without dissent or opposition. The Gaullists resisted any doctrine which suggested virtually automatic participation in a European battle alongside NATO. This

criticism was crystallized in an article written by General Lucien Poirier, the architect of France's "strategic model." Poirier rejected a continuity between an inner French zone and a broad area extending beyond its frontiers. For him, the possession of a nuclear deterrent constituted a radical break. He pointed out that it was on reaching France that an enemy would have to face the first nuclear power in its path. Under no circumstances should France weaken the credibility of its deterrence through participation in actions taking place in what he called "the Second Circle."<sup>7</sup>

Subsequent declarations by Giscard d'Estaing as well as other members of the government demonstrated the effect of this criticism. Giscard modified his position, replacing the certainty of a single strategic zone with an emphasis on the necessity of leaving the definition of France's sanctuary deliberately vague. In 1977, both Mery and Raymond Barre, the First Minister, tended to adopt a position which in some points marked a partial return to the neoisolationism of the early 1970s. Moreover, the Minister of Defense, Yvon Bourges, was a member of the Gaullist Party, and tended to continue expressing an orthodox line. To cite just one example, in an address to the National Assembly on 15 June 1978, Bourges stated that to assure "the security of French territory. . .the defense of Western Europe could require our participation," thus necessitating a flexible force posture. As subtle as this change appears, it was sufficient to restore the notion of free choice which is so important.<sup>8</sup>

In evaluating this aspect of French defense policy, it is necessary to separate statements such as that made by Bourges in 1978 from the practical implications of the changes in French force posture. If for domestic political reasons the French government has chosen to adopt a more conservative position, that did not affect the decisions to facilitate links with NATO or to strengthen French conventional forces. However, the renewed reluctance to give even the impression that France would intervene automatically in a European conflict cannot be discounted, and it will remain a source of

ambiguity which, publicly at least, will not disappear.<sup>9</sup>

## FORCE STRUCTURE

A major decision taken in this period was to strengthen significantly French conventional forces. In June 1976, a six-year Military Programs Law was passed by the Parliament. It was recognized officially at that time that the army was in need of priority attention to increase both the quality and quantity of its equipment. By the government's own admission, the armed forces were two years behind in their acquisitions, and were below quota in such key categories as medium tanks, antitank systems, artillery, and anti-aircraft weapons. It was symptomatic of the problems of the French Army that its soldiers were using a semiautomatic rifle which was a 1956 modification of a model dating from 1949.<sup>10</sup>

In the five years since the passage of the 1976 Military Programs Law, significant improvements have been made. Even if all goals have not been fully met (notably the 155mm GCT Self-Propelled Howitzer, AMX 13 Tracked Accompanying Vehicle, and HOT antitank missile system), most programs are close to schedule. The number of AMX-30 medium tanks has risen to about 1100, with another 150 authorized. In addition, more than 500 Milan antitank units have been acquired, as well as the first 20,000 Famas assault rifles, with annual deliveries set at 31,000.

These weapon programs have produced a measurable improvement in the French Army's combat capabilities. And while basic problems still remain, due largely to relative shortfalls in quantity, the French force structure is now settling into the form that it will retain throughout the 1980s. This force is not designed to fight a war of indefinite duration. Rather, the goal has been to obtain maximum efficiency over a relatively limited span of time. The levels of equipment, whether in tanks, high performance aircraft, or other necessary stocks, cannot be expected to sustain a high degree of participation over a long period.<sup>11</sup>

A second decision of significance

concerned a two-fold reorganization of the army. The brigade structure was abandoned, and the five "67" divisions were transformed into a new small division which became the basic unit. This step considerably simplified and lightened the army's organization, notably reducing unnecessary duplication of command. The new "77" divisions are designed to be multipurpose forces, more mobile and autonomous than the previous units. Each new "77" infantry division totals approximately 6900 men, organized into three mechanized infantry regiments, one armored regiment, and one artillery regiment. The "77" armored division has two tank regiments, two mechanized infantry regiments, and one artillery regiment. Its total manpower is about 7000.<sup>12</sup>

As the basic army unit structure was modified, the government undertook a major reorganization of the army itself. The previous distinction between territorial and active forces was dropped, and, whenever possible, the commands of the military districts were merged with resident divisional staffs. This adjustment reduced redundancy and permitted a better distribution of available funds and manpower. In addition, a third corps was created and stationed in northern France. The new deployment, completed in 1979, gave France eight armored and seven infantry divisions. Of these, three armored divisions (the 1st, 3d, and 5th) are stationed in Germany and make up the Second Army Corps. Behind them, four more armored divisions (the 4th, 6th, 7th, and 10th) constitute the First Corps in northeastern France. Finally, one additional armored division (the 2d), plus two infantry divisions (the 8th and 12th) are based in northern France, forming the Third Corps. Two infantry divisions (the 14th and 15th) are stationed in the south, constituting an active reserve. In addition there are three specialized divisions—the 9th marine infantry, 11th parachute, and 27th alpine—which are not incorporated into a corps.

The total manpower is approximately 69,200 for the three army corps, 13,800 for the two infantry divisions held in reserve, and 29,000 for the three specialized divisions. To

this must be added approximately 280,000 reserves under the current mobilization plan.<sup>13</sup>

### TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS

One of the more important problems of late has been the integration of tactical nuclear weapons into the French defense posture. It has been French policy to assign a dual mission to their tactical nuclear arsenal, with Mery in 1976 describing them as a battlefield weapon as well as an instrument of deterrence. He clarified this point in 1977 with the statement that France "links directly the use of tactical nuclear weapons with that of the *Force Nucléaire Stratégique*." Furthermore, Mery on several occasions rejected the idea of a prolonged nuclear battle and argued in favor of "as brief and massive" a use as possible. More recently, in a February 1980 interview with the newspaper *l'Aurore*, General Claude Vanbremeersch stated that the primary importance of the French tactical nuclear capability lay in a situation in which NATO's lines were broken and the alliance failed to stem an attack through escalation.<sup>14</sup>

Even if tactical nuclear weapons play a relatively minor role in the French force posture, their development has not been neglected. On 26 June 1980, Giscard announced that work on the neutron bomb was in progress. Subsequent statements—notably by the new Chief of Staff, General Vanbremeersch, in November 1980—supported deployment of the neutron weapon. It is most likely that a surface-to-surface missile with a range of 150 miles and the capability to carry an enhanced radiation or fission warhead will be developed to replace the Pluton.<sup>15</sup>

It would be incorrect to see the development of the neutron bomb as symptomatic of a shift in French doctrine. In itself, this weapon can be fit into existing concepts, serving as a means of either checking temporarily an enemy advance or delivering a final warning while limiting collateral effects. The latter would reassure the Germans; reducing unnecessary damage

would ease a cause of tension and facilitate relations between the two nations. In the final analysis, it is perhaps more significant that the replacement of the Pluton (baptized Hades) will have twice the range, thus permitting a flexibility in targeting which heretofore has not been possible.<sup>16</sup>

### STRATEGIC DETERRENCE

It is difficult to assess the extent to which the evolving strategic environment has affected French deterrence. The development by the Soviet Union of extremely accurate missiles capable of destroying a fixed silo, as well as improved defense against aircraft, raises important questions concerning the ability of a nation with the relative power of France to maintain deterrence. The French have not been unaware of this problem, and have begun a number of programs designed to maintain the credibility of the *Force Nucléaire Stratégique*. Of these, the most significant concerns the placing of MIRVed warheads on their sea-launched ballistic missiles (beginning in 1985). Additional programs which have already been decided upon include placing "penetration aids" on intermediate-range ballistic missiles and reducing the time necessary for their firing. Also, it is possible that a formal decision will be made in 1981 to start developing a mobile land-based missile. However, for the moment this intention has not been confirmed officially.<sup>17</sup>

The central tenet of French nuclear doctrine is that a nation of modest means can prevent aggression from a far more powerful enemy through the menace of direct nuclear reprisals. It is therefore necessary only to assure the continued offensive potential of this minimal deterrent—through survivability, second-strike capability, and penetration capability—to maintain deterrence. Under such circumstances, only anti-cities targeting is possible; there can be no question of adopting any form of counterforce doctrine. A gradual expansion of the number of targets that can be covered has led to an extension of this list to include industrial and economic sites.<sup>18</sup>

It is typical of the way that the French government deals with defense issues that the problem of silo vulnerability has been discounted in authorized or official declarations. One anonymous official spokesman, for example, has stated that the French land-based deterrent "remains operational and credible for a good ten years more." However, even if their intermediate-range ballistic missiles were vulnerable, the French do not believe that their deterrent would lack credibility. Colonel Guy Lewin, deputy director of the *Centre de Prospectives et d'Evaluation*—the strategic planning group of the Ministry of Defense—recently wrote that it would take at least a hundred 300-kiloton warheads to neutralize completely the various installations of the *Force Nucléaire Stratégique*. In such a case, Lewin argued, the collateral damage and level of the attack would justify a riposte from France's nuclear-missile-equipped submarines on patrol.<sup>19</sup>

Even if France were attacked, her second-strike capability is sufficient, under current conditions, to make an enemy pay a considerable price for the aggression. Indeed, the basis for French deterrence lies in the belief that the damage it could inflict, whether in a first- or second-strike situation, is sufficient to be unacceptable to the Soviet Union and therefore capable of preventing an attack. On this subject, a recent parliamentary report stated that the *Force Nucléaire Stratégique* could inflict 20 million deaths and 20 million additional wounded. However, these figures presupposed a strike by three submarines, each carrying 16 M-20 1-megaton warheads; nine intermediate-range ballistic missiles with 1-megaton warheads; and all 37 Mirage IVA bombers, each with a 60-kiloton bomb. Obviously, any reduction in that force would proportionately reduce the effect.<sup>20</sup>

It is always hazardous to attempt any definition of the criteria which could dictate the decision to launch a strategic nuclear attack. Two points, however, appear clear. The first is that under certain conditions, notably an invasion of its territory, France could initiate a nuclear exchange. The

second, as Giscard reaffirmed in his 26 June 1980 press conference, is that "any nuclear attack on French territory will provoke automatically a strategic nuclear riposte." The latter comment was clear reference to the problem of a selective strike and the danger posed by the deployment of the Soviet SS-20.

It has long been a French contention that the presence of an independent deterrent on European soil poses a problem for the Soviet Union. Such was the implicit sense of the Ottawa Declaration of 1974, which reconciled the French desire for independence with the allied need for solidarity. Any deliberate Soviet aggression against Western Europe would have to take into account the quasi-certainty of a French strategic retaliation. In this sense, at least, the French believe that they contribute to Western deterrence without subordinating their autonomy and freedom of decision.

### INTERVENTION FORCES

Of America's Western allies, France has been in the forefront in developing forces to protect her overseas interests. To some extent this constitutes a logical development evolving from the colonial period. Having once possessed a large empire, France has maintained close ties with a number of her former colonies, especially those in Africa. It is of equal importance that France has not hesitated to conduct an active policy in Africa, and that the permanent basing of troops on that continent is accepted, by both the French public and the host nations. Finally, and this may well be the most significant aspect, a French military presence in the Third World is not perceived in the same manner as a corresponding step by the United States. By virtue of her independent position among Western nations, as well as her history of close relations with numerous nonaligned states, France possesses a freedom of action unequalled among other members of the Atlantic alliance.<sup>21</sup>

The French intervention forces are made up of two unequal groups, the majority based in France and a small minority permanently based overseas. The bulk is composed of the

11th parachute division (stationed in southern France and Corsica), and the 9th marine infantry division (in western France). Collectively these total 20,200 soldiers, to which must be added a mechanized half-brigade (the 31st, stationed in the extreme south and in Corsica) which is being organized to bolster current firepower.

These units are designed primarily to act as a stabilizing factor rather than to provide a means of blocking a major thrust by the Soviet Union or even a number of highly armed Third World countries. The capability of France to airlift large quantities of equipment, notably medium tanks (the AMX-30) and artillery, is limited. Although this deficiency is partially compensated for by some prepositioning at Djibouti, it is not sufficient for a major contingency.<sup>22</sup>

Such limitations do not restrict the intervention forces to a token role. Steps have been taken recently to improve communications and lift capabilities. Some tactical air support has been linked with C-135 tankers to provide rapid deployment of at least a minimum number of planes. A stretched version of the C-160 Transall is under order for 1982 to improve an admittedly insufficient lift capability. Finally, it should be taken into consideration that the French are modifying their two aircraft carriers to carry the Super Etendard bomber with tactical nuclear weapons. The French government has stated that these would be used if the occasion justified. That reason alone suggests that a French overseas force can play an important role in a crisis. Moreover, with the current instability throughout the Third World, especially in Africa, a Western nation both capable and willing to make its presence felt is an inestimable benefit.<sup>23</sup>

It is perhaps significant to take into consideration that, despite periodic statements to the contrary, these forces are not designed to act unilaterally in the case of a major aggression. If the French are to act alone, it is most likely in the kind of operation which took place in Kolwezi. But, in the event of a more general conflict which no longer fits into the category of



“stabilization,” one can reasonably expect the French to cooperate fully with the United States and other Western allies. This was confirmed officially by General Mery in November 1975, when he stated that in most cases French operations would be carried out “in cooperation with other nations rather than alone.”<sup>24</sup>

## OVERVIEW

What can be expected from France in the 1980s? By far the most probable hypothesis is a continuation of the status quo. However, this is far from unacceptable—for the United States, for France, or for Western security. France will increase her defense budget by more than three percent—regardless of whether those NATO nations playing an active military role in the alliance fulfill their May 1981 commitment to do the same—and the final figure is most likely going to be nearly four. Despite the restrictions placed on overt cooperation with NATO’s military structure, the French Army has undergone a thorough modernization program which has improved its potential contribution to a common defense. And while it is of relatively modest proportions, the French strategic deterrent certainly strengthens Western European security. Finally, the intervention forces and fleet are present beyond France’s borders, reflecting a serious effort to meet the growing problem of threats to external zones.

## NOTES

1. Michel Debré, *Livre Blanc sur la Défense Nationale* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1972).

2. Michel Fourquet, “Emploi des Différents Systèmes de Forces dans le Cadre de la Stratégie de Dissuasion,” *Revue de Défense Nationale*, 25 (May 1969), 757-67. Fourquet’s comments constituted a refutation of the position held by his predecessor, General Charles Ailleret. For Ailleret’s views, see his article “Défense ‘Dirigée’ ou Défense ‘Tous Azimuts,’” *Revue de Défense Nationale*, 23 (December 1967), 1923-32.

3. For an example of this criticism, see Pierre Gallois, *Le Renoncement* (Paris: Plon, 1977).

4. Guy Mery, “Réflexions sur le Concept d’emploi des Forces,” *Revue de Défense Nationale*, 31 (November 1975), 15-26.

5. Guy Mery, “Une Armée Pour Quoi Faire et Comment,” *Revue de Défense Nationale*, 32 (June 1976), 11-34.

6. Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, “Allocution de Monsieur Valéry Giscard d’Estaing Président de la République à

l’occasion de sa Visite à l’Institut des Hautes Etudes de Défense Nationale,” *Revue de Défense Nationale*, 32 (July 1976), 5-20. It is a measure of the changes that took place that in a formal note to the government, Pierre Messmer, the Defense Minister under de Gaulle, mentioned the existence of a secret order for 1967-68 which restricted the French Army’s role in a conflict to limited actions on its borders.

7. Lucien Poirier, “Le Deuxième Cercle,” *Le Monde Diplomatique*, July 1976.

8. *Journal Officiel, Débats Parlementaires, Assemblée Nationale*, First sess., 15-16 June 1978, pp. 2946-53.

9. Since 1976, Giscard has refrained from publicly stating that Europe constituted a single strategic zone. At the same time, the term “enlarged sanctuary” has been absent from official declarations.

10. Among the shortages existing in 1976, the AMX-30 medium tank was 15 percent below quota, and the AMX-10 mechanized infantry combat vehicle about 33 percent. Also, in 1976 the French Army was suffering a serious personnel crisis which saw a number of demonstrations carried out by soldiers in uniform calling for the formation of soldiers’ committees. On the surface, at least, this agitation has disappeared.

11. To cite a key example of this problem, the tactical air force has available approximately 300 first-line aircraft. While of good quality, this force obviously suffers from a numerical problem.

12. The armored regiment of the infantry division is equipped with 36 AMX-10RC armored cars; the artillery regiment with four batteries of 155mm howitzers. Each of the three mechanized infantry regiments has 95 AMX-10 mechanized infantry combat vehicles. Each infantry regiment has 24 Milan antitank units. The armored division has two tank regiments, each with 27 AMX-30 medium tanks and 10 AMX-10P mechanized infantry combat vehicles. The two mechanized infantry regiments of the armored division each have 10 AMX-30 medium tanks and 22 AMX-10P mechanized infantry combat vehicles. Each infantry regiment is equipped with 16 Milan antitank units. In an interview granted to *l’Aurore* on 4 February 1980, General Vanbremeersch, then Commander of the First Army, cited artillery and antiaircraft capabilities as two chief weaknesses.

13. The French mobilization system is based on the principle of “derivation.” Ten line divisions serve as the infrastructure for 10 reserve divisions. To this must be added four reserve divisions formed from the various military training schools.

14. The interview with General Vanbremeersch was of particular interest as it gave a surprisingly complete view of the French Army’s capabilities. See *l’Aurore*, 4 February 1980, p. 2. At present, France deploys five Pluton surface-to-surface missile regiments (each with six ramps with a recharge) located at Laon, Suippes, Mailly, Oberhofen, and Belfort. Five tactical air squadrons are nuclear-equipped, with either the Mirage IIIE or Jaguar, carrying a 25-kiloton charge. These are stationed at St. Dizier, Luxeuil, and Istres.

15. The Pluton surface-to-surface missile carries a 20-kiloton charge and has a range of 75 miles. The formal decision to develop a second generation surface-to-surface missile has not been made, although in his June 1980 press conference, Giscard d’Estaing indicated that a replacement for the Pluton would be developed. As to the neutron weapon, Giscard indicated on the same occasion that the decision for deployment will not be made before 1982-83, and that this date could be delayed by up to two years if the configuration were changed.

16. Although a number of analysts, notably Marc Geneste, have called for an extended battlefield role for tactical nuclear weapons, their influence is slight and not expected to

affect the decision to maintain deployment of tactical nuclear weapons at a low level.

17. Presently the *Force Nucléaire Stratégique* is a triad. There are 18 intermediate-range ballistic missiles on the Albion plateau in southeast France. Of these, nine are the S-2 with a 150-kiloton warhead and 1800-mile range, and nine the S-3 with a 1-megaton yield and a range above 2100 miles. Five ballistic-missile-equipped submarines (SSBNs) are in service and a sixth is to be completed in 1985. They carry 16 M-20 missiles with a 1-megaton yield and a range of over 1800 miles. In 1985, a new SSBN carrying 16 MIRVed M-4 missiles (each with six warheads of 150 kilotons) with a 2500-mile range will enter service. Subsequently the M-4 will be retrofitted into the four most recent SSBNs at a rate of one each 18 months. The oldest SSBN will retain the M-20. France also has 37 Mirage IVA strategic bombers carrying a 60-kiloton bomb. After 1985, all but 15 will be retired, with those remaining in service to be equipped with a medium-range air-to-surface missile. Currently a mobile surface-to-surface missile is under serious consideration, while no public decision has been made concerning an increase in the number of SSBNs beyond six.

18. This aspect of French doctrine has rarely been challenged. An exception is the article by General Hautefeuille, "Etude sur Défense et Dissuasion Nucléaires," *Stratégique*, 2 (first semester 1980), 81-113. General Hautefeuille favors a moderation of initial strategic nuclear riposte so as to maintain a certain degree of rationality in an ongoing crisis.

19. Three "official" articles appeared on this subject in 1980: Colonel Guy Lewin, "La Dissuasion Française et la Stratégie Anti-Cites," *Revue de Défense Nationale*, 36 (January 1980), 23-31; Colonel Guy Lewin, "L'Avenir des Forces Nucléaires Françaises," *Revue de Défense Nationale*, 36 (May 1980), 11-20; Pierre Riou (a pseudonym), "La Force des Choses," *Revue de Défense Nationale*, 36 (July 1980), 5-20.

20. French officials rarely discuss Soviet counter-

measures, whether active or passive. Most discussions of this subject tend to stress the invulnerability of the French second-strike capability and do not speculate on the eventuality of the Soviets developing an effective ABM capability.

21. This has been evident through the ability of the French to maintain bases in Africa (notably in Senegal, Ivory Coast, Gabon, and the Central African Republic) without provoking serious protest, either at home or abroad. As recently as 22 January 1981, Mr. François-Poncet, the Foreign Minister, could testify before the Foreign Affairs Commission of the National Assembly that "France will always be alongside Africa when its independence will be threatened." It should be noted that the available open information suggests that the Soviet Union has never seriously attempted to pressure France into amending its African policy.

22. The French maintain in their former colony at Djibouti a company of AMX-13 light tanks equipped with SS-13 antitank missiles, a battery of 155mm towed howitzers, a battery of 30mm and 40mm antiaircraft guns, and 10 Mirage IIC fighters.

23. The problem of France's insufficiencies in her intervention forces was the object of a number of articles in January 1981. See, for example, Jean-François Mongibeaux, "L'Armée a-t-elle les Moyens d'Intervenir?" *Le Quotidien de Paris*, 16 January 1981. The workhorse of the military transport fleet, the Transall C-160, has a 2500-mile range under the most favorable conditions and has a relative inability to transport heavy materiel, notably the AMX-30 medium tank.

24. Not everyone is in favor of close cooperation with the United States. In an interview with *Le Monde* in July 1980, the Commander of French naval forces in the Indian Ocean, Rear Admiral Lejeune, took pains to affirm that "there is no question now of a division of labor with the United States." See "Le Contrôle de la Route du Pétrol," *Le Monde*, 1 July 1980.

