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**'Our most dear enemies': Franco-British relations from 1956 to 1973**

Wasson, Glenn David

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‘Our most dear enemies’; Franco-British relations from 1956 to 1973

By Glenn David Wasson, BA, MA, AFHEA



A thesis submitted to the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics of Queen's University of Belfast in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D).

November 2022

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## List of Abbreviations

ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile
AFSC	Anglo-French Steering Committee
AFVG	Anglo-French Variable Geometry aircraft
ANF	Atlantic Nuclear Force
ATMs	Anti-Tank Missiles
BAC	British Aircraft Corporation
BAOR	British Army of the Rhine
CAC	Churchill Archives Centre
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
EC	European Communities
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EDC	European Defence Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Area
ENF	European Nuclear Force
EPU	European Political Union
EU	European Union
EURATOM	European Atomic Energy Community
FLN	National Liberation Front
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
FTA	Free Trade Area
GAMD	<i>Générale aéronautique Marcel Dassault</i>
GDR	German Democratic Republic
IANF	Inter-Allied Nuclear Force
ICBM	Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
INF	Intermediate Nuclear Forces
IR	International Relations
IRBMs	Intermediate-range ballistic missiles
MIRV	Multiple Independently Re-Targetable Vehicle
MLF	Multilateral Force
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MPs	Members of Parliament
MRBM	Medium-Range Ballistic Missile
MRCA	Multi-Role Combat Aircraft
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NNWSs	Non-nuclear Weapons States
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
PFR	Prototype Fast Reactor
PSAC	President's Science Advisory Committee

PTBT	Partial Test Ban Treaty
RAF	Royal Air Force
RFP	<i>Régie française de publicité</i>
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander, Europe
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty
SAM	Surface-to-Air Missiles
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
SLBMs	Submarine-launched Ballistic Missiles
SNECMA	<i>Société Nationale d'Étude et de Construction des Moteurs d'Aviation</i>
SST	Supersonic transport
TNA	The National Archives
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WEU	Western European Union

## Abstract

This thesis seeks to explore the successes and failures of Franco-British politico-military cooperation from the nationalisation of the Suez Canal in July 1956 until the unveiling of the Anglo-French Variable Geometry (AFVG) aircraft, the SEPECAT Jaguar, in 1973. This thesis will be set in the context of the bipolar nature of the Cold War, where the United Kingdom and France were forced to reposition themselves in relation to the United States of America and the Soviet Union. With a focus on defence matters, this thesis will argue that British integration in the European Communities, a main sticking point in the bilateral relationship with France, was not possible without agreement first over important military concerns. Thus, this thesis will explore the fallout of the Suez Crisis as a catalyst for separate French and British policies concerning nuclear weapons development. The Anglo-American ‘special relationship’ and the F-I-G negotiations will be investigated as part of these opposing nuclear trajectories, culminating in the signing of the Nassau Agreement in December 1962. In addition, the emergence of multilateral defence organisations – including, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the Western European Union (WEU) and the *Europe puissance* will be considered as focal points for Franco-British disagreements on European defence planning. Further, the aftermath of French withdrawal from NATO in 1966 will be examined as a pretext to divisions in Western responses to the Prague Spring. Lastly, the first US-Soviet Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) will be discussed as the final nail in the coffin for Franco-British ambitions to lead a European Nuclear Force (ENF).



## Introduction

On 24 December 2020, a new UK-EU trade deal was announced following the decision by the British electorate in June 2016 to leave the European Union. Boris Johnson, the British Prime Minister from 2019 to 2022, stated that the United Kingdom (UK) was positioning itself to become a ‘science superpower’ despite being strategically ‘attached to Europe.’<sup>1</sup> One month later, French President Emmanuel Macron, a staunch critic of Brexit (Britain’s departure from the institutions of the European Union), expressed his desire to maintain ‘peaceful, constructive relations’ with Britain, citing that both countries’ industrialists and researchers ‘have a related destiny.’<sup>2</sup> The recent British foreign policy reorientation brings back into focus the question of the UK’s role in international relations with its European allies, but also in a more global geopolitical context. This question has featured prominently in intellectual and academic debates throughout the Cold War and the subsequent period following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This debate around Britain’s role in global affairs during the Cold War has transcended several fields of study – including technological, political, defence, cultural, economic and ideological concerns. It is worth noting that the Cold War was an ideological conflict mainly contested by the superpowers of the Soviet Union and United States of America (USA). Nonetheless, Britain played a key role in the politico-military direction of travel throughout the early Cold War period. This thesis will trace the ever-changing relationship between Britain and France from the beginning of the Suez Crisis until the end of US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger’s ‘Year of Europe’ in 1973. Key to the understanding of Britain’s world role will be the bilateral relationship between itself and France. Although Britain’s world role has received more scholarly attention, the question of France’s role following the collapse of its empire also merits investigation. This thesis seeks to understand both countries’ attempts to cooperate over defence projects concerning nuclear weapons development, as well as how their differing views on defence partnerships affected their ability to work together within multilateral organisations, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the Western

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<sup>1</sup> CNN, ‘Boris Johnson’s full post-Brexit trade deal speech’ (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88APJeMtPq4&feature=youtu.be>) (18 February 2021).

<sup>2</sup> ‘Emmanuel Macron appelle le Royaume-Uni à « choisir » sa relation avec l’UE’ in *Le Figaro*, 30 janvier 2021 (<https://www.lefigaro.fr/international/emmanuel-macron-appelle-le-royaume-uni-a-choisir-sa-relation-avec-l-ue-2021>) (18 February 2021).

European Union (WEU) and later the *Europe puissance* – the proposed military wing of European Community.<sup>3</sup>

The development of multilateral defence organisations emerged as an outcome of the Second World War, when the German defeat left a power vacuum on the European continent and in Africa. Initially, Franco-British relations, despite their wartime alliance, were fraught with diplomatic strain. Future French President Charles de Gaulle was suspicious of British activities in Beirut and Damascus, as he perceived Britain's presence in the Middle East as purely imperial and expansionist.<sup>4</sup> British and French efforts to bolster their imperial clout were a reaction to Soviet advances in the Middle East. According to Daniel F. Calhoun, 'no European power had anything like [the Soviet Union's] military clout.'<sup>5</sup> Calhoun's argument is certainly credible since in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, former Prime Minister Winston Churchill asserted in a visit to the United States in March 1946 that the Soviet Union sought to enjoy the 'fruits of war and the indefinite expansion of their power and doctrines' throughout the Middle East and Continental Europe.<sup>6</sup> Thus, in combination with imperial expansion, the British Labour government sought to organise European defence in an attempt to contain Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe. The British alternative to containment caused friction with the French as Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin proposed a Western Defence Union based on an Atlantic partnership, thereby the new military organisation would have a broad membership including the United States.<sup>7</sup> The occidental nature of the Brussels Pact, the precursor to NATO, laid the groundwork for the difficulties that occurred in the Franco-British partnership. With Bevin pressing US Secretary of State George Marshall to accept a union for Western defence where 'political and indeed spiritual forces must be mobilised in our defense,' Britain demonstrated its preference for an Atlantic-centric partnership rather than the alternative European option.<sup>8</sup> Thus, when NATO was eventually formed in 1949, the establishment of an Atlantic presence on the European

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<sup>3</sup> The European Community in this case technically referred to all three communities, the EEC, ECSC and Euratom, as they were amalgamated together by the Merger Treaty of 1965, which came into force in 1967, see Georges-Henri Soutou, 'Was there a European Order in the twentieth century? From the Concert of Europe to the end of the Cold War' in *Contemporary European History*, ix (2000), p.347; Bastien Irondele and Jean Joana, '« Etat de l'art » sur la sociologie des politiques d'armement : les approches Anglo-Saxonnes' in William Genieys (ed), *Groupes d'influence et processus de decision dans le domaine de la Défense: Approches compares* (Paris, 2001), p.14.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Thomas and Richard Toye, *Arguing about empire; Imperial rhetoric in Britain and France, 1882-1956* (Oxford, 2017), p.175.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel F. Calhoun, *Hungary and Suez, 1956; An exploration of who makes history* (Lanham, 1991), p.12.

<sup>6</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York, 2000), p.308.

<sup>7</sup> Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, 'Defending the West: Occidentalism and the formation of NATO' in *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, xi (2003), p.240.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid; Andrew Adonis, *Ernest Bevin; Labour's Churchill* (London, 2020), p.2.

continent was achieved. US influence placed French aspirations of maintaining their ‘great power’ role in doubt, particularly with the French and Germans working towards the creation of a European Community to counteract the ‘Trojan horse’ of Atlantic interference.<sup>9</sup>

Johnson and Macron’s comments reveal an interesting example of continuity, with regards to Britain and France’s attempts to retain their Great Power status. Both countries were considered ‘Great Powers’ following the Second World War. However, the emergence of the USA and the Soviet Union as global superpowers resulted in the relegation of Britain and France on the international stage.<sup>10</sup> The decline in both countries’ influence can be most critically seen during the decolonisation of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Britain and France reacted differently to their new fates as former Great – and imperial – powers. The French governments, particularly under Prime Ministers Guy Mollet and Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury, accepted this and rather pursued the development of a European political and military entity, with a neo-colonialist aim of retaining their strategic importance despite the collapse of its Eurafrika project.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, Britain took an alter-political approach through seeking an alternative means of ensuring its Great Power status.<sup>12</sup> This was encapsulated in the Anglo-American ‘special relationship’, which granted Britain strategic importance within the Cold War debate, particularly around the cessation of nuclear weapons.<sup>13</sup> However, it did not secure Britain superpower status; rather academics like political scientist Lawrence Freedman have argued that it only served to tie Britain’s potential future successes to that of the United States.<sup>14</sup>

Commenting on proposals for the 1956 Franco-British Union, José-Alain Fralon, author of *Au secours, les Anglais nous envahissent* a critique on British interactions with the French, wrote that the British are ‘our most dear enemies.’<sup>15</sup> Fralon referred to the continuously fractious state of the Franco-British political, cultural, military and societal relationship dating back to the French Revolutionary period. This concept around the

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Sowerwine, *France since 1870; Culture, politics and society* (Basingstoke, 2001), p.325.

<sup>10</sup> The European power vacuum left by the German defeat at the end of the Second World War afforded the USA and USSR the opportunity to court allies in a bid to spread their ideological and military influence on the continent and in the Middle East and Asia, where European powers maintained colonial property. For an overview, see David Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War; Churchill, Roosevelt and the international history of the 1940s* (Oxford, 2006), chapter 15; for a specific analysis on the role of ideology, see Mark Kramer, ‘Ideology and the Cold War’ in *Review of International Studies*, xxv (1999), pp.539-576.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Gildea, *Empires of the mind; The colonial past and the politics of the present* (Cambridge, 2021), p.6.

<sup>12</sup> Marilyn Strathern, *Relations; An anthropological account* (London, 2020), p.174.

<sup>13</sup> The National Archives, Kew [hereafter TNA], Record of Meeting at Hôtel Matignon, 29 June 1958, PREM/11/2326.

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *Britain and Nuclear Weapons* (Basingstoke, 1980), p.18.

<sup>15</sup> José-Alain Fralon, *Au secours, les Anglais nous envahissent* (Paris, 2006).

changing state of bilateral relations between Britain and France has provoked much academic debate in the fields of historical analysis, political science and International Relations (IR) theory, and therefore has been adopted as the title of this thesis to further explore how Franco-British relations have been interpreted and developed from the outcome of the Suez Crisis until Britain's entry into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973. Furthermore, this thesis should be considered as an informative instrument by which academics and those involved in political decision-making can use this addition to historical scholarship to learn from the controversial missteps of the past, and ensure that these mistakes are not repeated in any post-Brexit future relationship discussions.<sup>16</sup>

In 2017, the RAND Corporation released a compendium report seeking to understand the possible implications on the future of British defence and security posed by the country's withdrawal from the European Union (EU).<sup>17</sup> The report stated that European integration remained problematic for Britain owing to 'long-standing divisions at the heart of British society over the country's identity, role and place in Europe.'<sup>18</sup> This interpretation on Britain's lack of integration into the European framework is too short-sighted and simplistic. Understanding the difficulty surrounding British accession to the European Communities (EC), France's strenuous relationship with NATO and the alternatives to European defence collaboration sought by both countries will be one of the primary aims of this thesis.

This study of Franco-British relations will take into account the different positions of British and French policymakers throughout this period. There are copious amounts of studies relating to Franco-British relations, British and French domestic and foreign policies, accounts on politicians and high-ranking figures during this period and finally the international context which marked the Cold War as a unique conflict in historical terms. This thesis develops these considerations further and seeks to break new ground. With a focus solely on defence cooperation, this thesis argues that the much lauded integration into the economic framework of the EEC would not be possible without convergence on military

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<sup>16</sup> Since the 2016 EU referendum, scholarly attention has reverted to European defence in the wake of Britain's departure. This thesis contends that Britain plays a key role in European security and thus seeks to illustrate the mistakes that previous leaders made. This makes it unique insofar as scholar output generally focuses on the return of a Franco-German defence axis in the event of Brexit, see Delphine Deschaux-Dutard, 'The French-German military cooperation and the revival of European defence after Brexit: Between reality and political myth' in Cornelia-Adriana Baciú and John Doyle (eds), *Peace, security and defence cooperation in Post-Brexit Europe; Risks and opportunities* (Cham, 2019), p.56.

<sup>17</sup> James Black, Alex Hall, Kate Cox, Marta Kepe and Erik Silfersten, *Defence and Security after Brexit: Understanding the possible implications of the UK's decision to leave the EU* (Compendium report, Cambridge, 2017).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p.15.

issues which dominated the Cold War period.<sup>19</sup> Using defence policy as central theme, this thesis follows a chronological approach – looking in turn, at the Suez Crisis and its geopolitical fallout, discussions around NATO reforms in 1957-58, the Nassau Agreement and its effects on the Franco-British relationship, the French withdrawal from the Atlantic Alliance and finally the signing of the first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT). As far as possible, this thesis takes an impartial perspective to the Franco-British politico-military relationship. Like most of the written discourse on the subject of European defence, the different positions of French and British foreign policies have been covered by former politicians and policy-makers. Accounts from the likes of former political consultant to the Labour Party Philip Gould offer a different, and often critical, version of events. For instance concerning the European defence debate, Gould argued that Conservative policy on the matter brought ‘shame’ and ‘the shadow of fear.’<sup>20</sup> Herein lies the potential problem of navigating the issue of partisan historiographies while handling primary sources written by parties involved in political decision-making – principally, the manner in which their perspective influenced the evidence available to academics in the immediate aftermath of the events of this period. Relating to the European defence organisation, discussion around its formation began in earnest following the Suez Crisis. The first furrows towards a European defence union in literature came from the French political classes. In his autobiographical account *Suez 1956* French Foreign Minister Christian Pineau described a grand design initiative focused on France leading a power bloc within Europe that could rival the United States and Soviet Union in terms of ‘comparable power.’<sup>21</sup> Taking this into consideration, each chapter will consider these events and the bilateral relations between Britain and France within the wider international context of decolonisation and the emergence of bipolarity.

### **A European superpower**

The idea of the European Communities acting as third superpower existed before the Suez Crisis.<sup>22</sup> Notwithstanding this, the concept of a European superpower gained more traction during the 1960s in two separate guises: one perceiving Europe acting as a mediator between

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<sup>19</sup> For the argument that Britain’s economy required the country to access the EEC to stem the tide of relative decline, see Nauro F Campos and Fabrizio Coricelli, ‘EU Membership, Mrs Thatcher’s reforms and Britain’s economic decline’ in *Comparative Economic Studies*, lix (2017), pp.169-193.

<sup>20</sup> Philip Gould, *The unfinished revolution; How the modernisers saved the Labour Party* (London, 1998), p.2.

<sup>21</sup> Christian Pineau, *1956 Suez* (Paris, 1976), p.191.

<sup>22</sup> British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden told British Ambassador to Paris Sir Gladwyn Jebb that the Western European Union ‘should not attempt to convert itself into a supranational community on the model of the European Defence Community or European Political Community’ see TNA, The Future Rôle of Western European Union, 16 February 1955, FO/371/118579.

the Soviet Union and United States, while the Gaullist alternative saw Europe as a competitor thereby limiting the hegemonic influence of the two superpowers.<sup>23</sup> European defence integration was mooted as a strategy of containment against German rearmament, with a centralised political and military union proposed in a similar vein to the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC).<sup>24</sup> The European Defence Community (EDC) was negotiated from 1950 to 1952 and was designed to forestall German rearmament. However, the French were unsupportive of the initial idea. British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden told Cabinet that '[f]ailure of the French Assembly to ratify EDC before recessing for the summer would create an extremely difficult situation in Germany.'<sup>25</sup> While the United States and British Conservative government furthered the idea of European defence integration, the concept did not have unilateral support in French and British political circles. The British Labour Party backed German integration into Europe but the party was bitterly divided over the EDC and possessed 'no tactic to deal with the niceties of the defence debate.'<sup>26</sup> The French rejection of the EDC was a momentary set-back in the Franco-British relationship as the French Prime Minister still wished to maintain a fruitful bilateral partnership. Pierre Mendès France agreed to German integration into the NATO command structure; however reforms were required to 'provide safeguards on German rearmament without discrimination against Germany.'<sup>27</sup>

Initial French protests against a European defence organisation did not throw plans around European defence integration into chaos, as some academics have previously argued.<sup>28</sup> A French-led European defence network quickly replaced the EDC as a foreign policy objective for the governments of the Fifth Republic and, as such, has received much scholarly attention. Much of the academic work has centred on French leaders' failed attempts at cultivating the Five European Community nations into accepting a *Europe puissance* – de Gaulle's alternative to NATO and the WEU. For instance, Douglas T. Stuart

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<sup>23</sup> Mlada Bukovansky, Ian Clark, Robin Eckerley, Richard Price, Christian Reus-Smit and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *Special responsibilities; Global problems and American power* (Cambridge, 2012), p.183.

<sup>24</sup> Ralph Dietl, "'Une déception amoureuse'?" Great Britain, the continent and European nuclear cooperation, 1953-57' in *Cold War History*, iii (2002), p.29.

<sup>25</sup> TNA, European Defence Community – Note by the Foreign Secretary, C.(54) 266, 7 July 1954, CAB/129/69/26.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Foot, *Aneurin Bevan, Volume II 1945-60* (London, 1973), p.485; Mark Jenkins, *Bevanism – Labour's High Tide; The Cold War and the Democratic Mass Movement* (Nottingham, 1979), p.256.

<sup>27</sup> TNA, Alternatives to the European Defence Community – Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, C.(54) 276, 27 August 1954, CAB/129/70/26.

<sup>28</sup> D.E. Butler, *The British General Election of 1955* (London, 1955), p.9; Anne Deighton, 'Introduction' in Anne Deighton (ed), *Western European Union 1954-1997: Defence, Security, Integration* (Oxford, 1997), p.3; William Wallace, 'Old states and new circumstances: the international predicament of Britain, France and Germany' in William Wallace and W.E. Paterson (eds), *Foreign policy making in Western Europe; A comparative approach* (Farnborough, 1978), p.33.

has argued that the French desired this alternative avenue for European defence as it offered a way to exert control over military affairs on the continent. Stuart's argument, among others, has concentrated on the incompatibility of French foreign policy and US control within the Atlantic Alliance command structure. The crux of this argument can be found in the United States' treatment of France during the Suez Crisis, since the former was coerced 'to choose between its African vocation and its friendship.'<sup>29</sup> The *Europe puissance* and the NATO Multilateral Force will act as vital case studies in the third chapter of this thesis as they represent a period of divergence in not only the Franco-British partnership, but also the wider geopolitical concerns of organising an adequate defence response to the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis. By concentrating on the alternative European defence organisations, this thesis will shed new light on the disagreement between Britain and France over the possible construction of a European superpower to rival the pre-existing bipolarity in the international system. The idea of a *Europe puissance* with the intention of cultivating a European Political Union (EPU) allows us to effectively judge the historical credence of this thesis' main argument, insofar as Britain's resistance to a *Europe puissance* undermined its potential effectiveness. For European Community countries, European defence philosophy in the post-Suez period centred on the separation of continental military decision-making from US management. France and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) sought to exert some degree of independence over their defence policies, and openly criticised Britain for holding to their previous status as a Great Power and not adapting to the new bipolar order, with their acquiescence to US dominance in the West.<sup>30</sup> German Foreign Minister Franz Josef Strauss disapproved of Britain's post-Suez posturing on the European continent, going as far as critiquing Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's visit to France 'as dwelling on the past glories of the *entente cordiale* rather than on the new European philosophy.'<sup>31</sup>

This trend of Franco-British divergence over the *Europe puissance* continued when Charles de Gaulle returned to politics in 1958. However, in the short term de Gaulle wanted to keep France within a reformed NATO command structure. Between December 1958 and

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<sup>29</sup> For the specific quotation see Douglas T. Stuart, 'The United States and NATO Out-of-Areas-Disputes: Does the Cold War provide precedents, or merely prologue?' in Gustav Schmidt (ed), *A History of NATO -The first fifty years* (1<sup>st</sup> ed., Basingstoke, 2001), pp.130-131; for other examples of this line of argument, see Stuart Croft, 'European integration, nuclear deterrence and Franco-British nuclear cooperation' in *International Affairs*, lxxii (1996), pp.771-787; Philip H. Gordon, 'Charles de Gaulle and the nuclear revolution' in John L. Gaddis et al. (eds), *Cold War statesmen confront the bomb; Nuclear diplomacy since 1945* (Oxford, 1999), pp.216-235; Nicholas Geoffrey Rudi Saunders, 'The Suez Crisis and British and French policy revaluations towards membership of the European Communities' (Ph.D thesis, Oxford Brookes University, 2015).

<sup>30</sup> Sabine Marie Decup, *France-Angleterre; Les relations militaires de 1945 à 1962* (Paris, 1998), p.105.

<sup>31</sup> TNA, Prime Minister's visit to Federal Republic of Germany, 7 May 1957, PREM/11/1829B.

November 1959, de Gaulle pushed for a NATO triumvirate where Britain, France and the United States shared equal status in controlling the decision-making within the Atlantic Alliance. While the Conservative government agreed in principle with de Gaulle that NATO required reforms to meet the challenge of the Warsaw Pact, permitting France equal status within the Alliance was not something they wanted to accommodate. In essence, it would ‘mean subscribing to the idea that France was the leader of the EC powers.’<sup>32</sup> The *directoire à trois* proposed by de Gaulle is another significant case study in order to understand the extent of the animosity between Britain and France, particularly in the area of European defence planning. Indeed, the decisive moment for Britain and France was the divisions over the triumvirate. In March 1959, de Gaulle started to scale back France’s involvement in NATO exercises by withdrawing French forces from the NATO Mediterranean Fleet. This decision illustrates that British and French defence policies became incompatible. Klaus Schwabe first brought this idea into academic discussion by examining the US, British and French grand design policies for European defence. Using the *Europe puissance* and *directoire à trois* as an investigative lens, this thesis seeks to differentiate Schwabe’s ‘three-dimensional crisis of confidence,’ which marked Franco-British foreign policy decisions throughout the 1960s, by maintaining that the financial aspect of European integration was simply not possible without amicable bilateral interplay over political and military issues, principally the organisation of continental European defence.<sup>33</sup>

In attempting to understand how the politico-military aspect of Franco-British interactions influenced financial integration, this thesis draws on the extensive political and personal papers of politicians directly involved in defence decision-making. A selection of under-explored private papers at the Churchill Archives Centre will be drawn upon in each chapter. Included within these are the letters, press articles and political papers of the British Minister of Aviation Julian Amery, the analyses and recommendations of the Chief Scientific Advisor to the British Government Lord Plowden, the diaries, letters and memoirs of Shadow Foreign Secretary and later British Ambassador to Paris Sir Christopher Soames and finally, the dispatches of the Liberal peer and former British Ambassador to Paris Sir Gladwyn Jebb, particularly during the Suez Crisis. With regards to the design of a European superpower, these papers have been supplemented by the political papers of French politicians including

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<sup>32</sup> TNA, Record of a Meeting at Chequers, 22 November 1959, PREM/11/2679.

<sup>33</sup> Schwabe argued that 1963 was the peak of the political, military and financial crisis of confidence; each theme being treated as equally significance within the Franco-British partnership, see Klaus Schwabe, ‘Three grand designs: The USA, Great Britain, and the Gaullist concept of Atlantic partnership and European unity’ in *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, iii (2005), pp.7-30.



Presidents Charles de Gaulle and Georges Pompidou, Ministers Christian Pineau, Pierre Messmer and Geoffroy de Courcel and French military leaders Admiral Pierre Barjot and *Général d'Armée* Charles Ailleret. Official French reports on military exercises and tests will also be considered to test how the French prepared its own military for the eventual departure from the NATO command structure. These reports are held in the *Service historique de la défense* in Vincennes and the *Centre d'Archives de l'Armement et du personnel civil* in Châtellerault – a substantial proportion of which have only become available recently, with some files still inaccessible particularly in Vincennes.

In the broadest sense, it is well-known that the *Europe puissance* grew from a lack of acceptance over US domination in European defence decision-making. The concept has taken on many forms since the Suez Crisis and has, most recently, been revived to act as a military wing for European Union during the Iraq war and later following Britain's withdrawal from the European Communities framework.<sup>34</sup> However, any examination of the *Europe puissance* must take into account the changing dynamics of the political landscape. The initial British reaction to the Gaullist alternative to NATO is difficult to pin down. While Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was positive about Franco-British cooperation, his cabinet colleagues including First Secretary of State and *de facto* Deputy Prime Minister R.A. Butler professed that Britain should avoid 'bi-lateral collaboration in the field of military space with the French while General de Gaulle maintains his present policies of opposition to us in Europe.'<sup>35</sup> As the balance of power shifted from Conservatives to Labour, the policy towards the *Europe puissance* gradually changed. Rather than tolerate the existence of a European superpower, Britain sought to undermine its effectiveness by using the WEU as a consultative forum to resolve defence issues on the continent. Thereupon, the new British government would achieve two policy goals – the reduction of US influence on its defence policy and the increased role for Britain in European military discourse, as Rhiannon Vickers argues.<sup>36</sup> The Prague Spring provides a useful means by which to test Vickers' argument. From the outset of Soviet incursion into Czechoslovakia in 1969, Britain and the FRG formulated a common

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<sup>34</sup> Tzveton Todorov, 'L'Europe Puissance' in *Diplomatie*, vi (2003), pp.12-13; Julian Lindley-French, 'Europe puissance or Macro-Gaullisme?' ([www.defencesynergia.co.uk/europe-puissance-or-macro-gaullisme/](http://www.defencesynergia.co.uk/europe-puissance-or-macro-gaullisme/)) (accessed 8 March 2021).

<sup>35</sup> Churchill Archives Centre [hereafter CAC], Defence Collaboration with the French, 23 October 1963, AMEJ/1/6/17. For an in-depth analysis of the difficult political relationship between Butler and Macmillan, see Christopher Tugendhat, *The worm in the apple: A history of the Conservative Party and Europe from Churchill to Cameron* (London, 2022).

<sup>36</sup> Rhiannon Vickers, 'Foreign Policy beyond Europe' in Peter Dorey (ed), *The Labour Governments 1964-1970* (Abingdon, 2006), pp.130-131.

position within the context of the WEU rather than work on defining a pan-European consensus on how to tackle the crisis.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless by 1970, both Britain and France experienced a new direction of travel in political thinking. Britain moved away from its pro-Atlanticist tendencies as Edward Heath became Prime Minister; while Pompidou relaxed France's long-held hostility towards British involvement in European Community activities. From 1965, the Conservative Policy Group on Foreign Affairs advocated that European membership would 'ensure that Britain's political interests were considered, and not superseded, by the Six.'<sup>38</sup> The new converging attitudes over British membership of Europe are well-documented in political treatises and academic works. Heath endorsed the idea of nuclear cooperation with France through a *Europe puissance* as a means of securing Britain's entry into the European Communities.<sup>39</sup> Once again, the institutionalisation of European defence plays an important role in this analysis as demonstrated by scholarly output. For instance, Lawrence Freedman clarified Heath's opinion by stating that the British government was ready to include its forces with France's *force de frappe* to act as the basis of a *Europe puissance*.<sup>40</sup> While Franco-British reconciliation was secured by 1972, the United States and the Soviet Union ultimately undermined any chance the *Europe puissance* had of acting as a competitor between the two pre-existing superpowers through the SALT I processes. The first Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty concludes this analysis, especially as it signals the final curtain for Franco-British ambitions of becoming a nuclear competitor alongside the superpowers. An important caveat to this case study is that SALT I was not designed as a break to European nuclear aspirations. Rather, the non-proliferation initiatives guaranteed US and Soviet sovereignty while discouraging competition from emerging powers in nuclear affairs akin to China and Europe. The SALT process was born out of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which forced signatories to pursue arms limitation measures in 'good faith.' Thus, the United States and the Soviet Union agreed to limit nuclear arms delivery systems and, by extension, subordinated Britain and France's deterrent systems thereby limiting any success the *Europe puissance* might achieve.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> TNA, Czechoslovakia – Note by the Deputy Secretary of the Cabinet, C(68) 97, 23 August 1968, CAB/129/138/17; Benedikt Schoenborn, *La mésentente apprivoisée; De Gaulle et les Allemands, 1963-1969* (Paris, 2007), p.186.

<sup>38</sup> Conservative Party Archive [CPA], British Attitude towards Europe – Findings of Policy Group – Folder S, 16 July 1965, MS.Heath/E/3/2/7.

<sup>39</sup> Edward Heath, *Old World, New Horizon; Britain, the Common Market and the Atlantic Alliance* (London, 1970), p.73.

<sup>40</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *Britain and nuclear weapons* (Basingstoke, 1980), p.42.

<sup>41</sup> Ralph L. Dietl, *Equal security; Europe and the SALT process, 1969-1976* (Stuttgart, 2013), p.31.

## The influence of bipolarity

Given the Soviet Union and the United States were able successfully to undermine European attempts to create a third superpower, it is important to examine the role the bipolar international system played in the Franco-British relationship between 1956 and 1973. The bipolar Cold War system and its influence on each country's fledgling nuclear deterrent has experienced a resurgence in academic discussion in recent years. Rebecca Davis Gibbons and Stephen Herzog have advanced the argument that the NPT effectively stemmed the emergence of any competition to the established bipolar order.<sup>42</sup> This argument crosses two dominant trends in the field of International Relations including the introduction of 'hard' and 'soft' power politics purported by Joseph Nye and Pascal Boniface in the 1990s and early 2000s; and Amaël Cataruzza and Pierre Sintès' allusion that a state used its military influence to maintain its foreign security policy.<sup>43</sup> This thesis will acknowledge these lines of argument whilst determining how the United States and Soviet Union undermined Franco-British ambitions to become independent nuclear forces working together in the context of European defence. Generally Britain and France disagreed on the principle of nuclear arms limitation measures. Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States attempted to negotiate a comprehensive test ban treaty; whereas the French pursued a policy of increasing nuclear arms development.<sup>44</sup> However, US President Dwight D. Eisenhower's considered the idea of placing atomic weapons in the FRG, which ultimately buried any chance of achieving a certain level of nuclear disarmament.<sup>45</sup> The hierarchical nature of the international system meant that the Soviet Union and United States dictated the pace of discussions on the subject of disarmament. The subject was not approached again with any serious intent until January 1963, following the Cuban Missile Crisis when the de-escalation of hostilities was accompanied by an agreement between the superpowers to pursue the issue.<sup>46</sup> Thus, the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT), which emerged as the first meaningful non-proliferation

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<sup>42</sup> Rebecca Davis Gibbons and Stephen Herzog, 'Durable institution under fire? The NPT confronts emerging multipolarity' in *Contemporary Security Policy*, xliii (2022), p.60.

<sup>43</sup> Joseph S. Nye, 'Arms control after the Cold War' in *Foreign Affairs*, lxviii (1989), pp.42-64; Joseph S. Nye, *Soft power; The means to success in world politics* (New York, 2004); Pascal Boniface, *Comprendre le monde: Les relations internationales pour tous* (Paris, 2012); Amaël Cuttaruzza and Pierre Sintès, *Géopolitique des conflits* (Mesnil-sur-l'Estrée, 2016).

<sup>44</sup> TNA, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Defence, 23 June 1957, CAB/129/88/151; UNDC [UN Disarmament Council], Official Records, 'Déclaration faite par le chef de la délégation de la France à la 150<sup>e</sup> séance du Sous-Comité', 29 août 1957, DC/SC/1/68.

<sup>45</sup> Jeffrey D. Sachs, 'JFK and the future of global leadership' in *International Affairs*, lxxxix (2013), p.1382.

<sup>46</sup> Philip Nash, *The other missiles of October; Eisenhower, Kennedy and the Jupiters 1957-1963* (North Carolina, 1997), p.138; Rabie Talbi, 'Les puissances émergentes BRICS; réflexion sur la multipolarité émergente' (Ph.D thesis, Université Cadi Ayyad, 2018), p.20.

agreement in the aftermath of the events in the Caribbean, will be considered as an important case study.<sup>47</sup> The PTBT will be examined as a critical turning point in the general trend of declinism, which affected both Britain and France during this period.<sup>48</sup> The concept of declinism for European nations emerged as a consequence of the Second World War when nationalism swept across Africa and Asia and independence movements mobilised leading to a gradual decolonisation of the British and French empires from 1945.<sup>49</sup> For Britain, a sharp decrease in economic growth comparable to their Western European neighbours has also been cited as a specific reason for the decline in Britain's international standing as an imperial power during the early twentieth century.<sup>50</sup> While France did not suffer economically during this period of decolonisation, the installation of US nuclear safeguards in Europe marked French decline as an international power since the United States usurped the French as Europe's premier authority on nuclear power for military purposes.<sup>51</sup> De Gaulle sought to overcome France's position as a second-rate nuclear power, thus illustrating the nature of French decline from prominence following the Second World War. Nonetheless, the PTBT negotiations originally began as a trilateral exercise between Britain and the superpowers; however, it quickly became another example of the bipolar international system applying its will onto second-tier nations following a period of imperial decline. Therefore, this case study allows us to discern the extent of Franco-British decline from 1956 to 1963 as it sets the precedent for bipolar supremacy within the international community. This becomes particularly evident as the United States and Soviet Union dominated the NPT and SALT I discussions.

The ratification of the PTBT firmly cemented the United States and Soviet Union's position as effective dictators of global nuclear weapons policy. Recent law journals have elaborated on this view as the PTBT achieved more than institutionalising early efforts of non-proliferation; it served as an environmental and public health measure since it disrupted

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<sup>47</sup> The PTBT is often referred to as the Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT) in some academic works. However, this thesis will refer to the Treaty as the PTBT in subsequent uses.

<sup>48</sup> Jim Tomlinson, 'Thrice denied: "Declinism" as a recurrent theme in British history in the Long Twentieth Century' in *Twentieth Century British History*, xx (2009), pp.227-251.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Overy, *Blood and ruins; The great imperial war 1931-1945* (Milton Keynes, 2021), p.854.

<sup>50</sup> For the study of West European economics during the period of this thesis, see N.F.R. Crafts, 'The golden age of economic growth in Western Europe, 1950-1973' in *European History Review*, xlviii (1995), pp.429-447, p.434. For further discussion of the British case of decline see Corthorn, *Enoch Powell*, pp.18-19; Ritchie Owendale, 'The end of empire' in Richard English and Michael Kenny (eds), *Rethinking British decline* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp.257-259.

<sup>51</sup> Pierre Lellouche, 'La France et la politique américaine à l'égard de la sécurité de l'Europe' in *Politique étrangère*, xlv (1979), p.484.

the dispersal of airborne radioactive materials – a by-product of nuclear weapons testing.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, the PTBT corralled Britain into the same group of ‘second-rate nations’ alongside its European neighbours, with the United Kingdom’s dependence on US missiles effectively forbidding it from pursuing a policy where nuclear weapons would secure its role as a world-leading power. British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) Brigade Major J. Cowan argued that British nuclear policy was inadequate, stating that ‘reliance on nuclear weapons seems to me to be “iffy”’<sup>53</sup> Cowan’s successor Brigadier John Akehurst agreed with his predecessor, describing reliance on nuclear weapons ‘as tantamount to suicide,’ which went against his aspiration to ‘greatly enhance [sic] the reputation of the British Army.’<sup>54</sup> On this basis, David French has argued that the United States usurped Britain in facing Soviet threats. According to French, the United States wanted to control European deterrence to avoid ‘all forms of attack’ from Soviet forces; therefore Britain could not exert its will over nuclear forces in Europe.<sup>55</sup> French’s argument is indeed persuasive since when British Prime Minister Harold Wilson challenged US orthodoxy over a European MLF; the United States quickly shelved the proposals and rather reoriented European defence planning once again towards a strategy less dependent on nuclear weapons through the Harmel Report of 1968.

Furthermore, the PTBT robbed the French of self-determination over its national nuclear weapons programme. As a result of the PTBT, limited arms control measures were institutionalised. Manseok Lee and Michael Nacht have investigated the effects of the PTBT on the international community. In their discussion of the NPT, both stated that the thought-processes of the international community were reformed around the conditions of the PTBT.<sup>56</sup> According to the French sociologist Pierre Grémion, US influence within NATO and Germany undermined France’s ability to develop a world role in the Cold War period, despite the formation of the French strategic nuclear force – the *force de frappe*.<sup>57</sup> This thesis will examine how the French, quite successfully, established a strategic nuclear force against the backdrop of political unanimity towards non-proliferation. In 1961, the United Nations

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<sup>52</sup> David A. Koplow, ‘Sherlock Holmes meets Rube Goldberg: Fixing the Entry-into-Force provisions of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty’ in *Duke Journal of Comparative and International Law*, xxviii (2017), p.9.

<sup>53</sup> TNA, Policy for storage of army nuclear weapons in British Army of the Rhine, [undated], WO/32/17131.

<sup>54</sup> TNA, John Bryan Akehurst – Recommendations for Honours or Awards, November 1975, WO/373/176/113.

<sup>55</sup> David French, *Army, empire and Cold War; The British army and military policy, 1945-1971* (New York, 2012), p.214.

<sup>56</sup> Manseok Lee and Michael Nacht, ‘Challenges to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty’ in *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, xiv (2020), p.100

<sup>57</sup> Pierre Grémion, “‘Preuves” dans le Paris de guerre froide’ in *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire*, xiii (1987), p.78.

General Assembly passed the ‘Irish Resolution’ calling on the international community to unite on the issue of prohibiting nuclear weapons acquisition.<sup>58</sup> Thomas Graham – who later worked as a Special Representative for Arms Control, Non-Proliferation and Disarmament under US President Bill Clinton between 1994 and 1997 – stressed that President Kennedy was motivated to limit the amount of nations which possessed nuclear armaments following the Cuban Missile Crisis. Kennedy’s rationale centred on limiting rivals to US dominance in the nuclear field. Responding to a journalist on 21 March 1963, Kennedy stated that he was ‘haunted by the feeling that by 1970, unless we are successful, there may be 10 nuclear powers instead of four, and by 1975, 15 or 20.’<sup>59</sup>

The regulatory authority of the superpowers is an important consideration for this thesis as the PTBT opened the door for a dialogue between both countries to reduce tensions. Indeed, this period of dialogue between the United States and Soviet Union garnered a new direction for non-proliferation agreements. The NPT will be examined as part of this new direction since the superpowers soon discovered that nuclear tests could proceed unchecked underwater following the ratification of the PTBT.<sup>60</sup> Focusing on the various non-proliferation agreements, this thesis highlights the role changing attitudes to nuclearisation played in the decline of Britain and France’s international standing. An aspect of historiography which is critically underexplored compared to the institutionalisation of the non-proliferation regime to guarantee the sovereignty of the superpowers. The de Gaulle government did not accept the NPT and continued to pursue nuclearisation. By contrast, the British government fell in behind the United States and endorsed further arms control conditions. The influence of superpower bipolarity culminated in this period with the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties, with the first being signed in 1972.<sup>61</sup> Therefore by the time of British accession to the European Communities, the United States and Soviet Union had successfully carved out their share of control on the international stage, wherein policy concerning the development of nuclear weapons was effectively dictated by the superpowers.

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<sup>58</sup> Thomas Graham, ‘The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: Delayed review – issues old and new’ in *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament*, iv (2021), p.186; Mervyn O’Driscoll, *Ireland, West Germany and the new Europe, 1949-73; Best friend and ally* (Manchester, 2018), p.135; Evgeny M. Chossudovsky, ‘The origins of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons: Ireland’s initiative in the United Nations (1958-61) in *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, iii (1990), p.113.

<sup>59</sup> John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, ‘News Conference 52’, 21 March 1963 (<https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-press-conferences/news-conference-52>) (12 July 2022).

<sup>60</sup> M.I. Shaker, ‘The third NPT review conference: Issues and prospects’ in David B. Dewitt (ed), *Nuclear non-proliferation and global security* (New York, 1987), pp.5-6.

<sup>61</sup> Georges-Henri Soutou, *La guerre de Cinquante Ans; Les relations Est-Ouest 1943-1990* (Paris, 2001), p.447.

Thus, this thesis will examine how Britain and France attempted to cultivate a world role for themselves in this bipolar framework, and ultimately how this affected their bilateral relationship, given that some of their policies were incompatible.

### **Franco-British military cooperation**

While the 1960s and early 1970s were marked by Franco-British divisions over European economic integration, this period experienced a resurgence in cooperation in military hardware between both countries. The Suez Crisis promptly brought Britain and France's military weaknesses into light. Losing the Suez Canal to Egypt forced Britain to accept its declining military role in its overseas territories.<sup>62</sup> The story was similar for France as the loss of the Canal precipitated the collapse of its North African colonial dependencies, including Algeria and Lebanon. The Suez Crisis was selected as the starting point for this analysis as the effects of the cease-fire had a profound impact on British political thinking, particularly in relation to Britain's attempts to obtain a credible nuclear deterrent. In addition, the crisis accelerated the decline in Britain and France's imperial clout; therefore, it proves an appropriate case study by which to trace the emergence of the bipolar order and its effects on both countries' international standing. The decline in both countries' imperial influence compelled a change in policy direction with Britain and France now perceiving Europe as the main drive for preserving their authority on the international stage. The reorientation towards Europe brought British and French grand design ideas into conflict throughout the late-1950s and 1960s. The Macmillan and Home governments supported the creation of a commercial European union devoid of bureaucratic influence, whereas the French political elites increasingly favoured a more federal institution entitling member states to veto proposed policies on economic, defence and foreign policy concerns.<sup>63</sup> The divisions over both economic grand designs have been well-documented in academic literature; however this thesis takes a novel approach to Franco-British cooperation by examining the military aspects of the grand design ideas.<sup>64</sup> In doing so, this thesis seeks to overcome this neglect insofar as it

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<sup>62</sup> N.J. Crowson, *The Conservative Party and European integration since 1945; At the heart of Europe* (Abingdon, 2007), p.18.

<sup>63</sup> Kalypso Nicolaïdis and Janie Pélabay, 'One union, one story? In praise of Europe's narrative diversity' in David Phinnemore and Alex Warleigh-Lack (eds), *Reflections on European integration; 50 years of the Treaty of Rome* (Basingstoke, 2009), p.191.

<sup>64</sup> For examples of the academic consensus on Franco-British economic affairs, see D.E. Butler and Anthony King, *The British General Election of 1964* (London, 1965), p.17; Isabelle Lescent-Giles, 'The "Mésentente Cordiale": Economic relations between France and Great Britain since 1945' in Philippe Chassigne and Michael Dockrill (eds), *Anglo-French relations 1898-1998; From Fashoda to Jospin* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp.138-160; N. Piers Ludlow, *Dealing with Britain; The Six and the first UK application to the EEC*

considers the development of the Anglo-French Variable Geometry (AFVG) aircraft SEPECAT Jaguar – the Franco-British jetfighter which was introduced in 1973. The SEPECAT Jaguar arose out of the Anglo-French Agreement of 1962. The bilateral treaty between Britain and France emerged out of their desire to innovate civilian supersonic air travel, which obligated both countries to work together on the Concorde project.<sup>65</sup> Thus, the SEPECAT Jaguar was a result of a legitimate bilateral agreement, which the French used to cement cooperation over military hardware. For instance, The French Minister for the Armed Forces *Général d'armée* Louis Le Puloch only authorised the signing of the Anglo-French Agreement if British aviation industrial experts would assist in the construction of a French *force de frappe*, by providing details of their missile propulsion design.<sup>66</sup>

While the academic discussion around Franco-British military aircraft cooperation has been limited, it has in fact been extremely divisive. Despite not arousing much scholarly interest, the success of the SEPECAT Jaguar in fostering closer Franco-British relations divides opinion with the French viewing it as an unnecessary addition to pre-existing politico-military policies and the British considering the aircraft as an example of closer cross-channel cooperation in the military field. Herein lies the issue with bilingual historiographies since scholarly work depends on an availability of sources, with some contributions from British authors lacking in their use of French archival materials and vice versa. Thus, by undertaking a multi-archival, bilingual investigation, this thesis will deliver a holistic interpretation of what is a distinct period in Britain and France's shared history as both countries experienced a similar decline in military influence between 1956 and 1973. Nonetheless, conversations about extending Franco-British aeronautical cooperation began in earnest soon after the signing of the Anglo-French Agreement, with funding for a military aircraft to be given to the British Aircraft Corporation (BAC), Rolls-Royce engine manufacturers, Sud-Aviation and the *Société Nationale d'Étude et de Construction des Moteurs d'Aviation* (SNECMA).<sup>67</sup> Martin W. Bowman has contested that the SEPECAT Jaguar met both countries' 'urgent requirement in 1964' – namely, innovation in the military aviation sector to combat continual subservience to the United States and Soviet Union.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, contemporary academics have criticised closer Franco-British cooperation in

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(Cambridge, 1997), pp.36-37; For an example of the defence debate see Philip Goodhart, 'La défense de l'Europe et la coopération franco-britannique' in *Politique étrangère*, xxxix (1974), pp.215-222.

<sup>65</sup> Donald Alfred Nelson, 'Concorde: International cooperation in aviation' in *The American Journal of Comparative Law*, xvii (1969), p.453.

<sup>66</sup> Bernard Ledwidge, *De Gaulle* (London, 1982), p.274

<sup>67</sup> Martin W. Bowman, *SEPECAT Jaguar; Tactical support & Maritime strike fighter* (Barnsley, 2007), p.10.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p.27.



military terms, ultimately deeming it to be unnecessary. A prominent critic of General de Gaulle, Claude Fresnoy, presented this view in the immediate aftermath of the SEPECAT Jaguar decision. Fresnoy stated that the proposed introduction of the SEPECAT Jaguar was ‘a futility’ since its influence ‘would ultimately be limited.’<sup>69</sup> The size and presence of the Soviet Union was Fresnoy’s justification for this point of view. This divergence in thinking represents one such instance of the differing schools of thought between British and French academics, signifying the need for a broader interpretation of Franco-British military concerns during this period, which this thesis will deliver. Moreover, the SEPECAT Jaguar represents an interesting case study for the development of the Franco-British military partnership in the early Cold War period. The SEPECAT Jaguar was born out of amicable Franco-British cooperation. Aérospatiale (formerly Sud-Aviation) and BAC worked to facilitate the creation of the Jaguar as the next stage in military aviation technology.<sup>70</sup> The launching of the aircraft in 1973 heralded a period of new-found stability in the Franco-British working partnership. The roots of the SEPECAT Jaguar and France’s Mirage IV aircraft stem from the decision in November 1962 to combine British and French efforts affirmed by the British Minister of Aviation Julian Amery and French Ambassador to London Geoffroy de Courcel. The SEPECAT Jaguar’s legacy and technological supremacy brought stability to a Franco-British military and security partnership, which had experienced measurable damage following the Suez Crisis. Military collaboration over Jaguar construction is an important factor to consider as it formed part of the basis for British entry into the European Communities in January 1973. In addition, the AFVG project achieved two aims. The SEPECAT Jaguar acted as a fruitful medium for Franco-British cooperation whilst also advancing European research and development to such a degree that it began to challenge superpower dominance in the field of aeronautics. While both countries may have disagreed on the idea of non-proliferation and the construction of a nuclear deterrent, their military partnership spearheaded further innovation in the aviation sector throughout the remainder of the Cold War period. In particular, the SEPECAT Jaguar allowed Britain and France to organise global conventional defence measures. Oman and Ecuador both purchased SEPECAT Jaguar options in September 1974 following its immediate introduction into service, which permitted Britain and France to initiate further development into the project.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Claude Fresnoy, ‘Une force nucléaire indépendante’ in *Revue des Deux Mondes (1829-1971)*, (1964), p.390.

<sup>70</sup> CAA, Programme d’essai sur avion au sol, no. 50-21<sup>E</sup>-09-4312, 26 Oct 1972, AA/633/3K2/220.

<sup>71</sup> Bowman, *SEPECAT Jaguar*, p.119.

The SEPECAT Jaguar was only one example of Franco-British military cooperation. The pace of nuclear weapons development afforded Britain and France another means of inter-governmental partnership. From 1957, the British government began to move its nuclear testing capacities to its overseas dependencies, with Royal Air Force (RAF) flights freighting materials to Australia from February of that year.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, the French turned their attention to the development of a feasible nuclear deterrent within the context of European integration following the ratification of the Messina Treaties of 1957. French Prime Minister Guy Mollet authorised the construction of a national nuclear air force concentrated on the design of the Mirage aircraft. Mollet's case for the strategic nuclear force was two-fold. In the first instance, the Mirage IV was designed to act as a nuclear bomber force to forestall further decolonisation in the African colonies, as the French began nuclear tests in Sierra Leone in 1960.<sup>73</sup> Further the Mirage IV was envisaged to be one component part of a European nuclear deterrent force. President de Gaulle later adopted this way of thinking so as to use the Mirage IV as a means of deepening a sense of identity for European nations in the field of nuclear defences.<sup>74</sup> During the late-1950s and early-1960s, Britain and France took separate nuclear trajectories with the aim of retaining their international influence comparable to the United States and Soviet Union. Wolf Mendl argued that the French followed a British model towards nuclear weapons development since Britain pursued an integrationist model rather than creating a *force de dissuasion nationale*.<sup>75</sup> However, this thesis does not follow Mendl's argument; rather it pursues the diverging patterns in both nations' nuclear weapons development with the British pursuing an integrationist policy with NATO and the United States, while the French sought to create an independent deterrent to dominate European Community defence affairs throughout the late-1960s. It examines these different trajectories in nuclear weapons development to illustrate the unlikelihood of European unity in military terms, which by circumstance, would limit any prospect of economic integration.

Both countries' nuclear trajectories began to converge following the departure of President de Gaulle in 1969. On 20 June 1969, Georges Pompidou entered office and French defence spending experienced a sizeable downturn. Jacques Fontanela and Jean-Paul Hébert have traced the change in policy effectively since Pompidou moved away from the politics of

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<sup>72</sup> The main transport hubs for nuclear materials from the United Kingdom to Australia were RAF Lewisham and RAF Wiltshire, see 'A nuclear test base build-up; A Lewisham man navigates MET. flights' in *Lewisham Borough News*, 5 March 1957, p.1.

<sup>73</sup> Luc Berger, 'Dassault et le renouveau de 'aéronautique militaire française (1945-1960)' in *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, clxxxviii (1997), p.96.

<sup>74</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, 'Charles de Gaulle and Europe' in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, xiv (2012), p.60.

<sup>75</sup> Wolf Mendl, 'The background of French nuclear policy' in *International Affairs*, xli (1965), p.35.

*grandeur* which characterised de Gaulle's presidential tenure.<sup>76</sup> The proportion of French budgetary spending on nuclear defence was cut from 20.5 per cent in 1969 to 18.4 per cent the following year.<sup>77</sup> Yet, for the continuous decline in nuclear defence spending throughout the Pompidou presidency, France's status as a key player in European defence was strengthened in the early-1970s. Current research has focused on France's national de-nuclearisation as a requirement to rebuild trust with the electorate after the events of the May 1968 attempted revolution.<sup>78</sup> The workers' strikes which took place in May and June 1968 struck at the heart of de Gaulle's politics of *grandeur*, with French workers demanding better wages in line with the growing productivity, and the cost of living during the *Trente Glorieuses*.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, Pompidou's nuclear strategy paid dividends as it afforded Britain and France the opportunity for reconciliation over military affairs. Pompidou gave permission for the conversation on British membership of the European Communities to continue in 1970, with the intention of facilitating an *entente nucléaire* between Britain and France thus sustaining French nuclear influence while keeping the cost of a deterrent force within acceptable fiscal limits.<sup>80</sup> New British Prime Minister Edward Heath and Pompidou's desire to cultivate an *entente nucléaire* will be used as a good comparative case study to the SALT I negotiations as it demonstrates the shift in the Franco-British relationship towards reconciliation and cooperation. To accurately compare Franco-British aims in the face of geopolitical trends regarding non-proliferation, this thesis will examine efforts to foster this *entente nucléaire* against the backdrop of negotiations between the United States and Soviet Union over institutionalising arms control policies in a bipolar context through the SALT I discussions from 1969 to 1972.

Heath sought to accommodate Pompidou's desire for an *entente nucléaire* to progress Britain's accession to the European Communities. US-Soviet discussions concerning non-proliferation forced the Pompidou government to soften their stance towards British membership since France wanted to secure its status as a leading power on the European and

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<sup>76</sup> Jacques Fontanela and Jean-Paul Hébert, 'The end of the "French grandeur policy"' in *Defence and Peace Economics*, viii (1997), p.40.

<sup>77</sup> For a quantitative research approach to French nuclear defence through the Fifth Republic see Jacques Fontanel, *Les dépenses militaires et le désarmement* (Paris, 1995).

<sup>78</sup> Markku Lehtonen, Ana Prades, Josep Espluga and Wilfried Konrad, 'The emergence of mistrust civic vigilance in Finnish, French, German and Spanish nuclear policies: ideological trust and (de)politicization' in *Journal of Risk Research*, xxv (2022), p.625.

<sup>79</sup> The *Trente Glorieuses* refers to a period of economic prosperity from the Second World War until the Oil Crisis of the 1970s (1945-1975), see David Caute, *The year of the barricades: A journey through 1968* (New York, 1988), p.255.

<sup>80</sup> Alain Peyrefitte, *Le mal français* (Paris, 1976), p.66.

global stage. Amongst British government officials, there was a level of anxiety over Britain's prospective entry into the European framework. Foreign Office official W.J. Adams questioned whether a newly-developing relationship between British and French industry was an adequate foundation for the United Kingdom's entry into the European framework, as the Communities 'contained none of the supranational limits to which [Britain] attach importance.'<sup>81</sup> Despite the questions around British membership from within Whitehall, both countries concurred on amalgamating their nuclear deterrents with the aim of moulding a European Nuclear Force (ENF) to act as the defence apparatus for the European Communities. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) was the outlier in this sense. MoD officials sought to 'allow gradualism to produce an integrated European defence organisation' designed to bring together Franco-British politico-military aims within one institution.<sup>82</sup> The historian Helen Parr states that this attitude guided Heath's political thinking with regards to merging Franco-British nuclear arsenals, even if the British Prime Minister would later regret not achieving this once he left office.<sup>83</sup> This thesis follows a similar line of argument to the likes of Parr and Stoddart insofar as it maintains that Heath followed a pro-European way of thinking. By placing Heath's policies in the context of Franco-British military cooperation, we will see that collaborative projects, such as the ENF or SEPECAT Jaguar were utilised for political gains – namely, advancing the idea that the British were in fact 'good Europeans' to accelerate entry into the European Communities.

### **Sources and Methodology**

Over the course of this analysis, particular attention will be paid to papers and speeches of both British and French provenance while also examining US and Soviet viewpoints so as to set the thesis within the widest possible context. One distinctive characteristic of this analysis is the inclusion of French military documents, including design schematics and armed forces working group reports and planning reports, located at the *Service historique de la défense*, Vincennes and *Centre d'Archives de l'armement et du personnel civil*, Châtelleraut. This sets the thesis apart from previous work on the Franco-British partnership as it allows a thorough investigation of the preparatory work, which the Gaullist administration and the French military hierarchy carried out to discern France's readiness for withdrawal from the NATO

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<sup>81</sup> TNA, UK JOINING THE EEC, [undated], FCO/30/411.

<sup>82</sup> TNA, Burke Trend to Heath, 5 March 1971, PREM/15/789.

<sup>83</sup> Helen Parr, "'The Nuclear Myth': Edward Heath, Europe, and the international politics of Anglo-French nuclear co-operation 1970-3" in *The International History Review*, xxxv (2013), p.540; Kristan Stoddart, 'Nuclear weapons in Britain's policy towards France' in *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, xviii (2007), p.737.

command structure. The reports from the *Cours Supérieur Inter-armée* augment our knowledge of Gaullist enthusiasm for departing the Atlantic Alliance, given the extensive effort the French military invested in preparing the existing armed forces installations for the possibility of nuclear attack. By extension, these reports demonstrate the dichotomy of British and French defence policy orientations, therefore supporting the thesis' main argument that economic integration was not possible without reconciliation over military concerns and each country's standing within the international community. Much work has been done on the key events leading up to NATO withdrawal, such as the removal of French naval vessels from the Mediterranean fleet. However, the military preparation for withdrawal remains critically underexplored. Thus, this thesis breaks new ground by shining light on the entrenched policy positions of British and French governments throughout the 1960s. In addition, the multilingual approach to this research brings a sense of novelty to this examination, particularly as the integration of military and political primary sources in English and French allows this thesis to present a holistic interpretation of Franco-British relations during this period. Moreover in his overview of Franco-British relations, former British ambassador to Paris Sir Christopher Mallaby stressed the value of bilateral cooperation as a crucial reminder of previous alliances dating back to the World Wars. Mallaby, nonetheless, offers an appropriate reason for mistrust and the so-called 'great animosity' characterised by French assertions of Perfidious Albion – principally which 'Britain has long been a partner in Europe. Britain and France both want a "Europe des patries." They both want to be leaders in the European Union. The difference is that France is among the leaders, and Britain, though often influential, is not as much of a leader as its present government wants.'<sup>84</sup>

The inclusion of political primary sources from British and French archives has supplemented the research carried out at the *Service historique de la défense* and *Centre d'Archives de l'armement et du personnel civil*. The Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Defence and Cabinet Office files located in the National Archives, Kew and the de Gaulle and Pompidou presidential papers in the *Archives nationales*, Peyrefitte have been used to properly contextualise the rationale for British and French decision-makers in their orientation of defence policies in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis. By comparing and contrasting these political sources in relation to military and nuclear planning, this thesis seeks to understand the complexities of British policy, while understanding the nuances of the

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<sup>84</sup> Sir Christopher Mallaby, 'Britain and France: Some comments on complex relationship' in Philippe Chassaigne and Michael Dockrill (eds), *Anglo-French relations 1898-1998, From Fashoda to Jospin* (Basingstoke, 2002), p.9.

different party positions which affected its ability to put forth a coherent foreign policy towards its French neighbours, doing so with the awareness, as Laura Roselle, Alister Miskimmon and Ben O’Loughlin argued, that diplomacy can be a soft power tool by which politico-military relations are established.<sup>85</sup> Extensive official Foreign Office, Prime Minister’s Office and Ministry of Defence records in the National Archives compared with the critically unexploited policy documents and testing reports from the *Service historique de la défense* are invaluable to this argument as they allow us to specifically uncover the loci of Franco-British political decision-making. This is particularly effective when discussing the overarching theme of nuclear non-proliferation. In 1963, during the high tide of French preparation for withdrawal from NATO, the superpowers were engaged in bi-lateral negotiations to limit the arm races by establishing controls on nuclear weapons testing so as to undermine any emerging competition from nations outside of the bipolar framework. Thus by consulting these sources, this thesis goes beyond previous work in tracing the level of belligerence which the French government exhibited towards non-proliferation especially following the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Taking a bilingual approach to primary source research, personal papers of public figures and politicians related to policymaking will supplement the military files already consulted in order to gauge the thought-processes of those involved at the highest level of political decision-making. The Amery, Jebb, Sandys and Plowden personal papers located within the Churchill Archives Centre provided crucial information for the understanding of the British position on nuclear weapons. Much like the political papers based in the National Archives, these personal papers allow us to discern the nuances of key figures involved, particularly in the case of Julian Amery whose political ideology straddled the fields of Europeanism and neo-colonialism. For example, both Amery and Sandys in their writings had criticised – and even pushed against – the Macmillan government’s policy on institutionalising of Anglo-American military cooperation. Rather their preference veered towards tighter European integration. Thus, the inclusion of personal papers advances our knowledge of Franco-British relations insofar as provides critical contextual details of the alternatives debated by politicians in the creation of a coherent military policy position.

However, there is one serious restriction in the historical research of French nuclear policies, which means Franco-British politico-military cooperation remains unfortunately

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<sup>85</sup> Laura Roselle, Alister Miskimmon and Ben O’Loughlin, ‘Strategic narrative: A new means to understand soft power’ in *Media, War & Conflict*, vii (2014), p.73.

underdeveloped. There are two compelling reasons for this oversight. The restrictions on archival materials regarding ‘the fabrication, use or localisation of nuclear armaments’ written into the *Code du Patrimoine* make it difficult to ascertain the extent of French nuclear development beyond secondary material; while scholarly attention has tended – albeit in a limited manner – to focus on the by-products of Franco-British military cooperation, such as the SEPECAT Jaguar.<sup>86</sup> Nuclear weapons are an important theme throughout this thesis. As the 1960s and 1970s evolved, with restrictions on nuclear weapons development increasing, Britain and France were forced to accept their role as secondary powers and forgo what the architect of the European Communities Jean Monnet described as their attempts ‘to maintain [their] position in relation to the superpowers.’<sup>87</sup>

Lastly, this thesis will make use of the NATO Standing Group files in order to ascertain the contrasting military ambitions of Britain, France and the United States throughout the late-1950s until 1973. Standing Group files and letters from the General Secretaries illustrate the different factions developing within the Atlantic Alliance during this period and the knock-on effects this had on NATO effectiveness and unity, as well as Britain and France’s aim of playing a leadership role in Europe. Therefore, they prove a useful source, particularly for the period 1957 to 1965, when NATO reforms and the proposed Multilateral Force put the United States and France on different trajectories as to their Grand Design visions for a Western European defence initiative. These divisions are dealt with in detail throughout the thesis and provide a novel lens by which to contextualise the difficult choices facing Britain with regards to preserving its bi-lateral relationships and avoiding alienating either its Atlantic or European partner.

Despite certain restrictions on French archival materials, this thesis takes an uncommon approach to the discussion of Franco-British relations as it was based on a bilingual analysis of primary sources in France and English. This affords the investigation a certain degree of novelty as it permits the thesis to transect two different schools of thought and present a wider and more complete view of the events of the period. While the focus on nuclear and hardware aspects of the bilateral partnership means this thesis adopts a high politics historical approach, it also accounts for the impacts of institutional decision-making

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<sup>86</sup> L’article 17 de la loi du 15 juillet 2008 cited in Maurice Vaïsse, ‘L’historiographie française relative au nucléaire’, *Revue Historique des Armées*, cclxii (2011), p.8; A.J.R. Groom, ‘La politique de défense du gouvernement conservateur britannique’, *Études internationales*, iii (1972), pp.175-197 ; Marc R. Devore, ‘International Armaments Collaboration and the Limits of Reform’, *Defence and Peace Economics*, xv (2014), p.427.

<sup>87</sup> Jean Monnet, *Memoirs* (London, 1978), p.362; Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870* (London, 2004), p.108.

in each country. For instance, how Britain's efforts to develop a nuclear deterrent provoked backlash from intellectuals and opposition leaders, who were members of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) – an organisation that opposed military engagements which may escalate towards nuclear weapons use. In addition, this approach also accounts for how de Gaulle's *politics of grandeur*, of which nuclearization was a key part, led to discontent amongst some rioters during the attempted Mai '68 revolution. Thus, this thesis transcends many of the sub-literatures in relation to European integration and Franco-British post-war histories, and puts forth a holistic interpretation of how divergence in bilateral defence planning between Britain and France marked their inability to integrate into not only a European military organisation, but also more widely into the EC framework throughout the period 1956 to 1973.

Nonetheless, both Britain and France were acutely aware of the significance of leadership in Europe in the period where the bipolar order was taking shape (1962-8). Seemingly, Macmillan and de Gaulle understood the multitude of opportunities that European dominance offered to maintain their countries' influence in the field of defence. Macmillan argued that British integration into the pre-established European Communities would permit the United Kingdom 'to invoke the principle of interdependence' beyond the bilateral relationship with the United States.<sup>88</sup> In a similar vein, de Gaulle saw Europe as a possible alternative to maintaining France's military influence following the cuts in defence expenditure in February 1961 (total expenditure decreased by 8 per cent), stating that 'the rigorous budgetary measures could be elevated' by the construction of an EC inter-army council.<sup>89</sup> An important contention, however, is that these views, particularly in British political circles, did not represent the mainstream view of politicians during the 1960s. The 1950s and early 1960s characterised a time of political uncertainty around embracing more unitary governance approaches to areas of international cooperation. Within the Conservative Party, there was a long-standing support for Britain's imperial role with critics such as Enoch Powell stating 'Britain's main defence obligations lie overseas in the countries of the Empire or those bordering upon it.'<sup>90</sup> Powell's argument found its basis in opposition to Anthony Eden's readiness to cede joint control of the Suez Canal to the Egyptian government. The Right of the Conservative Party broadly held this viewpoint in the early period of

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<sup>88</sup> TNA, Record of Conversation between the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary on February 16 – Reply to Mr Herter, [undated, but 1963], PREM/11/4218.

<sup>89</sup> Service historique de la défense [SHD], Note relative à la présentation des prévisions pour le budget 1962, No. 0425/EMGA/33B, 6 February 1961, GR/23/S8.

<sup>90</sup> Paul Corthorn, *Enoch Powell; Politics and ideas in modern Britain* (Oxford, 2019), p.105.



decolonisation, where the Suez Group comprised of 50 to 60 Members of Parliament (MPs) frequently argued against the British government's 'sell out' in the Middle East, stressing the Suez Agreement rendered imperial 'disintegration ... inevitable.'<sup>91</sup> Similarly on the Left, the Labour movement were divided on whether to pursue nuclear integration into the NATO and WEU framework. Hugh Gaitskell, the Labour Party leader, overruled his party membership when he overturned anti-nuclear policies voted upon during the 1961 Party Conference. This resulted in criticism from various Labour MPs since they had expressed support for the Eisenhower administration's call for nuclear disarmament and frequently demanded in the House of Commons that the Conservative government adhere to the US President's proposals for non-proliferation.<sup>92</sup> By contrast, French foreign policy was not formulated under the same constraints as a result of the semi-presidential framework initiated with the introduction of the Fifth Republic.

This thesis will consist of five chapters following a chronological order, which will effectively trace the changing state of the Franco-British politico-military relationship during the period 1956 to 1973. The first chapter considers the Suez Crisis, including how the nationalisation of the Suez Canal and President Gamal Abdel Nasser's pan-Arab policies were a threat to the Franco-British concept of EURAFRICA, wherein any imperial property would be seconded into the WEU. In doing so, the actions to return the Canal to international control will be examined. The consequences of these actions – mainly, the breakdown in the bilateral relationship and the renewed solidarity between Arab nations are well-documented.<sup>93</sup> The second chapter looks at the divergence between Britain and France in terms of their attempts to design a new foreign and defence policy following the hastening of their decline as great powers in the immediate post-Suez period. Furthermore, this chapter traces the various means by which Britain and France sought to cultivate a role as nuclear powers, including France's involvement in the F-I-G accords and Macmillan's pursuit of the Anglo-American 'special relationship.' The third chapter explores the legacy of the Cuban Missile Crisis on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and how this affected the

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid, p.25; Kevin Hickson, *Britain's Conservative Right since 1945: Traditional Toryism in a cold climate* (Cham, 2020), p.35.

<sup>92</sup> For an overview of the Labour Party's internal debates on the issue of nuclear disarmament from 1957 to 1963, see Andrew Thorpe, *A history of the British Labour Party* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., London, 2015), chapter 7; John Baylis and Kristan Stoddart, *The British nuclear experience; The role of beliefs, culture and identity* (Oxford, 2015), p.80; Rhiannon Vickers, *The Labour Party and the world, volume 1: The evolution of Labour's foreign policy, 1900-51* (Manchester, 2003), p.196.

<sup>93</sup> Adam Watson, 'The aftermath of Suez: Consequences for French decolonization' in Wm. Roger Louis and Roger Owen, *Suez 1956; The Crisis and its Consequences* (Oxford, 1989), p.342; Philip Marfleet, 'State and society' in Rahab El-Mahdi and Philip Marfleet (eds), *Egypt; The moment of change* (London, 2009), p.26.

formation of US and French proposed military alternatives. As a result, the continuing divergence between Britain and France in politico-military terms will be discussed. The French withdrawal from the NATO command structure will be investigated as a catalyst to further decline in Franco-British military cooperation in the fourth chapter. The events from 1966 to 1969 including the Western responses to the Czechoslovak crisis in 1968 and the Soames Affair, which ironically caused tension in the bilateral relationship despite being born out of a Gaullist attempt at reconciliation, will also be discussed in this chapter. The softening of tensions between Britain and France will be traced in the final chapter. The influence of the SALT process will be considered as the main drive for this, especially as it secured the United States and the Soviet Union as the leaders of the bipolar international stage. The collapse of the *Europe puissance* will also be examined as a result of the institutionalisation of bipolarity.

## **Chapter One – Franco-British cooperation over the Suez Canal**

The Suez Canal played a crucial role in combined British and French foreign policy towards Egypt and the Middle East from the late 1870s. Originally the canal company was British-controlled after a share purchase of 44 per cent from the Khedive Ismail (1863-79) in 1875; however it fell under joint Franco-British control following European support for the Khedive during a coup d'état in January 1882.<sup>1</sup> Therefore from 1882 until its complete nationalisation in July 1958, the Suez Canal Company acted as a medium for Franco-British cooperation. It is the politico-military aspect of this cooperation which this chapter seeks to explore in further detail. Primarily, this chapter will outline the difficulties involved in bilateral cooperation and how this led to Britain and France exploring different defence initiatives following the cease-fire, which brought an end to Franco-British intervention in Egypt. The Suez Canal and later the controversies surrounding its nationalisation in July 1956 prompted discussions around a geopolitical concept, which dominated British and French foreign policy considerations during the early phase of decolonisation in the post-war period – the EURAFRICA. This European-African model was designed to amalgamate British and French colonial properties in the Western European Union (WEU), which acted as a politico-military union separate from the emerging European Communities (EC), with the purpose of creating a Third Force to exist alongside the superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> The WEU and its outcrop the EURAFRICA developed further as a result of the failures to create a European Defence Community in 1954 to retain continental influence during the Cold War.<sup>3</sup> The general academic consensus around the EURAFRICA concept considers that this model served to allow European military integration through the processes of colonialism.<sup>4</sup> This chapter seeks to overturn this idea by exploring the international dimension concerning the EURAFRICA – mainly, the revival of the Western European Union (WEU) as a competitor to the Europe of Six, which was introduced as a result of the Messina Treaties in 1956. The EURAFRICA will comprise the first part of the analysis in this chapter.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the balance of power in the Middle East 1952-1967; From the Egyptian Revolution to the Six Day War* (London, 2003), p.12.

<sup>2</sup> Harry J. Mace, 'The Eurafrika initiative, Ernest Bevin and Anglo-French relations in the Foreign Office, 1945-1950' in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, xxviii (2017), p.604.

<sup>3</sup> Anne Deighton, 'Conclusions' in Matthew Broad and Suvi Kansikas (eds), *European integration beyond Brussels; Unity in East and West Europe since 1945* (Cham, 2020), p.316.

<sup>4</sup> Avit Désirée, 'La question de l'Eurafric dans la construction de l'Europe de 1950 à 1957' in *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, lxxvii (2005), pp.17-23; Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, *Eurafrika : The untold history of European Integration and colonialism* (London, 2014) ; Yves Montarsolo, *L'Eurafric, contrepoint de l'idée d'Europe* (Aix-en-Provence, 2010).

This chapter nonetheless will focus primarily on Franco-British military cooperation during the Suez Crisis and the ways in which the intervention offered opportunities for developing a closer politico-military relationship. The influence of a third party – Israel – in this cooperation played an important role in military cooperation between Britain and France as the Middle Eastern country provided the opening for the European nations to intervene in the Egyptian-Israeli conflict and paint themselves as defenders of international rights in the Suez Canal zone. The crisis arose as a result of Egyptian Pan-Arabism, which advocated the unification of Egypt and Syria and maximising Arab influence in the Middle East under the control of the Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. On 26 July 1956, Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal. The British and French governments saw this as a culmination of the Egyptian president's pan-Arab, anti-colonial agenda, and as such a threat to both countries' 'continuing influence in the Middle East,' including a Franco-British EURAFRICA comprising all the imperial dependencies in Africa.<sup>5</sup> Both governments demanded the return of the Suez Canal to international control, but Nasser argued that this would only result in a return to 'collective colonialism.'<sup>6</sup> However, this chapter will go beyond recent studies and look at international environment around the Suez debate, rather than focus solely on the colonialist aspect of the crisis.<sup>7</sup> In doing so it situates the Suez intervention within a geopolitical context.

Finally, this chapter will investigate the effects of the Suez Crisis on the state of Franco-British relations in the military field. The British Prime Minister Anthony Eden, who supposedly led British actions during the response to the crisis was deposed by Harold Macmillan in January 1957, whilst the French Prime Minister Guy Mollet who originally welcomed British engagement with Europe radically changed his position and adopted a more aggressive stance. Thus the final section of this chapter will pose two important

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<sup>5</sup> Political leaders during this period referred to the spread of pan-Arab policies during this period as 'the Mossadegh Syndrome' following Iran's nationalisation of the British-controlled Abadan plant, see Ofer Israeli, 'Twilight of colonialism: Mossadegh and the Suez Crisis' in *Middle East Policy*, xx (2012), p.148; TNA, 'Franco-British Union', 21 September 1956, FCO/371/124822. For an overview of the effects of the Suez crisis locally in Egypt, see Marfleet, 'State and society', pp.14-33; Ray Bush, 'The land and the people' in Rahab El-Mahdi and Philip Marfleet (eds), *Egypt: The moment of change* (London, 2009), pp.51-67. For specific reference to the British and French contexts, see Keith Kyle, 'Britain and the Crisis, 1955-1956' in Wm. Roger Louis and Roger Owen (eds), *Suez 1956: The crisis and its consequences* (Oxford, 1989), pp.103-130; Maurice Vaïsse, 'France and the Suez Crisis' in Roger Louis and Owen (eds), *Suez 1956*, pp.131-144. For the wider discussion on France's EURAFRICA ambitions, see Poe Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, 'Eurafrika Incognita: The colonial origins of the European Union' in *History of the Present*, vii (2017), pp.1-32.

<sup>6</sup> Anglo-French ultimatum to the Governments of Egypt and Israel, 30 October 1956, cited in D.C. Watt, *Documents on the Suez Crisis; 26 July to 6 November 1956* (London, 1957), p.10.

<sup>7</sup> Kiran Klaus Patel, 'Widening and deepening? Recent advances in European integration history' in *Neue Politische Literatur*, lxiv (2019), p.354.

questions about the differences between Eden's approach to Franco-British relations, and the one adopted by Macmillan, given that Mollet took an inherent anti-British stance. Firstly, what was Macmillan's vision for Britain's future on the international stage? And secondly, what were the consequences of his vision for the Franco-British bilateral partnership? Thus, this chapter will set the scene for the breakdown in Franco-British relations, which remained a common theme from 1956 to 1973. In doing so, it contextualises both nations' decision to depart from traditional, colonial methods of defence planning towards a nuclear outlook.

### **'...as incompatible as darkness and light'<sup>8</sup>**

The EURAFRICA idea was grounded originally in a British pursuit of better European cooperation. As Harry J. Mace concluded, the project was devised for the 'betterment of the British metropole within a framework of European integration' during the Attlee Labour government.<sup>9</sup> The British idea for the EURAFRICA planned for it to be included in a sub-structure of the developing WEU, thus amalgamating the maintenance of colonial empires with the greater engagement of European powers, such as Britain and France, in Continental defence following the Second World War. From 1954 to 1955, the EURAFRICA proposal gained momentum in France with Prime Minister Pierre Mendès France wanting to use British interest in the WEU and securing its colonial future to drive European integration with the construction of 'a European grouping with the United Kingdom participation' to counterbalance the growth of anti-imperial sentiment on the African continent and in the Middle East and the rise of US dominance in European security planning.<sup>10</sup> The Suez Canal played a vital role in conserving the EURAFRICA given the waterway allowed the movement of goods, arms, supplies etc. from the metropolitan centres of empire to the colonies, particularly in the Middle East and around the Horn of Africa.<sup>11</sup> For instance between sixty and seventy per cent of Britain's oil came through the canal each year, which justified the Ulster Unionist MP Patricia McLaughlin's defence of the canal as 'one of Britain's greatest resources ... [and] it must be freely available for all people.'<sup>12</sup> The nationalisation of the canal from July 1956 until the settlement in 1958 cost Britain

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<sup>8</sup> This subheading was taken from a comparison of Nasserite and British foreign policies in the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram*, TNA, *Al-Ahram*, 17 March 1961, FO/371/155809.

<sup>9</sup> Mace, 'The Eurafrika initiative', p.603.

<sup>10</sup> Ralph Dietl, 'The WEU: a Europe of the Seven, 1954-1969' in *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, vii (2009), p.435.

<sup>11</sup> Jean Fremigacci, 'Les parlementaires africains face à la construction européenne, 1953-1957' in *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, lxxvii (2005), pp.5-16, p.9.

<sup>12</sup> TNA, Suez Canal traffic figures for 1955, [undated, but 1956], FO/371/119125/14211/1305A; *The parliamentary debates*, Hansard, House of Commons, 16 May 1957 (vol dlxx).

approximately \$71 million in oil-based revenue.<sup>13</sup> Additionally the French government under Mendès France adapted the EURAFRICA idea to include the assimilation of colonial peoples, whilst integrating their resources into the WEU for European defence purposes.<sup>14</sup>

Developments have been made into the contextualising the EURAFRICA's role and potential within the WEU, with particular attention being paid to the security architecture that would consume both the European and colonial defence needs. It is in examining the interpretations of the Egyptian leadership and Britain and France's international partners to the EURAFRICA concept where the prelude to the Suez debacle becomes clear. The EURAFRICA idea directly contrasted with the foreign policy aims of the Egyptian government. When Colonel Nasser became the *de facto* Egyptian dictator following the removal of the former president Mohammed Naguib in November 1954, he pursued a more ambitious foreign policy than his predecessor. Nasser adopted a hostile attitude towards Western European imperialism, whilst promoting his own brand of Pan-Arabism. This concept of Arab nationalism can be easily defined as an attempt to use the Islamic status in the Middle Eastern countries as 'currency' to promote a single contemporary Arab identity with the aim of overturning against the traditional imperialist values of the colonial powers.<sup>15</sup> This obviously contrasted against the vision of the EURAFRICA since the French proposal foresaw the African/European system within the WEU as a 'booster' to empire rather than an instrument of gradual decolonisation. Nasser's anti-colonialist policy came to the fore when in 1955 Nasser began to finance and provide military support to the National Liberation Front (FLN) in French Algeria. The Egyptian leader's support of the Algerian nationalists was an important aspect of his grand plan to 'constitute a limitless strength extending from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arab Ocean.'<sup>16</sup>

The Egyptian president continued his open hostility towards imperialist aspirations of colonial integration into a European security framework when he abandoned his neutral stance. Nasser signed the Egyptian-Czech arms deal in September 1955, which guaranteed that the Soviet Union would supply \$83 million worth of contemporary weaponry to the former British protectorate. Existing literature has – quite rightly – stated that this arms deal

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<sup>13</sup> Jean-Marc Pierre, *The 1956 Suez Crisis and the United Nations* (Auckland, 2014), pp.57-8.

<sup>14</sup> Derek W. Urwin, *A political history of Western Europe since 1945* (5<sup>th</sup> ed., London, 1997), p.115.

<sup>15</sup> Fouad Ajami, 'On Nasser and his legacy' in *Journal of Peace Research*, xi (1974), p.42.

<sup>16</sup> 'Message from Prime Minister Eden to President Eisenhower', 5 August 1956, *FRUS 1955-1957*, IV, p.147.

represented a critical turning point in Franco-British history.<sup>17</sup> Many academics do not reference Nasser's attempts to maintain his 'non-aligned' policy orientation. The Press Attaché<sup>18</sup> to the British Embassy in Cairo Sir Anthony Parsons stated that Nasser's definition of "Non-aligned" to us in Cairo in those days seemed to be a process of giving the Soviet Union the benefit of every doubt and never giving the West benefit of any doubt! But still it was presented as non-alignment between the two blocs.<sup>19</sup> Despite this, the British attempted to cooperate with Nasser through an Anglo-French-German consortium in conjunction with the United States over the Aswan Dam project to induce a 'liberal settlement' to counter an aggressive Egyptian foreign policy.<sup>20</sup> While the Aswan Dam was a civil engineering project aimed at capitalising on national economic growth, British assistance was partly based on defence policy. The Eden government saw it as necessary to forestall the growth of Soviet influence in Egypt since by 1955; the Soviet Union had attempted to widen their sphere of influence to include Middle Eastern countries. This represented a direct threat to the Franco-British EURAFRICA and the remnants of Western European empires.<sup>21</sup>

The French also wished to contain Soviet influence in the Middle East. Whilst the EURAFRICA was a joint endeavour for both Britain and France, the latter also sought to sustain their colonial clout in Algeria which was essential to the maintenance of their oil supply line.<sup>22</sup> While Nasser's support for the FLN in Algeria was part of his grander plan to foster a greater Arab movement in the Middle East. As part of this venture, Nasser subsidised the Palestinian revolutionary movement – the *fidaiyyun* – in Israel.<sup>23</sup> Egyptian military assistance, which the Czech arms deal supplemented, provoked 'deep concern' to the Israeli security services. The mutual threat from the Egyptian government towards France and Israel created an opportunity for politico-military cooperation. In May 1956, representatives of both governments opened negotiations about a possible arms deal. The following month, the Israeli Chief of the General Staff Moshe Dayan travelled to a military airfield outside Paris to sign a \$100 million agreement for French Mystère IV jet fighters to be delivered to Israel no

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<sup>17</sup> Bertjan Verbeek, *Decision-making in Great Britain during the Suez Crisis; Small groups and a persistent leader* (Aldershot, 2003); W. Scott Lucas, *Divided we stand; Britain, the US and the Suez Crisis* (London, 1991); Herbert Tint, *French foreign policy since the Second World War* (London, 1972).

<sup>18</sup> Although in day-to-day matters, Parsons was referred to as the Oriental Secretary rather than his official title.

<sup>19</sup> CAC, Transcript of interview: Sir Anthony Parsons, 1996, GBR/0014/DOHP 10.

<sup>20</sup> TNA, Aswan High Dam – Note by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, C.P.(55) 168, 1 November 1955, CAB/129/78/18; TNA, Opportunities for the Moslem majority, [undated, but pre-19 July 1956], T/273/380.

<sup>21</sup> Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson, 'Imperial origins of European integration and the case of Eurafrika: A reply to Gary Marks' "Europe and its Empires" in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 1 (2012), p.1037.

<sup>22</sup> Jean-Jacques Berreby, 'Le pétrole, enjeu stratégique autour de la Méditerranée' in *Politique étrangère*, xxxvi (1971), p.521.

<sup>23</sup> Antony Adolf, *Peace: A world history* (Cambridge, 2009), p.157.

later than the 18 July 1956.<sup>24</sup> This agreement marked an onset of amicable Franco-Israeli relations. Although this was a success for the French Foreign Minister Christian Pineau, it was not well-received by his British counterparts. During a trilateral meeting following the nationalisation of the Suez Canal on 23 August, the British delegate Sir Leslie Rowan asked Pineau to consider implementing economic sanctions rather than pursue an overtly hostile military strategy. Pineau's reply was emphatic: 'it is appropriate to take [such] measures against Egypt. If Egypt were to know that we are hesitant to take economic measures, it would be inclined to respond negatively to its offer to negotiate.'<sup>25</sup> The Franco-Israeli military pact caused a minor disruption to the Franco-British relationship since Britain was vehemently against a facilitating of military power in the Middle East. The British viewed the June 1956 arms deal as a circumvention of the Tripartite Agreement of 1950, which was brought in by the United States, Britain and France as a means of containing the tensions between the Arab States and the Israelis following the Arab-Israeli war in 1949.<sup>26</sup>

More provocatively, before the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, Franco-British relations went through a turbulent period. In January 1956, the British government sought to bolster the Baghdad Pact, which they had formed with Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan and Iran in 1955. This move angered France, which was solely concentrating on maintaining the EURAFRICA, since Britain had not consulted their cross-channel partner on the formation of the Middle Eastern military union.<sup>27</sup> The Pact was one of the two key tenets of British foreign and defence policy for safeguarding peace in the Middle East during the pre-Suez period. In tandem with preserving the EURARFICA, the Baghdad Pact was also a necessary part of the British defence policy insofar as it was used to undermine US anti-colonialism in the Middle East.<sup>28</sup> The United States, despite being a NATO ally of both Britain and France, pursued a policy of anti-imperialism and anti-Communism in the Middle East. Before the British government had signed the Suez Agreement in July 1954, US representatives supported Nasserite policies with the minister plenipotentiary in Tripoli Sir Alec Kirkbride offering this critique: 'American policy in the Middle East countries is nearly always to cultivate the

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<sup>24</sup> David Charlwood, *Suez Crisis 1956; End of empire and the reshaping of the Middle East* (Barnsley, 2019), p.28.

<sup>25</sup> *Compte rendu [d'une reunion tripartite sur l'affaire de Suez], 23 août 1956, Documents diplomatiques français [hereafter DDF], vol 2, no.143.*

<sup>26</sup> TNA, Minutes of a Cabinet Meeting, C.M. 37(56), 17 May 1956, CAB/195/15/1; Keith Kyle, 'La Grande-Bretagne, la France et la crise de Suez' in *Histoire, Économie et Société*, xiii (1994), p.81.

<sup>27</sup> Kyle, 'La Grande-Bretagne, la France et la crise de Suez', p.80.

<sup>28</sup> Nigel John Ashton, 'The hijacking of a pact: The formation of the Baghdad Pact and Anglo-American tensions in the Middle East, 1955-1958' in *Review of International Studies*, xix (1993), p.134.



“nationalistic” parties or politicians on the grounds that anyone fighting for any form of independence must be a “good thing” *vide* the American War of Independence.<sup>29</sup> Britain’s two-pronged Middle Eastern defence policy with the Baghdad Pact and the EURAFRICA served to isolate it in the prelude to the Suez Crisis. This became clear during the military preparations on the original plan to recapture the Suez Canal from Egyptian government – project Musketeer. On 3 August 1956, Pineau instructed the French Ambassador to London Maurice Chauvel to veto any inclusion of Iraq whom Britain ‘considered it essential to invite’ in the Suez intervention.<sup>30</sup> The French Foreign Minister saw British influence in the Baghdad Pact as a distraction, with US anti-colonialist policies also threatening the strategic value of the EURAFRICA project which the French prioritised. Pineau desired the US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles reconsider his country’s hostile Northern Tier policy as it would prove detrimental to the nations within the EURAFRICA as they were ‘essential zones in [French North Africa which] would become a very active transit area... for the recapture of Europe’ in the event of Soviet incursion.<sup>31</sup>

Overall, the international dimension dictated the prelude to the Suez Crisis with declining relations between Britain, France and the United States allowing the growth of pan-Arabism in the Middle East. Nasser exercised his socialist policies against British and French colonies, which overtly threatened their interests in the Middle East. Lebanon, in particular, became Nasser’s target since it was ruled over by a predominantly pro-Western leader – President Camille Chamoun. It is difficult to precisely pin down the extent of Nasser’s pan-Arab coercive policies towards less powerful Middle Eastern nations given that redaction of source material available concerning British counter-intelligence activities aimed at deterring the spread of pan-Arab ideology in the former French colony.<sup>32</sup> Despite this limitation, it is generally agreed upon that Nasser moved aggressively against the imperialist interests of the colonial powers, which greatly concerned Eden who implored US President Dwight D. Eisenhower that while ‘U.K. firms were interested’ in funding the Aswan Dam, the Nasserite policy of ‘subverting moderate regimes in’ the Middle East to create a United Arab regime

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<sup>29</sup> TNA, Minute by Sir Alec Kirkbride, 3 July 1953, FO/371/104528.

<sup>30</sup> M. Chauvel, Ambassadeur de France à Londres, au Ministère des Affaires Étrangères. Télégramme 3202, 3 août 1956, *DDF*, vol. 2, no. 111.

<sup>31</sup> M. Chauvel, Ambassadeur de France à Londres, au Ministère des Affaires Étrangères. Télégramme 3270, 2 août 1956, *DDF*, vol. 2, no. 110; Karis Muller, ‘Reconfigurer l’Eurafrrique’ in *Matériaux pour l’histoire de notre temps*, lxxvii (2005), p.55; John Kent, ‘British foreign policy and military strategy: the contradictions of declining imperial power and the Baghdad Pact, 1947-55’ in *Middle Eastern Studies*, lvi (2020), p.733.

<sup>32</sup> The British Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) ran counter-intelligence activities across the Middle East during this period, David Easter, ‘Spying on Nasser: British signals intelligence in Middle East crises and conflicts, 1956-67’ in *Intelligence and National Security*, xxviii (2013), pp.825, 833.

could not be ignored.<sup>33</sup> Thus when Britain and the United States agreed to fund the construction of the Aswan Dam, the groundwork was set for the military reaction of the Suez intervention in October-November 1956. Nasser hailed Western involvement as key point in Egyptian technological development since the completion of the Aswan Dam would have permitted Egypt 'to control its annual flooding, increase its agricultural land by an estimated 30 per cent, store water for planned irrigation and generate hydroelectricity.'<sup>34</sup>

### **Intervention: an opportunity for reconciliation and development?**

The technological cooperation between Western powers and Egypt on the Aswan Dam project was markedly brief. On 19 July 1956, President Eisenhower announced that the United States would withdraw its funding for the Aswan Dam project. Many have correctly argued that this announcement acted as 'the trigger' for the Suez Crisis, given that Britain followed suit the next day.<sup>35</sup> The collapse of imperial control in the Middle East during the immediate post-war period created a power vacuum, with the balance of power now depending on which nations could exercise influence in the region. As a result of the 'military potential' in the Middle East, Washington was not supportive of Nasser's pan-Arab foreign policy.<sup>36</sup> The United States' new-found position as a global power in an ideological sense meant that Dulles sought to outline foreign policy objectives in opposition to growing calls in the Middle East for self-determination.<sup>37</sup> It was for this reason that Dulles and Eisenhower decided to pull funding from the Aswan Dam. Although Dulles was well aware of the strength of Egypt's military position in the Middle East – he denied the United States was culpable in provoking the nationalisation of the canal, rather he criticised Nasser for demanding 'the United States and Britain ... give Egypt the money to enable it to get started on this \$1,000,000,000-plus Aswan Dam' which would have revolutionised the Egyptian economy.<sup>38</sup> Abandoning the Aswan Dam project infuriated Nasser, who retaliated by announcing that the Suez Canal would be nationalised on the 26 July 1956. Nasser's

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<sup>33</sup> TNA, Record of Cabinet Meeting, C.M. 51 (56), 20 July 1956, CAB/195/15/15; Simon C. Smith, *Ending empire in the Middle East; Britain, the United States and post-war decolonization, 1945-1973* (Abingdon, 2012), p.43.

<sup>34</sup> Alex von Tunzelmann, *Blood and sand; Suez, Hungary and the crisis that shook the world* (London, 2016), p.23.

<sup>35</sup> TNA, Record of Cabinet Meeting, C.M. 51 (56), 20 July 1956, CAB/195/15/15; Philip Stephens, *Britain alone; The path from Suez to Brexit* (London, 2021), p.27.

<sup>36</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford, 1997), p.200.

<sup>37</sup> Richard H. Immerman, 'Introduction' in Richard H. Immerman (ed), *John Foster Dulles and the diplomacy of the Cold War* (New Jersey, 1990), pp.15-6.

<sup>38</sup> 'The Suez Canal', Broadcast report to the nation by John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State on 3 August 1956 in *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 1 September 1956, p.684.

argument for removing the canal from international control stemmed from the need for Egypt to capitalise on the income raised from transit on the Suez waterway after the awarding of new contracts to Anglo-Egyptian Oil in May 1956 to ensure ‘effective economic development.’<sup>39</sup>

The nationalisation received an ill-tempered response from both Britain and France. In a communiqué dated 27 July 1956, the British government accused Nasser of ‘arbitrary action... constituting a grave threat to the freedom of navigation on an international waterway of vital importance.’<sup>40</sup> Regardless of bilateral relations being at ‘an all-time low’ before the canal nationalisation, British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd reached out to Pineau through the British Ambassador to Paris Sir Gladwyn Jebb to invite him to Admiralty House in London for a summit on possible joint action against the Egyptian regime.<sup>41</sup> The meeting set the course for Franco-British intervention in October-November 1956. Both foreign ministers agreed that military action was needed to achieve their ultimate aim of removing Nasser from power to preserve their influence in the Middle East and to protect the EURAFRICA from the perversion of pan-Arab policies, or alternatively from US anti-colonialism.<sup>42</sup> The steps which both countries had taken in military collusion are well-documented: the Sèvres negotiations between the Western powers and Israel from 22 to 24 October 1956, the Sinai Peninsula invasion on 29 October and the landing of British and French troops on 5 November in their ‘peace-keeping’ capacity.<sup>43</sup> This chapter will continue by examining the meaning of the Franco-British intervention as a way of reinvigorating their bilateral relationship, and the hindrances which ultimately led to the collapse of the allied intervention in Egypt on 6 November 1956.

The Franco-British EURAFRICA became a focal point of bilateral military planning. Sir Gerald Fitzmaurice, a Senior Legal Advisor to the Foreign Office, argued that intervention was needed to avoid losing a ‘larger zone of [our] own territory’ to the Egyptians

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<sup>39</sup> Amy L.S. Staples, ‘Seeing diplomacy through bankers’ eyes: The World Bank, the Anglo-Iranian oil crisis, and the Aswan High Dam’ in *Diplomacy History*, xxvi (2002), p.410; Annick Cizel, ‘Le Moyen Orient après 1945: unilatéralismes d’empire et enjeux économiques’ in *Cahiers Charles V*, xxxv (2003), p.80.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Communiqué du gouvernement britannique relatif au canal de Suez, Londres, 27 juillet 1956’ in *Chronique de politique étrangère*, x (1957), document 15.

<sup>41</sup> Christopher Goldsmith, ‘Gladwyn Jebb, 1954-60’ in Rogelia Pastor-Castro and John W. Young (eds), *The Paris Embassy; British ambassadors and Anglo-French relations 1944-79* (Basingstoke, 2013), p.74.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p.77.

<sup>43</sup> Motti Golani, *Israel in search of a war; The Sinai campaign 1955-1956* (Brighton, 1998), pp.99-124; Lucas, *Divided we stand*, pp.263-285; Paul Gaujac, ‘France and the crisis of Suez: An appraisal, forty years on’ in David Tal (ed), *The 1956 war; Collusion and rivalry in the Middle East* (London, 2001), pp.47-64.

– albeit that it would be difficult to legally justify.<sup>44</sup> Discussion around the legal difficulties surrounding military action delayed any meaningful preparation around the returning the Suez Canal to international control. Debates concerning whether international control mandated military intervention or control via economic means dominated both Cabinet and Whitehall discourse, with Macmillan as Chancellor of the Exchequer favouring financial persuasion to coax Nasser towards the negotiating table.<sup>45</sup> Whitehall hesitancy did not hamper French ambitions to resolve the Suez Crisis in its infancy. The Mollet government prioritised military action as the only viable method of sustaining French presence in its colonial sphere of influence. Having received NATO support from March 1956, France continuously supplemented its troop numbers in Algeria to rely the ‘importance of stability [in the country] for European defence.’<sup>46</sup> The WEU also sanctioned the strengthening of French defences in Algeria; however this strategy was overturned and replaced with a joint initiative under the NATO purview.<sup>47</sup> On 6 August 1956, British, French and US representatives met in a restricted afternoon session to discuss a commonly agreed motion to create an ‘establishment of an international authority for Suez Canal’ on the forthcoming Suez Canal User’s Association (SCUA) conference in London.<sup>48</sup> The joint Franco-British-American proposal represents the main issue with placing the EURAFRICA at the centre of Allied decision-making during the early days of this crisis. It is well-known that the US government did not regard Franco-British ambitions around the EURAFRICA with much esteem. Eisenhower disliked the ‘vague objectives’ of the WEU in incorporating imperial property, preferring the Europeans to embrace European unity through a more liberal model.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the only way to ensure a viable military solution to regain control of the Suez Canal required Britain and France to work under the veil of secrecy.

With the United States seeking to resolve the Suez Crisis as peaceably as possible, the French supported Britain in expediting punitive measures against Egypt.<sup>50</sup> US interference in searching for a Suez resolution hijacked the Franco-British discussions around preserving the

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<sup>44</sup> Lewis Johnman, ‘Playing the role of a Cassandra : Sir Gerald Fitzmaurice, Senior Legal Advisor to the Foreign Office’ in Saul Kelly and Anthony Gorst (eds), *Whitehall and the Suez Crisis* (London, 2000), p.58.

<sup>45</sup> TNA, Macmillan to Sir Norman Brook, 2 August 1956, T/273/380.

<sup>46</sup> NATO archives [hereafter NATO], *Mouvements troupes françaises*, 30 March 1956, No. 0259, LOSTAN 1611,

<sup>47</sup> NATO, Exchange of classified information between NATO and WEU, 11 May 1956, No, 0068, LOSTAN 1684.

<sup>48</sup> NATO, SECRET, Paris to Washington, 7 August 1956, LOSTAN 1786.

<sup>49</sup> Eisenhower shared Anthony Eden’s original objections to the WEU in Continental European defence, see TNA, Eden to Jebb, The future role of Western European Union, 16 February 1955, FO/371/118579; Memorandum from the Department of State, 29 February 1956, *FRUS 1955-1957, XXVII*, p.341.

<sup>50</sup> James F. McMillan, *Twentieth-century France; Politics and society 1898-1991* (London, 1992), p.162.

EURAFRICA. Robert R. Bowie states the United States wished to ‘prevent resort to force [since] US shipping was a large Canal user and US business had oil concessions,’ so military intervention was against US foreign policy interests.<sup>51</sup> In August 1956, Loy W. Henderson, the Deputy Under-Secretary of State for the Eisenhower administration, discussed the possibility of imposing economic sanctions with Lloyd, the British Minister of Transport Harold Watkinson, Pineau and Felix E. Wormser should a representative of the Egyptian government refuse to meet with the Suez Committee in London.<sup>52</sup> The economic sanctions placed upon Nasser were seen as necessary due to the Canal dues Britain was forced to pay. These sanctions amounted to approximately £100 million.<sup>53</sup> The demand for stricter diplomatic measures came after the failure of the SCUA conference in London from 16 to 23 August, when Nasser and the Western governments could not reach an agreement on shared ownership of the Canal, whereupon the former sequestered all property belonging to the British and French governments in Egypt.<sup>54</sup>

The ineffectiveness of the SCUA conference provided fresh impetus to revive military cooperation. The day before the conference, the French delegate to NATO Alexandre Parodi notified the North Atlantic Council that France withdrew some forces from West Germany and Algeria without supplying any ‘discernible reason for this largely unexpected move.’<sup>55</sup> Britain also took measures to withdraw military forces from NATO operations. Sir Herbert Brittain, working on behalf of the War Office and Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, requisitioned 18 cargo vessels, ‘six passenger liners and three coasters’ to hasten troop landings in the event of the intervention.<sup>56</sup> The rationale of the early stage military planning was not shared with the North Atlantic Council, and thus took place outside of the NATO framework. The Secretary General of NATO Lord Ismay and his successor Paul-Henri Spaak advocated reducing the Western nations’ dependence on the Suez Canal waterway, which became a tenet of NATO policy from July 1956 until January 1957.<sup>57</sup> Spaak proposed the ‘construction of pipelines in areas which are strategically less vulnerable.’<sup>58</sup> Therefore, NATO officials were on a separate course from those in Britain and France, which prompted

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<sup>51</sup> Robert R. Bowie, *Suez 1956 ; International crisis and the role of law* (London, 1974), p.29.

<sup>52</sup> Telegram from the Delegation at the Suez Canal Conference to the Department of State, 18 August 1956, *FRUS* 1955-1957, XVI, p.298.

<sup>53</sup> Selwyn Lloyd, *Suez 1956: A personal account* (London, 1978), p.76.

<sup>54</sup> D.B. Kunz, *The economic diplomacy of the Suez crisis* (North Carolina, 1991), p.187.

<sup>55</sup> NATO, SECRET, Paris to Washington, 15 August 1956, LOSTAN 1790.

<sup>56</sup> TNA, Note of a meeting in Sir Edward Bridges’ room, 2 August 1956, T/273/380.

<sup>57</sup> NATO, Measures to reduce Western Dependence on the Suez Canal, 27 June 1957, C-M(57)102.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

the cross-channel partners to look elsewhere for political support on this occasion. On 15 September 1956 when military preparations were well underway, British and French NATO ambassadors met their counterparts for the 60<sup>th</sup> WEU Council meeting. Despite the main order of business revolving around the nuclearisation of NATO, Parodi and Britain's NATO ambassador Sir Christopher Steel used the forum as an opportunity to garner support for a military intervention solution.<sup>59</sup> The meeting acted as a catalyst – in the short term – for developing European independence in the strategic field with German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer boasting of a WEU able to defend its interests outside of the European continent.<sup>60</sup>

The 60<sup>th</sup> WEU Council meeting bestowed political support to Britain and France in their endeavour to return the Suez Canal to international control. The incorporation of resources from African dependencies under Franco-British influence effectively prompted the green light for military intervention.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, as Eden himself acknowledged, with the United States considering a legal recognition of Egyptian sovereignty over the canal as a possible resolution to the crisis, Britain and France required further approval to save face with their US partners.<sup>62</sup> The cross-channel partners referred the Suez question to United Nations (UN) with urgency. Both parties hoped the UN would sanction the idea of intervention. The pressure of Soviet interference also forced Britain and France into this decision. On 15 September 1956, the same day as the 60<sup>th</sup> WEU Council meeting, Soviet Premier Nikolai Bulganin sent 'fourteen "volunteer" pilots to Cairo... to alleviate the acute shortage of canal pilots' while increasing Soviet 'arms shipments to Egypt and sent more technicians.'<sup>63</sup> The Soviet Union's increasing interest prompted representatives from Britain and France to agree on the terms of military intervention. On 23 September 1956, Pineau and Lloyd met for military planning discussions to clarify what exactly the Franco-British definition of returning the Suez Canal Company to international control meant. After much deliberation, Pineau finally cabled Chauvel to inform him that both parties finally agreed on avoiding the term 'management' in favour of 'control.' Pineau stated that Lloyd 'preferred international control of an Egyptian administration rather than have an international executive

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<sup>59</sup> Ralph Dietl, 'Suez 1956: A European intervention?' in *Journal of Contemporary History*, xliii (2008), p.270.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p.271 ; Philip H. Gordon, 'Does the Western European Union have a role?' in Anne Deighton (ed), *Western European Union 1954-1997: Defence, security, integration* (Oxford, 1997), p.112.

<sup>61</sup> Dietl, 'Suez 1956', p.271

<sup>62</sup> Anthony Eden, *The Suez Crisis of 1956* (Boston, 1968), p.91.

<sup>63</sup> Office of Current Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, *The Suez Crisis – A test for the USSR's Middle Eastern policy*, 3 January 1957, CAESAR V-A-56.

under Egyptian control.’<sup>64</sup> Thus the opportunity arose for further Franco-British military cooperation in order to exercise a genuine ‘regional policy’ to protect the proposed EURAFRICA project from pan-Arab and Soviet military threat.<sup>65</sup>

The efficacy of this new opportunity for Franco-British cooperation is open to debate given the need to keep this collaboration a secret. The Soviet threat of a creating an informal empire did not garner much attention when the Suez question was referred to the UN.<sup>66</sup> The future of Franco-British control in Egypt took centre stage. Sir Pierson Dixon, the British Ambassador to the UN, expressed his discontent to the Foreign Office concerning the UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold moving to alleviate ‘Egyptian susceptibilities.’<sup>67</sup> Hammarskjold’s anti-colonialist motive placed him in line with the stance of other UN member states. Spanish Foreign Minister Don Alberto Martin Artajo asserted that his government saw the Suez Canal as Egypt’s ‘sovereign territory.’<sup>68</sup> Therefore, Britain and France were, by circumstance of their own decision-making, forced into planning military intervention in secret. The Mollet government welcomed the decision to coordinate the Suez expedition without consulting the United States or the UN, since their colonial dependencies were increasingly under threat from the FLN as of early October 1956, particularly the most southern border of Morocco.<sup>69</sup> Collusion between Britain and France over the proposed military campaign, whilst creating an opportunity to protect their Middle Eastern and African possessions in a European-Colonial hybrid defence pillar within the WEU, laid the groundwork for precipitating the Franco-British decline from world powers to a position where they could no longer ‘play in the big leagues.’<sup>70</sup>

### **An invitation to a conspiracy - Israel’s role in the Suez intervention**

The covert nature of military planning called for Britain and France to rethink previous concepts around intervention. The amphibious attack on Alexandria which was detailed in the

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<sup>64</sup> M. Pineau, Ministre des Affaires étrangères à M. Chauvel, ambassadeur de France à Londres, Télégramme 9938, 24 septembre 1956, *DDF*, vol. 3, no. 210.

<sup>65</sup> Philip Allott, ‘Britain and Europe; A political analysis’ in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, xiii (1975), p.215.

<sup>66</sup> Miles Kahler, *Decolonization in Britain and France; The domestic consequences of International Relations* (Princeton, 2014), p.137.

<sup>67</sup> TNA, Dixon to FO, 22 December 1956, FO/371/123680.

<sup>68</sup> Shih-Yu Chou, ‘Constructing national interests: Narrating the Suez Crisis’ in *International Critical Thought*, viii (2018), p.462.

<sup>69</sup> Note du Secrétariat des Conférences, 2 octobre 1956, *DDF*, vol. 3, no. 237.

<sup>70</sup> ‘L’épilogue de la crise de Suez, qu’il n’était plus question qu’ils prétendent jouer dans la cour des grands’ see Alain Crémieux, *Vers une Europe-puissance ; Comment aboutir concrètement à l’Europe de la défense* (Paris, 2020), pp.27-8.

plans for Operation MUSKETEER was dropped following the decision to pursue a *sub rosa* military strategy.<sup>71</sup> British Cabinet Ministers, unaware of Eden's ulterior motives, welcomed the idea of abandoning military action. Duncan Sandys, the Minister for Housing, in particular was grateful considering 'the lack of full Cabinet involvement on Suez policy,' which had marked Eden's style of working throughout the crisis.<sup>72</sup> Regardless, only a select few Cabinet Ministers – namely, Macmillan, Lloyd and Watkinson – were aware of the plans to continue intervention preparations, since military strategy was centralised during the latter stages of the Suez Crisis. Indeed military decision-making was 'directed from No.10' Downing Street.<sup>73</sup> The centralised micro-management which characterised Britain's military planning contrasted with France's more overt style. French Minister of the Armed Forces Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury re-established bilateral links with Israel. Concurrent with the collusion between Britain and France, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion gave strong consideration to military reprisals against Egypt following the latest *fidaiyyun* terror campaign, which 'precipitated the descent' towards the Sinai campaign.<sup>74</sup> For the French, this presented an opportunity to explore another way of pursuing a military campaign against Nasser. Admiral Pierre Barjot, who acted as Deputy Commander of the Combined Allied Forces during the Franco-British intervention, inquired with Ben-Gurion as to his willingness to participate in military action with the European allies during a visit in September 1956.<sup>75</sup> The Israeli PM was open to collaborating with France beyond mere arms deals and agreed to work on a strategy to depose Nasser. While Barjot and his Israeli counterparts agreed on the need to settle the Egypt issue, Ben-Gurion issued one important stipulation – Israel would not be seen as 'doing the dirty work' of the former colonial powers.<sup>76</sup> Early Franco-Israeli discussions around military action, though far from conclusive, afforded the French an opening by which to stage a military intervention in the Suez Canal zone. Barjot's work in securing an Israeli entry ticket to Suez intervention re-energised allied defence planning in time to reduce the economic stress that nationalisation caused.<sup>77</sup> Despite British aspirations of

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<sup>71</sup> McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the balance of power in the Middle East 1952-1967*, pp.52-3.

<sup>72</sup> TNA, Brook to Sandys, 22 August 1956, PREM/11/1152.

<sup>73</sup> Jack Brown, *No.10; The geography of power at Downing Street* (London, 2020), p.10.

<sup>74</sup> Moshe Shemesh, 'The Fidaiyyun organisation's contribution to the descent to the Six Day War' in *Israel Studies*, xi (2006), p.1; Chaim Herzog, 'The Suez-Sinai campaign: background' in S.I. Troen and Moshe Shemesh (eds), *The Suez-Sinai crisis 1956; Retrospective and reappraisal* (New York, 1990), p.5.

<sup>75</sup> AN, Crise de Suez – préparation, [non daté], 19790620/20 MAR 4.080.

<sup>76</sup> S.I. Troen, 'The Sinai campaign as a "War of No Alternative": Ben-Gurion's view of the Israel-Egyptian conflict' in S.I. Troen and Moshe Shemesh, *The Suez-Sinai Crisis 1956; Retrospective and reappraisal* (New York, 1990), p.180.

<sup>77</sup> Britain re-engaged with Allied military planning following the guarantee of Israeli involvement. This provided both European nations the opportunity to reduce the stresses on their economies. In particular, the



maintaining stability in the Middle East, politicians criticised the involvement of the Israelis as ‘an invitation to a conspiracy’, which prompted Foreign Office Minister Anthony Nutting to resign from the government.<sup>78</sup>

The confirmation of Israeli involvement in allied planning allowed Britain and France to overcome the hurdle of justifying military intervention into Egypt. Until October 1956, the British and French governments struggled to obtain a rationale to justify intervention. The Secretary of the NATO Committee of International Staff K.H. Beyen recognised the threat of the Soviet Union against the Franco-British EURAFRICA project. In a report to the North Atlantic Council, he wrote the ‘Suez Canal crisis... favours Communist intrigues. Moreover, the tension on the Palestine border is a permanent cause of instability in the area.’<sup>79</sup> Beyen’s warnings of the Soviet and Egyptian threat to Middle Eastern stability prompted no action from NATO forces, with the United States particularly acting in contempt of British and French desires for military action. Dulles and President Eisenhower’s personal representative Robert Murphy were at cross-purposes with Pineau on the need for an interventionist strategy, as the United States prioritised a UN-driven solution to the crisis.<sup>80</sup> October 1956 marked a significant turning point in the creation of an allied strategy against Nasserite control of the Suez Canal. The Eisenhower government registered their support for Egyptian sovereignty over Suez. Henry Cabot Lodge, the US Ambassador to the UN, agreed with the Egyptian declaration to the Security Council on 1 October 1956 that the actions of ‘France and the United Kingdom taken against Egypt placed international peace in danger and were a grave violation to the UN Charter.’<sup>81</sup> Regarding Franco-British priorities towards military intervention, the lack of US and NATO support pushed the colonial powers into practicing deceptive policies with Israel over their Western allies.<sup>82</sup>

The formulation of a tripartite military strategy between Britain, France and Israel was not an easy process. The reason for this was two-fold. Firstly, Britain and France would not receive any military support for action taken in Egypt as the Suez Canal, despite being an

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Executive Vice-President of the Export/Import Bank Mr Sawyer informed Sir Denis Rickett that the continued Canal closure would require the UK to apply for a loan of \$500-600 million, see TNA, Note of Meeting, 17 September 1956, T/273/380.

<sup>78</sup> Anthony Nutting, *No end of a lesson; The story of Suez* (London, 1967), pp.90-100; M.A. Fitzsimons, ‘The Suez Crisis and the Containment policy’ in *The Review of Politics*, xix (1957), p.421.

<sup>79</sup> NATO, Committee on Soviet economic policy – Periodic surveys of Soviet moves vis-a-vis the outside world, 4 September 1956, AC/89-D/10.

<sup>80</sup> Christian Pineau, *1956 Suez* (Paris, 1976), p.91.

<sup>81</sup> Dernières informations de New York, Télégramme No.1649, 1 octobre 1956, DDF, vol. 3, no. 229.

<sup>82</sup> Marc Trachtenberg, *A constructed peace; The making of the European settlement 1945-63* (New Jersey, 1999), p.216.

important economic lifeline to Western nations, fell outside of the remit of Article 5 of the NATO Charter which guarantees the ‘collective defense of territory.’<sup>83</sup> Secondly, there was a specific difference between British and French governing positions since Eden had to deal with dissent in Whitehall and parliament, while French government ministries found themselves united by the overlapping of the questions of European defence and the threat of decolonisation in Algeria.<sup>84</sup> The British political class generally endorsed the decision to refer the Suez question to the UN. Lord Beveridge criticised government intentions of pursuing military action: he described the Prime Minister’s idea as ‘not really practicable’ with ‘economic force, not military force, [as] the way to get the Suez Canal back into general use again.’<sup>85</sup> Negative reaction of proposed military intervention from the upper echelons of British politics and the Service personnel involved in planning forced Eden to restrict knowledge of ongoing strategy discussions to a select few. This was particularly the case since the Egypt Committee, which acted as the *de facto* War Cabinet, did not meet between the 16 October and 1 November 1956 when key strategic decisions were primarily taken among national heads of state.<sup>86</sup>

Pineau’s insistence on trilateral negotiations between Britain, France and Israel has received much criticism from historians, such as Motti Golani and Edward Johnson, for pressuring Eden into a more covert form of military planning.<sup>87</sup> Collusion was the only recourse for the British by mid-October 1956. On 14 October 1956, Eden proposed reviving the original intervention plan as MUSKETEER REVISE at a tripartite meeting in Chequers. French General Maurice Challe refuted Eden’s proposal in favour of a collaborative action. The French Minister for Labour Albert Gazier represented Pineau at this strategy discussion, where the Israeli representatives Defence Minister Shimon Peres and the chief of staff of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) Moshe Dayan pressed the importance for military action as Egypt had extended its policy of restricting Israeli access to the Canal towards blocking their

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<sup>83</sup> Hall Gardner, ‘NATO and the UN: The contemporary relevance of the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty’ in Gustav Schmidt (ed), *A history of NATO – The first fifty years* (Vol 1, Basingstoke, 2001), p.49.

<sup>84</sup> TNA, ‘Association with France’, 2 October 1956, PREM/11/1352; Frédéric Bozo, *French foreign policy since 1945; An introduction* (Paris, 2016), p.36. Trans. By Jonathan Hensher.

<sup>85</sup> *The parliamentary debates*, Hansard, House of Lords, 13 September 1956 (vol cxcix).

<sup>86</sup> Christopher Brady, ‘The cabinet system and management of the Suez Crisis’ in *Contemporary British History*, xi (1997), p.71.

<sup>87</sup> Golani, *Israel in search of a war*, p.76; Edward Johnson, “‘The umpire on whom the Sun never sets’”: Dag Hammarskjöld’s political role and the British at Suez’ in *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, viii (1997), p.259.

transit through the Gulf of Eilat, which fuelled fears that an ‘all-out war’ was imminent.<sup>88</sup> The British and French delegations were receptive to Israeli urgency since it also provided an opportunity to relieve another concern which plagued their governments – the growing oil crisis. Her Majesty’s Treasury had been covertly planning for intervention since 14 August 1956, due to oil shortages caused by a number of factors converging at one time. For instance, the nationalisation of the Canal and the blockage of the Iraq pipeline were projected to create \$100 million shortfall in Britain’s balance of payments, further augmented by an additional \$28 million payment to Saudi Arabia for access to other oil supplies in the Middle East.<sup>89</sup>

Eden’s enthusiasm for bringing MUSKETEER back into discussions revealed a serious issue with the state of military planning in the UK. General Charles Stockwell’s assumption of the role as leader of the intervention was one aspect of the allied plan that was agreed in the Chequers meeting. However, French commanders did not take kindly to their subjugation under a British general. A French political advisor Jacques Baeyens reported to Louis Joxe, the Secretary General of the Quai d’Orsay that French officers ‘did not wish to be placed under the authority of this General.’<sup>90</sup> French decision-makers summarily ignored Baeyens’ report since it was essential to get the British up to speed with military preparations. While Barjot and his colleague Admiral Nomy welcomed Britain’s renewed interest in intervention, they were aware that the British military remained at least two weeks behind Israel and France in terms of preparedness.<sup>91</sup> Britain’s delay in arranging its military forces ranged from divisions over intervention between Eden and the First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Louis Mountbatten. The latter was overtly critical of any possible military action in Suez. Mountbatten encouraged providing air support to allied efforts to secure the bridgehead at Port Said, thus ensuring continued Franco-British access to the Suez Canal.<sup>92</sup> Resistance from Mountbatten and other military commanders, who criticised government ‘micro-management,’ forced Eden to designate responsibility for military operations to Stockwell and the Suez Expedition’s Commander-in-Chief General Sir Charles

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<sup>88</sup> Itamar Levin, *Locked doors; The seizure of Jewish property in Arab countries* (Connecticut, 2001), p.102. Trans. by Rachel Neiman; Shabtai Teveth, *Moshe Dayan; The soldier, the man, the legend* (London, 1972), p.254.

<sup>89</sup> TNA, ‘SUEZ -Effects on the Economy – Top Secret’, RR Neild to Harold Macmillan, 26 August 1956, T/273/380; ‘Suez -The economic effects of the long haul’, undated [21 September 1956], T/273/380; Pnina Lahav, ‘The Suez Crisis of 1956 and its aftermath: A comparative study of constitutions, use of force, diplomacy and international relations’ in *Boston University Law Review*, xcv (2015), p.1347.

<sup>90</sup> Baeyens à Pineau, 22 décembre 1956, *DDF*, vol. 3, no. 321.

<sup>91</sup> Keith Kyle, ‘La Grande-Bretagne, la France et la crise de Suez’ in *Histoire, économie et société*, xiii (1994), p.86.

<sup>92</sup> TNA, Note by the Air Ministry – Memorandum no.335, 30 August 1956, DEFE/5/71/335.

Keightley, with the interests of maintaining security around the tripartite collaboration.<sup>93</sup> Eden's actions were required to get Britain on par with the French and Israeli war preparations since the intensive discussions at Chequers put all three nations on a course of which there was no turning back from.<sup>94</sup>

Following the Chequers negotiations, delegations from all three countries met at Sèvres to finalise the plan of attack in order to return the Suez Canal to international control. Although, cooperation between all three powers was agreed in principle, Britain's relationship with the United States remained an issue for the Israelis. Golda Meir, who accompanied Dayan to Sèvres, demanded to know whether the United States would intervene – militarily or economically – against Israel and its allies as a result of the proposed intervention.<sup>95</sup> Pineau was quick to reassure Meir and the rest of the Israeli delegation that the Americans were tied up in the UN. Once the Israeli delegation had been satisfied by Pineau's reassurances, it was agreed that once Israel had invaded Egypt, Britain and France would intervene in a 'peace-keeping' capacity. Britain and France's peace-keeping role was agreed to appease Eden, who wanted 'to avoid any overt military collaboration with Israel.'<sup>96</sup> This concession firmly placed Eden at odds with Mollet over the issue as the Sèvres Protocol guaranteed Israel military assistance.<sup>97</sup>

Notwithstanding Eden's desire to keep the Suez intervention secret, the superpowers had anticipated Franco-British military action and took steps to ensure its failure. As the Israeli offensive entered Egyptian territory in the evening of 29 October, Pineau requested that Chauvel inform the British government that they had started to move French aircraft to Malta.<sup>98</sup> French troop movements shattered any hopes of keeping the intervention from the superpowers, despite the Soviet Union being aware of allied intentions since 12 September.<sup>99</sup> Regardless on 30 October, the Anglo-French ultimatum was issued to bring a cessation to

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<sup>93</sup> TNA, Security of Planning for Action against Egypt, Memorandum 18/78, undated, DEFE/4/89/78; Adrian Smith, 'Rewriting history? Admiral Lord Mountbatten's efforts to distance himself from the 1956 Suez Crisis' in *Contemporary British History*, xxvi (2012), p.490; Martin Thomas, *Fight or flight; Britain, France and their roads from Empire* (Oxford, 2014), p.167.

<sup>94</sup> David Tal, 'Israel's road to the 1956 war' in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, xxviii (1996), p.75.

<sup>95</sup> Golda Meir, *My life* (New York, 1975), p.297; Charlwood, *Suez Crisis*, p.55.

<sup>96</sup> Golani, *Israel in search of a war*, p.124.

<sup>97</sup> The British copy of the Sèvres Protocol was destroyed, since Eden reminded Patrick Dean, the Britain's signatory of the Protocol, that absolute secrecy was essential if the façade of Franco-British 'peace-keeping' was to be maintained, TNA, 'note on the Cabinet meeting', 25 October 1956, CAB/195/15/37. However, Pineau kept the French copy of the Sèvres Protocol despite Article 6 of the agreement guaranteeing that the negotiations concerning intervention were to remain secret, AN, Protocol Sèvres, 24 octobre 1956, 580AP/ 27.

<sup>98</sup> M. Chauvel, Ambassadeur de France à Londres au Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *DDF*, 30 octobre 1956, vol 3, no. 56.

<sup>99</sup> TNA, Notes of Cabinet meeting, C.M. 74(56), 25 October 1956, CAB/195/15/37; Dietl, 'Suez 1956', p.272.

hostilities, calling the Egyptian and Israeli forces ‘to comply... [or] UK and French forces will intervene in whatever strength may be necessary to secure compliance.’<sup>100</sup> Once the ultimatum was delivered, the United States took steps to bring an end to the intervention. In Washington, Dulles summoned the French Ambassador Hervé Alphand to relay a message to the French government. Dulles ‘compared Franco-British intervention to the Soviet totalitarianism in Hungary,’ whilst understanding the ‘common front occurred in the face of blatant legal violations committed by a dictator.’<sup>101</sup> The US Secretary of State took his response to the Suez intervention beyond simple rhetoric. The United States engaged with the other European allies to force the Britain and France to capitulate before any troops had landing. Dulles and US Ambassadors abroad pushed the case for peace in the Middle East towards the NATO allies, however many did not believe the United States would take aggressive action against its Western partners.<sup>102</sup> Martin Thomas states the United States attempted to mobilise opinions to bring Western powers to heel in the Middle East throughout the early Cold War period.<sup>103</sup> The United Nations responded to US attempts to paralyse imperial intervention into Suez by calling a Security Council session to give ‘legal validity’ to a UN Expeditionary Force in the Canal Zone to deal with the crisis.<sup>104</sup> This view is therefore constant with the approach that Dulles took in his efforts to forestall Franco-British troop deployment.

The Soviet Union took more militaristic steps to counter Franco-British intervention. On 1 November, Soviet forces were deployed through the Caucasus to deposit ‘100 MIG 15s, 100 armoured vehicles and 120 artillery pieces’ to support the Egyptian military from 4 November.<sup>105</sup> It must be said that the Soviet Union, while a decisive factor in the culmination of the Suez Crisis, did not give the problem its fullest attention. The Hungarian uprising was bearing the brunt of a brutal repression after Soviet tanks entered Hungarian territory on 23 October 1956.<sup>106</sup> Student activists were the primary driving force behind the uprising, calling

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<sup>100</sup> Anglo-French ultimatum to the Governments of Egypt and Israel, 30 October 1956 in Watt, *Documents on the Suez Crisis*, p.86.

<sup>101</sup> M. Alphand, Ambassadeur de France à Washington, au Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, 30 octobre 1956, *DDF*, vol. 3, no. 61.

<sup>102</sup> Geoffrey Warner, ‘The United States and the Suez crisis’ in *International Affairs*, lxvii (1991), p.312.

<sup>103</sup> Martin Thomas, ‘Defending a lost cause? France and the United States vision of imperial rule in French North Africa, 1945-1956’ in *Diplomatic History*, xxvi (2002), p.233.

<sup>104</sup> Khagendra Chandra Pal, ‘An estimate of the Eisenhower Doctrine for the Middle East’ in *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, xxi (1960), 338.

<sup>105</sup> J.R. Tournoux, *Secrets d'état* (Paris, 1960), pp.148-9.

<sup>106</sup> The crisis reached its peak on 2-3 November 1956, with a representative from the government of the Hungarian Popular Republic calling for Soviet troop withdrawal. See M. Paul-Boncour, Ministre de France à Budapest à M. Pineau, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, 3 novembre 1956, *DDF*, vol 3, no.96.

for a people's republic without Soviet involvement under Imre Nagy to replace the current leader Communist chairman Mátyás Rákosi.<sup>107</sup> The Soviet Union needed to devote much military attention to repressing the uprising since it triggered several similar student demonstrations in neighbouring countries, most noticeably in Romania.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, the Soviet Union intensified its support to the Egyptians. The Soviet air force flew over the Franco-British carriers and noted that the French vessels including the *Georges-Leygues* were being escorted by Israeli frigates.<sup>109</sup> The Soviet presence during the crisis did little to deter the allies in their efforts. Although it did prompt some anxiety in France as, during the visit by Chancellor Adenauer on 5 to 6 November, Mollet asked British Ambassador Jebb whether 'the Americans will back you up if the Russians bombard the Anglo-French fleet off Suez.'<sup>110</sup> Allied anxiety was soon realised when Premier Bulganin issued his notes of 5 November to the British, French and Israeli governments. The importance of these notes has been well-examined. It is generally undisputed that the nuclear threat reduced the importance of the belligerent powers within the international community since it portrayed the Soviet Union as the 'dictator of Middle Eastern affairs.'<sup>111</sup> Within the UN context, the United States proposed a cease-fire which coincided with the threat of nuclear destruction. The rationale behind this cease-fire was to preserve the 'long-term survival' of peace in the Middle East.<sup>112</sup>

The French, in particular, noted this possible collusion between the United States and the Soviet Union. On 3 November, French Ambassador to Bonn Maurice Couve de Murville cabled Pineau stating 'the previous events in the United Nations confirm our current fears around a direct and exclusive *entente* between the United States and Russia.'<sup>113</sup> In consequence, Adenauer expressed West German support for Franco-British endeavours in protecting the EURAFRICA. However, Eisenhower used the opportunity presented by Bulganin's threat of 'taking measures with the aim of stopping the war and curbing the aggressors' to apply pressure on Eden to accept the UN-sponsored cease-fire on 5

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<sup>107</sup> György Litván, *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956; Reform, revolt and repression 1953-1963* (London, 1996), p.55. Trans. by János M Bak and Lyman H Legters.

<sup>108</sup> Corina Snitar, *Opposition, repression, and Cold War; The case of the 1956 student movement in Timișoara* (London, 2021), p.49.

<sup>109</sup> Tournoux, *Secrets d'état*, p.158.

<sup>110</sup> Sean Greenwood, *Titan at the Foreign Office: Gladwyn Jebb and the shaping of the modern world* (London, 2008), p.368.

<sup>111</sup> 'The Bulganin Notes' in *The New York Times*, 17 November 1956, p.20.

<sup>112</sup> Jonathan M. Roberts, *Decision-making during international crises* (Basingstoke, 1998), p.59.

<sup>113</sup> M. Couve de Murville, Ambassadeur de France à Bonn, à M. Pineau, Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, *DDF*, 3 novembre 1956, vol 3, no.102.

November.<sup>114</sup> Eden accepted the cease-fire proposal for two reasons – namely, the Suez intervention triggered a run on the pound ‘at a speed which threatened disaster to [Britain’s] economic position’ and Britain, while an atomic power, could not countenance Soviet superiority in the nuclear field.<sup>115</sup> Eden’s acceptance of the cease-fire without consulting Mollet or Ben-Gurion effectively ended the fruitful opportunities for amicable military cooperation. When Mollet was informed of Eden’s decision, he had no alternative but to remove French forces from Egypt. The cease-fire provoked a dramatic shift in Franco-British foreign policy cooperation since Adenauer persuaded Mollet to use the British betrayal to refocus French policy towards the concept of European defence through the newly-developed European Communities (EC).<sup>116</sup>

Eden’s failure quickly made his premiership untenable. The Suez Crisis succeeded in isolating Britain from its allies within the Atlantic Alliance. The Mollet government decided to pursue its defence policy through a European sphere of influence whilst maintaining its colonial links. Indeed, Mollet’s vision for a *Europe puissance* contained the integration of EURATOM – the EC vehicle for nuclear cooperation and collaboration through a Franco-German *Comité militaire et technique*.<sup>117</sup> By contrast, the United Kingdom had yet to form a ‘Grand Design’ for European military reform. Eden became unwell with an abdominal illness during the crisis and in its immediate aftermath was replaced by Lord Privy Seal R.A. Butler, whom was designated to organise the Franco-British withdrawal from Egypt. It soon became clear that Butler was not up to the job as caretaker Prime Minister, he could not get Cabinet – or more importantly, French support – for his planned withdrawal from Suez. Butler received criticism for not persuading the French to acquiesce to a withdrawal date with Pineau stipulating that any date before 22 December would be unacceptable.<sup>118</sup> In the interim period between the cease-fire and the eventual withdrawal of British troops, Eden’s Parliamentary Private Secretary Robert Carr revealed that the Prime Minister had been under the influence of stimulants during the Suez Crisis.<sup>119</sup> Cabinet concluded thereafter that a change of Prime Minister was required to steer Britain through the reorientation of its foreign policy. Butler

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<sup>114</sup> Bulganin’s statement to Eden, Mollet and Ben-Gurion was a veiled threat to use nuclear weapons to curb the Israel and the ‘foreign imperial Powers’, see Mr Bulganin to Mr Ben-Gurion, 5 November 1956, *Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, volume VI, no.7.

<sup>115</sup> Eden, *The Suez Crisis of 1956*, pp.201-2.

<sup>116</sup> Ronald Irving, *Adenauer; Politics in power* (London, 2002), p.127.

<sup>117</sup> Crémieux, *Vers une Europe-puissance*, p.28; Dietl, *Suez 1956*, p.274.

<sup>118</sup> TNA, Conclusions of a meeting of Cabinet, C.M. (56), 12 December 1956, CAB/128/30/99.

<sup>119</sup> Lord David Owen, ‘The effect of Prime Minister Anthony Eden’s illness on his decision-making during the Suez Crisis’ in *QJM: An international journal of medicine*, xcvi (2005), p.393

was seen as an ineffectual candidate for the job given his poor record in the immediate aftermath of the Suez invasion. Thus, Macmillan was eventually touted as Eden's replacement owing to his pragmatism and aim of 'steering British policy onto a more Europe-oriented course.'<sup>120</sup> Thus on 7 January 1957, after receiving the advice of the Marquess of Salisbury Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, Queen Elizabeth II appointed Macmillan as Prime Minister.

The Soviet-American collusion which brought an end to the Suez intervention acted as a catalyst for disunity amongst Middle Eastern countries. The nuclear threat from Bulganin triumphed in forcing Eden to accept the UN cease-fire. However, the cease-fire of 5 November had a secondary effect. Nasser ultimately succeeded in his aim of disrupting Franco-British imperialist interests – namely, the development of the EURAFRICA within the WEU – given that the British removed their support for the inclusion of their colonial dependencies in the European security framework during its infancy.<sup>121</sup> By February 1957, the new British government under Macmillan would come to regret turning its back on the Franco-British geopolitical design as the Mollet government raised the EURAFRICA concept with the United States. Lloyd saw this move as a precursor to US domination in previous British territories.<sup>122</sup> The British Foreign Secretary interpreted this move towards a Franco-American rapprochement as 'politically embarrassing' concerning the closeness by which Britain and France cooperated over the Suez intervention.<sup>123</sup> The bilateral summit between Eisenhower and Mollet on 23 February 1957 marked a critical turning point in post-Suez world order. The United States entered the discussions with the objective 'to create an atmosphere... which indicates the restoration of normal and friendly relations between France and the United States, without reviving the "Big Three" concept.'<sup>124</sup> The United States wavered any support for the former Franco-British politico-military concept. Instead, Eisenhower acknowledged that the EURAFRICA under French leadership was 'an ambitious

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<sup>120</sup> Sabine Lee, 'Staying in the game? Coming to the game? Macmillan and European integration' in Richard Aldous and Sabine Lee (eds), *Harold Macmillan and Britain's world role* (Basingstoke, 1996), p.123. For an insight into the discussions concerning the selection of a new party leader and *de facto* Prime Minister in 1956/57 and 1963, see John Ramsden, *An appetite for power; A history of the Conservative Party since 1830* (London, 1998), pp.330-334; D.R. Thorpe, 'Harold Macmillan' in Charles Clarke, Toby S. James, Tim Bale and Patrick Diamond (eds), *British Conservative Leaders* (Hull, 2015), pp.269-271, 274-275.

<sup>121</sup> Bino Olivi and Alessandro Giaccone, *L'Europe difficile: Histoire politique de la construction européenne* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Paris, 2007), p.13.

<sup>122</sup> TNA, Memorandum on the present position of the Common Market from a European angle, 18 February 1957, FO/371/128337/611/241.

<sup>123</sup> Lloyd, *Suez 1956*, p.204.

<sup>124</sup> Memorandum from the Secretary of State to the President, 23 February 1957, *FRUS 1955-1957*, XXVII, p.104.



but meritorious idea’, but could not support any organisation that would foster a ‘partnership on more equal terms’ outside the framework of the Atlantic Alliance.<sup>125</sup> The Soviet nuclear threat heralded a *pax atomica* which solidified the hierarchical standing of Soviet Union and the United States above former world powers – namely France and Britain. Thus, the United States could not afford to support French aspirations of including colonial forces within a Western security grouping. The United States and Soviet Union turned their attention to reinforcing their nuclear arsenals. Nuclear posturing became clear in the immediate aftermath of the Suez Crisis. Chauvel advised Pineau to exercise caution towards the emerging superpowers since the threat of nuclear action showed that the Soviet Union could easily embarrass the European powers on the world stage, and the ‘Americans would surely respond to this initiative.’<sup>126</sup> The proceeding nuclear arms race between both superpowers would occupy an important aspect of their defence policy until 1963. However, the United States disregard towards the EURAFRICA seemingly supports Ralph Dietl’s assertion that in the immediate post-Suez period the ‘Allies seemed not to count,’ given the renewed focus towards nuclear weapons development.<sup>127</sup>

Mollet’s decision to approach the United States for support of the EURAFRICA concept demonstrates an emerging trend in Franco-British relations following the Suez Crisis; exploring separate defence initiatives as opposed to cooperation. Moreover, this trend extended into the field of nuclear weapons development during the late-1950s and 1960s. Both Britain and France turned their attention towards establishing a nuclear deterrent, when the Bulganin notes clarified the credibility of the threat of atomic weapons. Therefore, the cessation of hostilities at the Suez Canal in November 1956 sparked a radical change in British and French defence philosophies. The pursuit of separate nuclear arsenals set the groundwork for the issues both countries would face throughout the remainder of this period. The historic context is important when considering the French approach to nuclearisation. As a result of the Messina Conference in June 1955, further continental integration was agreed by all members of the European Coal and Steel Community. For France, this provided a framework to ensure it could maintain an influential leadership role on the European continent, which Mollet pursued with West Germany and Italy through the F-I-G accords. Consequently, Eden’s decision to agree to a cease-fire gave France a strategic advantage as

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid, p.105.

<sup>126</sup> M. Chauvel, Ambassadeur de France à Londres, au Ministère des Affaires Étrangères. Télégramme 4878, 7 novembre 1956, *DDF*, vol. 3, no. 139.

<sup>127</sup> Dietl, ‘Suez 1956’, p.273.

membership of the European Communities, which were institutionalised in 1957, permitted for an easier transition from colonial defence initiatives to the cultivation of a European defence regime with a nuclear element. On the other hand, Britain found itself drawn into a ‘special relationship’ with the United States as a means of protecting its international influence following the humiliation of the Suez Crisis.

### Conclusion

The failure of the Suez intervention in returning the canal to international control had a dual effect. It has been well-documented that Suez caused ‘embarrassing memories’ for both the French and the British and would loom over their respective decision-making into the 1960s.<sup>128</sup> Indeed the Suez affair has been described as a decisive blow to what Conservative MP Brigadier Otho Prior-Palmer claimed as Britain’s ‘jugular vein.’<sup>129</sup> Suez clearly loomed over Macmillan in December 1962, when during a negotiation to secure Britain’s role as a nuclear power in Nassau, he stated in regards to the possession of nuclear weapons – ‘the UK wants a nuclear force not only for defense, but in the event of menace to its existence, which the UK might have to meet; for example: when Khrushchev waved his rockets about the time of Suez.’<sup>130</sup> Macmillan’s desire for a national nuclear deterrent illustrates that Suez acted as a catalyst for Britain and France to turn their attentions away from the viewing defence through the guise of traditional Western colonialism ‘with its gunboat philosophy’ and rather reposition themselves towards obtaining nuclear capabilities.<sup>131</sup> Domestically, the crisis provoked further divisions between Conservative and Labour governments and Whitehall staff over the issue of a proposed review into the events in Suez, which took place throughout the late-1950s and the majority of the 1960s. In 1963, Macmillan openly opposed a recommendation from the Chiefs of Staff wherein the Joint Services Staff College would study British actions during the Suez campaign.<sup>132</sup> Similarly, Labour Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart requested the historical adviser to his department Rohan Butler to undertake a study into the Suez intervention following the significant impact of his report on the Abadan crisis in Iran. Stewart ordered the inquiry, stating that ‘the Abadan report would be

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<sup>128</sup> Christopher Hill, ‘A theoretical introduction’ in William Wallace and W.E. Paterson (eds), *Foreign policy making in Western Europe; A comparative approach* (Farnborough, 1978), p.12.

<sup>129</sup> *The parliamentary debates*, Hansard, House of Commons, 16 May 1957 (vol dxii); J.C. Hurewitz, ‘The historical context’ in Wm. Roger Louis and Roger Owen (eds), *Suez 1956; The crisis and its consequences* (Oxford, 1989), p.22.

<sup>130</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, 20 December 1962, *FRUS 1961-1963*, XIII, p.1109.

<sup>131</sup> Urwin, *A political history of Western Europe since 1945*, p.121.

<sup>132</sup> Peter J. Beck, ‘“The less said about Suez the better”: British Governments and the politics of Suez’s history, 1956-67’ in *The English Historical Review*, cxxiv (2009), p.615.

the pattern and precedent... so something worthwhile could emerge from a study of Suez.’<sup>133</sup> However, Stewart’s request shocked his Parliamentary Under-Secretary Paul Gore-Booth who was worried about the repercussions of discontent within the Foreign Office following their ostracisation during the planning process for the Suez intervention.<sup>134</sup> Gore-Booth was successful in getting Stewart to ‘back down’ from his position on a Suez inquiry, thus saving the Labour government and Whitehall officials the embarrassment of any public blood-letting as a result of the inquiry.<sup>135</sup> The response from Gore-Booth and Macmillan in the face of any investigation into Suez demonstrated the level of embarrassment the decline of British stature had on UK politics in the long-term.<sup>136</sup>

Further, the humiliation surrounding the ceasefire in November 1956 signalled the start of a new trend in the Franco-British working partnership. The British government abandoned the EURAFRICA project and worked to transform its foreign policy aligning it more towards influencing European defence affairs. This was done in part due to the collapse of British influence on the African continent, and in part to reconcile the Conservative government with its backbench MPs since its interventionist policy alienated many influential Conservatives – including Colonel C.W. Mansell, John Biggs-Davison, Sir Victor Raikes and Lawrence Turner as well as the members of the backbench parliamentary Suez Group.<sup>137</sup> Macmillan summarised Britain’s new approach to foreign policy in the round – not only in the defence sphere – during a speech to the Women’s Conservative Annual Conference in May 1957. He spoke about the need to concentrate British energies on European affairs since ‘if we go into Europe, our horizons would broaden.’<sup>138</sup> However, the French chose not to mirror British capitulation towards the EURAFRICA. Instead they adapted the project into a sole French design to encompass their colonial dependencies into their defence decision-making. The key difference between the EURAFRICA and the *Françafrique* was that the latter was a national endeavour rather than being included into the WEU like its predecessor. Although this marked the beginning of divisions between Britain and France, the decision to retain the *Françafrique* was one of necessity. Following the cease-fire at Suez, Nasser

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<sup>133</sup> Peter J. Beck, ‘The lessons of Abadan and Suez for British foreign policymakers in the 1960s’ in *The Historical Journal*, xlix (2006), p.542.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Paul Gore-Booth, *With great truth and respect* (London, 1974), p.230.

<sup>136</sup> For an overview of Macmillan’s attitude of a ‘conscious agent’ regarding Britain’s role in the post-Suez period, see Lord Beloff, ‘The crisis and its consequences for the British Conservative Party’ in Wm. Roger Louis and Roger Owen (eds), *Suez 1956; The crisis and its consequences* (Oxford, 1989), p.333.

<sup>137</sup> CPA, Macmillan to Sir Oliver Poole, Conservative Party Chairman, 9 May 1957, CCO/4/7/438.

<sup>138</sup> CPA, Macmillan, speech to Women Conservatives’ Annual Conference, 22 May 1957, CCO 4/7/443.

continued to support Algerian revolutionaries in their efforts to overhaul French colonial rule. Thus maintaining a tight-knit defensive link with its colonies was seen as a certain way of defying the growth in anti-colonialist tendencies, especially in Algeria where Nasserite ‘dogma’ had dominated revolutionary thinking.<sup>139</sup> The French Consul M. Perceau clearly expressed the need for this link in Belfast on 14 July (Bastille Day) 1957, saying that while he sympathised ‘with and support[ed] the most controversial aspect of modern French politics – the fight against the nationalist movement in Algeria... if Algeria was lost to France, Western Europe would be driven out of Africa and the great project known as Eurafrica would be unrealizable.’<sup>140</sup> Overall, while Britain and France had turned their attentions to Europe in the wake of the Suez Crisis, the culmination of the military intervention caused a disruption which started both nations on differing defence policy trajectories.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Gilbert Meynier, ‘Les Algériens vus par le pouvoir égyptien pendant la guerre d’Algérie d’après les mémoires de Fathi al Dib’ in *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, xli (1990), p.89.

<sup>140</sup> ‘Consul’s plea for sympathy with French Algerian policy’ in *Northern Whig*, 15 July 1957, p.3.

<sup>141</sup> Paul-Henri Spaak, ‘The West in disarray’ in *Foreign Affairs*, xxxv (1957), p.189.

## Chapter Two – The nuclear alternatives, 1957- November 1962

The outcome of the Suez Crisis – in which Britain and France found themselves in the difficult position of re-orienting their respective foreign policies – had a profound impact on the international standing of the UK and France during the period 1957 to 1962. The retreat of Britain and France’s overseas empire was accelerating following the Suez Crisis. In the case of Britain, King Hussein of Jordan demanded a move away from the former’s influence in the Middle East. As a result, the Anglo-Transjordanian Treaty of 1948 guaranteeing Jordanian dependence on Britain was terminated meaning that British influence in key Middle Eastern territories was being eroded.<sup>1</sup> French historian Maurice Vaïsse summarised the need for a change in policy when he stated that the Suez debacle led both powers to decide to concentrate on developing nuclear deterrents as a show of their power.<sup>2</sup> The negative outcome from Suez created a dilemma for not only France, but Britain thereafter. The standard conventional military approach to civil, national and imperial defence was now outdated and nuclear power was needed as a show of a state’s superiority towards others. The threat of a Soviet nuclear attack at Suez forced Guy Mollet to pursue a more aggressive nuclear defence and security strategy in early 1957. He renewed his interest in a pre-conceived idea of a tripartite nuclear defence strategy with Italy and West Germany. This was initially established as an exchange of ‘possible forms of technological cooperation, including... military applications of nuclear energy’ from within the Atlantic Alliance, but Mollet suggested it within a wider framework of closer European integration.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in 1958, Britain took its first steps towards pursuing the development of a practicable nuclear arsenal, whilst reducing the numbers of its conventional forces across the globe. The Defence White Paper of 1958 began the process of reducing military forces, particularly in Europe with the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) being reduced from 77,000 men to 64,000.<sup>4</sup> The rationale behind this action was made quite plain with Duncan Sandys, the Secretary of State for Defence, arguing:

Present-day military preparations can no longer be planned on a national basis, since no country is strong enough or large enough to stand alone. Nor can they properly be

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<sup>1</sup> TNA, Letter from Charles Johnstone, British Ambassador in Amman to Selwyn Lloyd, 19 March 1957, FO/371/127876.

<sup>2</sup> François Bédarida, ‘Débat’ in Daniel Colard and Pierre Lefranc, *L’aventure de la bombe ; De Gaulle et la dissuasion nucléaire (1958-1969)* (Paris, 1985), p.73; Maurice Vaïsse, ‘Le choix atomique de la France (1945-1958)’ in *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire*, xxxvi (1992), p.27

<sup>3</sup> Leopoldo Nuti, ‘Extended deterrence and national ambitions: Italy’s nuclear policy, 1955-1962’ in *Journal of Strategic Studies*, xxxix (2016), p.564.

<sup>4</sup> TNA, ‘Defence White Paper, 1958 entitled Britain’s Contribution to Peace’, 4 February 1958, CAB/129/91/30.

described as defence. For there remains no effective protection against global war, save the threat of devastating retaliation.<sup>5</sup>

This argument - though quite dramatic - illustrates the re-orientation of Britain's policy, including a closer relationship with the United States, wherein the United Kingdom occupied the role of a reluctant, subservient power to its superpower partner.<sup>6</sup> Increasingly, Anglo-American cooperation would reflect the growing importance of military planning 'at the nuclear level,' thus Britain's acceptance of the so-called 'special relationship' represented a clear divide between British and French defence policies.<sup>7</sup> However, the actions of the Mollet government in proposing the F-I-G negotiations over nuclear development indicated a gaping split between Britain and France in their politico-military relationship. As this chapter will show, this period was a fractious one for the Franco-British bilateral partnership with both countries on opposing trajectories in the field of nuclear weapons development. In doing so, it will argue that both countries' search for a role in transatlantic and European terms made continued cooperation increasingly unlikely as their respective aims were incompatible. Britain's desire to create militaristic links with the United States, which emerged as a global superpower in this period, along with France's European tendencies will be explored. However, it is too simplistic to view the United States' role in the fields of transatlantic and wider European defence as a hegemonic superpower or an 'empire by invitation', as the Norwegian historian Geir Lundestad argued.<sup>8</sup> Rather it would be more applicable to view the United States as a collaborating partner during the period 1957 to 1962. As we have seen, the United States was powerless to stop Britain and France engaging in initial military action against Egypt during the Suez Crisis. Equally, the United States was unable to impose their will upon France during their initial efforts to achieve nuclear weapons capability during the F-I-G negotiations in 1957, and instead had to restructure NATO to counteract the emergence of a European axis within the Atlantic Alliance. Although this chapter will concentrate on the tumultuous nature of the Franco-British partnership, the influence of the United States will be given careful consideration, through the discussion of the 1958 memorandum sent by French President Charles de Gaulle, and the advances in nuclear development and power-sharing. More widely, this chapter will demonstrate that the pursuit of 'nationalistic fantasies' in an

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> While the Suez crisis was a catalyst to Britain's decline, in the wider context it was part of a process wherein the United States marginalised British involvement in European and Middle Eastern defence affairs, see B.J.C. McKercher, *Britain, America, and the Special Relationship since 1941* (London, 2017), p.65.

<sup>7</sup> John Baylis, *Anglo-American defence relations, 1939-1984* (Basingstoke, 1984), p.95.

<sup>8</sup> Geir Lundestad, 'Empire by Invitation: United States and Western Europe, 1945-1952' in *Journal of Peace Research*, xxiii (1986), pp.263-77. For an in-depth analysis of Lundestad's argument see Mark Gilbert, *Cold War Europe: The politics of a contested continent* (Maryland, 2015).

attempt by Britain and France to reclaim their declining great power status led to their eventual subjugation as sub-hegemonic powers within Europe.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, this chapter will demonstrate that British and French integration into a Western Europe military network akin to NATO or the EDC was not possible given the level of divisions in both countries' defence policies. In doing so, it will oppose the view of previous contributions that both the United States and French sought to instil a 'pragmatic doctrine' which created a framework for a response to Soviet incursions in Europe, principally through the organisation of NATO.<sup>10</sup> Rather, this chapter will contend that the United States and France attempted to carve out a leadership role in NATO following the failure of Selwyn Lloyd's 'Grand Design', which ultimately forced the reforms of the Atlantic Alliance to bring about stability. Moreover, the short-term F-I-G cooperation and attempts to cultivate a European pillar within the NATO decision-making apparatus will be discussed as this highlights the difficulties for the UK in traversing the international stage when two key allies deployed uniquely different military planning strategies.

### **'The Backbone of European Defence'**

Mollet made the case, during the withdrawal of the French troops from the Suez Canal, that France should concentrate its defence policy on a nuclear option. Mollet, who as leader of the SFIO had previously advocated against the use of nuclear arms in diplomatic matters, spoke of the need for a nuclear deterrent to protect against further decolonisation – but more critically – in terms of wider ramifications one might have for European defence and security affairs.<sup>11</sup> Mollet's view would become entrenched into French defence policy during the 1960s since the de Gaulle administration would commonly refer to nuclear weapons as the '*la colonne vertébrale de la défense d'Europe*.'<sup>12</sup> Mollet's new directive was to be enacted upon at each level of French defence. For instance, the *Générale aéronautique Marcel Dassault*, (GAMD) responsible for the construction of the Mirage III jet fighter was informed that its

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<sup>9</sup> Nationalistic fantasies are a modern concept which has evolved in recent discourses and initially popularised by Tom Kelsey towards non-academic audiences, see Tom Kelsey, 'Concorde was the flying Brexit: a different era but the same mistakes' in *The Guardian*, 21 July 2017 (<https://www.theguardian.com/science/political-science/2017/jul/21/concorde-was-the-flying-brexite-a-different-era-but-the-same-mistakes>) (23 February 2021); For academic discussion of the emerging nationalistic fantasies, see Jeffrey Glen Giauque, *Grand designs and visions of unity; The Atlantic powers and the reorganization of Western Europe, 1955-1963* (North Carolina, 2003); Mark Leonard, *Rediscovering Europe* (London, 1998), p.35.

<sup>10</sup> Lawrence Freedman and Jeffrey Michaels, *The Evolution of nuclear strategy* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., London, 2019), p.296.

<sup>11</sup> Patrice Buffatot, 'Guy Mollet et la défense : « Du socialisme patriotique au socialisme atlantique »' in Bernard Ménager et al. (eds), *Guy Mollet : un camarade en république* (Lille, 1987), pp.506-10.

<sup>12</sup> For the quotation see AN, correspondence entre Charles de Gaulle et Harold Macmillan sur l'énergie nucléaire, les expériences nucléaires et les réunions tripartites, 13 décembre 1961, AG/5(1)/688.

latest development Mirage IV was to be redesigned into a bomber aircraft. The French government forced this decision on GAMM as part of its shifting focus onto developing a viable nuclear deterrent. On 15 November 1956, GAMM was informed that the Mirage IV had to be capable of ‘carrying a nuclear charge’ if it was to be given the funding to continue development.<sup>13</sup> As such, French and British views concerning nuclear weapons development will continue to be the focus of this section. Since 1950, Mollet was receptive to the idea of British involvement in European integration. However, the abrupt ceasefire agreed to by the Eden government on 6 November 1956 resulted in the French Prime Minister hardening his stance against further British involvement in the European project.

Mollet’s critical stance towards British involvement in Europe meant that Harold Macmillan was faced with numerous challenges on his arrival into office as British Prime Minister in January 1957. Britain’s relationship with the United States had been damaged as a result of the Suez Crisis. In the same vein, France treated its bilateral partnership with Britain with great scepticism. However, the British Conservative government was keen to retain its role as global – or great – power. While Britain had been a nuclear power since 1952, its world role was looking in serious jeopardy when Macmillan assumed office. The reduction of its influence overseas led the British government to focus its energies on strengthening its role within European and transatlantic military organisations – namely the WEU and the Atlantic Alliance. In December 1956, British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd brought forth his ‘Grand Design’ to the NATO Council with a dual purpose aim. It was envisaged to integrate European and Atlantic military organisations into one European Defence Community, with a nuclear element.<sup>14</sup>

If this planned merger was successful, the British government would achieve its second aim; the continuation of its nuclear deterrent project. This was important for Britain to exert control over European defence since the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and Italy had issued a counter-proposal calling for the gradual reduction of the WEU’s role in European defence. The Germano-Italian proposal required the six European Community nations and Britain to form a political union, which was contrary to British foreign policy.<sup>15</sup> The British government saw a fruitful relationship with the United States or the WEU as key

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<sup>13</sup> Luc Berger, ‘Dassault et le renouveau de ‘aéronautique militaire française (1945-1960)’ in *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, clxxxviii (1997), p.96.

<sup>14</sup> TNA, ‘The United Kingdom and Europe’, Draft Cabinet Paper, 28 January 1957, FO/371/130966.

<sup>15</sup> Ralph Dietl, ‘The WEU: A Europe of the Seven, 1954-1969’ in *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, vii (2009), p.437.



to Britain's pursuit of a viable nuclear deterrent. Although, it also heeded the advice of Ministry of Defence, which maintained that the United States would not take kindly to a European centre to the Atlantic Alliance.<sup>16</sup> Particularly since the Germano-Italian proposals resulted in reforms, which meant that NATO could not undertake arms controls on WEU nations.<sup>17</sup> Lloyd initially intended the 'Grand Design' to offer a politico-military aspect to negotiations over an economic free trade area (FTA). Robert Marjolin, the French official who supervised talks between the WEU nations, welcomed Britain's efforts into the WEU proposals, especially with Lloyd's proposal that Britain would cover any expenditure on thermo-nuclear arms development. However, the French took a different view. While Mollet was encouraged by Britain's 'growing interest in Europe', he was adamant that France was to lead a *Europe puissance*, which he thought would rival the United States.<sup>18</sup> Mollet also conceived that Britain was using the 'Grand Design' as a means of subverting the European Communities project, and bringing Western European defence under British control. This was something that Lloyd considered a possibility given Britain's thermo-nuclear capacity, which outstripped that of its European partners.<sup>19</sup> Lloyd's proposal called for the creation of a 'General Assembly of Europe' to encompass NATO, EURATOM, the WEU, the Council of Europe and the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which justified Mollet's perspective on the 'Grand Design' plan.<sup>20</sup>

The nuclear guarantee brought some stability to the Franco-British working partnership, but it proved to be short-lived. Lloyd's 'Grand Design' found opposition from several different actors involved in Western European defence. Marjolin saw the 'Grand Design' for what it was – Britain attempting to have the 'best of both worlds.'<sup>21</sup> Britain's nuclearisation of the WEU proved controversial to the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) General Lauris Norstad. From 1956 until his retirement in 1963, Norstad pursued

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<sup>16</sup> Ralph Dietl, 'In defence of the West: General Lauris Norstad, NATO nuclear forces and transatlantic relations 1956-1963' in *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, xvii (2006), p.352.

<sup>17</sup> NATO, 'Agence de contrôle des armements de l'UEO', 26 January 1957, LOSTAN 1922.

<sup>18</sup> Herbert Tint, *French foreign policy since the Second World War* (London, 1972), p.70; James Ellison, 'Britain and the Treaties of Rome, 1955-1959' in Roger Broad and Virginia Preston (eds), *Moored to the Continent? Britain and European integration* (London, 2001), pp.40-1.

<sup>19</sup> TNA, 'The Grand Design (Co-operation with Western Europe: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs', 5 January 1957, CAB/129/84/46.

<sup>20</sup> Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon, *Continental drift: Britain and Europe from the end of empire to the rise of euro-scepticism* (Cambridge, 2016), p.221.

<sup>21</sup> Christopher Goldsmith, 'Gladwyn Jebb, 1954-60' in Rogelia Pastor-Castro and John W. Young (eds), *The Paris Embassy; British ambassadors and Anglo-French relations 1944-79* (Basingstoke, 2013), p.84.

a policy of increased conventional defence on the European Continent – entitled MC 14/2.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the nuclear element of the ‘Grand Design’ threatened this proposal, particularly as it would place more importance on the European states within the WEU and NATO. The British Conservative government had foreseen the augmentation of European defence as a means of improving British trade opportunities with its European partners. This policy has continued to influence Britain’s role within Europe until its departure from the European Union. However, Lloyd’s ‘Grand Design’ displayed the limitations of an all-encompassing, supranational approach to European affairs. The culmination of European trade and defence proved to be untenable given the competitive nature of the international system in the late-1950s. With opposing ideas on how to best approach the development of a nuclear element, it proved unlikely that the WEU framework for nuclear cooperation would have been successful, especially since only Britain and the United States were member states with nuclear capabilities.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the British proposal for enveloping European defence and trade within the remit of the WEU proved unacceptable. Mollet continued to pursue a Western European nuclear axis by reviving the F-I-G tripartite organisation. Article 84 of the EURATOM treaty afforded France the capability to revive F-I-G as safeguards on the dissemination of nuclear material did not extend to ‘materials intended to meet defence requirements.’<sup>24</sup>

Overall, the ‘Grand Design’ was relegated to having only a limited success since it had little support in Cabinet and on the parliamentary backbenches. Former Defence Minister Anthony Head disagreed with the prioritisation of nuclear weapons in British defence policy; insisting that Britain should support Norstad’s proposal for increasing conventional forces on the Continent to suppress any notions of German resurgence.<sup>25</sup> While the ‘Grand Design’ demonstrated an expression of British interests in developing Continental defence within a European framework, the Cabinet decided to abandon the nuclear element in order to pursue a strengthening of the Anglo-American ‘special relationship.’ Lloyd did not receive much support for his proposals as he strongly advocated risking Britain’s ‘special arrangements

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<sup>22</sup> Norstad’s proposal was designed to ‘supersede’ all previous concepts of European defence. MC 14/2 dictated the ‘Overall Strategic Concept for the Defence of the NATO Area’; NATO, ‘Brief for the Council on Military Committee 14/2 (revised) and MC 48/2’, 17 April 1957, SGWM-255-47.

<sup>23</sup> Dan Keohane, *Labour Party defence policy since 1945* (Leicester, 1993), p.18.

<sup>24</sup> Historical Archives of the European Union [HAEU], The EURATOM treaty condensed version, 25 March 1957, 11957A/TXT .

<sup>25</sup> Richard Moore, *Nuclear illusion, nuclear reality; Britain, the United States and nuclear weapons, 1958-64* (Basingstoke, 2010), p.32; Sue Onslow, *Backbench debate within the Conservative Party and its influence on British Foreign Policy, 1948-57* (Basingstoke, 1997), p.105.

with America and Canada, particularly in the nuclear and intelligence fields.<sup>26</sup> The British government did not wish to pursue a policy that would further strain Anglo-American relations. Thus, on 8 January 1957 the nuclear 'Grand Design' strategy was shelved. Although the turn towards Europe was closely linked to Macmillan's tenure as Prime Minister, it was one of the final acts of Anthony Eden's government to embark on restoring Anglo-American relations and removing the nuclear element of Lloyd's proposal.

Britain's decision to pursue closer links with the US government provoked a restructuring of Continental defence. Mollet, shortly after Macmillan's assumption of power in Britain, pushed forward with negotiations between France and the FRG over nuclear collaboration. Convinced that Britain had once again turned its back on France with intentions of pursuing a peripheral strategy, Mollet and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer started the process of creating a Franco-German axis within the European Communities. The negotiations between the two leaders proved to be fruitful since the Protocol of Colomb-Béchar establishing a *Comité militaire et technique* between both nations was signed on 17 January 1957 by Franz Josef Strauss, the West German Atomic Minister, and French Defence Minister Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury.<sup>27</sup> The creation of the Franco-German committee came at a price. Strauss was clear that the signing of the Protocol of Colomb-Béchar resulted in a French commitment to West German rearmament, particularly in the nuclear domain. Strauss argued that the *Bundeswehr* should never have been excluded from the nuclear club.<sup>28</sup> Notes and correspondence concerning the finer details of cooperation continued to be exchanged between Strauss and Bourgès-Maunoury until April 1957, when it was decided that both countries would proceed with developing nuclear technologies.<sup>29</sup> However, the establishment of the *Comité militaire et technique* illustrates that the nature of Franco-British relations during the early post-Suez period. France had committed itself to pursuing an inherently nuclear defence strategy, realising that it depended on its European partners for the realisation of its foreign policy. While Britain had a similar objective, it wished to extend interdependence between itself and the United States, rather than integrate its thermo-nuclear

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<sup>26</sup> TNA, 'The Grand Design', 5 January 1957, CAB/129/84/46.

<sup>27</sup> Mervyn O'Driscoll, "Les Anglo-Saxons", F-I-G and the rival conceptions of "advanced" armaments research & development co-operation in Western Europe, 1956-58' in *Journal of European Integration History*, iv (1998), p.107.

<sup>28</sup> Michael Sutton, *France and the construction of Europe, 1944-2007; The geopolitical imperative* (Oxford, 2011), p.82.

<sup>29</sup> This collaboration was not limited to a strategic nuclear element, it also encompassed civil nuclear energy development; AN, 'texte du protocole de Colomb-Béchar du 17 janvier 1957, avant-projet, notes et correspondance', Octobre 1956-avril 1957, 580AP/13.

expertise into the WEU framework. Therefore, while France had accepted the need for European integration as a means of maintaining its status on the international stage; Britain had not and decided against pursuing a European policy contrary to its foreign policy interests.<sup>30</sup> French acceptance of its diminished role as a European power rather than a global one arguably has been very successful in securing France as the leader of a soft-power bloc. Indeed, as a result of pursuing a pro-European defence and foreign policy, France still maintains a leadership role within the European Union. For instance, in 1991 President François Mitterrand demanded all EC member states agree to the adoption of a single currency.<sup>31</sup> More recently, it was President Macron who has proposed a broader revision of the EU, particularly with the inclusion of a *Europe puissance* following British withdrawal and the growing unrest in Eastern Europe during the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, Macron's proposal of a French-led *Europe puissance* was devised to provide stability in the wake of NATO fragility, with the French president lamenting its 'brain-death' in 2019.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, Britain's influence has remained fairly limited despite its technological expertise, particularly as the decision to institutionalise Anglo-American nuclear sharing on 23 March 1957 at the Bermuda Conference placed Britain on a trajectory towards greater interdependence, and some have argued reliance, on US hardware for maintaining a global role in defence planning.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, Britain risked being excluded from a possible European nuclear club. The protocol of Colomb-Béchar opened the door to Franco-German-led nuclear cooperation within the WEU. The Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Emilio Taviani endorsed this approach to nuclear cooperation and began to lobby the British government, since a Europe-centric pillar within the WEU would allow it to secede from NATO, thus freeing the Europeans from the yoke of US dominance. Britain, despite seeking to open negotiations with the United States concerning the development of a nuclear deterrent, tried to reassure its Western European allies of its commitment to Continental defence. Prior to the signing of the Messina Treaties, Macmillan stated that Britain was not privy to US defence policy and

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<sup>30</sup> Laurent Warloutzet, 'Britain at the centre of European co-operation (1948-2016) in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, lvi (2018), p.957.

<sup>31</sup> Colette Mazzucelli, *France and Germany at Maastricht: Politics and negotiations to create the European Union* (Abingdon, 1997), p.176.

<sup>32</sup> Araine Bogain, 'Reflections on Macron's proposals for a renewed EU' in *Arucuria*, xxii (2020), p.209.

<sup>33</sup> John Baylis, 'The 1958 Anglo-American Mutual Defence Agreement: The search for nuclear interdependence' in *Journal of Strategic Studies*, xxxi (2008), p.435; Klaus Schwabe, 'Three Grand Designs: The USA, Great Britain, and the Gaullist concept of Atlantic partnership and European unity' in *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, iii (2005), p.9; Constantine A. Pagedas, *Anglo-American strategic relations and the French problem, 1960-1963*(Abingdon, 2013).

wished to play its part in the strengthening of European politico-military integration. However, Britain reaffirmed its commitment to NATO in the same instance. On 21 February 1957, the British representative to NATO Admiral Sir Michael M. Denny stated that any proposed change to WEU military activities must have the consent of the SACEUR during a meeting of the Military Representatives Committee in Washington.<sup>34</sup> Denny's recommendation to the Conservative government involved the transfer of WEU controls of armaments to NATO. Britain, thus, adopted a policy of increasing European military cooperation at the WEU Council Meeting on 26 February 1957. It went as far as committing itself to the sharing of weapons procurement with France to bolster European conventional military, which was agreed bilaterally between Bourgès-Maunoury and Her Majesty's Ambassador to Paris Sir Gladwyn Jebb on 1 March 1957.<sup>35</sup> Britain still followed Sandys's White Paper proposal for the reduction of conventional forces, particularly for the BAOR. Therefore, by 9 March 1957, Britain had remodelled its commitment to European defence in the short term, so it was in line with Norstad's proposal to conventional military defence, at the 77<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Council of the WEU.<sup>36</sup> Britain's recommitment to Europe did little to forestall the decline in Franco-British relations. Mollet continued to criticise the British for refusing to share its nuclear production capacity within the WEU framework.<sup>37</sup>

Mollet's criticism seems harsh compared to the assistance that Britain had given to France during the pre-Suez period. Bourgès-Maunoury authorised the development of a nuclear deterrent with the construction of the Chinon nuclear power station on 1 February 1957, after Pierre Guillaumet and Sir John Cockcroft agreed to the construction of a nuclear power plant in France with British assistance in December 1954.<sup>38</sup> The development of the Chinon and Pierrelatte power stations in 1957 represented the new direction of French defence policy.<sup>39</sup> The move towards the production of enriched uranium was necessary for France to play a strategically important role within EURATOM and provide a Europe-centric axis to Continental defence, rather than what had up until that point been a largely US-dominated defence agenda. Franco-British cooperation over the initial construction over

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<sup>34</sup> NATO, 'Summary record of a meeting of the Military Representatives Committee', 21 February 1957, MRC-131-57.

<sup>35</sup> Both countries' Foreign Ministers were present for this signing; TNA, Bourgès-Maunoury to Jebb, 1 March 1957, FO/371/131074; 'Record of meeting at Hotel Matignon', 1 March 1957, PREM/11/3721.

<sup>36</sup> TNA, '77th Meeting of the Council of Western European Union', 9 March 1957, DG/1/49.

<sup>37</sup> O'Driscoll, "'Les Anglo-Saxons'", p.115.

<sup>38</sup> Britain aided France in its early development of a nuclear deterrent with the construction of the Chinon nuclear power station in 1957. Chinon was one of the power stations used to provide nuclear materials for the French *force de frappe*, see Bédarida, 'Débat', p.67.

<sup>39</sup> SHD, 'L'usine de séparation isotopique de Pierrelatte', ix (1967), p.4.

French nuclear energy in 1954 rebukes a previous argument amongst French historians that Suez was the catalyst for the Mollet government's concentration on French nuclear weapons development.<sup>40</sup> Despite this and Britain's recommitment to European defence, Mollet had lobbied his Western European counterparts at the meeting of the Council of Western European Union on 9 March to block British policy concerning reduction of the BAOR in case Britain refused to consent to WEU reforms.<sup>41</sup>

Britain had to react quickly in order to maintain a leadership role within the WEU. Mollet appeared to usurp Macmillan as a leader in Europe. Macmillan stated to Mollet that he would obtain support for the newly-created WEU Anglo-French Steering Committee (AFSC) at the Bermuda Conference between Britain and the United States from 21-23 March 1957.<sup>42</sup> Macmillan found that the United States was also interested in reconciling Anglo-American relations. William N. Dale, the Officer in Charge of the United Kingdom and Ireland Affairs, drew up the US Position Paper for the Bermuda Conference, which states that the US delegation should be open to discussions around 'defense problems.'<sup>43</sup> Indeed US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles listened to Lloyd's concerns over the growth of French influence in the WEU. Lloyd stated that Britain was not interested in furthering WEU reforms, which would dissociate the organisation from NATO, going as far as suggesting that WEU activities be integrated into the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE).<sup>44</sup> Lloyd also pushed Dulles, Dale and Colonel Andrew J. Goodpaster, the White House Staff Secretary, to support his proposal committing European nations to amalgamate the numerous parliamentary councils in Europe, citing the failure of the Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Council of Ministers to coordinate a supranational European policy.<sup>45</sup> The proposal for a single NATO-based council received a cold reception from Dulles, who stated that the United States would not support it since President Dwight D. Eisenhower had his own plans for European military affairs.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, Britain departed from commitments to allied

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<sup>40</sup> Pierre Guillen argued that without Suez, the decision to develop a *force de frappe* would not have come to pass, see Bédarida, 'Débat', p.73.

<sup>41</sup> Dietl, 'In defence of the West', p.353.

<sup>42</sup> TNA, 'Record of a Meeting at the Hotel Matignon', 9 Mar 1957, FO/371/ 131074.

<sup>43</sup> Position Paper prepared in the Bureau of European Affairs, 13 February 1957, *FRUS* 1955-1957, XXVII, p.257.

<sup>44</sup> Memorandum of a Conversation, Mid-Ocean Club, Bermuda, 22 March 1957, *FRUS* 1955-1957, XXVII, p.724.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p.725.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*.

countries in pursuit of a separate agenda, which was condemned by Western European politicians, British intellectuals and the US government.<sup>47</sup>

The Bermuda Conference turned out to be a strategic success for Britain in its efforts to curtail the emergence of a European axis within the WEU or NATO. The success was two-fold. Firstly, it allowed Britain to continue the nuclearisation of its military, whilst pursuing force reductions in European nations. Macmillan and Eisenhower honoured an agreement broached by Sandys and his US counterpart Charles Erwin Wilson in January 1957 that Britain would take a stock of US Thor missiles. This allowed Britain to bolster its nuclear forces, whilst freeing it from relying on WEU allies to maintain its role as a leading European military power.<sup>48</sup> However, this came at a price. The warheads used within the Thor missiles were under ‘full United States custody,’ meaning that use thereof had to be agreed by a Joint Committee comprising representatives from Britain and the United States.<sup>49</sup> The acquisition of Thor missiles resulted in Britain cancelling the Blue Streak missile tests planned for 1958, which led to its eventual abandonment in 1960.<sup>50</sup> While Britain’s status as a nuclear power was secured, it is debatable whether it can truly be called independent since the success of the Bermuda Conference created the foundation for British subservience to the United States in the domain of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, the United States persuaded Britain to accept a different policy towards French nuclear ambitions. Dulles and Lloyd signed up to the ‘Agreed note on Military Nuclear Programmes of Fourth Countries.’ Under this agreement, Lloyd committed Britain to a policy, which would vex Franco-British relations for the next five years. Lloyd and Dulles agreed that they ‘were not in favour of the French plans’ to pursue a nuclear deterrent project.<sup>51</sup> The United States committed to keeping Britain apprised of its plans to propose a NATO-based nuclear deterrent under a dual-key system in June 1957.

It has been well-documented that Britain was the main beneficiary of the Bermuda Conference, but the effect that this agreement had on Franco-British relations remains critically under-explored. In June 1957, when the United States presented its proposal to place French nuclear arms development under certain controls. The Intergovernmental

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<sup>47</sup> Ian Hall, *Dilemmas of decline; British intellectuals and world politics, 1945-1975* (California, 2012), p.158.

<sup>48</sup> John Baylis, *Ambiguity and deterrence; British nuclear strategy, 1945-1964* (Oxford, 1995), p.253.

<sup>49</sup> TNA, Summary of the arrangements agreed at the Bermuda Conference, March 1957, PREM/11/2043; ‘Memorandum of a Conversation, Bermuda’, 22 March 1957, *FRUS* 1955-1957, XXVII, p.746.

<sup>50</sup> TNA, ‘Development of an underground launching site for a medium range ballistic missile’, 29 August 1958, AIR/2/13677.

<sup>51</sup> ‘Agreed note on Military Nuclear Programmes of Fourth Countries’, 23 March 1957, *FRUS* 1955-1957, XXVII, p.291.

Committee of the European Coal and Steel Committee under the chairmanship of Paul-Henri Spaak granted France the ability to conduct nuclear arms research providing that it met ‘compliance check[s].’<sup>52</sup> However, the US proposal coincided with a radical shake-up in the French political system. Bourgès-Maunoury succeeded Mollet as *Président de Conseil des Ministres* on 13 June. Bourgès-Maunoury’s short tenure (13 June 1957 – 6 November 1957) was marked by the upheaval in Algeria. However, he achieved successes in strengthening Franco-German military nuclear cooperation. France and West Germany agreed to place civil nuclear materials under the control of EURATOM in order to further European integration, but the military aspect of their tripartite partnership with Italy was to be handled outside of the framework of the Six.<sup>53</sup> André Morice, the French defence minister, asked the so-called ‘Three Wise Men’ Louis Armand, Franz Etzel and Francesco Giordani, while leading a delegation to the United States to investigate possible links for transatlantic nuclear arms cooperation.<sup>54</sup> The interest in US nuclear cooperation was fleeting, especially given that the Eisenhower government had reneged on its earlier promise to Britain concerning continued military nuclearisation. Shortly after British scientists carried out a successful hydrogen bomb test near Christmas Island on 15 May 1957, Harold Stassen, Eisenhower’s special assistant on disarmament proposed ending fissile material production for military means.<sup>55</sup>

The Stassen proposals for nuclear disarmament provoke much controversy in, not only the Franco-British bilateral partnership, but also the Anglo-American relationship. However, it is important to note that these proposals came as a reaction to a UN memorandum from the Soviet Union, calling for the reduction of conventional forces and the prohibition of nuclear weapons – both atomic- and hydrogen-based – in March 1957.<sup>56</sup> Stassen’s proposals for the cessation of nuclear tests and the elimination of all military fissile materials received a cold reception in London. While the Macmillan government was in favour of progressive nuclear disarmament, Sandys argued that Stassen’s proposals were too limited in their attempts to push forward multilateral discussions around the issue. Sandys reiterated that ‘unless the cuts in military manpower and conventional weapons are much

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<sup>52</sup> Grégoire Mallard, ‘L’Europe puissance nucléaire, cet obscur objet du désir’ in *Critique internationale*, xlii (2009), p.150.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p.151.

<sup>54</sup> HAEU, Rapports des trois Sages (L. ARMAND, F. ETZEL, F. GIORDANI) et de la délégation française sur une mission aux Etats-Unis : équipement, technique et coopération dans le domaine nucléaire, juillet 1957, BAC 118/1986/2.

<sup>55</sup> Baylis, ‘The 1958 Anglo-American Mutual Defence Agreement’ p.435.

<sup>56</sup> United Nations Disarmament Commission [UNDC], Official Records, ‘Union of Soviet Socialist Republics: proposal on the reduction of armaments and armed forces and the prohibition of atomic and hydrogen weapons’, 18 March 1957, DC/SC/1/49.



more drastic... the complete elimination of nuclear armaments would unquestionably leave Russia with decisive military superiority.<sup>57</sup> Similar to the United States and Soviet Union, Britain attempted to negotiate a comprehensive disarmament agreement within the United Nations Disarmament Commission. Sandys and Lloyd's demands at the Bermuda Conference show that there were still areas of division between the United States and Britain. While the Eisenhower administration originally began to pursue the Stassen proposals, Britain maintained that future nuclear tests had to be carried out as part of their attempts to increase British security, given the nuclear superiority of the superpowers.<sup>58</sup>

The decision to bring nuclear disarmament under the purview of the UN added a level of bureaucracy to the debate around the prohibition of nuclear weapons testing and development. The Sub-Committee of the Disarmament Commission adopted the Stassen proposals seeking to reach an overall agreement on the cessation of nuclear tests, whilst introducing a level of arms controls on nuclear weapons in the United States and the Soviet Union. After a series of discussions between the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain, France and Canada, the decision was taken for the Sub-Committee to work on inspection systems to protect nations against a surprise nuclear attack at Lancaster House from 2 August to 6 September 1957. It was at this conference that Franco-British relations continued to deteriorate. Macmillan pushed Bourgès-Maunoury to pursue a policy of disarmament with controls on the Soviet Union. However, Macmillan's preferred way forward for disarmament contrasted with the French policy on nuclear arms development. Morice and Bourgès-Maunoury wished to increase their nuclear arsenal but they understood that for France to be competitive in the field of nuclear weapons development, it needed to put in place controls on the superpowers. The Permanent Representative of France to the UN Guillaume Georges-Picot called for controls to be placed on nuclear weapons development as it would represent a 'restoration of trust' between France and the other members of the UN Security Council.<sup>59</sup>

The French declaration served a dual purpose. While it would have permitted France to compete with the superpowers, thus maintaining France's great power role; it would also have limited Britain's ability to pursue further interdependence between itself and the United States. The imposition of controls would have levelled the playing field between the Four

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<sup>57</sup> TNA, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Defence, 23 June 1957, CAB/129/88/151.

<sup>58</sup> TNA, 'Final communiqué from the Bermuda Conference', 25 March 1957, PREM/11/1837.

<sup>59</sup> UNDC, Official Records, 'Déclaration faite par le chef de la délégation de la France à la 150<sup>e</sup> séance du Sous-Comité', 29 août 1957, DC/SC/1/68.

Powers considerably. Although, the discussions around the Stassen proposals and future disarmament proved to be unsuccessful as the Soviet Union did not accept any controls on nuclear weapons testing. In fact, the Soviet Union continued its testing of nuclear delivery systems during the Four Power conference, with the successful test of its first transatlantic Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) on 27 August 1957.<sup>60</sup> The Permanent Representative of the Soviet Union to the UN Arkady Sobolev clarified that while no agreement was reached at the conference, the Soviet Union valued discussions around disarmament, thus laying the groundwork for future negotiations around nuclear non-proliferation.<sup>61</sup> While tensions between the East and West seemed to be relaxing, the Franco-British bilateral partnership was strained by these negotiations. France's desire for unilateral controls contrasted heavily with Britain's pursuit of strengthening their security by increasing their nuclear weapons capacity. In addition, the French need for broad controls came from their previous agreement with West Germany over nuclear intelligence sharing. Under the Stassen proposals, West Germany would have been excluded from debates around nuclear weapons, as the decision around the placement of NATO nuclear weapons on Continental Europe remained with the SACEUR.<sup>62</sup>

### **The deepening tensions over nuclearisation**

Bourgès-Maunoury's failure in nuclear disarmament discussions – and more widely in his handling of the French crisis in Algeria – led to the dissolution of his government and subsequent replacement with the radical politician Félix Gaillard on 6 November 1957. Gaillard addressed the need for further nuclear cooperation between West Germany, Italy and France. He also pushed for France to gain a greater role within the Atlantic Alliance. Under the guidance of his Minister of National Defence and the Armed Force Jacques Chaban-Delmas, Gaillard moved to further cement military cooperation over nuclear secrets. On 28 November 1957, Chaban-Delmas, Strauss and Taviani signed the F-I-G accords, officially signifying that France, the FRG and Italy were committed to the increase of nuclear defence on the European continent.<sup>63</sup> The signing of the F-I-G accords took place against the backdrop of the Sputnik launch on 4 October 1957. The impact of Sputnik cannot be understated. The success of the Soviet rocket illustrated the divisions within the Atlantic

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<sup>60</sup> Claude Delmas, 'Géopolitique de l'âge nucléaire' in *Espace géographique*, xvi (1987), p.278.

<sup>61</sup> UNDC, Official Records, Letter from the representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission', 11 September 1957, DC/115.

<sup>62</sup> SHD, 'Les négociations Adenauer-Kühn', 2 septembre 1957, ED 329/9.

<sup>63</sup> Jean Ranger, 'Situation du radicalism' in *Revue française de science politique*, xiv (1964), pp.952-972, p.962 ; O'Driscoll, 'Les Anglo-Saxon', p.115.

Alliance. With France, Italy and West Germany now committing to construction of European strategic nuclear community, the United States was at a loss for keeping pace with the Soviet Union in the nuclear arms race.<sup>64</sup> This new nuclear triad within NATO granted France the ability to impose its will on the US-dominated system. In particular, Gaillard pressurised Macmillan and Eisenhower to undertake fundamental changes within the Alliance. On 5 December 1957, Gaillard threatened to introduce a class system within NATO, with the F-I-G axis representing an EC working group over the development of a European nuclear deterrent under French, Italian and German control.<sup>65</sup> Gaillard's posturing for a more equal multilateral community strained Franco-British relations, by forcing Britain into a position whereupon it would have to share its nuclear secrets.

Gaillard's grandstanding towards Macmillan did not help France's position within the F-I-G axis. While Gaillard was threatening the future of the Alliance, the German Foreign Minister Heinrich von Brentano was in London for bilateral negotiations concerning European defence. The launch of Sputnik had alarmed the German government and thus von Brentano was sent to London to foster a greater technical understanding around possible ways of bolstering Western defence in the face of the Soviet Union's resurgence. At a meeting between von Brentano and the British Minister of Supply Aubrey Jones, it was agreed that in exchange for German procurement of British surface-to-air missiles, the UK would agree to renew their efforts to strengthen the Atlantic Alliance.<sup>66</sup> Von Brentano stated that, with Britain's support, the Federal German Republic would assure France of the need for further nuclear integration within the NATO command structure by submitting proposals for cooperation over research and development.<sup>67</sup> West Germany's influence over France seems apparent as while speaking at the NATO Summit from 16 to 19 December 1957, Gaillard made several calls for unity in the face of Soviet attempts to bring about the 'decomposition of the Atlantic Alliance.'<sup>68</sup>

The NATO Summit resulted in a profound restructuring of European defence. In conjunction with German proposals over changes to research and development, the United

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<sup>64</sup> Georges-Henri Soutou, 'Les accords de 1957 et 1958 : vers une communauté stratégique nucléaire entre la France, l'Allemagne et l'Italie ?' in *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, xxxi (1993), p.8.

<sup>65</sup> TNA, Jebb to FO, 5 December 1957, FO/371/131038.

<sup>66</sup> TNA, Record of visit of Herr von Brentano, Federal German Foreign Minister, to London, 4-5 December 1957, PREM/11/1853.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Evanthis Hatzivassiliou, 'The view from NATO: Sputnik as a catalyst, 1957-8' in *The International History Review*, lxii (2020), p.1140.

States brought forth a reform package which created a NATO Nuclear Stockpile and also introduced these nuclear warheads into US Intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) to be placed on the European continent, including the Thor missiles promised to Britain during the Bermuda Conference.<sup>69</sup> Whether this reform package introduced more equality into the NATO command structure remains questionable. The Thor missiles were to remain under the control of the SACEUR, which maintained US dominance therefore over the perceived use of tactical weapons on Continental Europe. What this reform package achieved, with regards to the Franco-British relationship, was a cooling of bilateral tensions between both countries. For on 29 October 1957 when Britain had secured an exemption from the nuclear restrictions of the MacMahon Act, French Ambassador in London Jean Chauvel sent a series of telegrams addressed to Macmillan demanding that Anglo-American nuclear cooperation should be extended to include all WEU countries.<sup>70</sup> Britain agreed to US proposals for the use of IRBMs in a coordinated NATO approach to European defence, with an additional caveat that Britain's national interest should supersede its commitments to NATO in times of crisis. The US initiative also brought part of the F-I-G axis under the remit of NATO, which temporarily ended the threat France posed to US dominance and repositioned the Alliance towards a more uniform goal of common defence through Balanced Collective Forces.<sup>71</sup>

The undisciplined tripartite efforts to create a European-centric nuclear axis resulted in the defence ministers of the F-I-G countries registering their intentions to continue their nuclear weapons development. However, they complied with US conditions that European countries should work collaboratively towards a collective weapons program within the remit of the WEU.<sup>72</sup> Maurice Vaïsse argued that, in complying with US proposals for a collective approach to European defence, France, West Germany and Italy had effectively reconsidered their plans for a European pillar and repositioned their nuclear materials within NATO in order to obtain a nuclear 'military strategy.'<sup>73</sup> In essence, this point was a sensible one, but the British demand for a national deterrent and a similar decision in Paris meant that the US proposals only achieved partial successes. In January 1958, SACEUR Norstad called for military authorities in NATO member states to submit recommendations on how US IRBMs

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<sup>69</sup> Dietl, 'In defence of the West', p.357; Dimitri Kitsikis, 'L'attitude des États-Unis à l'égard de la France de 1958 à 1960' in *Revue française de science politique*, iv (1966), p.689.

<sup>70</sup> M. Jean Chauvel à Londres, 29 octobre 1957, *DDF*, vol 2, nos. 270, 285.

<sup>71</sup> NATO, 'Balanced Collective Forces', 28 February 1958, no. 0205, RDC/57/428.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Maurice Vaïsse, 'L'histoire de l'armement nucléaire' in *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, xxxii (1991), p.94.

and the NATO Nuclear Stockpile should be introduced.<sup>74</sup> Norstad stressed the need for Continental nuclear development not to impede the works of NATO. Norstad's plan for coordinating NATO defence forced Eisenhower into accepting – rather begrudgingly – the continuation of the F-I-G project.<sup>75</sup>

While the United States brought forth the idea of centralising the use of nuclear weapons within the remit of NATO; it remained ambiguously uncommitted to the idea of placing the weapons solely under Norstad's control. In France, the Norstad plan and Gaillard's acceptance of it received a negative response. His actions were criticised by the likes of Michel Debré, a Gaullist supporter, and the French financial inspector Léon Noël for lacking any sensible judgement and undermining France's national defence.<sup>76</sup> Debré, in particular, accused Gaillard of placing France 'under the shadow' of the United States.<sup>77</sup> Debré's criticism seems not to take into consideration the potential hardware solution that the F-I-G could still bring France as for the creation of a national nuclear weapons system. F-I-G symbolised a promise to cooperate over the development of nuclear technology, it did not specify that this collaboration would not benefit participating countries' national defence. The continued existence of F-I-G after the NATO Summit in December 1957 did not escape the notice of Britain and the United States. On 1 January 1958, Macmillan implored Eisenhower to consider endorsing a tripartite agreement between Britain, France and the United States towards partial nuclear disarmament.<sup>78</sup> The Eisenhower administration investigated the possible dangers of incorporating the F-I-G cooperation within NATO during bilateral discussions with West Germany on 20 January 1958. Robert D. Murphy, the US Deputy Under Secretary of State, asked his German counterparts Dr Josef Rust and Albrecht von Kessel whether the FRG was using F-I-G cooperation as a means of enhancing national defence. Von Kessel was adamant that the *Bundeswehr* was uninterested in the development of nuclear weapons, and that the F-I-G cooperation was purely for discovering the possible uses of atomic energy.<sup>79</sup> The secrecy around the F-I-G negotiations embittered Britain and France's bilateral relationship. Both countries' pursuit of a national nuclear capacity strained the integration of their weapons in NATO, which was further hampered by US indecisiveness towards the inclusion of IRBMs under the control of SACEUR. Macmillan's idea of

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<sup>74</sup> NATO, 'December 1957 Ministerial Meeting-Follow-Up Action-NATO Defense', 30 January 1958, LOSTAN 2338.

<sup>75</sup> Schwabe, 'Three Grand Designs', p.9.

<sup>76</sup> Patrick Samuel, *Michel Debré ; L'architecte du Général* (Bayeux, 2000), p.145.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, p.241.

<sup>78</sup> TNA, FO to Washington, 1 January 1958, PREM/11/2502.

<sup>79</sup> TNA, Record of meeting, 20 January 1958, FO/371/137374.

returning to a policy of disarmament was doomed to fail given the momentum behind the F-I-G cooperation, particularly after the successful splitting of the atom in April 1958.<sup>80</sup>

The problem for Britain in early 1958 was two-fold. Firstly, it did not want to be seen as separate from Continental European states; a vision that its demand for a national deterrent perpetuated. In addition, it needed to show that it was not as aloof in wanting to commit its nuclear capabilities to a European deterrent as its US partners had been. Hence, the decision was taken to reinvigorate arms cooperation within the WEU.<sup>81</sup> The Secretary of State for Air George Ward and Sandys suggested sharing the British Blue Streak missile project with its European partners. This idea was well-received by the French at the NATO Defence Ministers meeting on 15 April 1958, with Chaban-Delmas accepting the Medium-range Ballistic Missile (MRBMs) development could be undertaken within the WEU and in a solely European context.<sup>82</sup> A new understanding was reached between Britain and the F-I-G countries to coordinate within the WEU on proposals for an IRBM project with a thermo-nuclear warhead.<sup>83</sup> The agreement between Britain and France to renew military cooperation was seen as a positive move towards the creation of a European deterrent, which Norstad had communicated to US aeronautical engineer David Thurston in March 1958.<sup>84</sup> While Britain had made some inroads into resolving the NATO IRBM crisis, the United States did not respond well to attempts at European nuclearisation. Britain had already committed to developing the Blue Streak missile since the early 1950s and the agreement between Chaban-Delmas and Sandys focused on the usage of the Blue Streak within the WEU framework. However, an offer from the United States to produce a second-generation, solid-fuelled IRBM resulted in a period of great confusion around the development of European nuclear defence.

The US offer of a more advanced IRBM system renewed bilateral tensions between France and Britain. The French plan for the creation of a nuclear deterrent had not achieved much progress since Mollet announced it in January 1957. With the United States offering a more viable propulsion option – like the one designed for Polaris missiles – France could gain an advantage over its Western allies from acquiring technologically-advanced US hardware. General Jean Crépin had been assigned to work on the creation of a French

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<sup>80</sup> O'Driscoll, "Les Anglo-Saxons", p.129.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p.122.

<sup>82</sup> TNA, Chaban-Delmas to Sandys, 15 April 1958, DEFE/13/339.

<sup>83</sup> Benjamin Cole, 'Soft technology and technology transfer: Lessons from British missile development' in *The Nonproliferation Review*, vi (1998), p.58.

<sup>84</sup> O'Driscoll, "Les Anglo-Saxons", p.122.

deterrent with Pierre Guillaumet, and in April 1958 they began consultations with officials from the British Ministries of Aviation, Defence and Supply around the use of the Blue Streak as the basis of an F-I-G deterrent.<sup>85</sup> However, these negotiations did not stem into any sort of genuine cooperation over nuclear arms development. Despite Sandys' endorsement of bilateral collaboration over nuclear weapons, British officials, such as Ministry of Defence official J.T. Williams, strongly argued against divulging nuclear technology secrets shared as a result of the Bermuda Conference with the French.<sup>86</sup> This infuriated Crépin who previously consented to the forging of cooperative links between British and French electrical and aeronautical firms.<sup>87</sup> Bilateral cooperation was later rendered impossible in May 1958 after the Ministry of Aviation refused to allow any inter-company sharing of technological designs ahead of a formal agreement between the British and French governments.<sup>88</sup>

The limitations that Ministry of Aviation placed on Franco-British nuclear cooperation frustrated the Prime Minister. Macmillan had hoped that nuclear weapons would secure Britain's international standing as a great power, and in addition cooperation with the French would ease Britain's burden in trying to gain access to the Common Market. Thus, the decision to not share nuclear secrets lessened the appeal of the Blue Streak missile to the Europeans, since the missile itself was incompatible with the design of a proposed F-I-G warhead.<sup>89</sup> The breakdown in Franco-British cooperation and the French decision to pursue the US IRBM proposal also risked the Anglo-American nuclear partnership. Chaban-Delmas indicated that the French would welcome the deployment of a NATO Nuclear Stockpile in France with the proviso that authority over the use of nuclear weapons in the case of an emergency would lie with the French Defence Minister rather than the SACEUR.<sup>90</sup> If the United States agreed to Chaban-Delmas' request then France would achieve nuclear supremacy in Europe. Consequently, the US Secretary of Defense Neil H. McElroy sought to persuade Eisenhower to bring further changes to the McMahon Act so as to include France and other European states in the nuclear club.<sup>91</sup> The terms of Franco-American cooperation in nuclear matters were to be agreed by a US-French Working Group from December 1957

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<sup>85</sup> TNA, Williams to Jones, 29 April 1958, AVIA/65/739.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> O'Driscoll, "Les Anglo-Saxons", p.125.

<sup>88</sup> TNA, Mitchell to Burns of English Electric, 17 April 1958, AVIA/65/706.

<sup>89</sup> O'Driscoll, "Les Anglo-Saxons", p.125.

<sup>90</sup> Telegram from the Embassy in France to the Department of State, 20 December 1957, *FRUS* 1955-1957, XXVII, p.209.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, p.210.

onwards.<sup>92</sup> However, the significance of an agreement was noteworthy. Integration of US IRBMs in France – and more importantly within the NATO framework – would grant the Gaillard government substantial control over the development of a European deterrent against the Communist forces in the Soviet Union. By contrast, a Franco-American nuclear deal would leave Britain floundering since the Blue Streak missile was not considered a credible option for a British deterrent due to its soon-to-be outdated hardware. Sandys epitomised Britain's desire for a stronger nuclear alternative when he submitted a proposal to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Mansfield D. Sprague to purchase 60 Thor missiles in return for the cancellation of the Blue Streak project.<sup>93</sup>

### **The return of de Gaulle**

Rather thankfully for Britain, the Franco-American discussions around resolving the incorporation of F-I-G within NATO and the placement of IRBMs in France never had the opportunity to progress further beyond the Working Group. The Gaillard government collapsed in April 1958 due to two factors that plagued Gaillard's time in office. The situation in Algeria, which contributed to Mollet's downfall, had continued to escalate and the French Army withdrew its support for the French leadership.<sup>94</sup> Secondly under Gaillard's premiership, the budgetary deficit in France had reached 15 per cent, which led to a run on the franc.<sup>95</sup> After an interim government led by Pierre Pflimlin proved unable to restore control in French Algeria, on 13 May 1958, French President Rene Coty invited General Charles de Gaulle to form a new government at the request of the French military. The introduction of de Gaulle proved decisive in the restoration of the Franco-British bilateral relationship. De Gaulle had made a point to his new Cabinet that France would now focus on a policy of *grandeur*, which entailed the exploitation of France's resources with the goal of returning it to the front rank in international politics.<sup>96</sup> As part of this new policy, France was committed to securing its Algerian property in a *Françafrique* project, while pursuing a nuclear programme which would restore France's national prestige. However, de Gaulle knew that France's national prestige was currently being overshadowed by integration within

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Memorandum by the Counselor of the Department of State Frederick G. Reinhardt, 11 September 1958, *FRUS* 1958-1960, VII, p.822.

<sup>94</sup> Gildea, *Empires of the mind*, p.99.

<sup>95</sup> Éric Roussel, 'De Gaulle et les grandes réformes de 1958' in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, (avril 2017), pp.44-50, p.47.

<sup>96</sup> AN, Manuscrite de Phillippe Ragueneau, ministre en contrôle des relations de presse écrite, sans date, 663AP/13.



NATO and its commitment to nuclear technology sharing within the F-I-G axis. Thus, on 15 June 1958, de Gaulle informed Italian and West German officials that France would renege on its commitments to exchanges over nuclear power technology.<sup>97</sup>

De Gaulle's return had provoked a political shockwave within the international system, particularly towards Britain. When de Gaulle effectively ended tripartite collaboration over nuclear energy, Sandys expressed his concern about de Gaulle's actions and the effect they may have on continued French contributions to NATO.<sup>98</sup> When de Gaulle came to power, he opted to create the *Haut-Commissariat de l'énergie atomique*, with the mandate of constructing a French nuclear deterrent rather than pursue further European nuclear development.<sup>99</sup> Sandys was very critical of de Gaulle's actions, stating that 'we shall find de Gaulle rather difficult and uncomfortable to deal with and we must expect him to press for an increased measure or '*la présence française*' in NATO.'<sup>100</sup> Sandys' expectation of de Gaulle proved accurate. On 3 June 1958, after an ambassadorial meeting with de Gaulle, Sir Gladwyn Jebb sent a telegram to the Foreign Office, informing the Principal Private Secretary Denis Laskey of de Gaulle's new stance towards France's NATO allies. In sum, de Gaulle impressed on Jebb three key demands. Firstly, he demanded an acknowledgement from both Britain and the United States that France had the right to develop its own military nuclear weapons programme.<sup>101</sup> The British government did not protest France's right to a national nuclear deterrent in this instance as Britain's nuclear future was secured by its US connections. However, Britain was also in the process of negotiating a Free Trade arrangement with France, so it used support for a French nuclear deterrent as a *quid pro quo* for securing a stronger trading relationship with Continental Europe.<sup>102</sup>

De Gaulle's push for a French national deterrent was an attempt to reclaim France's great power position on the international stage. Although it was part of his policy of *grandeur*, his nuclear posturing placed France firmly at odds with Britain. The second demand that de Gaulle gave Jebb in June 1958 was that France had the right to be part of

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<sup>97</sup> Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle ; The ruler 1945-1970* (London, 1991), p.212. Trans. By Alan Sheridan.

<sup>98</sup> TNA, 'General de Gaulle' a paper by Duncan Sandys, 6 June 1958, PREM/11/2339.

<sup>99</sup> AN, manuscrit du conférence de presse tenue au palais d'Orsay, Paris, 19 mai 1958, AG/5(1)/1428.

<sup>100</sup> TNA, 'General de Gaulle' a paper by Duncan Sandys, 6 June 1958, PREM/11/2339.

<sup>101</sup> TNA, Jebb to Laskey, 3 June 1958, PREM/11/2339.

<sup>102</sup> Wolfram Kaiser, 'Party games: The British EEC applications of 1961 and 1967' in Roger Broad and Virginia Preston (eds), *Moored to the Continent? Britain and European integration* (London, 2001), pp.67-8.

nuclear decision-making within ‘Anglo-United States confabulations.’<sup>103</sup> NATO’s Atlantic influence was one of the main risks to de Gaulle’s strategy for France’s national defence, since under the previous French governments it was agreed that France’s nuclear potential would be incorporated within the NATO and WEU remits.<sup>104</sup> De Gaulle took a rather philosophical view to the nuclear question whereupon he argued that French representation within the Anglo-American relationship was imperative to her maintenance of power in Europe.<sup>105</sup> The French demand for inclusion into the ‘special relationship’ prompted Britain into taking immediate action. Laskey communicated de Gaulle’s demands to Sir Harold Caccia, the British Ambassador in Washington with the instruction of relying the French President’s requests to Secretary of State Dulles. In keeping with the Anglo-American ‘special relationship’, Dulles agreed to defer any bilateral discussions around possible French reforms to NATO until Macmillan could join, he went as far as saying ‘we must certainly not give up this special relationship which had been achieved not without difficulty.’<sup>106</sup> Thus, de Gaulle’s return to leadership on the international stage caused a stir with France’s allies – both in European and transatlantic affairs. By placing France on a path where it was pursuing its national nuclear deterrent, de Gaulle effectively ended any chance of a multilateral nuclear stockpile similar to the one devised within NATO being created. In addition, de Gaulle’s demands laid the groundwork for the controversies within the Franco-British relationship, which would endure into the following decade.

### **The issues surrounding French *Gleichberechtigung***

From July to September 1958, de Gaulle struggled to make any politico-military gains with his allies. Following a meeting in the United States on 5 July, Dulles and the Assistant Secretary of State C. Burke Elbrick rebuffed de Gaulle’s initial idea of a tripartite directorate overseeing NATO and global nuclear affairs. Dulles foresaw difficulties within NATO as a result of de Gaulle’s desire to purport France back to the front rank in world affairs.<sup>107</sup> Britain and the United States expressed deep uncertainties towards the directorate idea, which forced France to look toward its closest neighbour for support. Macmillan stated in his memoirs that Britain could not allow France any independence over nuclear weapons use, even in ‘dire

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<sup>103</sup> TNA, Jebb to Laskey, 3 June 1958, PREM/11/2339.

<sup>104</sup> Claire Andrieu, Philippe Braud and Guillaume Piketty, *Dictionnaire de Gaulle* (Paris, 2006), p.864.

<sup>105</sup> Jacques Vernant, ‘Le general de Gaulle et la politique exterieure’ in *Politique étrangère*, vi (1970), p.622.

<sup>106</sup> TNA, Caccia to Laskey, 3 June 1958, PREM/11/2339.

<sup>107</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, 5 July 1958, *FRUS*, VII 1958-1960, p.352.

emergency.’<sup>108</sup> De Gaulle sought to court German support for his policies after July 1958, when the United States deployed marines to support the regime of the Lebanese President Camille Chamoun.<sup>109</sup> This angered de Gaulle since Lebanon was still within the French Empire’s sphere of influence. Regardless, France was in middle of a policy reorientation with de Gaulle needing German assistance to ensure its success. Adenauer was reluctant to accept the French invitation for bilateral negotiations given de Gaulle’s dispassionate attitude towards German success within the F-I-G axis upon his return to power.<sup>110</sup> German reticence was understandable given that it was de Gaulle’s unilateral withdrawal from the F-I-G axis in June 1958, which guaranteed that the military evolution of the United States and Soviet Union would continue to outpace that of the Europeans.

Adenauer and de Gaulle met in Colombey-les-Deux-Églises on 14 September 1958, where they discussed their countries’ respective roles within NATO. De Gaulle acknowledged the benefits the FRG drew from membership of NATO, but he stated that France, once it had created a full nuclear deterrent, would withdraw from the organisation since his proposed *force de frappe* ‘could not be brought under the umbrella of integration.’<sup>111</sup> Despite not informing Adenauer of his proposed directorate, de Gaulle and the German chancellor made a firm commitment to one another to look beyond previous rivalries and work towards the creation of – what de Gaulle called – a European Union resulting in a profound shake-up of the integrated military command within NATO.<sup>112</sup> De Gaulle may have succeeded in attaining German support for his proposal to reform NATO, but the FRG had to concede to de Gaulle that it would not attempt to become a nuclear power like France. Strauss was frustrated by de Gaulle’s insistence but supported Adenauer’s decision of committing to work towards the unification of European politico-military planning under French dominance.<sup>113</sup>

While it may seem that de Gaulle was committing France to contributing to a multilateral defence community, the historical reality is more complex. De Gaulle disliked the idea of France being part of European defence organisation as it would only serve as a

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<sup>108</sup> Harold Macmillan, *Pointing the way; 1959-1961* (London, 1972), p.355.

<sup>109</sup> Sutton, *France and the construction of Europe, 1944-2007*, pp.86-7.

<sup>110</sup> Maurice Vaïsse, ‘La reconciliation franco-allemande: le dialogue de Gaulle-Adenauer’ in *Politique étrangère*, iv (1993), pp.963-72, p.967.

<sup>111</sup> Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires d’espoir* (Paris, 1970), p.184.

<sup>112</sup> Vaïsse, ‘La reconciliation franco-allemande’, p.964.

<sup>113</sup> Sutton, *France and the construction of Europe, 1944-2007*, p.89.

hindrance to French sovereignty.<sup>114</sup> Indeed, a multilateral defence institution contradicted de Gaulle's policy of *grandeur* since it would not allow France to regain its international stature in global decision-making. On 17 September 1958, de Gaulle put forth his proposals to Britain and the United States to rescind military integration within NATO and rather give France equal powers with both countries in nuclear decision-making on both the European and global scales.<sup>115</sup> The US Ambassador in London John 'Jock' Whitney had anticipated the de Gaulle memorandum, and pushed Selwyn Lloyd not to engage in tripartite talks over the adoption of the proposed reforms, as he stated that Britain and the United States should not be in a position to alienate France's defence policy, especially with de Gaulle's desire to pursue the construction of a nuclear deterrent independent of NATO.<sup>116</sup>

The perspective reforms concerning NATO called into question the validity of the current defence system. The French President wrote to Eisenhower and Macmillan contesting the US monopoly over nuclear weapons, and demanded France, Britain and the United States pursue a common security and defence policy.<sup>117</sup> Frédéric Bozo has suggested that France saw the mutation of the NATO system as indispensable.<sup>118</sup> However, Bozo's assertion does not necessarily stand the test of time. De Gaulle, himself, knew that the memorandum's success was dependent on the acquiescence of Macmillan and Eisenhower towards his political viewpoint. This came despite de Gaulle creating the *Comité interministériel du renseignement* (CIR), which was charged with presiding over the management of France's national defence.<sup>119</sup> Macmillan and Eisenhower agreed to de Gaulle's request for trilateral meetings in Washington in late 1958. This concession proved to be very limited, since the tripartite meetings which took place were between senior officials and not the three heads of state.<sup>120</sup> Part of de Gaulle's memorandum called for overseas territories to be included in the NATO sphere of influence, which, if the proposed reforms were adopted, would have allowed France to maintain its colonial property abroad with assistance from NATO.<sup>121</sup> The broader context was that Algeria was experiencing a civil war in 1958, which continued to

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<sup>114</sup> Georges-Henri Soutou, 'The linkage between European integration and détente; The contrasting approaches of de Gaulle and Pompidou' in N. Piers Ludlow (ed), *European integration and the Cold War: Ostpolitik-Westpolitik, 1965-1973* (London, 2007), p.15.

<sup>115</sup> Schwabe, 'Three Grand Designs', p.10.

<sup>116</sup> TNA, Caccia to Lloyd, 3 June 1958, PREM/11/2689.

<sup>117</sup> AN, Lettre et mémorandum du général de Gaulle au général Eisenhower, 17 septembre 1958, AG/5(1)/722.

<sup>118</sup> Frédéric Bozo, 'De Gaulle, l'Amérique et l'alliance atlantique. Une relecture de la crise de 1966' in *Vingtième Siècle, revue d'histoire*, lxxiii (1994), pp.55-68, p.59.

<sup>119</sup> AN, 'OTAN, Guerre dans le cadre de SHAPE', [undated], 19910852/1.

<sup>120</sup> Andrieu et al, *Dictionnaire de Gaulle*, p.864.

<sup>121</sup> AN, Lettre et mémorandum du général de Gaulle au général Eisenhower, 17 septembre 1958, AG/5(1)/722.

threaten French rule. However, Britain seemed unconcerned with de Gaulle's need for NATO reform, especially the demand for parity around nuclear decision-making. In December 1958, Macmillan was unequivocal in rejecting de Gaulle's memorandum for two important reasons. In the first instance, the triumvirate proposed by France took no account of the desires of other European nations – namely, the FRG and Italy, with whom France had previously worked closely to attain NATO reforms.<sup>122</sup> Macmillan was correct in this instance since the triumvirate was designed to detach the FRG from any notion of becoming a nuclear power, and reposition European nuclear decision-making in line with French defence policy. More critically, Macmillan drew de Gaulle's attention to the work carried out two years previously by his predecessor Gaillard in remodelling NATO into a more equal organisation, which the French President himself ceased when he came to power.<sup>123</sup> Macmillan's rebuke towards de Gaulle soured any chance of renewing a Franco-British working partnership over nuclear affairs. This led de Gaulle's Prime Minister Michel Debré to brand Britain's political agenda 'hostile' towards French needs to secure its own national defence, in spite of previous assistance Britain granted France to attain the capacity to develop nuclear power.<sup>124</sup>

French *Gleichberechtigung* – or the ambition for nuclear self-determination – and Britain's out-right rejection of that had an immense impact on Franco-British relations within the context of European defence integration. The strengthening of the Anglo-American 'special relationship' was an outcome of the tripartite discussions between senior officials. Eisenhower called for transatlantic unity in the face of the French President's 'troublesome' attitude.<sup>125</sup> In addition, the rejection of the global, tripartite directorate led de Gaulle to re-evaluate his foreign policy position. De Gaulle began to pursue a policy which can be characterised as strictly exclusionary towards Britain. Following the French President's termination of European Free Trade Area (EFTA) negotiations on 14 November 1958, France began to shift towards the idea of a non-NATO, European-centred alliance within which it would play a leadership role.<sup>126</sup> The European Union, which de Gaulle proposed to Adenauer at Colombey, was now perceived as a strictly European 'Third Force' or superpower. It seems clear therefore that, within the context of Franco-British relations, the Anglo-American resistance to the directorate provoked a major reorientation of French defence policy, in a

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<sup>122</sup> La réponse de Macmillan, décembre 1958, *DDF*, Vol. 12, no.559.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid; Paul Legoll, *Charles de Gaulle et Konrad Adenauer; La cordiale entente* (Paris, 2004), p.85.

<sup>124</sup> Michel Debré, *Gouverner: Mémoires 1958-1962* (Paris, 1988), p.426.

<sup>125</sup> Memorandum from Major John S.D. Eisenhower to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, 12 December 1958, *FRUS* 1958-1960, VII, p.202.

<sup>126</sup> Ellison, 'Britain and the Treaties of Rome, 1955-1959', p.46; Philip H. Gordon, *A certain idea of France; French security policy and Gaullist legacy* (New Jersey, 1993), p.31.

vein more detrimental to Britain's aspirations of joining the European Communities. De Gaulle pushed for military and defence integration between the EC states so that the European superpower – or *Europe puissance* – could replace Britain as an intermediary with the United States and would therefore terminate France's 'sub-hegemonic' status as a second-class nation to that of the superpowers.<sup>127</sup>

### **Britain and the Fouchet Plans**

De Gaulle pressed his arguments concerning the unsuitability of NATO in bilateral meetings with Adenauer, suggesting that a European nation must possess 'political primacy' in continental military affairs.<sup>128</sup> However, de Gaulle's intentions were clear. France was only to reach equal footing with Britain and the United States by assuming a leadership role in the coordination of the defence of EC states. The French President's intention led to an internal – albeit relatively short – civil war within NATO. Britain attempted to forestall France's efforts to assume a leadership role in the Atlantic Community. On 31 January 1959 the British Foreign Secretary approached Strauss with proposals of reigniting discussions around arms control inside the WEU framework.<sup>129</sup> Lloyd's proposal aimed at discriminating between conventional and nuclear weaponry, insofar as bringing disarmament back to the foreground in political decision-making. This would continue to keep the nuclear issue focused within NATO, rather than de Gaulle's preferred option of creating a French-dominated, Euro-centric defence organisation which, while still part of the Atlantic Alliance, would entail the EC states devising a common politico-military position that could carry more influence.<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless, Britain moved to maintain the unity of the Atlantic Alliance, which fundamentally placed it on a different trajectory to that of the French government. De Gaulle explicitly stated this in correspondence with Macmillan, demanding that France needed a role in nuclear decision-making given the uncertainty around the use of US IRBMs within NATO.<sup>131</sup> Once again, Macmillan rebuffed de Gaulle's demands for additional influence in this matter, and defended the quality of the US deterrence system since the Royal Air Force had recently conducted successful test launches of US Thor missiles at RAF Feltwell on 11

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<sup>127</sup> Schwabe, 'Three Grand Designs', p.11.

<sup>128</sup> Legoll, *Charles de Gaulle et Konrad Adenauer*, p.86.

<sup>129</sup> TNA, FO to Bonn, 31 January 1959, PREM/11/2705.

<sup>130</sup> Robert Bloes, *Le « Plan Fouchet » et le problème de l'Europe politique* (Bruges, 1970), p.33.

<sup>131</sup> AN, Correspondence entre le general de Gaulle et Harold Macmillan, février 1959, AG/5(1)/688.

February.<sup>132</sup> Macmillan instructed Lloyd to acquire further support for disarmament measures from West German officials during a visit to Bonn from 12 to 13 March. Strauss did not respond favourably to Lloyd's request for support, and while discussing the de Gaulle issue, he notified Lloyd that the FRG and France 'were in the same boat' and that Adenauer would not criticise de Gaulle over the French President's proposed – although at this time unconfirmed – idea to remove French forces from the NATO Mediterranean Fleet.<sup>133</sup>

De Gaulle's response to the inadequacy of the NATO system would unravel gradually. It began on 25 March 1959, when he stated at a press conference that France would be withdrawing its naval forces from the NATO Mediterranean Force, thus confirming Anglo-American fears that France would pursue non-NATO connections with EC countries.<sup>134</sup> The withdrawal of the French fleet angered the likes of Spaak, Eisenhower and Macmillan. In particular, it led to a continued disruption in the Franco-British relationship, as France now openly excluded Britain from European affairs on multiple fronts, ranging from economic integration to nuclear cooperation. Gladwyn Jebb, in his role as UK Ambassador to Paris, stressed to Macmillan that de Gaulle now held the balance of power in European affairs, and producing a coherent policy for Britain's integration into Europe was seriously hindered by de Gaulle's presence in Paris.<sup>135</sup> Jebb was very much correct in his assertion that de Gaulle controlled Britain's future pathway into the European Community. This was evident since de Gaulle had begun to exercise French influence amongst the EC countries. In early 1959 at a meeting of the foreign ministers of the six EC states, French Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville brought forth an idea devised by the French Ambassador to Denmark Christian Fouchet for an intergovernmental union of nations. The purpose of the Fouchet proposal of 1959 was to devise a common foreign and defence policy for EC states, based outside of the supranational European framework commonly associated with the European Economic Community (EEC), EURATOM and the ECSC.<sup>136</sup> The Foreign Ministers of the Six agreed to open a three-month consultation into a proposed politico-military union. The move towards further politico-military integration within a European

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid; Brian White, 'Britain: An Atlantic or a European relationship' in Robert S. Jordan (ed), *Europe and the superpowers; Essays on Europe international politics* (New York, 1991), p.152; Dino A. Brugioni, *Eyes in the sky: Eisenhower, the CIA and Cold War Aerial Espionage* (Maryland, 2010), p.251.

<sup>133</sup> TNA, Record of Meeting at German Foreign Office, 12 March 1959, PREM/11/2676.

<sup>134</sup> AN, Conférence de presse tenue au palais de l'Élysée, 25 mars 1959, AG/5(1)/1429; Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages* (vol 3, Paris, 1970), p.82.

<sup>135</sup> Goldsmith, 'Gladwyn Jebb', p.86.

<sup>136</sup> Anthony Teasdale, 'The Fouchet Plan: De Gaulle's intergovernmental design for Europe' in *LSE Europe in Question – Discussion Paper Series* (2016), p.2.

context plunged Franco-British relations into further crisis. Britain's rejection of France's military interests from June to December 1958, especially French calls for more input into NATO nuclear affairs, risked British ostracism from European affairs as Macmillan's vision for Europe greatly contrasted de Gaulle's strategy.<sup>137</sup>

The threat of the Fouchet proposals did not become fully apparent to Britain immediately. In the short term, the Benelux countries – most notably the Netherlands – opposed the idea of a politico-military union separate to NATO. The Dutch Foreign Minister Joseph Luns became very critical of de Gaulle's proposals. He criticised the French President's proposal for France to take a leadership role within the union, and accused de Gaulle of using the attempts to coordinate a common defence policy as a 'power instrument' for returning France to its great power role within the international community.<sup>138</sup> Luns' objections to the Fouchet proposals delayed any further discussion around a politico-military union until 1960. In addition, the first Fouchet proposals did not attract much support among the other members of the Six, owing mainly to the creation of a separate European community when the WEU already provided the Six and Britain a forum for politico-military discussions.<sup>139</sup> Macmillan was thankful for the rejection of the Fouchet proposals as the initial plans contained several difficulties, which would have marginalised Britain in European defence planning. For instance, a Foreign Office report cited that the mention of defence planning outside the Atlantic Alliance would prove impractical as it would place this proposed community in direct conflict with NATO.<sup>140</sup> Therefore, Luns' decision to reject the first Fouchet plans saved Britain from a potential division with France, which would have further hindered its ambitions to join the European Communities.

Despite the failure of the first Fouchet plans, de Gaulle continued to pursue European military integration. However, the redrafting of the Fouchet plans took place against the backdrop of a European crisis, which threatened to intensify the bipolar nature of the international system. The Berlin Crisis reflected divisions among Britain and France. With the German Democratic Republic (GDR) demanding recognition from the Western powers, de Gaulle attempted to persuade the leader of the Soviet Union Nikita Khrushchev that East-West relations would be better served if the Soviet Union agreed to pursue a policy that

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<sup>137</sup> TNA, Record of Meeting at Hôtel Matignon, 29 June 1958, PREM/11/2326; Bloes, *Le « Plan Fouchet » et le problème de l'Europe politique*, p.159; Schwabe, 'Three Grand Designs', p.16.

<sup>138</sup> Jeffrey W. Vanke, 'An impossible union: Dutch objections to the Fouchet Plan, 1959-1962' in *Cold War History*, ii (2001), p.97.

<sup>139</sup> Gilbert, *Cold War Europe*, p.92.

<sup>140</sup> TNA, Brief description of the Fouchet Plans, undated, FO/371/118579.



would eventually lead to German reunification.<sup>141</sup> However, de Gaulle's direct approach to Khrushchev put him once again at odds with his Atlantic partners. Macmillan was less inclined to challenge the Soviet Union directly. In fact, his decision to travel to Moscow to discuss possible solutions to the Khrushchev ultimatum weakened Anglo-German relations as Adenauer perceived Macmillan's actions as appeasing in nature rather than defending the position of the Atlantic Alliance.<sup>142</sup> Ultimately, Britain found itself being increasingly marginalised in international affairs during 1959. For instance, the United States and France acted without any meaningful consultations with Britain in their bids to bring about a peaceful solution to the crisis. In turn, Britain's indecisiveness during the Berlin Crisis played into de Gaulle's hands. While at a meeting in Chequers in November 1959, de Gaulle once again made the case for a European politico-military union as the 'present organisation of NATO was outdated' and inefficient in dealing with the Berlin Crisis.<sup>143</sup> Macmillan maintained his resolve and argued that the creation of such a union would render the WEU impotent, and more importantly European military integration irrelevant, since France would possess military control over Continental forces.<sup>144</sup> By December 1959, Franco-British relations had reached their lowest point since the Suez Crisis. British insistence towards military integration within the WEU or NATO highlighted the incompatibility of Gaullist foreign policy and the pro-Atlanticist stance of its cross-channel partner.

By 1960, Britain had found itself in a precarious position with its European partners. De Gaulle had redrafted the Fouchet Plans and proceeded to discuss them with his EC partners. In addition, the French sought to explore with their Community partners the prospect of nuclear scientific collaboration in conjunction with the creation of this proposed politico-military union.<sup>145</sup> The control of any further nuclear collaboration would rest with France as de Gaulle cleverly included areas of influence from the *Françafrique* project under this proposal. However, Macmillan found that British actions during the Berlin Crisis had not soured the 'special relationship' between Britain and the United States. Britain was not completely excluded from international decision-making since in early 1960, Sandys

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<sup>141</sup> Maurice Vaïsse, 'De Gaulle's handling of the Berlin and Cuban crises' in Wilfried Loth (ed), *Europe, Cold War and co-existence 1953-1965* (Southgate, 2004), chapter 5.

<sup>142</sup> Ken Nannichi, 'In the shadow of back-channels: Britain and the Berlin Four Power talks, 1968-1971' in *Diplomatic History*, xlv (2019), p.191.

<sup>143</sup> TNA, Record of meeting at Chequers, 22 November 1959, PREM/11/2679.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Archives nationale d'outre-mer [ANOM], 'Une collaboration scientifique internationale', 1 décembre 1959, TAAF4.

travelled to the United States to invoke aspects of interdependence in the Anglo-American nuclear partnership. Seeking to integrate British and US nuclear strategies contained some difficulties for Britain's standing on the international community, which would further affect its foreign policy during the early part of the 1960s. This became clear as when Sandys agreed to purchase Skybolt missiles in exchange for the cessation of Blue Streak development, Britain had to compromise and permit US Polaris submarines to tender in Holy Loch and other ports in Scotland.<sup>146</sup>

Britain's decision to align its nuclear defence policy with that of the United States was purely strategic. In reality, Britain wanted access to the highly-advanced US Polaris missiles to maintain its status as a nuclear power.<sup>147</sup> The NATO debate around MRBMs withheld British attempts to attain Polaris missiles since the Chief of Mission to NATO W. Randolph Burgess called for a common storage and defence policy for 'advanced weapons'.<sup>148</sup> Britain, rather correctly, proceeded with caution as the discussion around this issue placed it again on a contra-strategy with France. De Gaulle was against a NATO common policy on nuclear weapons as he previously stated that nuclear weapons development was vital to his policy of *grandeur*. Rather de Gaulle wished to pursue a development programme fitting of technological state. Thus, in April 1961, France continued its nuclear tests in the Algerian Sahara.<sup>149</sup> When a French bomb detonated near Sierra Leone in April 1961, Macmillan wrote to de Gaulle to call for French tests to be suspended near former British colonies as the British government was facing political backlash from newly-established governments in West Africa.<sup>150</sup> Arguments around NATO MRBMs and the concentration of French nuclear tests in West Africa further demonstrate the conflicting courses that Britain and France found themselves on during the early 1960s. De Gaulle's indifference towards calls for the

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<sup>146</sup> Memorandum from Secretary of State Herter to President Eisenhower, 27 March 1960, *FRUS*, VII 1958-1960, p.860.

<sup>147</sup> Matthew Jones, 'Prelude to the Skybolt Crisis: The Kennedy administration's approach to British and French strategic nuclear policies in 1962' in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, xxi (2019), p.83. Britain's acquisition of US nuclear hardware and its significance on the Anglo-American 'special relationship' have received much scholarly attention, see Jan Melissen, *The struggle for nuclear partnership: Britain, the United States and the making of an ambiguous alliance 1952-1959* (Groningen, 1993); Pagedas, *Anglo-American strategic relations and the French problem, 1960-1963*; Matthew Jones, *The official history of the UK strategic nuclear deterrent; Volume I: From the V-bomber era to the arrival of Polaris, 1945-1964* (London, 2017).

<sup>148</sup> Telegram from the Mission at the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and European Regional Organisations to the Department of State, 1 April 1960, *FRUS*, VII 1958-1960, p.579.

<sup>149</sup> Christopher Robert Hill, 'Britain, West Africa and "the new nuclear imperialism": Decolonisation and development during French tests' in *Contemporary British History*, xxxiii (2019), pp.274-9; Jean-Marc Regnault, 'France's search for nuclear test sites, 1957-1963' in *The Journal of Military History*, lxxvii (2003), p.1234.

<sup>150</sup> TNA, Macmillan to de Gaulle, 25 April 1961, PREM/11/4242.

discontinuation of nuclear testing and US-driven initiatives within NATO show his determination in creating a Euro-centric politico-military organisation, which would drive France back to the 'front rank' in international politics given that it was the only EC state to possess a nuclear weapons development program.

France's push towards a leadership role in the European Community did not go unnoticed in Britain. The second Fouchet Plan was devised in late January 1961. This was met with a request from EC states to allow Britain to be consulted concerning this new politico-military community. On 28 February 1961 at a meeting of the Council of the WEU, the Lord Privy Seal Edward Heath gave a speech, in which he sought to assure the French delegate at the meeting that Britain 'sought [...] to take part in, to fulfil, to enlarge and strengthen [European military integration], and not to dilute it.'<sup>151</sup> Heath called on European unity in politico-military defence planning so as a NATO crisis, such as the one which had occurred in December 1957 would not be repeated.<sup>152</sup> In doing this, Heath placed in front of the EC state representatives two alternatives for politico-military cooperation. Either Britain be permitted to engage with its European partners in the union proposed in the Fouchet Plans, or European military planning remain principally handled within NATO and its subsidiary the WEU. Following this Council meeting, the successful adoption of the Fouchet Plans seemed unlikely. From February 1961 to March 1962, de Gaulle pressed on with revising the Fouchet articles to make a more persuasive argument for a Europe, which had complete autonomy over its own political and defence planning. De Gaulle argued that an intergovernmental defence organisation would be 'an end to American "integration"' in European affairs.<sup>153</sup> The French President's redrafting of the Fouchet Plan I made it appear that France was choosing the first of Heath's options, with the additional caveat that Britain continued to be excluded from European politico-military planning outside of the NATO/WEU framework.

Fouchet Plan II provoked an angered response from Britain. With public pressure mounting on the Macmillan government and fears of being excluded from de Gaulle's 'Grand Design' for Europe increasing, Britain demanded to be included in consultations in the 'deliberations over the Fouchet Plans prior to their adoption.'<sup>154</sup> British pressure gave the less influential EC states such as Belgium and the Netherlands the opportunity to once again

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<sup>151</sup> TNA, Western European Union – Memorandum by the Lord Privy Seal, 3 March 1961, CAB/129/104/29.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Vanke, 'An impossible union', p.97.

<sup>154</sup> Schwabe, 'Three Grand Designs', p.16.

register their disapproval of the proposals in their current form. The Dutch, in particular, were unequivocal in their rejection of the Fouchet plans for two distinct reasons. The lack of British involvement in the proposed 'Union of States' was paramount to Luns' second rejection. Despite Fouchet writing that Britain could not be included in the proposed union until the outcome of its application to join the EC had been verified; the Dutch rejected his explanation seeing it as an unnecessary hindrance to the formation of a political union.<sup>155</sup> Secondly, the Dutch would not have equal representation in the union with France and other EC states, having to settle for only 7.9 per cent control over proposed activities, which Luns argued negated any point of having a supranational community.<sup>156</sup> This would only serve to strengthen de Gaulle's hold over European integration, which he viewed as vital for purporting France back to its former status as a great power. The rejection of the second Fouchet Plan was avoidable. De Gaulle's posturing towards strengthening France's position within a European context pitted it against the wishes of its EC partners, particularly the Benelux countries. In terms of Franco-British relations, de Gaulle's exclusionary tactics only served to countermand his own political ambitions. On 10 April 1962, Heath once again addressed the WEU Council of Ministers and relayed that Britain had adopted a more integrationist policy towards its European neighbours. Heath said that Britain's entry into the European Communities 'will not be used by us to discourage ... or to obstruct in any way the development of the European idea.'<sup>157</sup>

The reorientation of British policy towards European integration was brought about by necessity. Britain's 'special relationship' with the United States had entered a difficult period as a result of the negotiations over Skybolt. On 31 December 1961, Harold Caccia informed the Foreign Office as to the issues with Britain's purchase of Skybolt. He warned that the United States had engaged in a 'horse trading venture', when it came to the exchange of Skybolt for permission to place US Polaris submarines in Scottish ports.<sup>158</sup> For clarity, horse trading tactics refers to dishonest negotiations when one side agrees to part company with a lower valued sum than what they are receiving in return. In this case the United States was indeed granting Britain access to missiles in which the Eisenhower administration had no

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<sup>155</sup> TNA, 'Towards political union', [undated], PREM/11/1333.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> TNA, 'The British position in 1962-63', 11 April 1962, FO/371/118579.

<sup>158</sup> TNA, Caccia to the FO, 31 December 1961, PREM/11/3257; John Newhouse, 'De Gaulle and the Anglo-Saxons' in Douglas Brinkley and Richard T. Griffiths (eds), *John F. Kennedy and Europe* (Louisiana, 1999), p.45.

real faith.<sup>159</sup> George Kistiakowsky, the chairman of the President's Science Advisory Committee (PSAC) was apathetic towards calls for a continuation of Skybolt, given that the newly-developed Minuteman ICBM could perform the same function and was more cost effective.<sup>160</sup> Sandys was frustrated with the US Secretary of Defense Thomas S. Gates Jr over his lack of good faith during the negotiations over the exchange of Skybolt missiles for US use of British naval facilities. Essentially Sandys knew that the acquisition of US nuclear missiles would serve to ease Britain's decline as a great power, but the inadequacy of Skybolt only fuelled the tension between Britain and the United States over the issue of Western defence.<sup>161</sup> Despite this, the decision to accept Skybolt missiles prompted the question among the members of the Future Policy Study Committee as to whether Britain should 'continue [its] independent contribution to the strategic nuclear deterrent.'<sup>162</sup> The agreement over Skybolt had deep ramifications for British foreign policy, particularly towards France, as by invoking interdependence with the United States and permitting their submarines access to British naval facilities, Macmillan had effectively linked the success of any British defence policy with that of its Atlantic partner.<sup>163</sup>

The controversies around the Skybolt crisis forced Britain to renew its efforts to restore amicable bilateral relations with France. On 15 May 1962 when Couve de Murville opened negotiations with Britain under Article 205 of the Treaty of Rome, Macmillan stated that, despite the European Communities framework threatening the Commonwealth trading relationship, Britain wished to develop the nuclear relationship between itself and France.<sup>164</sup> The President of EURATOM Pierre Chatenet was receptive to Britain's proposed nuclear sharing and opened negotiations with Heath on 6 June 1962.<sup>165</sup> This opened the door for nuclear power sharing in a bilateral context between Britain and France. De Gaulle had continued to develop his *force de frappe* and this prompted Macmillan to consider whether trading British nuclear delivery systems and technology with France would be feasible.<sup>166</sup> The French were also open towards the incorporation of British nuclear technology to their

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<sup>159</sup> Ken Young, 'The Skybolt Crisis of 1962: Muddle or mischief?' in *Journal of Strategic Studies*, xxvii (2004), p.618.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> David M. McCourt, *Britain and world power since 1945; Constructing a nation's role in international politics* (1<sup>st</sup> ed., Ann Arbor, 2014), pp.86-87; Stephen Twigge and Len Scott, *Planning Armageddon; Britain, the United States and the command of the Western nuclear forces 1945-1964* (Amsterdam, 2000), p.129.

<sup>162</sup> TNA, Meeting of the Future Policy Study Committee, 10 October 1961, CAB/134/1929/96.

<sup>163</sup> TNA, United States request for Naval facilities in the United Kingdom, 31 January 1961, PREM/11/3257.

<sup>164</sup> TNA, Macmillan to Couve de Murville, 15 May 1962, PREM/11/3774.

<sup>165</sup> TNA, Heath to Chatenet, 6 June 1962, PREM/11/3774.

<sup>166</sup> TNA, Record of Meeting between Macmillan, Minister of Defence and Minister of Aviation, 9 October 1962, PREM/11/3772.

nuclear force. France's openness was based on Britain's development of nuclear weapons technology, in particular the Prototype Fast Reactor (PFR), which allowed the British to create nuclear material for both civil and military reasons.<sup>167</sup> However, the British were unwilling to include the PFR in any bilateral discussions with France.<sup>168</sup> Macmillan held a meeting with the Minister of Defence Peter Thorneycroft and Minister of Aviation Julian Amery to assess whether British nuclear delivery systems could be used for a European deterrent akin to the type proposed by de Gaulle.<sup>169</sup> The discussion around supporting French nuclear development revealed that British and French foreign policies began to coalesce as Britain realised its future would involve integrating into the European Communities. Despite Britain's ongoing difficulties with the United States over the Skybolt crisis, Britain's accession to the EC was part of the grand design of newly-elected US President John F. Kennedy, who wanted a Europe with strong links to the United States.<sup>170</sup>

### Conclusion

Franco-British relations from January 1957 to November 1962 show the stark differences between British and French foreign policies in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis. France quite quickly became a driving force in the newly-developed European project. The French leadership, from Mollet to Gaillard, drove forward military planning within both European and NATO contexts, primarily because France, in the immediate aftermath of the Suez Crisis, had accepted its relegation from a world power to that of a mainly European one.<sup>171</sup> However, under de Gaulle, the French seemed less inclined to simply integrate within the European Communities, and rather push forward with plans to take on a leadership role in Europe, thereupon reclaiming their great power status which had been lost post-Suez. The Fouchet Plans, which were advanced in 1959 and 1961 respectively encompassed de Gaulle's primary aim of turning France into a decisive player in the bipolar world order. This illustrates the differing trajectories between Britain and France, with the British seeking to reform European defence within NATO rather than push for an alternative arrangement. De Gaulle's *Europe puissance* envisaged the creation of a French-led superpower in Continental

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<sup>167</sup> Stuart A. Butler, 'The struggle for power: Britain and Euratom 1955-63' in *The International History Review*, xxxvi (2014), p.334.

<sup>168</sup> TNA, Lester to Dodd, 21 November 1962, T/225/2272.

<sup>169</sup> TNA, Record of Meeting between Macmillan, Minister of Defence and Minister of Aviation, 9 October 1962, PREM/11/3772.

<sup>170</sup> Schwabe, 'Three Grand Designs', p.13.

<sup>171</sup> Gildea, *Empires of the mind*, p.4.

Europe, which retained the French dependencies abroad as spheres of influence.<sup>172</sup> Thus, the failure of the Fouchet Plans to provide any concrete framework for multilateral defence cooperation outside of NATO, and de Gaulle's abandonment of the F-I-G axis within NATO for an all-French deterrent demonstrated the dramatic divide between British and French defence planning since their cooperation during the Suez Crisis came to nought.

For Britain, the result of the Suez crisis arguably had a more profound impact. With Mollet's decision to pursue a pan-European defence programme for France, Britain was effectively left without a NATO ally, since British actions in Egypt tarnished the Anglo-American relationship. Under Macmillan, Britain restored its amicable bilateral partnership with the United States and in doing so compounded the pre-existing issues in the Franco-British relationship. Macmillan's prioritisation of the Atlantic relationship – and in addition the Atlantic Alliance – led French leaders, particularly Gaillard and de Gaulle, to call for a restructuring of European defence. The proposed NATO reforms of both French leaders failed as a result of American indifference. Consequently, British ties with the United States prompted de Gaulle to adopt exclusionary tactics towards his cross-channel partners, as the *Europe puissance* needed to avoid a 'rivalry of power and domination,' which the inclusion of a pro-Atlanticist Britain could potentially cause.<sup>173</sup> In the later years, de Gaulle's stance against Anglo-Saxon involvement in European affairs would have a severe impact on the Franco-British relationship, especially concerning Britain's first EEC application. However, this will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Despite an improvement in the Franco-British bilateral relationship by the end of this period, British defence policy still encountered several problems. By 11 December 1962, British Defence Minister Thorneycroft had been informed by US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara that the Kennedy administration had come to the conclusion to cancel the Skybolt project.<sup>174</sup> The importance of Skybolt cannot be underestimated. A report by the Royal Air Force (RAF) in December 1962 stressed that without an effective delivery system, Britain would be incapable of maintaining the British V-Bomber nuclear deterrent force, which risked being rendered obsolete by 1965.<sup>175</sup> Thus, Britain's efforts to foster a cordial nuclear partnership between itself and the United States were brought about by necessity. The Nassau

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<sup>172</sup> Edward L. Morse, *Foreign policy and interdependence in Gaullist France* (New Jersey, 1973), p.318.

<sup>173</sup> AN, Conférence de presse tenue au palais de l'Élysée, 14 Jan 1963, AG/5(1)/1437.

<sup>174</sup> TNA, FO to Paris, 11 December 1962, PREM/11/3716.

<sup>175</sup> TNA, 'The importance of Skybolt to the RAF', [undated], PREM/11/3716.

Agreements of December 1962 would build upon the successes of the Bermuda Conference and thus relegate Britain to the role of a junior partner in the Anglo-American 'special relationship.' The differing nuclear trajectories, therefore, laid the groundwork for the problems regarding Britain's European credentials which marked the entirety of the 1960s.



### **Chapter Three – European defence and the nuclear options, December 1962-1965**

Nuclear weapons development in the late 1950s provoked numerous calls from high-ranking politicians on the global stage for the construction of multilateral defence organisations. These calls were largely a reaction to the perceived nuclear superiority of the Soviet Union demonstrated through the launch of Sputnik I in 1957. The Soviet satellite's success in achieving a low Earth orbit provoked a stern response from US Democrats, who criticised President Eisenhower citing that Sputnik represented the 'failures by the Republican President' within the context of the nuclear arms race.<sup>1</sup> The partisan debate intensified during the 1960 US Presidential election campaign, when John F. Kennedy's campaign team highlighted a 'missile gap' with the Soviet Union as something his administration would rectify.<sup>2</sup> President Kennedy aimed to strengthen the West's position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. In May 1961, Kennedy envisaged the creation of a multilateral nuclear force to achieve the 'optimum strength' to counterbalance the growing threat of the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup> Kennedy's idea of a Multilateral Force (MLF) received a jarring response from French President Charles de Gaulle, who perceived the MLF as 'unworkable.'<sup>4</sup> De Gaulle's criticism came as a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis, which demonstrated the 'new and gigantic fact' that the Soviet Union was now able to directly threaten the United States.<sup>5</sup> The *Europe puissance*, which pre-existed de Gaulle's tenure as president, became his alternative to the MLF and a means of creating a European axis within the Atlantic Alliance. Similarly, the *Europe puissance* was devised to give France a leadership role in a European community – something that Britain had sought to cultivate through membership of the European Communities.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter traces the divisions that arose from the conflicting ideas around the creation of nuclear defence forces. Britain was inextricably linked to the United States from December 1962 with the signing of the Nassau Agreements, while de Gaulle was guiding France away from US hegemony over European affairs. The differing nuclear trajectories of

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<sup>1</sup> Yanek Mieczkowski, *Eisenhower's Sputnik moment; The race for space and world prestige* (Ithaca, 2013), p.16; Kim McQuaid, 'Sputnik reconsidered: Image and reality in the early space age' in *Canadian Review of American Studies*, xxxvii (2007), pp.375-376.

<sup>2</sup> These claims have largely been dismissed as 'fiction', see Irwin F. Gellman, *Campaign of the century; Kennedy, Nixon, and the election of 1960* (Connecticut, 2022), p.20.

<sup>3</sup> Michael D. Stevenson, "'A very careful balance:': The 1961 Triangular Agreement and the conduct of Canadian-American relations' in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, xxiv (2013), p.305.

<sup>4</sup> TNA, Summary of General de Gaulle's press conference of January 14, 16 January 1963, PREM/11/4413.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Gülnur Aybet, *The dynamics of European security co-operation, 1945-1991* (Basingstoke, 2001), p.103.

both states will be examined since Britain was torn between joining a US-controlled MLF or pursuing the construction of de Gaulle's alternative of a European superpower – the *Europe puissance*. As such, this chapter will account for the exclusionary tactics that de Gaulle used to keep Britain from introducing a 'rivalry of power and domination' into the European Communities.<sup>7</sup> De Gaulle and Macmillan frequently clashed from December 1962 as their policies towards developing a world role for their countries were incompatible. The former saw Europe as a third force which could act as a mediator between the superpowers in Cold War conflicts.<sup>8</sup> Contrary to de Gaulle's certainty around his foreign policy objectives, Macmillan had to balance Britain's international standing between the United States and its European partners. In February 1960 Macmillan commissioned a report to find an appropriate way forward for British foreign policy. The Brook report acknowledged that Britain had limited influence in an international system dominated by the superpowers.<sup>9</sup> The authors clearly understood the intransigence of Kennedy and de Gaulle's foreign policy positions – or grand designs – and stated in their findings that British defence policy must be reworked to adapt to cooperation in multilateral organisations. Therefore, this chapter will discuss how Britain was caught between Europe and the United States in achieving its defence policy objectives. Thus, if the European Communities proceeded in its development without Britain, then the latter's bilateral relationship with the United States would suffer.<sup>10</sup> The British government considered reducing its military presence in the Middle East, Persian Gulf and South-East Asia between 1962 and 1970 in order to realise its foreign policy aim – mainly, membership of the European Communities, whilst maintaining its domestic nuclear deterrent.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, this chapter seeks to overturn previous contentions that British decision-makers debated an array of 'ill-considered ideas' when reorienting their policy away from a traditional, colonialist outlook.<sup>12</sup> Rather, this chapter contends that Britain assessed various alternatives with the intention of maintaining its great power role. As we shall see, its

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<sup>7</sup> AN, Conférence de presse tenue au palais de l'Élysée, 14 January 1963, AG/5(1)/1437; Klaus Schwabe, 'Three Grand Designs: The USA, Great Britain, and the Gaullist concept of Atlantic partnership and European Unity' in *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, iii (2005), p.26.

<sup>8</sup> Schwabe, 'Three Grand Designs', p.11.

<sup>9</sup> TNA, Future Policy Study, 1960-70; Part IV – Conclusions and recommendations, 24 February 1960, CAB/129/100.

<sup>10</sup> Stephens, *Britain alone*, p.79.

<sup>11</sup> TNA, Future Policy Study, 1960-70; Part IV – Conclusions and recommendations, 24 February 1960, CAB/129/100.

<sup>12</sup> Nicholas J. White, *Decolonisation; The British experience since 1945* (London, 1999), p.104; Piers Brendon, *The decline and fall of the British empire, 1781-1997* (London, 2008), p.539; Allott, 'Britain and Europe', p.203.

attempts to remain influential ran in the face of US and French grand design ideas, resulting in this period becoming a turbulent one for Franco-British and Atlantic partnerships.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first deals with the Cuban Missile Crisis – an event which would have a lasting legacy over the political decision-making, especially concerning the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. This chapter also considers de Gaulle's proposed *Europe puissance*, which the French President used to exclude Britain from the European Communities. The third section will examine the controversy around the proposed MLF and the difficulties this caused for the realisation of British foreign policy during the Conservative and Wilson governments. Drawing on British and French political documents, personal papers and NATO Standing Group files, this chapter will ultimately account for the divisions in the Franco-British politico-military relationship as a result of the discussions around the US and French grand design proposals.

### **Cuban Missile Crisis and its aftermath**

Although there has been an abundance of work undertaken on the Cuban Missile Crisis, the deep effects of the crisis in the field of Franco-British relations have yet to be fully appreciated. This Soviet-American conflict permeated into the discussions around Britain's negotiations with the United States for use of their nuclear weapons. In order to understand the wider historical context of the crisis, it is important to note that it came as a reaction to the placement of US Jupiter missiles in Turkey in July 1960. Nikita Khrushchev, the leader of the Soviet Union, and Soviet Defence Minister Rodion Malinovsky decided to position Medium-Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBMs) with nuclear warheads in Cuba as a response to the US deployment of nuclear missiles from Turkey to Bulgarian shoreline.<sup>13</sup> Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow have attempted to rationalise Soviet decision-making for placing missiles into Cuba.<sup>14</sup> Understanding Soviet interests can only prove useful if we consider that the actions taken were a reasonable response to US actions. Khrushchev employed a solely retaliatory logic towards US actions, using the Russian colloquialism: 'Why don't we throw a hedgehog into Uncle Sam's pants? Why can't we do the same in response?'<sup>15</sup> Therefore, it is necessary

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<sup>13</sup> Sergo Mikoyan and Svetlana Savranskaya, *The Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis; Castro, Mikoyan, Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the missiles of November* (Washington, 2012), p.89.

<sup>14</sup> Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Harlow, 1999), p.22.

<sup>15</sup> Khrushchev speaking in a military briefing in April 1962, quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War* (London, 2005), p.56.

to look beyond the prehistory of this crisis and rather consider the effects of it on the international system within a Franco-British context.

The Soviet government sought to place missile delivery systems in Cuba secretly, and by September 1962 it accomplished this task. However, the Cuban Missile Crisis was brought into the open on 15 October 1962 when an American U2 plane took surveillance photos of missile launchers. The threat of nuclear attack reached fever-pitch in October 1962, with the Soviet Union placing nuclear missiles in Cuba with the capability of reaching the United States. Tensions between the Cold War rivals escalated as Kennedy ordered a quarantine blockade around Cuba to ‘halt this offensive build-up.’<sup>16</sup> US measures against Soviet action in Cuba brought the need for nuclear weapons back to the forefront of superpower decision-making. The crisis in the Caribbean emphasised the importance of stifling the nuclear arms race while other nations sought to bolster their roles within the international community. The crisis brought the superpowers close to a genuine conflict since the Communist leader of Cuba Fidel Castro called for Khrushchev to consider a nuclear strike against the United States so as to counteract any possibility of an invasion by so-called imperialist forces.<sup>17</sup> Throughout the US blockade, both Soviet and US politicians worked towards a peaceful solution. Khrushchev initially called for a complete withdrawal of Jupiter missiles from Turkey. This led to further diplomatic rows between the United States and its Turkish allies. The US Ambassador to Ankara Raymond Hare argued to the Secretary of State Dean Rusk that the ‘dismantling and removal [of the] Jupiters... would create serious politico-military problems for US-Turkish relations.’<sup>18</sup> Regardless, the United States entertained the idea of a missile trade with the Soviet Union on 27 October 1962. President Kennedy was not interested in the concept of missile trading; rather he negotiated with Khrushchev and Dobrynin to reduce global tensions by arranging a gradual diminution of missile installation, whilst pledging against an invasion of Cuba.<sup>19</sup> Following this Khrushchev announced the withdrawal of Soviet nuclear missiles from Cuba in November 1962.<sup>20</sup> The threats of nuclear war and the over-exposure of such an event in the global media led British and French

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<sup>16</sup> ‘John F. Kennedy tells the world about the missiles’, quoted in Laurie Collier Hillstrom, *Defining moments: The Cuban Missile Crisis* (Detroit, 2015), p.171.

<sup>17</sup> Letter from Fidel Castro to Nikita Khrushchev, 26 October 1962, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum (<https://microsites.jfklibrary.org/cmc/oct26/doc2.html>) (20 April 2021).

<sup>18</sup> Philip Nash, *The other missiles of October; Eisenhower, Kennedy and the Jupiters 1957-1963* (North Carolina, 1997), p.138.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.136-7.

<sup>20</sup> The climbdown in hostilities led Kennedy to withdraw the US fleet and Jupiter missile delivery systems from the Turkish coast by January 1963; Hillstrom, *Defining moments*, p.66.

governments to carefully consider their defence policies in relation to nuclear weapons acquisition. On 20 November 1962, British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan opened cross-party talks with his counterpart Hugh Gaitskell with the aim of reorganising British defence. Macmillan argued that nuclear weapons saved the superpowers from engaging in war as a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis.<sup>21</sup> Macmillan, however, was distressed that he was unaware of Kennedy's intentions following the discovery of MRBM launchers in East Havana.<sup>22</sup> The plenary summit on British defence policy was an essential move for Macmillan. Nuclear weapons were at the forefront of British political posturing which was an idea the Prime Minister shared with Gaitskell, who rejected – and by 1961 overturned – a Labour Party Conference proposal to maintain an unilateralist alternative towards the British government's nuclear policy.<sup>23</sup>

The Macmillan/Gaitskell meeting reveals much about the fragile state of the Franco-British partnership. The British Ambassador in Washington David Bruce wrote to the Prime Minister stating that Britain 'must somehow find a means to get rid of nuclear weapons.'<sup>24</sup> Bruce's insistence placed Macmillan in a difficult position. Britain could not openly demand the disarmament of nuclear weapons with its upcoming deal with the Americans. Macmillan gained a cross-party consensus that the French should be the ones to call a Summit Conference since European nations were still distrusting of growing Anglo-American influence within the Atlantic Alliance.<sup>25</sup> The issue for Macmillan was de Gaulle's aim of making France a nuclear power. French Ambassador to London Geoffroy de Courcel explained French nuclear policies formed the base of its national defence programme in December 1962.<sup>26</sup> De Courcel's assessment proved accurate since from 8 December 1960 the French Defence Ministry received an extra 4,753 million francs to develop thermo-nuclear weapons, with 770 million francs set aside for the creation of strategic nuclear force based upon the Mirage IV programme developed during Guy Mollet's premiership.<sup>27</sup> Macmillan travelled to Rambouillet for a summit meeting with de Gaulle from 15 to 16 December 1962.

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<sup>21</sup> TNA, Note for the record, 20 November 1962, PREM/11/3859.

<sup>22</sup> TNA, de Zulueta to ACI Samuel, Foreign Office, 22 October 1962, PREM/11/3689.

<sup>23</sup> Paul Byrne, 'Nuclear weapons and CND' in *Parliamentary Affairs*, li (1998), p.425.

<sup>24</sup> TNA, Foreign Office Telegram No. 7395 from US Ambassador David Bruce to Prime Minister, 22 October 1962, FO/598/29.

<sup>25</sup> TNA, Note for the record, 20 November 1962, PREM/11/3859.

<sup>26</sup> Geoffroy de Courcel, 'Préface' in Daniel Colard and Pierre Lefranc (eds), *L'aventure de la bombe; De Gaulle et la dissuasion nucléaire (1958-1969)* (Paris, 1985), p.17.

<sup>27</sup> The *loi de programme relative à certains équipements militaires (1960-64)* laid the foundations for the development of a French strategic nuclear force, see Pierre Messmer, 'Les deux premières lois de programme la F.N.S et les projets concernant l'arme nucléaire tactique' in Colard and Lefranc (eds), *L'aventure de la bombe*, p.95.

Prior to this summit, ministers representing all WEU nations met in Paris to discuss the creation of a NATO-based nuclear strike force. The summit did not go as Macmillan would have wanted. De Gaulle did not agree to cooperate with the British on progressive disarmament, stating that ‘in the near future, I [de Gaulle] do not believe it possible’ to achieve full disarmament.<sup>28</sup> However, the British government found itself forced into following a progressive disarmament strategy given the internal pressures from Conservative backbenchers and Labour MPs, with pressure groups including the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and the Campaign for Multilateral Disarmament Group also vocalising their discontent around nuclear weapons development.<sup>29</sup> In particular, the CND led demonstrations against nuclearisation throughout the late-1950s and 1960s, which engrained the perils of nuclear politics into the public consciousness. During a meeting with NATO Heads of Government, Macmillan openly referred to public concern ‘in U.K. about U.S. and U.K. planes carrying atomic bombs.’<sup>30</sup> The CND urged the government to dismantle the Atlantic Alliance and establish a ‘third way’ of representing domestic security without relying on nuclear weapons.<sup>31</sup> The CND featured prominently in the debate around de-escalation in the nuclear arms race. Alongside the National Council for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons Tests, the CND enjoyed support from the left-wing parliamentary elites, with a growing number of Labour MPs calling for Britain to engage in a policy for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.<sup>32</sup> However, historian Jim Smyth has contextualised the level of parliamentary support for the CND. The organisation had no formal sponsorship or affiliation with the Labour Party despite numerous MPs supporting their public demonstrations.<sup>33</sup> Rather the nexus of the CND was intellectuals, including socialist academic A.J.P. Taylor. Regardless the Labour MP for Salford West, Stanley Orme, was still vehement in his support, stating:

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is an honourable organisation which is supported by a vast cross-section of the people of this country. The only section of the

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<sup>28</sup> Entretiens entre le general de Gaulle et M. Macmillan à Rambouillet, 15 décembre 1962, *DDF*, vol. 2, no. 200.

<sup>29</sup> Lawrence Black, “‘The bitterest enemies of Communism’”: Labour revisionists, Atlanticism and the Cold War’ in *Contemporary British History*, xv (2001), pp.26-62; p.30.

<sup>30</sup> Telegram from the United States Delegation at the NATO Heads of Government Meeting to the Department of State, 18 December 1957, *FRUS 1955-1957*, IV, p.250.

<sup>31</sup> Richard Taylor, *Against the Bomb: The British Peace Movement 1958-1965* (Oxford, 1988), p.53; Mark Phythian, ‘CND’s Cold War’, *Contemporary British History*, xv (2001), p.140.

<sup>32</sup> Henry J. Steck, ‘The Re-Emergence of Ideological Politics in Great Britain: The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament’, *The Western Political Quarterly*, xviii (1965), p.92; John Baylis and Kristan Stoddart, *The British nuclear experience; The role of beliefs, culture and identity* (Oxford, 2015), 80.

<sup>33</sup> Jim Smyth, *Cold War culture; Intellectuals, the media and the practice of history* (London, 2016), p.141.

country which does not support it is the Tories. It is significant that no debate has taken place inside the Tory Party when the rest of the nation and the world have been discussing nuclear policy over the past six or seven years.<sup>34</sup>

The CND was influential in placing nuclear weapons at the heart of public debates. However, its success in forcing British policy-makers into pursuing non-proliferation with the superpowers is questionable. Taylor, himself, lamented that the involvement of the CND did little to compel Britain into a position of embracing non-proliferation measures as the country was already made subservient to the United States and Soviet Union during talks around prohibiting the testing of nuclear weapons.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, de Gaulle refused to accept that the fragmentation of Europe was responsible for the emergence of the superpowers, and that Britain should have been involved in the construction of the political union conceived in the Fouchet Plans.<sup>36</sup> These disagreements suggest that the French were intent on pursuing an independent nuclear strategy while closely linking it to the policy outcomes from the NATO December 1962 Triennial Review, which stressed the need for member states to develop nuclear capabilities as NATO member states could not ‘afford to rely on a political settlement’ in superpower confrontations.<sup>37</sup>

When de Gaulle rebuked British intentions to join the European Communities, this came as no surprise to their government. British Cabinet files reveal that the Prime Minister went to Rambouillet aware that convincing de Gaulle was going to be a herculean task.<sup>38</sup> In order to persuade de Gaulle of Britain’s European credentials, Macmillan proposed an *entente nucléaire* to overcome the obstacles from Project Blue Streak, which was rendered redundant due to insufficient US support.<sup>39</sup> Project Blue Streak emerged as a potential Franco-British venture for the development of a European military spacecraft carrier, so

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<sup>34</sup> Orme’s impassioned defence of the CND came as a result of Conservative MP for Banbury Neil Marten’s motion that ‘this House regrets the influence which the supporters and policies of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament have upon the Government’s policies’ see *The parliamentary debates*, Hansard, House of Commons, 13 July 1965 (vol dccxvi).

<sup>35</sup> Taylor commented ‘we [the leadership of the organisation] made one great mistake which ultimately doomed CND to futility. We thought that Great Britain was still a great power whose example would affect the rest of the world. Ironically we were the last imperialists’, see A.J.P. Taylor, *A personal history* (London, 1983), pp.291-292.

<sup>36</sup> TNA, Record of Conversation at Rambouillet, 15 December 1962, PREM/11/4230.

<sup>37</sup> NATO, Memorandum for the Chairman, Military Committee in Chiefs of Staff session, 16 November 1962, SGM-666-62; TNA, UK-France co-operation on nuclear matters, undated [13 December 1962], PREM/11/3712.

<sup>38</sup> French politicians, particularly Gaullist ministers had never ‘been enthusiastic and . . . will drive a hard bargain, particularly where their own interests are affected’ before allowing British accession to the European Communities, see TNA, Britain, The Commonwealth and the European Economic Community, 17 August 1962, CAB/129/110.

<sup>39</sup> AN, Projet Blue Streak, juin 1960, AG/5(1)/2625; Kristan Stoddart, ‘Nuclear weapons in Britain’s policy towards France, 1960-1974’ in *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, xviii (2007), p.721.

much so that de Gaulle authorised an inter-ministerial committee to study its strategic value.<sup>40</sup> The work of the Franco-British committee encouraged de Gaulle as the introduction of a European launcher would offset the time needed to create land, sea and air component for a strategic nuclear force. However, the project was stalled in its developmental phase as the Blue Streak missile design was joint UK/US intellectual property shared under the MacMahon Act, and therefore use of the missile by the French was forbidden under Articles I and II.<sup>41</sup> Kennedy stressed to Macmillan that this type of bilateral cooperation was not appreciated as Britain was dependent on the United States for the sharing of strategic nuclear materials.<sup>42</sup> The Rambouillet meeting provided Macmillan with green shoots. On 29 November 1962 Britain and France signed the Anglo-French Treaty, which locked both countries into constructing the supersonic transport (SST) aircraft Concorde, and provided the British government with an opportunity to highlight its suitability for EC membership.<sup>43</sup> This treaty played a key role in Franco-British nuclear sharing. The French signatory to the agreement Geoffroy de Courcel was not authorised to commit France to an SST project by the French Minister for the Armed Forces Louis Le Puloch unless the British agreed to aid the French in the construction of their strategic nuclear force, by sharing design schematics for missile propulsion.<sup>44</sup> The British Cabinet did not respond kindly to this as it committed Britain to assisting France in the nuclear field whilst heightening tensions with the United States ahead of a key summit, which would decide Britain's future as a nuclear power.<sup>45</sup> For instance, the First Secretary of State R.A. Butler pushed Macmillan to ignore backbench pressures to collaborate over nuclear matters.<sup>46</sup>

By mid-December 1962 Macmillan found himself in a challenging position. De Gaulle's explicit rejection of British membership in the European Communities came around a time of widespread anxiety in Whitehall that the United States would pressurise Britain into abandoning its independent nuclear deterrent.<sup>47</sup> Concerns around this issue were understandable. High-ranking Europeanist US politicians including Under-Secretary of State

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<sup>40</sup> AN, rapports sur Projet Blue Streak, juillet 1960, AG/5(1)/2625.

<sup>41</sup> TNA, Possible transfer to French government of military technical information on Blue Streak, 20 January 1961, AVIA/92/38.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Moore, *Nuclear illusion, nuclear reality; Britain, the United States and nuclear weapons, 1958-64* (Basingstoke, 2010), p.158.

<sup>43</sup> Geoffrey Knight, *Concorde: The inside story* (London, 1976), p.50.

<sup>44</sup> CAC, 'Collaboration with the French', Aug 1963, AMEJ 1/6/17; Bernard Ledwidge, *De Gaulle* (London, 1982), p.274.

<sup>45</sup> TNA, France and nuclear weapons: Arguments for Rambouillet', [undated], PREM/11/3689.

<sup>46</sup> CAC, Minute entitled 'Defence collaboration with the French', 23 October 1963, AMEJ 1/6/17.

<sup>47</sup> Baylis, *Ambiguity and deterrence*, p.320.



George Ball and William Bundy pushed for an Anglo-American nuclear deal to promote further integration into the European Communities.<sup>48</sup> This US grand design idea for the construction of a European bloc was incompatible with de Gaulle's aim for the future of European politico-military affairs. De Gaulle feared British inclusion in the European affairs would only risk the coherence of the communities.<sup>49</sup> However, the initial concept for an Anglo-American nuclear deal was unsatisfactory as Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara had informed his counterpart Peter Thorneycroft that the United States had decided to cancel the Skybolt air-launched ballistic missile.<sup>50</sup> This further pressurised Macmillan to reach a deal to continue a bilateral nuclear partnership. The Chief of the Defence Staff Sir Robert Scott argued that the RAF could not maintain an independent nuclear deterrent without Skybolt since the existing Blue Steel weapons would become obsolete after 1965.<sup>51</sup>

Quite quickly, the developing uncertainty around Britain's national deterrent gave way to its future security as a nuclear power. On 12 December 1962 Philip de Zulueta, Macmillan's Private Secretary in the Foreign Office, presented a report from Sir Solly Zuckerman detailing the flaws in the Skybolt missile, which the Prime Minister used to argue that Skybolt should be abandoned for strategic reasons.<sup>52</sup> Zuckerman's critique of Skybolt was very much a reflection of his view of nuclear weapons. In 1960, Zuckerman wrote 'one cannot conceive of a Government giving the order to fire first... So why do we have a deterrent at all?'<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, Defence chiefs like Scott and the First Sea Lord Sir Caspar John argued that cancelling Skybolt left Britain without a viable alternative for its nuclear arms strategy. The cancellation also allowed the Kennedy administration to tie Britain closer to its grand design concept for a US-dominated European nuclear force, since Thorneycroft and Sir Burke Trend presented Macmillan with requests for highly-superior Polaris missile systems incorporated into two-to-three nuclear submarines.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Nigel J. Ashton, *Kennedy, Macmillan and the Cold War; The irony of interdependence* (Basingstoke, 2002), p.136.

<sup>49</sup> Schwabe, 'Three Grand Designs', p.20.

<sup>50</sup> TNA, FO to Paris, 11 December 1962, PREM/11/3716.

<sup>51</sup> TNA, Report entitled 'The importance of Skybolt to the RAF', [undated], PREM/11/3716.

<sup>52</sup> University of East Anglia Special Collections, Chief Scientific Adviser's papers, Report entitled 'Strategic nuclear deterrence', [undated], SZ/CSA/93/31; TNA, Macmillan to de Zulueta, 12 December 1962, PREM/11/3716.

<sup>53</sup> TNA, Solly Zuckerman to Minister of Defence, 19 February 1960, DEFE/25/13 cited in Richard Maguire, "'Never a credible weapon": nuclear cultures in British government during the era of the H-bomb' in *British Journal for the History of Science*, xlv (2012), p.528.

<sup>54</sup> Ian McCroch, 'The British Polaris project' in Frank Gregory, Mark Imber and John Simpson (eds), *Perspectives upon British defence policy, 1945-1970* (Southampton, 1978), p.128; Ralph Dietl, *Emanzipation und Kontrolle; Europa in der westlichen Sicherheitspolitik 1948-1963; Eine Innenansicht des westlichen*

Securing Polaris was crucial for Macmillan at the Nassau Conference from 19 to 21 December 1962. Macmillan arrived at Nassau on the back-foot as Kennedy opened proceedings by suggesting that Skybolt should be revived as a joint enterprise between the Atlantic partners.<sup>55</sup> While Macmillan acknowledged that this – and an offer of the Air-launched nuclear stand-off missile system Hound Dog – was appreciated, the British delegation stressed that neither system met their needs. Rather Macmillan stated that the Polaris missile system was the only viable option both for an independent British deterrent, and for the beginning of a ‘fresh phase in US-UK relationships.’<sup>56</sup> Macmillan’s explanation for the acquisition of Polaris was clear. The Suez Crisis still weighed heavily on British political thinking as Macmillan was concerned that it caused ‘friction in foreign-relations’ particularly with the US government.<sup>57</sup> Academics have generally argued that Britain needed the Polaris nuclear system to maintain its global power role.<sup>58</sup> Polaris was required to prevent any existentialist threat towards Britain in the Cold War period. Macmillan himself acknowledged that while obtaining Polaris was a case of Britain ‘keeping up with the Joneses’, an effective nuclear force was needed to combat any Soviet threat to Britain’s existence.<sup>59</sup> Macmillan likened this request for Polaris missiles to Britain’s desire to avoid threats of nuclear missile deployment similar to the close of the Franco-British intervention during the Suez Crisis.<sup>60</sup>

The Anglo-French Agreement, which closely aligned British and French nuclear development, did not feature in the former’s decision-making at Nassau. In response to British requests for Polaris weapons, President Kennedy offered a compromise which he hoped would influence the British into maintaining their bilateral relationship, whilst preserving the Atlantic Alliance. Kennedy agreed to give Britain use of Polaris missiles providing they remain part of a multilateral nuclear force to be assigned to NATO. For Kennedy, the adoption of an original Eisenhower plan for NATO integration afforded him the pretext by which to maintain stable relations with Britain, whilst avoiding any interpretations

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*Bündnisses, Band II: Europa 1958-1963: Ordnungsfaktor oder Akteur?* (Stuttgart, 2007), p.256; TNA, Report entitled ‘Skybolt’, 9 December 1962, PREM/11/3716.

<sup>55</sup> Stephens, *Britain alone*, p.122.

<sup>56</sup> Memorandum of a Conversation, Nassau, 20 December 1962, *FRUS* 1961-63, XIII, p.1109.

<sup>57</sup> Beck, “‘The less said about Suez the better’”, p.613.

<sup>58</sup> Andrew Priest, ‘In American hands: Britain, the United States and the Polaris nuclear project 1962-1968’ in *Contemporary British History*, xix (2005), p.368; Andrew J. Pierre, ‘Nuclear diplomacy: Britain, France and America’ in *Foreign Affairs*, xlix (1971), pp.283-301; James A. Dewar, ‘Britain and the Skybolt affair’ in *Aerospace Historian*, xviii (1971), pp.129-134; Martin A. Smith, ‘British nuclear weapons and NATO in the Cold War and beyond’ in *International Affairs*, lxxxvii (2011), pp.1395-1399.

<sup>59</sup> Memorandum of a Conversation, Nassau, 20 December 1962, *FRUS* 1961-63, XIII, p.1110.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

of bias by European heads of state. However, agreeing to supply Britain with Polaris missiles only served to hinder Kennedy's grand design of promoting further European integration. The Nassau Agreement gave de Gaulle the *carte blanche* he needed to refuse Britain access to the Common Market in January 1963, since the General perceived the 'Anglo-Saxon' powers as consolidating their position within the Atlantic Alliance.<sup>61</sup> While Klaus Schwabe argued that the Nassau Agreement undermined Macmillan's European policy, it, in fact, laid the foundations by which Britain's nuclear deterrent was secured until at least 2060.<sup>62</sup> In addition, the details of the Polaris agreement helped Britain to overcome the setbacks of Eisenhower's proposed multilateral MRBM programme, which previously meant any British nuclear weapon under NATO control could only be used by the consent of the SACEUR.<sup>63</sup> By the end of the Nassau conference, Macmillan had achieved a masterstroke in obtaining Britain Polaris missiles. Macmillan had persuaded Kennedy to allow Britain usage of nuclear missiles in the event of a 'dire national emergency.'<sup>64</sup> In spite of this allowance, President Kennedy and the members of the US delegation, particularly George Ball, scrutinised the wording of this exemption so as it would not allow the French to argue that Britain and the United States were aiming to preserve a monopoly over nuclear power in the West.<sup>65</sup> Finally, Kennedy's concession was required so as not to drive the British towards de Gaulle's foreign policy plan. More crucially, the Nassau Agreement firmly linked Britain's status on the international stage to that of the United States, which caused significant problems for a renewal of bilateral negotiations with France as both countries' nuclear trajectories were once again on different courses. Thus, Britain's acquisition of nuclear weapons from the US came at a cost to its European policy.

As British Cabinet ministers congratulated Macmillan on his successful negotiation over the Polaris missiles, Britain became embroiled in discussions around the formation of a

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<sup>61</sup> Anglo-Saxon was the term de Gaulle used in criticising the Anglo-American partnership, Eugène Hinterhoff, 'Réflexions sur la force multilatérale' in *Politique étrangère*, xxx (1965), p.53. De Gaulle took up several foreign policy positions contrary to the interests of the West's 'Big Two' – the United States and Britain – as a means of achieving his primary aim of returning France to the front rank of the international system. Criticising the 'Big Two' with the 'Anglo-Saxon' label was one means of doing this, and had a historic connotation given the divisions between Anglo-American and French strategies during the Second World War, see Andrew J. Williams, *France, Britain and the United States in the Twentieth Century: Volume 2, 1940-1961; A reappraisal* (London, 2020), p.252.

<sup>62</sup> In the summer of 2016, Conservative British Prime Minister David Cameron renegotiated the terms of an Anglo-American agreement which would see Britain's nuclear arsenal 'Trident' remain operational until 2060, Stephens, *Britain alone*, p.133.

<sup>63</sup> TNA, Possible ways of keeping France from attaining nuclear capabilities, 26 December 1960, PREM/11/3325.

<sup>64</sup> Telegram from the delegation to the Heads of Government meeting to the Department of State, 19 December 1962, *FRUS* 1961-63, XIII, p.404.

<sup>65</sup> TNA, Record of Nassau Conference, 19 December 1962, PREM/11/4229.

MLF, or the Inter-Allied Nuclear Force (IANF) – a non-integration model conceived as a more reasonable avenue for European cooperation. Kennedy's *modus operandi* for getting Britain to agree to place their nuclear warheads within the remit of NATO was not only to protect against any accusations of favouritism within the Alliance, the growing threat of German militarisation rested heavily on the US President's mind.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, Kennedy envisaged an MLF capable of containing German nuclear ambitions by permitting military personnel from non-nuclear NATO states to comprise the crews for the MLF submarine forces. Achieving this would serve to strengthen the Alliance nuclear defences of against Soviet military action, as Kennedy argued to the US Ambassador to France Charles E. Bohlen.<sup>67</sup> Both the British and the American delegations agreed on the final day of the conference that nuclear assistance should be offered to the French in exchange for membership of the MLF.<sup>68</sup> It was in the offer of assistance to the French that the issues for Britain arose. During the summit, Macmillan sought clarity as to what the so-called 'multilateral nuclear force' was. The British Defence Secretary Thorneycroft objected to the idea of an MLF, viewing it as contrary to the whole dynamic of interdependence between Britain and the United States.<sup>69</sup> Thorneycroft, along with the British Minister for Aviation Julian Amery, favoured a nuclear policy as a means of furthering European integration. Both insisted that using pre-established bilateral links through the Concorde project, and offers of nuclear secrets dating back to 1952, would benefit the Franco-British working partnership and smooth any tensions relating to Britain's prospective entry into the European Communities, whilst ensuring the future of their independent nuclear deterrent, thus enabling Britain to 'remain at the forefront' of the international community.<sup>70</sup> The principle of the Nassau Agreement served to hamper any potential success in Franco-British nuclear sharing since any technologies shared between both powers would conscript the French national deterrent into the NATO command structure.

The Nassau Agreement proved to be a decisive moment for Franco-British bilateral relations. Macmillan's insistence on British use of nuclear weapons in the event its national

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid; Memorandum of a Conversation, Nassau, 20 December 1962, *FRUS* 1961-63, XIII, p.1109.

<sup>67</sup> Telegram from the delegation to the Heads of Government meeting to the Department of State, 19 December 1962, *FRUS* 1961-63, XIII, p.404.

<sup>68</sup> Memorandum from President Kennedy to Prime Minister Macmillan, 21 December 1962, *FRUS* 1961-63, XIII, p.409.

<sup>69</sup> TNA, Record of a meeting at Bali-Hai, the Bahamas, 19 December 1962, PREM/11/4229.

<sup>70</sup> The United Kingdom had previously agreed to supply the French Republic with nuclear secrets during a conference on the Korean War in 1953, see TNA, Conference on Korea, (undated, but 1953), PREM/11/1311; CAC, Amery to de Courcel, [no date but early 1962] AMEJ 7/2/2; Maurice Vaïsse, *La grandeur; Politique étrangère du general de Gaulle 1958-1969* (Paris, 1998), p.213.

interests were in jeopardy diluted Kennedy's perceived triumph for US Europeanists.<sup>71</sup> Britain's strategic victory at Nassau adversely affected its bilateral connections with France. The decision to offer France nuclear assistance in exchange for membership of the MLF placed Kennedy's proposed multilateral solution for European security at odds with the Gaullist alternative. As we shall see in the next section, de Gaulle's *Europe puissance* was in direct opposition to the principles of Kennedy's NATO-based hardware solution. Johan Galtung summarised the reason for the *Europe puissance* most effectively. De Gaulle's European military alternative was designed to ensure that multilateral cooperation involving a dominant power – in this case the United States – and several dependent nations was to be avoided.<sup>72</sup> Thus the British, by accessing the Nassau Agreement, placed their role in European affairs at risk since de Gaulle had already – albeit unofficially – prevented them from joining the European Communities, and resistance from pro-European members of Cabinet, such as Thorneycroft and Amery, limited any advancement in the discussions around the introduction of the MLF.

### ***The Europe puissance***

The Cuban Missile Crisis and the Nassau Agreement succeeded in placing the question of European nuclear defence at the heart of the political debate in France and Britain. British attempts to persuade de Gaulle of the merits of the multilateral approach to European nuclear defence have received much scholarly attention.<sup>73</sup> However, this section will examine how the Gaullist alternative for organising European nuclear defence hampered the restoration of an amicable Franco-British bilateral relationship in the fallout of the Rambouillet summit of December 1962. In the immediate aftermath of the Nassau conference, civil servants based at the British Embassy in Paris were tasked with convincing members of the Gaullist government that Britain had fulfilled its commitment on nuclear cooperation with the French by gaining access to the highly-advanced Polaris missile system. This task was ultimately unsuccessful despite the British Ambassador to Paris Pierson Dixon being attached to the delegation responsible for negotiating Britain's accession to the European Communities

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<sup>71</sup> Schwabe, 'Three Grand Designs', p.21.

<sup>72</sup> Johan Galtung, *The European Community: A superpower in the making* (Oslo, 1973), p.42.

<sup>73</sup> See for example, Wolfram Kaiser, 'The bomb and Europe. Britain, France, and the EEC entry negotiations 1961-1963' in *Journal of European Integration History*, i (1995), pp.65-87; James Ellison, 'Pierson Dixon, 1960-65' in Rogelia Pastor-Castro and John W. Young (eds), *The Paris Embassy; British ambassadors and Anglo-French relations 1944-79* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp.91-112; Grégoire Mallard, 'L'Europe puissance nucléaire, cet obscure objet du désir' in *Critique internationale*, xlii (2009), pp.141-63.

under the Lord Privy Seal Edward Heath in Brussels.<sup>74</sup> De Gaulle was not interested in the British nuclear offer. During his infamous press conference, the French President began objectively to criticise the British offer, following his declaration that the United Kingdom would not be permitted to join the European Communities.<sup>75</sup> While de Gaulle considered the Nassau Agreements to be an equitable arrangement for both parties concerned, Polaris was of no interest since France had neither the submarine capability nor the warheads to supply the missile.<sup>76</sup> De Gaulle also cited transnational communication difficulties at times of ‘atomic apocalypse’ as his reasoning for rejecting French integration into the NATO-based project.<sup>77</sup> The rejection of Britain’s application for entry into the European Communities left Macmillan and his cabinet struggling to readjust their nuclear defence policy. Despite the rejection, cooperation was still a crucial factor in de Gaulle’s policy of *grandeur* since the French President had reaffirmed his country’s commitment to pursuing the construction of Concorde and further collaboration in the civil and military aviation fields.<sup>78</sup> Vindictive action against the French would therefore invite retaliation from de Gaulle and only succeed in further isolating Britain from its European partners.<sup>79</sup>

The growing trend in French political culture from 1958 until de Gaulle’s January 1963 press conference shows nuclear independence was central to its foreign and defence policies. The nature of the multilateral nuclear force would have undermined de Gaulle’s aim of using a national nuclear deterrent to return France to the front rank in the international community.<sup>80</sup> Consequently, the French government returned to the idea of an IANF in lieu of Kennedy’s proposed multilateral force. NATO Secretary General Dirk Stikker was considering the formation of an IANF comprising of bomber aircraft as a potential hardware solution to the issues facing European nuclear defence, given ‘some countries would prefer that he do this.’<sup>81</sup> Originally, the backbone of the IANF project was the US-Canadian Lockheed F-104 Starfighter supersonic fighter-bomber aircraft.<sup>82</sup> The construction of an aerial nuclear force frustrated the French Representative to NATO, particularly with its

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<sup>74</sup> Ellison, ‘Pierson Dixon’, p.96.

<sup>75</sup> AN, Conférence de presse tenue au palais de l’Élysée, 14 janvier 1963, AG/5(1)/1437.

<sup>76</sup> TNA, Summary of General de Gaulle’s press conference of January 14, 16 January 1963, PREM/11/4413.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Archive diplomatiques [AD], matériel militaire britannique, 1963, EU16-7-1; AN, Conférence de presse tenue au palais de l’Élysée, 14 janvier 1963, AG/5(1)/1437.

<sup>79</sup> Ellison, ‘Pierson Dixon’, p.99.

<sup>80</sup> Tzveton Todorov, ‘L’Europe puissance’ in *Diplomatie*, vi (2003), p.12.

<sup>81</sup> NATO, Memorandum of a Conversation between the Secretary General and the Standing Group, no. 0202, 28 April 1963, LOM/136/63.

<sup>82</sup> Stevenson, “‘A Very Careful Balance’”, p.303.

reliance on hardware representative of US dominance in the Atlantic Alliance. To offset US influence, the French looked to replace the Starfighter jet with the Mirage IV as the delivery force for the IANF. Proposing the Mirage IV as an alternative to the Starfighter disrupted the Franco-German cooperation as the latter was assigned to the *Bundeswehr* in airbases such as Bremgarten.<sup>83</sup> The touting of the Mirage IV for the IANF also weakened the bilateral relationship between Britain and France. Despite cooperation over the turboprop for the aircraft, the British did not rate the Mirage IV over the Starfighter. RAF Group Captain P.W. Jamieson reported to the NATO Standing Group that the Starfighter was more efficient given the Mirage IV's predecessor did not pass scrutiny during Alliance training exercises in January 1960.<sup>84</sup>

As a result of a breakdown in cooperation within NATO, de Gaulle looked to consolidate French leadership within the European Communities, most notably over European defence. To achieve this aim, de Gaulle had to formalise bilateral commitments with German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. Based on a draft text sent to Bonn from the Quai d'Orsay on 17 September 1962, de Gaulle and Adenauer were to begin to prioritise non-NATO links as any idea of a defence force under the control of the Atlantic Alliance would only 'drown [...] strictly European initiatives.'<sup>85</sup> While this did not stop Adenauer committing the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in principle to the MLF, the draft note between the two European powers signalled a desire to foster their own special relationship. For de Gaulle, securing German support for a European confederation over defence and political matters was essential to bring about the end of US dominance over the NATO command structure and, by extension, European military affairs.<sup>86</sup>

Convincing Adenauer of the merits of a European *idée-force* was a particular challenge for the French President. The German Chancellor remained torn on the advantages of a joint Franco-German defence organisation since any reduction in US influence over European military affairs would be considered beneficial for the Soviet Union.<sup>87</sup> De Gaulle

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<sup>83</sup> Dieter Krüger, 'Plus de soldats et moins de sécurité ? La stratégie nucléaire de l'OTAN et le déploiement de la *Bundeswehr* au cours des années 1960' in *Revue Historique des Armées*, cclxii (2011), p.31.

<sup>84</sup> NATO, Corrigendum no.1, 13 August 1962, SGM/456/62.

<sup>85</sup> Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, p.341.

<sup>86</sup> Sutton, *France and the construction of Europe*, p.105.

<sup>87</sup> Konrad Adenauer, *Mémoires* (Vol 2., Paris, 1967), p.337. For academic insights on the Franco-German defence relationship and the Élysée treaty's legacy, see Mathias Delori, 'La genèse de la coopération franco-allemande au début des années 1960; L'apport de l'analyse des politiques publiques' in *Revue française de science politique*, lvi (2006), p.412; Yannis Karagiannis, 'The Élysée Treaty and European integration theory' in *German Politics & Society*, xxxi (2013), p.55.

argued that an agreement between Paris and Bonn would indeed reduce US control in Europe, but have the desired outcome of greater independence both in Europe and domestically.<sup>88</sup> By 17 January 1963, the French had managed to persuade their German counterparts that although a multilateral force would grant them access to a nuclear deterrent, they would have no input as to its use; while a Franco-German union would give Adenauer greater influence over the Berlin question. This would prove decisive towards Franco-German reconciliation for on 17 January, de Gaulle announced that the new 'Franco-German entente' was to be the cornerstone of French foreign and defence policies.<sup>89</sup> On 23 January 1963 France and the FRG signed the Élysée Treaty. This can be considered a triumph for de Gaulle and his foreign policy aim of returning France to centre stage in European affairs. As part of the arrangement, the FRG joined the *declaration commune* between itself and France, which entailed both countries agreeing a 'similar position' over European defence matters.<sup>90</sup>

Academics have argued that the Élysée Treaty achieved a dual objective. Tim Geiger stated while the Germans were now divided between their commitment to the Gaullist model for European defence cooperation and the MLF proposals, the bilateral treaty succeeded in overturning a period of tension between both countries, which had existed prior to the Second World War.<sup>91</sup> The return to a more amicable relationship between the FRG and France can be seen in the resulting cooperation from the Élysée Treaty. In mid-1963, the French Minister of the Armed Services Pierre Messmer authorised the sale of aeronautical equipment to the FRG, to help avoid any possible reoccurrence of aerial threats akin to the Berlin Crisis.<sup>92</sup> Sharing aerial expertise with the Germans helped sustain their partnership since the French reneged on an earlier guarantee that the Élysée Treaty would give the FRG access to a nuclear force. Messmer had previously rejected West German proposals for access to the French *force de frappe* in the event of the FRG's national interests were jeopardised.<sup>93</sup>

The second achievement was that de Gaulle had finally succeeded in reviving the Fouchet Plans, which had not gained much traction with other member states within the

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<sup>88</sup> Lacouture, op cit., p.341.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p.342.

<sup>90</sup> While the Élysée Treaty ensured Franco-German cooperation over civil matters, the agreement over a common defence policy was a strategic victory for de Gaulle. For the *declaration commune* see Pierre Jardin, 'Les relations franco-allemandes' in *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, lv (1999), p.19.

<sup>91</sup> Tim Geiger, *Atlantiker gegen Gaullisten. Außenpolitischer Konflikt und innerparteilicher Machtkampf in der CDU/CSU 1958-1969* (Munich, 2008); Ingo Kolboom, 'Le « Triangle de Weimar » et la « double ouverture » euro-atlantique de la Pologne' in *Études internationales*, xl (2009), p.263.

<sup>92</sup> AN, cahier des clauses communes à l'ensemble des travaux, mai 1963, ARCH-0844/28.

<sup>93</sup> Sutton, *France and the construction of Europe*, p.104.



European Communities. The Fouchet Plans were adapted on a bilateral basis between France and Germany in the form of the Élysée Treaty of January 1963. Under this treaty, Adenauer acknowledged that the US security and defence guarantees towards its European allies were meagre towards the menace of Soviet intervention in Europe.<sup>94</sup> However, the treaty contained an important provision for French security and, more importantly, leadership of a European defence community in a similar vein of the European Steel and Coal Community. The inter-ministerial commission set up to oversee Franco-German cooperation in the nuclear field was given the responsibility of ‘monitoring and controlling [Germany’s] nuclear ambitions.’<sup>95</sup> Thus, in getting the FRG to sign a friendship agreement in the form of Élysée Treaty, de Gaulle succeeded in the first steps to developing a *Europe puissance*, which would have control over its military affairs and weakening NATO’s position on the European continent. In addition by limiting German access to nuclear materials, France was in a prime position to take charge of de Gaulle’s proposed defence organisation since the Élysée treaty created a Franco-German axis within the European Communities. Similarly, the FRG’s membership of the WEU also constrained its ability to lead de Gaulle’s *Europe puissance* as the Control of Fissile Materials agency ensured that the FRG was unable to use any nuclear components for the purposes of national defence.<sup>96</sup> Adenauer’s successor Ludwig Erhard later clarified that while the FRG would still consider assigning forces to an MLF, Franco-German cooperation was the most effective means of ensuring that the West German people would ‘have the right to self-determination.’<sup>97</sup>

With initial support for a European defence community now assured, the French refocused their efforts on completing their own nuclear deterrent. The cooperation between the FRG and France opened new avenues of exploration for the construction of a nuclear missile. Bilateral aviation links with the Germans allowed for high technology collaboration over missile designs. Euromissile, a Franco-German weapon manufacturing company based in Seine-Saint-Denis, was born out of this new period of cooperation.<sup>98</sup> Euromissile experienced its greatest successes in developing Franco-German anti-tank missiles (ATMs) –

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<sup>94</sup> Georges-Henri Soutou, ‘The linkage between European integration and détente; The contrasting approaches of de Gaulle and Pompidou, 1965 to 1974’ in N. Piers Ludlow (ed), *European integration and the Cold War; Ostpolitik-Westpolitik, 1965-1973* (London, 2007), pp.16-7.

<sup>95</sup> Georges-Henri Soutou, *L’alliance incertaine; les rapports politico-stratégiques franco-allemands, 1954-1996* (Paris, 1996), pp.209, 242.

<sup>96</sup> Mallard, ‘L’Europe puissance nucléaire’, p.148; André Giraud, ‘Construction européenne et défense’ in *Politique étrangère*, lv (1990), p.519.

<sup>97</sup> AN, Communiqué franco-allemand faisant suite à la visite de Ludwig Ehrard, chancelier de la République fédérale d’Allemagne, 22 novembre 1963, AG/5(1)/1438.

<sup>98</sup> AN, Projet d’implantation d’Euromissile au Bourget, [non daté], 20020119/1.

namely, the HOT and MILAN ATMs in the 1980s. However, the firm succeeded in creating a missile capable of carrying a nuclear charge. The ROLAND, which entered development in 1963, was the first nuclear-powered surface-to-air missile (SAM) to be created with the aim of supplying a European nuclear deterrent.<sup>99</sup> This provoked anger within NATO as the French Representative had argued against a multilateral force and instead prompted his contemporaries to consider an organisation of European forces.<sup>100</sup> To NATO representatives, the development of ROLAND represented a clear lack of commitment towards unified European defence within the Atlantic Alliance. Indeed the French succeeded in controlling a vital area of European defence – weapons manufacturing. In doing this, they effectively excluded Britain from engaging in military high technology cooperation with European states. This resulted in the British Conservative government concentrating their energies on European cooperation in the civil technology field. Ultimately, the British government's move played into the de Gaulle's hand, whereupon France could control a monopoly over high technology cooperation within the military field in the WEU and in civil matters within the European Communities. The first signs of this became apparent on 18 May 1963 when de Gaulle authorised the French Minister of Transport M. Lacarrière to sign an agreement with his British counterpart Ernest Maples to begin developing a cross-channel tunnel.<sup>101</sup>

In May 1963 de Gaulle succeeded in retaining British support for the construction of the Concorde project, whilst effectively black-balling Britain from playing any role in a European defence agency. He argued that France could, with progress in its nuclear deterrent, 'undergo an adaptation' and lead a European superpower, in spite of a decrease in French influence abroad mainly due to troop reductions in previous spheres of influence.<sup>102</sup> At this point, the French had placed their foreign policy primarily within the European Communities following the declaration of Algerian independence in late-1962. Yet for all of de Gaulle's ambition, the nuclear element of his policy of *grandeur* greatly contrasted with the move towards non-proliferation which characterised interactions between the superpowers and Britain in 1963. In addition, the German decision to invest its energies in a strategic deterrent force within the NATO remit led to the abortion of certain aspects of the Élysée treaty.<sup>103</sup> Nonetheless, strategic analysts such as Morton Halperin and Thomas Schelling were

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<sup>99</sup> NATO, Assessment of Surface/Air Missile Tests, 13 April 1965, LOM 156/65.

<sup>100</sup> NATO, Memorandum for Secretary of Standing Group, 6 May 1963, LOM 144/63.

<sup>101</sup> AN, rapport de la commission franco-britannique chargée des projets d'ouvrages fixes de traversée de la Manche, 18 mai 1963, AG/5(1)/2806; Laurent Bonnaud, 'The Channel Tunnel, 1955-75; When the Sleeping Beauty woke again' in *The Journal of Transport History*, xxii (2001), p.14.

<sup>102</sup> AN, Voeux aux armées de Terre, de Mer et de l'Air, 31 décembre 1963, AG/5(1)/1438.

<sup>103</sup> Soutou, *L'alliance incertaine*, p.253.

promoting a new concept of arms control to ensure ongoing stability in the arms race between the superpowers.<sup>104</sup> Both superpowers, and to a lesser extent Britain, began multilateral negotiations in the immediate aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis. US Secretary of State Dean Rusk and the First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union Anastas Mikoyan opened negotiations to find a common position regarding the ‘cessation of nuclear tests’ and more importantly the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and non-transfer of missiles across sovereign borders.<sup>105</sup>

All the while, de Gaulle’s position continued to be at odds with the growing momentum behind a move towards non-proliferation. The removal of missiles from Turkey and Cuba by January provided an impetus for reducing the tensions between both superpowers. As Philip Nash argues Kennedy pursued a policy of détente through nuclear non-proliferation, with the Soviet Union reciprocating this move.<sup>106</sup> The Soviet First Deputy Foreign Minister Vasili Kuznetsov informed President Kennedy that the Soviet Union would be open to introducing nuclear weapons test inspections as a precursor to a prospective test ban treaty.<sup>107</sup> Despite much debate over the conditions of such a treaty – whether it would entail a comprehensive or partial ban – Kennedy welcomed the Soviet response, particularly following the aggression from October 1962, and commissioned the US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs W. Averell Harriman to continue tripartite negotiations around bans on nuclear weapons tests with Britain’s Viscount Quinton Hailsham and the Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. By July 1963 all three met in Moscow for a round of negotiations with Soviet Chairman Khrushchev. The tripartite meeting created an inflammatory moment in Franco-British relations, in spite of Gromyko and Harriman effectively sidelining Hailsham and continuing the negotiations bilaterally.<sup>108</sup> Khrushchev had a series of stipulations, which delayed the signing of the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT). Most importantly, the Soviet leader demanded the inclusion of France as a main signatory of the treaty. However, this contradicted Anglo-American policy centred on non-proliferation

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<sup>104</sup> John R. Walker, *Britain and disarmament; The UK and nuclear, biological and chemical weapons arms control and programmes 1956-1975* (Surrey, 2012), pp.5-6; Delphine Deschaux-Dutard, ‘La France et l’Allemagne face à la relance de la PSDC après le Brexit : Le retour du moteur franco-allemand ?’ in *E-conférence – L’actualité de la Politique européenne de sécurité et défense*, janvier 2018, (<https://blogdroiteuropeen.com>) (25 May 2021).

<sup>105</sup> Transcript of Conversation between Comrade A.I. Mikoyan and US Secretary of State Dean Rusk, 30 November 1962, cited in Sergo Mikoyan and Svetlana Savranskaya (eds), *The Soviet Cuban Missile Crisis; Castro, Mikoyan, Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Missiles of November* (Stanford, 2012), pp.548-56.

<sup>106</sup> Nash, *The other missiles of October*, p.149.

<sup>107</sup> Memorandum of Conversation between the President and First Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov, 9 January 1963, *FRUS* 1961-63, XIII, pp.628-9.

<sup>108</sup> Moore, *Nuclear illusion, nuclear reality*, p.155.

between powers of equal measure. Ahead of this meeting, US nuclear physicist Herbert York explained to a Soviet counterpart that the PTBT aimed to bring balance to two nuclear arsenals.<sup>109</sup>

The Khrushchev demand further contradicted US interests in centralising control over nuclear weapons, particularly as the United States was being coerced into recognising France which it saw as possessing a ‘second-stage nuclear deterrent.’<sup>110</sup> Hailsham and the US Ambassador to Moscow Foy D. Kohler argued France should be ‘eliminated’ from the Soviet draft of the PTBT.<sup>111</sup> While the British and US negotiating teams agreed in principle to other Soviet demands – namely, the inclusion of controls to protect from surprise nuclear interventions, the recognition of France’s nuclear power was a concession the United States was unwilling to make. De Gaulle interpreted Kennedy’s actions as contradictory to a previous US position on flexible response towards Soviet nuclear posturing.<sup>112</sup> Further, the French President found it belittling that Kennedy refused to acknowledge his interpretations directly. Kennedy sent the Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric and the Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Nitze to address European leaders’ concerns, both of whom stressed that the balance of nuclear power was paramount to US foreign policy.<sup>113</sup> De Gaulle was unimpressed in dealing with Gilpatric and Nitze as he felt that European concerns were now being treated as ‘secondary’ in regards to the higher priorities of the superpowers.<sup>114</sup> Indeed, the PTBT marked the first concrete move towards nuclear arms non-proliferation. However, the relegation of Hailsham to a role of lesser significance during the negotiation process represented the imposition of superpower ambitions on the international community. Therefore, French and British nuclear concerns did not play a meaningful part in US-USSR decision-making towards arms control measures. Regardless, the PTBT has the adverse effect of stymieing the military nuclear development programmes of both European countries while the United States and the Soviet Union ensured their continued superiority over atomic affairs and set the foundation for a comprehensive agreement on non-proliferation later.

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<sup>109</sup> Georges Fischer, ‘La non-prolifération des armes nucléaires’ in *Annuaire française de droit international*, xiii (1967), p.50.

<sup>110</sup> Sir W. Reginald Verdon-Smith criticised the renunciation of control over Britain’s nuclear ambition to the United States, saying Britain accepted its status as ‘second-stage nuclear’ power, see CAC, Verdon-Smith to Amery, 3 May 1964, AMEJ 1/6/23.

<sup>111</sup> Telegram from the Embassy in the Soviet Union to the Department of State, 15 July 1963, *FRUS* 1961-1963, VII, p.800.

<sup>112</sup> Andreas Wenger and Marcel Gerber, ‘John F. Kennedy and the Limited Test Ban Treaty: A case of Presidential leadership’ in *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, xxix (1999), p.467.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, p.485ff.

<sup>114</sup> AN, Conférence de presse tenue au palais de l’Élysée, 29 juillet 1963, AG/5(1)/1438; McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and survival: Choices about the bomb in the first fifty years* (New York, 1988), pp.381-2.

Understanding this, it is unsurprising that de Gaulle continually pursued the *Europe puissance* as the superpowers and Britain were committed to non-proliferation and détente. Therefore, the PTBT, which was eventually signed in Moscow on 5 August 1963, symbolised material progression towards relaxing tensions between the superpowers but succeeded in heightening the strain within the Atlantic Alliance.<sup>115</sup>

France did not sign up to the PTBT and pushed for a centralised European defence organisation with a nuclear element. This was in stark contrast towards non-proliferation and led to a collapse in Franco-British politico-military relations. As the PTBT came into effect on 10 October 1963, the testing of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere and underwater was forbidden. Despite the PTBT, the superpowers had led the way in technological innovation around the creation of nuclear charges and their delivery systems. With this in mind, de Gaulle prioritised the introduction of the French *force de frappe* by 1964, in order to join the nuclear club and achieve his foreign policy objective of returning France to a place of precedence on the international stage.<sup>116</sup> De Gaulle advocated his *Europe puissance* becoming a military wing of the European Communities, and encouraged exploiting France's bilateral relations with the UK through the Concorde project to access US designs for the completion of a nuclear deterrent.<sup>117</sup> *Général Aéronautique Marcel Dassault* (GAMD) exploited links established with the British Aircraft Corporation through the Anglo-French Treaty of 1962 to access turboprops designs for military aircraft. This allowed the French aviation design companies Dassault and Sud-Aviation to construct jet engines thereby fast tracking the development of Mirage IV, the delivery vehicle for French nuclear weapons.<sup>118</sup> Dassault and Sud-Aviation were successful in exploiting British industry networks to introduce the 'Gascogne', the first serviceable Mirage IV, into the *Force nucléaire stratégique* (FNS) in November 1965.<sup>119</sup> Thus, in its efforts to keep pace with technological

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<sup>115</sup> Jacques Vernant, 'La conférence sur la sécurité et la coopération en Europe' in *Politique étrangère*, xxxviii (1973), p.17.

<sup>116</sup> Georges Le Guelte, 'Le champ éclaté des négociations sur la non-prolifération nucléaire: entre rapports de puissance et expertise' in Franck Petiteville and Delphine Placidi (eds), *Négociations internationales* (Paris, 2013), p.315.

<sup>117</sup> AN, Allocution de de Gaulle au palais de l'Élysée, 27 avril 1965, AG/5(1)/1441.

<sup>118</sup> TNA, Choice of engine for French Mirage IV bomber aircraft, [no specific date], PREM/11/2596; Koen Frenken, 'A complexity approach to innovation networks. The case of the aircraft industry (1909-1997)', *Research Policy*, xxix (2000), p.270.

<sup>119</sup> Versailles, 'Le maître d'oeuvre dans les programmes d'armement.', p.87.

advancements France jeopardised bilateral relations with Britain by prioritising military strength over the multilateral shift towards non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.<sup>120</sup>

Despite de Gaulle's foreign policy victory with the introduction of an aerial component of the *force de frappe* in late 1965, the international context surrounding nuclear weapons manufacturing gave him little cause for celebration. For the *Europe puissance* to overcome the obstacles the Fouchet Plans encountered, it required European support. De Gaulle's need for European assistance afforded the opportunity to improve the Franco-British relationship. A beneficial by-product of the Anglo-French Treaty was that bilateral cooperation extended from the civil aviation field into the military one. A.P. Hockaday, a senior civil servant in the Ministry of Defence, headed a delegation in collaborating with the French over nuclear armaments following the collapse of the British supersonic military aircraft P.1154 project.<sup>121</sup> Sharing of military materials eventually led to Franco-British cooperation over nuclear and aircraft technologies. Another Ministry of Defence official C.S. Benjamin authorised British aeronautics company Bristol-Siddeley to share their latest jet fighter technology to be used in the prospective French-designed NBMR.3, to be based within NATO.<sup>122</sup> The collaboration between Britain and France continued from 1963 until 1966, and evolved into a joint aim to create a *Europe puissance*, which Conservative and Labour government ministers both advocated as 'bi-lateral collaboration in the field of military space' was seen as a means of softening de Gaulle's hardened stance against British integration within the European Communities.<sup>123</sup> Despite the stance of British leaders towards developing European nuclear cooperation, policy committees pushed successive governments to embrace membership of the *Europe puissance*. Lord Carrington, the chair of the Conservative Policy Group on Foreign Affairs, tried to persuade Harold Wilson that joining the defence organisation was necessary. The bilateral supremacy that the United States and the USSR obtained over 'technology, especially in the field of modern weapons' as a result of the Cuban Missile Crisis settlement was the rationale behind this fresh pressure on the British Prime Minister.<sup>124</sup> European allies, including Franz Josef Strauss, Wilson and

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<sup>120</sup> Jean Klein, 'La France, l'arme nucléaire et la défense de l'Europe' in *Politique étrangère*, xlv (1979), p.476.

<sup>121</sup> CAC, A.P. Hockaday to N.D. Paren, 1 August 1963, AMEJ 1/6/17.

<sup>122</sup> CAC, C.S Benjamin to Paren, 31 October 1963, AMEJ 1/6/17; NATO, Memorandum pour le représentant du groupe permanent – Matériels destinés à satisfaire les Besoins en Liasons Tête, 22 avril 1963, SGM-172-63.

<sup>123</sup> CAC, Defence collaboration with the French, 31 October 1963, AMEJ 1/6/17.

<sup>124</sup> CPA, 'British attitude towards Europe', a paper from the Conservative Policy Group on Foreign Affairs, 16 July 1965, MS. Heath E/3/2/7.

de Gaulle, viewed the PTBT as a discriminatory treaty against their ‘desire for security.’<sup>125</sup> While the PTBT emerged as a result of the crisis in Cuba, the treaty triggered a European reaction since this first step towards nuclear non-proliferation served to create a quasi-coalition between the superpowers designed to undermine the nuclear ambitions of the European nations, such as West Germany and France.

The improved state of Franco-British cooperation was fleeting. The joint Anglo-French NBMR.3 failed to make it into service following a public disagreement over funding, and NATO adopted the project which finally became a surface-to-surface missile system with no overt French or British influence.<sup>126</sup> The economic fallout and lack of indication of any change in de Gaulle’s attitude led the British government to remove any support from the *Europe puissance*. Maurice Vaïsse has concluded that France needed to rely on the Franco-German *entente* to ensure the Gaullist defence alternative became a reality.<sup>127</sup> To bring this about, the French Minister for Transport Marc Jacquet commissioned a Franco-German convention for the sharing of nuclear materials bilaterally in November 1965.<sup>128</sup> For historians – especially those in France, the general consensus of German foreign policy in the Cold War period centred on reconciliation with its wartime enemies in order to become ‘a legitimate actor on the international stage.’<sup>129</sup> However, this approach does not consider the international context concerning nuclear weapons development during the 1960s. On 19 August 1963, the FRG signed the PTBT, which the Bundestag voted in favour of ratification on 1 December 1964. Therefore the likelihood of the *Europe puissance* materialising was thrown into uncertainty. Conditional to its membership of NATO, the FRG was not permitted to become a nuclear power and ratification of the PTBT ensured that the country would never access nuclear weapons capability. These limited French options despite the French General Staff believing German nuclear armament as the ‘best solution’ for European defence integration.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Franz Josef Strauss, *The Grand Design; A European solution to German reunification* (London, 1965), p.56. Trans. by Brian Connell.

<sup>126</sup> NATO, Memorandum for the Secretary General, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, 4 August 1964, SGM-272-64.

<sup>127</sup> Maurice Vaïsse, ‘A certain idea of peace in France from 1945 to the present day’ in *French History*, xviii (2004), p.335.

<sup>128</sup> AN, Projet de convention France/RFA pour les matières nucléaires, 15 novembre 1965, 20010177/2.

<sup>129</sup> Carolina Duarte de Jesus, ‘L’influence de l’arme nucléaire sur la politique extérieure des pays – Le cas des États-Unis, de l’Allemagne et de l’Estonie dans le cadre de l’OTAN’ (Ph.D thesis, Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3, 2016), p.33 ; David S. Yost, ‘La dissuasion nucléaire en question ?’ in *Politique étrangère*, lv (1990), p.390.

<sup>130</sup> Matthias Küntzel, *Bonn und die bombe: deutsche atomwaffenpolitik von Adenauer bis Brandt* (Frankfurt, 1992), p.126.

Between January 1963 and early 1966, France prioritised the creation of a French-dominated European superpower within NATO.<sup>131</sup> For de Gaulle, the inclusion of a *Europe puissance* within the Atlantic Alliance would be considered a strategic victory in his attempt to create a *Europe des patries* thus returning France to the front rank in international politics by leading a European axis within the Atlantic military organisation. However, the growing trend of non-proliferation and France's most influential allies signing the PTBT – notably, the other members of the Six – prevented the idea of a *Europe puissance* from gaining any momentum. In short, from the failure of the Fouchet Plans in late-1962 until 1965, the French government enthusiastically pursued its return to a state of prominence within the international community. The *Europe puissance* was central to the defence aspect of French politics of *grandeur*. Nonetheless, France, along with its Élysée Treaty partner the FRG, was relegated to pursuing this approach in vain following the ratification of the PTBT. Indeed, the Soviet Union and the United States dictated international policy by circumstance as a result of their superpower status and their pursuit of détente.<sup>132</sup>

Despite the *Europe puissance* idea coming to nought, this does not mean that French influence over nuclear affairs dissipated. It continued to play a role within the European Communities, albeit outside of the military sphere. From the mid-1960s until 1983, France had committed to sharing civil nuclear expertise through the European Atomic Energy Commission – EURATOM.<sup>133</sup> The impetus for this decision stemmed from French anti-Americanism as Pierre Ailleret and later his successors Marcel Boiteux and Michel Hug persuaded the French government to continue their pursuit of *grandeur* within the civil nuclear field following the submission of the Peon report on civil electro-nuclear development in 1964.<sup>134</sup> The French desire to return to the forefront of international leadership can be clearly seen through the Peon report which advocated the development of a *nucléaire civil* in the European Communities to promote competition between a French-led Europe and its non-community partners.<sup>135</sup> Therefore while France succeeded in continuing to influence nuclear cooperation, at least in the European sphere of influence, the Gaullist aim of using a *Europe puissance* to purport France back to a place of military seniority met with little success. Ultimately the proposals were scrapped following the outbreak of the Empty

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<sup>131</sup> Gordon, *A certain idea of France*, p.35; Sean Greenwood, *Britain and European cooperation since 1945* (Oxford, Macmillan, 1992), pp.86-7.

<sup>132</sup> Soutou, *L'alliance incertaine*, p.319.

<sup>133</sup> AN, Convention EDF – CEA, non date [1965], 20070459/56.

<sup>134</sup> AN, rapport PEON, 11 janvier 1964, IND/83/17/13.

<sup>135</sup> François Guillaumat-Tailliet, 'La France et l'énergie nucléaire: réflexions sur des choix' in *Observations et diagnostics économiques: revue de l'OFCE*, xix (1987), p.197.



Chair Crisis in July 1965 when France boycotted the institutions of the European Communities, effectively forestalling any chance for the adoption of French policy until the situation had abated.

### **The Multilateral Nuclear Force**

That was not the only reason why the Gaullist alternative failed to gain any traction within NATO and the European Communities: for the Kennedy, and later the Lyndon B. Johnson administration, held firm to their pursuit of bracketing European nuclear development within a proposed MLF. The US proposals – of which Britain was already subscribed – involved a nuclear force, more advanced in its scale and purview than the *Europe puissance*. Under the US design, an Atlantic-European nuclear force would consist of the MLF, which included mixed-manned, multi-national crews from the United States, Britain and other European NATO member states; additionally the IANF comprising of military aircraft mainly of Canadian-US design.<sup>136</sup> The MLF guaranteed NATO member states input into its manning and running, thus securing each country an aspect of sovereignty over whether they would contribute to the defence force.<sup>137</sup> In spite of this, the direction of the MLF would still remain under the control of the SACEUR, and by extension the United States. Nevertheless, the constitutional sovereignty – or illusion thereof – that resulted from the MLF/IANF proposals effectively undermined the appeal of the *Europe puissance*, which would have super-imposed French nuclear decision-making on France’s EC partners.

From January 1963, the NATO SACEUR General Lyman Lemnitzer began to scrutinise the Nassau Agreements with particular attention being focused on the MLF proposals. He decided in response to the Anglo-American decision to offer nuclear assistance to the French that the idea of an MLF needed to be developed but only in line with the consensus of NATO representatives. On 9 February 1963 at a meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers, the MLF proposals first came under discussion in a multilateral context. In brief, the Foreign Ministers welcomed the idea of a multilateral nuclear force with multi-national crews.<sup>138</sup> But only to a certain degree: the French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville called into question the feasibility of the nuclear defence system. British Foreign Secretary Lord Home reported to Macmillan that the French objections were purely to ‘work out an Anglo-

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<sup>136</sup> Stevenson, “‘A very careful balance’”, pp.291-311.

<sup>137</sup> NATO, Statement by Ambassador Finletter, 27 February 1963, LOM 58/63.

<sup>138</sup> The mixed manning element of the MLF was deemed ‘essential’ by US officials; NATO, Memorandum for Secretary, Standing Group, 27 February 1963, LOM 58/63.

American line' on NATO defence matters.<sup>139</sup> The French opposition towards the adoption of the MLF/IANF model within NATO clearly stemmed from the Gaullist line that such a force would be impractical. The lack of a unanimous agreement prevented much progress being made in the creation of the multilateral nuclear force. Thus, Lieutenant General J.M. Guerin of the NATO Standing Group decided that a North Atlantic Council (NAC) meeting on the proposed nuclear responsibility-sharing defence system would be required, so representatives from all member states could put forth amendments to the US proposals.<sup>140</sup> Ultimately French protests and the subsequent delay in MLF/IANF implementation provoked great concern in the United States. It was in the US response where the diplomatic conflict between Britain and France deepened. Were Kennedy openly to criticise the actions of de Gaulle and his ministers in relation to MLF proposals, it would only serve to foster greater anti-American sentiment within the French political hierarchy, and crucially worsen the deteriorating Franco-American economic relations.<sup>141</sup> In defying the French view of Europeanisation within NATO, the US Permanent Representative to NATO Thomas K. Finletter asked the British to persuade de Gaulle into recognising the possible merits of an MLF – mainly the need for unanimity.<sup>142</sup>

The need for Britain to act as an intermediary was carefully considered, as even though the Italian government had also subscribed to the multilateral nuclear force, Finletter believed the British would carry more political capital than their Italian counterparts – who described the MLF proposals as 'a more efficient multilateral NATO nuclear force.'<sup>143</sup> British Ambassador Dixon again promoted the MLF proposals with Couve de Murville and de Gaulle with limited success. The French President remained adamant that the US-proposed force was an unsuitable defence solution for European countries since the existence of a US veto fundamentally undermined their defence decision-making.<sup>144</sup> The impact of French opposition can be seen in the political fallout in July 1963, when Dixon expressed his frustrations to the Foreign Office in a dispatch claiming that for Britain to have a coherent

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<sup>139</sup> TNA, Home to Macmillan, 10 February 1963, PREM/11/4218.

<sup>140</sup> NATO, Multilateral Atomic Force Planning, 20 February 1963, LOSTAN 4769.

<sup>141</sup> Anti-Americanism grew in France following the return of General de Gaulle to power in May 1958. The anti-American sentiment among the French political elites would peak in March 1965 after an economic fallout between President de Gaulle and US President Johnson, where the General was dubbed 'de Gaullefinger' liking him to the James Bond villain. See, Sean Kennedy, 'André Siegfried and the complexities of French anti-Americanism' in *French Politics, Culture and Society*, xxvii (2009), p.1; Library of Congress, Herbert L. Block prints and photographs, Herbert Block, *Gaullefinger* (March 1965).

<sup>142</sup> Memorandum from President Kennedy to the members of the MLF Negotiating Delegation, 21 February 1963, *FRUS* 1961-1963, XIII, p.509.

<sup>143</sup> Letter from Prime Minister Fanfani to President Kennedy, 6 March 1963, *FRUS* 1961-1963, XIII, p.872.

<sup>144</sup> Ellison, 'Pierson Dixon, 1960-65', p.105.

and workable defence strategy it must ‘by-pass the French each time [as] they are obstructive.’<sup>145</sup> Dixon’s dispatches contrasted the general stance of the British government. Macmillan wanted Britain to play a strategic role in the multilateral force and therefore assigned Foreign Secretary Lord Home to consider European variations to the MLF in order to appease French complaints.<sup>146</sup> In the short term, Macmillan’s actions only served to stymie Franco-British relations. The idea of a European variant to the MLF did little to encourage de Gaulle of its benefits, as any multilateral NATO nuclear force ran contrary to the French policy of garnering European hegemony at the expense of the United States.<sup>147</sup>

The opposition to French defence policy from the British Embassy would become secondary to de Gaulle in October 1963. Macmillan became ill with a prostatic obstruction before the annual Conservative party conference and was quickly replaced by Sir Alec Douglas-Home on 19 October.<sup>148</sup> The new prime minister’s stance towards NATO, European defence and the multilateral nuclear force is very difficult to pin down. According to David Dutton, Douglas-Home only pursued options that would augment Britain’s ‘political clout in the wider world.’<sup>149</sup> To a certain degree this was true since the British Prime Minister was not in favour of a multilateral force in the form of the US proposals, but instead wished to adapt the subsidiary IANF.<sup>150</sup> The adoption of an IANF became central to British defence policy. Defence Minister Peter Thorneycroft criticised Macmillan’s decision to access a US-controlled nuclear force, branding it ‘military nonsense.’<sup>151</sup> Douglas-Home briefed the Cabinet stating that Britain did not necessarily need to be a member of the multilateral force but only possess a nuclear force capable of ‘complementing’ US policy.<sup>152</sup> Although this is not to say that Douglas-Home was against the idea of European integration. Under the new

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<sup>145</sup> TNA, Dixon to FO, 11 July 1963, PREM/11/4811.

<sup>146</sup> A report on European variations was published during the early stage of Douglas-Home’s premiership, TNA, Variants to the Multilateral Force, 22 January 1964, DEFE/6/87/135.

<sup>147</sup> Ellison, ‘Pierson Dixon, 1960-65’, p.101; Maurice Bertrand, ‘De l’Europe apaisée à l’Europe pacifiante ?’ in *Hérodote*, iii (2003), p.172.

<sup>148</sup> ‘Parliament’s new session put back two weeks’ in *The Times*, 23 October 1963, p.10; For the historical context of the 1963 Conservative leadership selection process, whereby Sir Alec Douglas-Home was chosen as Macmillan’s successor see Ramsden, *An appetite for power*, pp.374-383. Following the 1963 Conservative Party Conference in Blackpool, it was decided that a verifiable leadership election would be the appropriate method for deciding the next Conservative leader after Douglas-Home, see John Ramsden, *The winds of change: Macmillan to Heath, 1957-1975* (London, 1996), p.214.

<sup>149</sup> David Dutton, *Douglas Home* (London, 2006), p.38.

<sup>150</sup> Moore, *Nuclear illusion, nuclear reality*, p.184.

<sup>151</sup> Lord Mountbatten of Alamein referred to Thorneycroft’s criticism in a debate in the House of Lords, condemning the mixed-manned element of the IANF as ‘poppycock’. Quoted in Andrew J. Pierre, *Nuclear politics; The British experience with an independent strategic force 1939-1970* (London, 1972), p.247.

<sup>152</sup> A.J.R. Groom, ‘La politique de défense du gouvernement conservateur britannique’ in *Études internationales*, iii (1972), p.184.

prime minister, Britain would continue to pursue economic integration. However unlike the previous Macmillan government, the new Conservative administration would treat French objections with passivity and seek to counter Gaullist policies of *grandeur* when the opportunity arose. Douglas-Home's stance was brought into the public sphere in France by Radio Luxembourg journalist Geneviève Tabouis, who stated that post-veto Franco-British tensions had reached their peak by January 1964.<sup>153</sup>

Douglas-Home's premiership represented the beginning of a decline in Anglo-American cooperation over the multilateral force. The British Prime Minister believed that submission to the United States was not needed given Britain's influence within the Commonwealth community.<sup>154</sup> Thus, Britain began to move away – albeit briefly – from the US influence. This can be seen in British apathy towards multilateral discussions on the topic of European defence integration. The head of the MLF negotiating team Livingston T. Merchant informed the US Secretary of State Dean Rusk that while the British had not fully 'closed [the] door' on multilateral negotiations, they were unwilling to partake in further debates around alternatives for European defence.<sup>155</sup> Douglas-Home, as Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister, aspired for Britain to emerge as a leading figure in European defence, not as an intermediary between the superpowers but as an independent strategic force on the international stage. While being both pro-European and pro-Commonwealth in similar measures, Douglas-Home's defence policy reigned from a desire for the balance of power on Continental Europe not to shift in the Soviet Union's favour.<sup>156</sup> Despite the limitations of the PTBT, Britain's attempts to increase its own influence in the nuclear defence field put it on a similar course to France who sought to expand its own nuclear proficiency. Douglas-Home's efforts culminated in the adoption of a new strategy vis-à-vis a multilateral nuclear defence option. From September 1963, Douglas-Home voiced his opposition more publicly to the MLF proposals since the British military hierarchy openly critiqued the idea of a supranational nuclear naval force. Rear-Admiral Sir Anthony Wass Buzzard stated that the proposed military force was 'too drastic [and] inflexible' and criticised the threat a

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<sup>153</sup> AN, Manuscrites de Genevieve Tabouis sur le Grande-Bretagne, janvier 1964, 27AR/211.

<sup>154</sup> Dennis Austin and Keith Panter-Brick, 'Le post-colonialisme' in Françoise de la Serre, Jacques Lereux and Helen Wallace (eds), *Les politiques étrangères de la France et de la Grande-Bretagne depuis 1945* (Paris, 1990), p.180.

<sup>155</sup> Telegram from the Department of State to the Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and European Regional Organization, 1 August 1963, *FRUS* 1961-1963, XIII, p.607.

<sup>156</sup> Luca Ratti, 'The Anglo-American Special Relationship and West Germany's Eastern policy from 'bridge-building' and Vietnam to *Ostpolitik*' in *The International History Review*, xliii (2021), p.626.

multilateral nuclear force could have on an independent British defence strategy.<sup>157</sup> On 12 September 1963, Douglas-Home announced that Britain would adopt the position that any multilateral force must be revised from the current US-sponsored MLF proposals. In a memorandum to his cabinet colleagues, he advocated an opposing position to the multilateral nuclear force. Rather the Prime Minister stressed that Britain must persuade the United States to review its proposals and prepare to be isolated from its US allies in the event of rejection.<sup>158</sup> For Douglas-Home, neither the multilateral force nor the *Europe puissance* presented an adequate defence solution for a Britain– which he believed could continue its global influence through the Commonwealth and a greater role in Europe – and so Britain had to prepare for a period of self-imposed isolation in multilateral defence affairs.<sup>159</sup>

There are important differences between the desired strides for independence from Britain and France. Firstly, Britain’s push for a greater national deterrent under the Douglas-Home government proved to be passing, while between 1963 and 1964 the Gaullist push for the *Europe puissance* was still in its infancy. The second and more pertinent difference was that the Gaullist alternative played a crucial role in the French President’s wish to return France to the fore in international influence, while the position Douglas-Home espoused resulted from anxieties that the US-proposed nuclear force adversely affected Britain’s own nuclear ambition.<sup>160</sup> The British Prime Minister’s fears were confirmed as a result of the PTBT, which placed the superpowers on course for a path to stable cooperation to preserve their monopolies over military nuclear production. Consequently, Britain’s nuclear ambitions were hindered. In February 1964 during a bilateral meeting when the PTBT mandated that there was to be a freeze on the production of nuclear armaments, the United States called on Britain to follow the cessation of fissile material production and stick to the terms of the Nassau Agreements – namely, agreeing to the creation of a multilateral nuclear force.<sup>161</sup> The United States was successful in subverting Britain’s nuclear strategy as William R. Tyler, the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, succeeded in getting the British to agree to contribute the nuclear ‘bonfire’ by abandoning its policy on nuclear military development.<sup>162</sup> The reaction from the British government was as rapid as it was begrudged. On 21 April

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<sup>157</sup> Ian Hall, *Dilemmas of decline; British intellectuals and world politics, 1945-1975* (California, 2012), p.158.

<sup>158</sup> TNA, The Multilateral Force – Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 16 September 1963, CAB/129/114/51.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Walker, *Britain and disarmament*, p.139.

<sup>161</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, 13 February 1964, *FRUS* 1964-1968, XI, p.19.

<sup>162</sup> The nuclear ‘bonfire’ was a term introduced by the US and Soviet governments as they abandoned the B-47 stratojets and Tupolev Badger programmes, see *ibid*.

1964, Douglas-Home announced the gradual cessation of military-grade plutonium 239 production in the UK.<sup>163</sup> Therefore, Britain renewed its interest in the US-sponsored multilateral force, which did little to ease Franco-British relations as de Gaulle maintained his embittered hostility towards the MLF proposals.

De Gaulle's hostility managed to affect more than just the Franco-British bilateral partnership. On 23 July 1964, the French President delivered a press conference to update his electorate on the state of social, economic and military matters. During this press conference, de Gaulle stated that Franco-German reconciliation had been damaged as a result of German support for the multilateral force project.<sup>164</sup> The German Chancellor Erhard contacted President Johnson in September 1964 to state that the FRG agreed to the US implementation of the MLF proposals in NATO.<sup>165</sup> Erhard's unilateral decision to agree to a multilateral force frustrated de Gaulle as it contravened the Élysée Treaty. The FRG's close proximity to Warsaw Pact countries was the main impetus behind Erhard's decision.<sup>166</sup> However, the German Chancellor's decision had unintended impacts on Franco-German relations since including its forces in the multilateral force conflicted with the Gaullist alternative. The FRG's support of a multilateral force also created a Franco-American nuclear conflict as both countries now tried to court German inclusion in their proposed nuclear defence programmes.<sup>167</sup> The fracture in Franco-German relations further isolated France in terms of exercising its influence in both continental and transatlantic nuclear affairs. Erhard criticised de Gaulle for attempting to exert French influence over its community partner whilst practicing a policy of anti-Americanism.<sup>168</sup> In this case the FRG leadership was more in line with Britain in its commitment to the Atlantic Alliance than its French neighbour. Despite its isolation, France still played a key role in European defence negotiations owing to its developing nuclear programme.

While France struggled to breathe life into its *Europe puissance* idea, Britain and the United States continued to be at odds whether to pursue an IANF or the system proposed in the MLF plans. Despite these disruptions in negotiations around the MLF project, the British

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<sup>163</sup> Walker, *Britain and disarmament*, p.3.

<sup>164</sup> AN, Conférence de presse tenue au palais de l'Élysée, 23 juillet 1964, AG/5(1)/1439.

<sup>165</sup> Letter from Chancellor Erhard to President Johnson, 30 September 1964, *FRUS* 1964-1968, XIII, p.78.

<sup>166</sup> Philippe Hébert and Paul Létourneau, 'De haut de l'Olympe: perspectives américaines sur l'arme nucléaire allemande' in *Études internationales*, xxvii (1996), p.39.

<sup>167</sup> Vaïsse, *La grandeur*, p.373; Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages – Pour l'effort* (Vol 4, Paris, 1970), pp.222-37.

<sup>168</sup> AN, Conférence des ministres français et allemands, 15 février 1964, AG/5(1)/93/1.

General Election of 1964 prompted a significant shift in the country's foreign and defence policy following thirteen years of Conservative governance. The Labour Party leader Harold Wilson succeeded Douglas-Home as Prime Minister on 16 October 1964. The move from Conservative to Labour rule marked a significant change as Wilson ran on a manifesto commitment to improve the Polaris aspect of the Nassau Agreements, believing it to be insufficient to meet Britain's defence needs.<sup>169</sup> The accession of the Labour Party to power introduced a rogue element onto the international stage. Wilson's desire to renegotiate the Nassau Agreement, coupled with his disgust at US actions in Vietnam soured the Anglo-American special relationship; while his desire to cancel so-called 'Prestige Projects' did not improve Franco-British relations, and only served to exacerbate de Gaulle's alienation of British influence in the European Communities.<sup>170</sup> The main thrust of Wilsonian policy with regards to British military concerns was to avoid further embarrassment following the failed EEC bid and Britain's gradual subjugation to the United States following the PTBT negotiations.<sup>171</sup> Wilson had to delicately balance the status of the Anglo-American relationship with the interests of his party members. In 1966 and 1967, Labour party members voted against Wilson's policy towards brokering a peace treaty in Vietnam.<sup>172</sup> The Labour rank-and-file discontent marked the first time that the party membership openly rebelled against a government policy, thus illustrating the difficulty of maintaining Anglo-American relations in a manner that Wilson's supporters approved.

Labour's new economic plan, which was designed to make British foreign and defence policies fiscally sustainable throughout 1965 called for an abrupt end 'on Government spending abroad which has been rising much too quickly.'<sup>173</sup> Indeed, Jim Tomlinson has argued that the state of the British economy required Labour to take 'immediate action.'<sup>174</sup> And yet in spite of this, Wilson's defence policy worked in de Gaulle's favour. Following a summit meeting in Washington in December 1964, President Johnson

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<sup>169</sup> Wilson's desire to renegotiate the Polaris portion of the Nassau Agreement carried through the tenure of his government (October 1964 – March 1966), which the Prime Minister described as 'not an adequate defence policy', Barbara Castle, *The Castle diaries, 1964-70* (London, 1984), p.12; Kristan Stoddart, 'The Wilson Government and British responses to Anti-Ballistic Missiles, 1964-1970' in *Contemporary British History*, xxiii (2009), p.2.

<sup>170</sup> David Edgerton, 'The "White Heat" revisited: The British government and technology in the 1960s' in *Twentieth Century British History*, vii (1996), p.60.

<sup>171</sup> John W. Young, 'International factors and the 1964 Election' in *Contemporary British History*, xxi (2007), p.355.

<sup>172</sup> Rhiannon Vickers, 'Harold Wilson, the British Labour Party, and the war in Vietnam' in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, x (2008), p.43.

<sup>173</sup> TNA, Labour Government National Plan for economic development, PREM/13/274.

<sup>174</sup> Jim Tomlinson, *The Labour governments 1964-70; Volume 3: Economic policy* (Manchester, 2004), p.49.

reaffirmed the United States' commitment to the creation of a multilateral nuclear force, despite British suggestions of developing an Atlantic axis within the US-proposed defence body.<sup>175</sup> Effectively, Wilson was trying to undermine US foreign policy. For the United States, the success of the Nassau Agreements was simple. By providing – and more importantly guaranteeing – a delivery system for British nuclear warheads, the United States would secure control over weapons of this kind within NATO, and strengthen the deterrent forces in Europe with naval installations strategically placed in the United Kingdom.<sup>176</sup> Wilson's call for greater multilateral consultation in the NATO-based force thus threatened the US monopoly over nuclear weapons, but for the most part would loosen the grip the United States had over European security.<sup>177</sup> By 1965, the British government had given up attempting to sell the MLF idea to European powers. France welcomed this change, however remained unconvinced by the alternative that the British foreign secretary George Brown had described.<sup>178</sup> Brown's disappointment in persuading de Gaulle was due to the former's criticism of a French *force de frappe*, which he viewed as superfluous.<sup>179</sup> De Gaulle continually resisted any defence proposal that reduced French control over its strategic nuclear force. In November 1965, the new British Ambassador to Paris Sir Patrick Reilly – in spite of a poor working relationship with Brown – tried to persuade Couve de Murville of the advantages of a British-proposed Atlantic Nuclear Force (ANF).<sup>180</sup> Despite playing on Gaullist sensibilities for equal control within the Atlantic Alliance, de Gaulle, Couve de Murville and French Prime Minister Georges Pompidou continued to resent the detrimental impacts that any NATO nuclear force would have on their country's sovereignty – namely, the abandonment of French pre-eminence to a multilateral concept.<sup>181</sup> Thus, while Wilson may have gained favour with de Gaulle for challenging US hegemony over European affairs, his insistence on retaining a multilateral approach to NATO defence planning hindered any chance of a Franco-British reconciliation over politico-military matters.

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<sup>175</sup> TNA, Talks between Prime Minister and President Johnson, December 1964, PREM/13/4.

<sup>176</sup> The full aspect of interdependence was recognised when US submarine forces were permitted to dock at naval installations near the River Clyde in Scotland, see TNA, United States request for Naval facilities in the United Kingdom, 31 January 1961, PREM/11/3257.

<sup>177</sup> NATO, 'NATO SECRET: Subject is multilateral [sic] NATO nuclear force', February 1963, LOSTAN 4750; John W. Young, *The Labour governments 1964-70; Volume 2: International policy* (Manchester, 2003), p.122.

<sup>178</sup> Avi Shlaim, Peter Jones and Keith Sainsbury, *British foreign secretaries since 1945* (London, 1977), p.211.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid; AN, Lettre adressé à Harold Wilson, 24 janvier 1967, AG/5(1)/1445.

<sup>180</sup> Helen Parr, 'Patrick Reilly, 1965-68' in Rogelia Pastor-Castro and John W. Young (eds), *The Paris Embassy; British ambassadors and Anglo-French relations 1944-79* (Basingstoke, 2013), pp.124-5.

<sup>181</sup> Objection française envers les accords britanniques, 24 mai 1965 cited in Michel Voelckel, 'Les navires à équipages multinationaux dans la force multilatérale' in *Annuaire française de droit international*, xi (1965), p.734.



De Gaulle and his ministers revived pre-war, bilateral arrangements between Britain and France to undermine the ANF proposals. Coupled with the French response to the ANF, was the indication that this force would be equally as unworkable as the US-proposed alternative. De Gaulle cited the Paris Declaration of 16 April 1856 as his evidence for this claim. Under this agreement, neither Britain nor France could engage in military combat without observing certain particularities which respected the national will of the other.<sup>182</sup> The use of multinational crews on US submarines or destroyers, such as the *Claude W. Ricketts*, would have contravened France's national interests by incorporating its nuclear forces into either the US or British multilateral defence options. The *force de frappe* was seen by French academics – even those critical of Gaullist policies – as a success for 'overall strategy [of *grandeur*].'<sup>183</sup> Thus, de Gaulle's use of the maritime laws contained within the Paris Declaration was purely strategic as it successfully weakened any chances of the British alternative being considered by the United States or France's European partners.<sup>184</sup> This came as a blow to British defence policy as the Wilson Cabinet considered the Atlantic Nuclear Force as an adequate alternative to the MLF, which ensured Europe was protected from Soviet attack, whilst consequently preserving the Anglo-American nuclear partnership.<sup>185</sup> In terms of the Franco-British bilateral relationship, this outcome should not be surprising. As Wilson explained to his Cabinet colleagues, 'there was no give at all by the French.'<sup>186</sup>

Labour's foreign policy objectives succeeded in one thing: isolating Britain on international stage, particularly in defence matters. The British government held firm to its ANF alternative to the multilateral nuclear force. Part of the ANF proposals, developed in March 1965, involved the removal of a US veto over the multilateral organisations' actions, whilst subtly subverting US control over the hardware used in this European defence force.<sup>187</sup> The Nassau Agreements guaranteed that multi-national forces would man US defence vehicles in a multilateral force and the IANF. However, under the ANF proposals, the Wilson government made it clear that any hardware committed to a nuclear deterrence force must be

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid, p.741.

<sup>183</sup> Claude Fresnoy, 'Une force nucléaire indépendante' in *Revue des Deux Mondes (1829-1971)*, (1964), p.390.

<sup>184</sup> For a copy of the maritime law in the Paris Declaration, see TNA, Copy of Paris Declaration of 1856, April 1856, FO/881/1389.

<sup>185</sup> Diary Entry, 30 March 1965 in Castle, *The Castle Diaries 1964-70*, p.26; Young, *The Labour governments 1964-70*, pp.116-117.

<sup>186</sup> Wilson stressed that 'it is clear that they [the French] will hold us to the full letter of the law' in response to the Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain, quoted in Diary Entry, 14 July 1966 in Castle, *The Castle Diaries 1964-70*, p.144.

<sup>187</sup> TNA, Atlantic Nuclear Force – Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 25 March 1965, CAB 129/120/48.

a ‘jointly-owned element.’<sup>188</sup> President Johnson reacted negatively to the ANF proposals. Johnson drew British attention back to the Nassau Agreements wherein their use of US nuclear delivery systems demanded the need for a US veto. The ANF thus directly challenged a fundamental principle of US foreign policy, which was to effectively undermine any independence Britain had over its Polaris nuclear deterrent. President Johnson found himself in a difficult position as to the future of multilateral nuclear cooperation within NATO, since domestically the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee William Fulbright argued that there was ‘no need for it.’<sup>189</sup> Fulbright also stated that the MLF proposals could prompt accusations of an ‘Anglo-Saxon’ axis within NATO.<sup>190</sup> Thus in July 1965, Johnson bowed to the pressure and dissolved the MLF project, which also ended discussions around the proposed IANF, effectively ending the construction of a military nuclear delivery system within NATO.<sup>191</sup>

Shelving the MLF proposals opened the United States up to criticism, particularly from the French. French Junior Defence Minister Formel criticised the United States for abandoning the centralisation of European nuclear defence.<sup>192</sup> The French political elite mostly criticised the United States for leaving European countries to flounder behind emerging economic and nuclear powers, such as China. Pierre Sudreau was amongst those French politicians who openly disparaged US actions and called on President de Gaulle to revive the *Europe puissance*.<sup>193</sup> Thus in late-1965 de Gaulle revived his alternative to European nuclear cooperation but with a specific exception. The new iteration of the Gaullist alternative involved removing any element of NATO from the idea, and rather now promoted nuclear cooperation within the WEU by integrating civil innovations from the French nuclear power plant in Chinon.<sup>194</sup> The *Europe puissance* still represented an aspect of de Gaulle’s policy of *grandeur* since it placed French nuclear industry in a position where it could influence rearmament in the FRG and general industrial understanding in Western Europe. However, France remained unmoved in its pursuit of *grandeur* but the idea of sharing its nuclear expertise within the WEU provoked a negative response from the Wilson

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Country File, Box 214, Fulbright to Johnson, UK Wilson Visit I 12/7-8/64, 6 December 1964, quoted in Jonathan Colman, *A ‘special relationship’? Harold Wilson, Lyndon B. Johnson and Anglo-American relations ‘at the summit’, 1964-68* (Manchester, 2004), p.30.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, p.33; David Reynolds, *Britannia overruled; British policy and World power in the Twentieth century* (Harlow, Longman, 2000), p.213.

<sup>191</sup> TNA, Atlantic Nuclear Force, 1965, DEFE/25/34.

<sup>192</sup> AN, Documents concernant la défense, non daté [1965], 19790501/23.

<sup>193</sup> AN, Activités diverses, l’archive de Pierre Sudreau, mai 1965, 91AJ/4.

<sup>194</sup> AN, Directive sur la défense industrielle, 25 juin 1966, 19790501/12.

government. For Britain, the nuclearisation of the WEU threatened its defence policy position of using its deterrent status as an ‘instrument of British influence’ to facilitate strategic competition between itself and the superpowers.<sup>195</sup>

The actions which Harold Wilson took to circumvent French nuclearisation of the WEU only fostered greater dissension between Britain and France. Wilson stated that Britain would not support German rearmament and any possible sharing of fissile materials through the WEU.<sup>196</sup> Despite the threat of a British veto, Michel Debré voiced the French government’s intention to introduce nuclear cooperation with the FRG and France’s EURATOM partners as a matter of national priority.<sup>197</sup> Nonetheless, this obstructive interplay between Wilson and Gaullist ministers had a detrimental impact on the Franco-British working partnership, in spite of the uncertainty of whether the Wilson government would retain the British nuclear deterrent after 1967.<sup>198</sup> Although Debré, in particular, was one of de Gaulle’s more pro-British ministers, he was adamant that France had to act as a counterbalance in Continental affairs to remain a leading European power.<sup>199</sup> The Wilson government abided by its earlier claim of moving against the revival of the *Europe puissance* as the introduction of this apparatus for European nuclear defence would ruin chances of transatlantic cooperation, especially since WEU acted as a subsidiary of the Atlantic Alliance.<sup>200</sup> With the support of the United States, this move proved successful. As a result, the Gaullist alternative was shelved for it failed in its ultimate aim of getting European countries to renounce US leadership and pursue a Continental – though ultimately French-led – nuclear defence policy.<sup>201</sup>

## Conclusion

The idea of multilateral defence cooperation over nuclear weapons usage in a European context negatively affected the Franco-British relationship, making nuclear cooperation inconceivable. As conflicting approaches evolved and developed from the late-1950s to the

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<sup>195</sup> Philip A.G. Sabin and Marisol Touraine, ‘Société, État et Défense’ in Françoise de la Serre, Jacques Lereux and Helen Wallace (eds), *Les politiques étrangères de la France et de la Grande-Bretagne depuis 1945* (Paris, 1990), p.63.

<sup>196</sup> TNA, Conclusions of a meeting of Cabinet, 1 July 1965, CAB/128/39.51.

<sup>197</sup> Philippe Garraud, ‘Politique électro-nucléaire et mobilisation: la tentative de constitution d’un enjeu’ in *Revue française de science politique*, xxix (1979), p.466

<sup>198</sup> Walker, *Britain and disarmament*, p.204; Young, *The Labour governments 1964-70*, p.131.

<sup>199</sup> Samuel, *Michel Debré*, p. 355.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid, p.354; Priest, ‘In American hands’, p.368.

<sup>201</sup> AN, publications gouvernementales d’Union européenne occidentale [UEO], non daté, 5 AG F/916; Schwabe, ‘Three Grand Designs’, p.7; Todorov, ‘L’Europe Puissance’, p.12.

mid-1960s, they did so against a backdrop of declining European and Atlantic relations between several countries, mainly Britain, France and the United States. In the case of Franco-British relations, the competition between grand design concepts prompted further segregation in their bilateral partnership. Regardless of whether Conservative or Labour governments were in power, Britain was committed to cooperation with its European partners to maintain their influence on the international stage. The Labour Secretary of State for Defence Denis Healey argued that Britain, out of a sense of fear, needed to maintain its international significance through contributions to European defence – mainly, through contributions to the MLF, firmly placing Britain in line with the United States.<sup>202</sup> Therefore it seems previous scholarship on Britain's attempts to cooperate over European defence was unnecessarily critical. Philip Allott stated that British politicians acted on European integration through the deliberation of 'ill-considered ideas.'<sup>203</sup> By contrast, the French were solely concerned with the creation of the *Europe puissance*. The impetus for de Gaulle's fixation on his alternative came from a drive to fulfil the French policies of *grandeur*. The French President wished to place this defence organisation within the Atlantic Alliance to build upon his predecessors' actions and cultivate a separate European defence position and identity.<sup>204</sup>

It has been well-documented that the proposals for combined nuclear forces within NATO caused a period of great friction between Britain and France. The MLF proposals placed British Atlanticism and French Europeanism on a collision course.<sup>205</sup> And while academics are divided over whether British Atlanticism made the United Kingdom simply a satellite to the United States, the debate around placing nuclear forces within the Atlantic Alliance has a lasting impact on the British foreign policy. Unlike France, Britain's strategic policy was inter-connected with the quality of the Anglo-American relationship.<sup>206</sup> By contrast, Gaullist France engaged in a largely independent strategy typified by the creation of an independent nuclear force, which provided the basis for the French President's *Europe*

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<sup>202</sup> TNA, Conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet, 14 February 1966, CAB 128/41/8; Lecture, 'Britain and Europe' at the Bologna Center of the John Hopkins University by Denis Healey, 10 November 1987 in Denis Healey, *When Shrimps learn to whistle* (Pennsylvania, 2012); Wilfrid L. Kohl, 'Nuclear sharing in Nato and the Multilateral Force' in *Political Science Quarterly*, lxxx (1965), pp.101-2.

<sup>203</sup> Allott, 'Britain and Europe', p.203.

<sup>204</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the creation of a European defence identity, see Oliver Bange, *The EEC crisis, Kennedy, Macmillan, de Gaulle and Adenauer in conflict* (Basingstoke, 2000).

<sup>205</sup> Michael H. Smith, 'The political economy of transatlantic relations: Forces of history and the shadow of the future' in Gustav Schmidt (ed), *A history of NATO – The first fifty years* (Vol 1, Basingstoke, 2001), p.295.

<sup>206</sup> Richard J. Aldrich and Michael F. Hopkins, 'British intelligence, defence and diplomacy since 1945' in Richard J. Aldrich and Michael F. Hopkins (eds), *Intelligence, defence and diplomacy; British policy in the post-war world* (Essex, 1994), p.4; Stephens, *Britain alone*, p.133.

*puissance*. Nevertheless, the MLF, ANF and *Europe puissance* ideas found no purchase with the NATO member states. The impasse between the Europeans and the United States had an acute impact on the Franco-British relationship. The attempts of Dixon and Reilly to persuade the Gaullist government to abandon their alternative to a European nuclear defence force convinced the French President of the incompatibility of British involvement in any European institution, in which French influence may be undermined.<sup>207</sup> Thus, the diverging defence policies of both countries resulted from the intransigence of their leading politicians. On both sides of the Channel, there was no meaningful appetite for nuclear cooperation. The former First Secretary of State R.A. Butler pushed the Conservative government to ignore backbench pressures to collaborate in the military-use nuclear field.<sup>208</sup> Following a similar line, the French imposed, through EURATOM, a series of directives that limited the chance of nuclear cooperation outside of the European Communities. This was added to the existing EURATOM treaty as Article 96.<sup>209</sup> Thus, the divisions between the different grand design ideas negatively affected the Franco-British relationship, whereupon nuclear cooperation was inconceivable.

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<sup>207</sup> It is important to state that the French government allowed Franco-British cooperation in civil aviation and business affairs see AN, La concurrence avec les companies anglo-saxonnes, non-daté, 20050329/1.

<sup>208</sup> CAC, Minute entitled 'Defence collaboration with the French', 23 October 1963, AMEJ 1/6/17.

<sup>209</sup> HAEU, Projet de directives sur le libre accès aux emplois qualifiés dans le domaine nucléaire, 1962, EUR/C/985/6/59.

## **Chapter Four – Differing philosophies, difficult relationships, 1966-69**

Considerable strain manifested itself in the Franco-British bilateral relationship from the mid- to late-1960s. This period saw many events, which exemplified the differing global, military visions for Britain and France. For the former, it was essential to strike a delicate balance between the European and Atlantic military strength in order to ‘strengthen the Alliance as a factor for durable peace.’<sup>1</sup> While the French and British political decision-makers shared some mutual objectives – in essence, the strengthening of European continental defence measures against the perceived threat of Soviet advance – President de Gaulle continued his press towards a European Defence Community free from the influence of the United States.<sup>2</sup> The French departure from NATO acted as the catalyst to the deterioration in Franco-British military cooperation. On 21 June 1966, de Gaulle announced the unilateral withdrawal of French military forces from the NATO integrated command structure.<sup>3</sup> Historians have argued that French withdrawal provoked a fundamental shift in Alliance policy-making, with the remaining allies in NATO re-evaluating their strategy in response to Soviet action, allowing for greater consultation on matters of European security.<sup>4</sup> This argument will be examined in the context of Franco-British policy reorientation during this period.

It is well-known that 1966 marked the peak divergence in both countries’ foreign policies. British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, after winning a second General Election, had decided to scale back British troops from Aden and cancel an order for a new aircraft carrier. This acted as an early indicator of the British government’s acceptance that its function was no longer that of a global player but rather of a regional power. On the other hand, France achieved one of its main policy goals under the Gaullist government – independence over its defence planning. Withdrawing from the NATO integrated command structure was the realisation of this grand design strategy based upon the introduction of the French *force de frappe* in August 1965. This chapter seeks to shed light on the construction of the French nuclear force as a means of ensuring France’s status as a world power. The *force de frappe* was France’s key to exiting the Atlantic Alliance and pursuing de Gaulle’s foreign policy

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<sup>1</sup> NATO, Report on the Future Tasks of the Alliance, 1 January 1968, IS/04/PDD/NP/1968.

<sup>2</sup> Vernant, ‘Le général de Gaulle et la politique extérieure’, p.627.

<sup>3</sup> De Gaulle took the decision to withdraw from the command structure on 7 March 1966, AN, Dossier 5 – ‘Stratégie concernant le retrait de la France de l’Otan’, 7 mars 1966, 492AP/36.

<sup>4</sup> See David S. Yost, ‘The US debate on NATO nuclear deterrence’ in *International Affairs*, lxxxvii (2011), pp.1401-1438; Walter Schütze, ‘La France et l’OTAN’ in *Politique étrangère*, xxxi (1966), pp.109-118; Aurélien Poilbout, ‘Quelle stratégie nucléaire pour la France? L’armée de l’Air et le nucléaire tactique intégré à l’OTAN (1962-1966)’ in *Revue Historique des Armées*, cclxii (2011), pp.46-53.

goal of becoming an intermediary between the superpowers. The first section of this chapter considers the planning, which underpinned the French decision to withdraw from NATO, and its after-effects. The 14<sup>th</sup> session of the *Cours Supérieur Inter-armée* in June 1962 was the first instance when French military decision-makers had undertaken to ascertain France's ability to act as a nuclear power outside of the integrated command structure. Exercises AZAZEL and AQUILON, conducted by the *Cours Supérieur Inter-armée*, will be consulted as key case studies for the understanding of France's departure from NATO. The *Général d'Armée* Charles Ailleret, who coordinated the *force de frappe*, used *études particulières* to investigate France's readiness to separate from NATO.<sup>5</sup> By studying the *études particulières*, this chapter breaks new ground by critically analysing the means that the French military used to ascertain France's ability to act outside of the Atlantic Alliance. Therefore, it goes beyond pre-existing studies since previous accounts deal with well-known events in the build-up to French withdrawal, such as the removal of forces from the Mediterranean Fleet in March 1959. Whereas this thesis explores of minutiae of the preparation for French departure, including the nuclearisation of French military hardware.

This chapter's main consideration will be the tumultuous nature of Franco-British relations following France's withdrawal from the Atlantic Alliance. Central to this discussion will be interactions between British Labour politicians and Gaullist ministers around the European military integration within the context of both NATO and the European Community. In addition, the strength of both countries' military positions will be considered against the backdrop of domestic issues, such as the necessary devaluation of the Pound sterling between 1967 and 1968, and the Paris riots in 1968 which fundamentally undermined de Gaulle's standing as French President.<sup>6</sup> As we shall see, the decision to withdraw British forces from East of Suez correlated sharply to currency devaluations, which negatively impacted Britain's standing as an influential player on the world stage. Similarly, the Mai '68 revolution marked the nadir for Gaullist policies of *grandeur* as French citizens openly – and violently – rejected de Gaulle's continued leadership of France. Ultimately, the Soames Affair – a minor diplomatic dispute which arose from British leaks of a lunchtime meeting between de Gaulle and British Ambassador in Paris Christopher Soames – must be

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<sup>5</sup> Charles Ailleret, 'Défense dirigée et défense tous azimuts' in *Revue de Défense nationale*, cclxiii (1967), pp.1923-1932; SHD, Journal Officiel du 25 février 1962, no. 47, 24 février 1962, GR/23/S/8.

<sup>6</sup> Emilie Comes, *Mai 1968; La France paralysée* (Namur, 2015), p.29; TNA, Public Expenditure: Post-devaluation measures – Further Defence Cuts; Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Defence, CC(68)11, 3 January 1968, CAB/129/135/11; Bibliothèque nationale de France [BNF], Citroën. Vive la résistance prolétarienne [affiche texte], mai 1968.

investigated to understand the extent of the divisions in British and French viewpoints. The affair offers an interesting case study since de Gaulle intended to soften his anti-British stance towards EC membership, in order to formulate a new European identity whilst negating West German resurgence on the continent.<sup>7</sup> British Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart's decision to share de Gaulle's proposals for Franco-British cooperation within the Community provoked deep mistrust between France and its European allies. Thus, this chapter will overturn previous studies by illustrating that 'an unbroken continuum' between beneficial cooperation and strong bilateral relations does not in-fact exist.<sup>8</sup> Rather, the historical reality is much more complex given that it was the desire for reconciliation between de Gaulle and Soames that allowed the former's successor George Pompidou the opportunity for renewing the Franco-British working partnership.

### **Attitudes of obstruction**

The rationale for the French departure from NATO can be found in the aftermath of the Suez Crisis. While the aspiration to remove France from the NATO command structure has typically been associated with de Gaulle's politics of *grandeur*, French naval commander Admiral Pierre Barjot first advocated avoiding 'mainstream integration into NATO despite years of membership' following the failed Franco-British-Israeli cooperation during the Suez Crisis of 1956.<sup>9</sup> The French political elites largely ignored Barjot's advice until de Gaulle returned to power in 1958. Withdrawing from NATO command structures was an integral part of Gaullist foreign and defence policies from 1962 onwards, particularly as it fitted in with the French President's political narrative. De Gaulle's aim at fostering divisions within the Atlantic Alliance stemmed from his resentment at US political and military personnel for not consulting European partners on matters of NATO policy, as evidenced by the failed discussions around the MLF from January 1963 to March 1966.<sup>10</sup> French military personnel perceived involvement in NATO training exercises throughout the early 1960s as a hindrance. French Colonel Jost indicated, during the NATO DAVOUT exercise of 1961, that it was difficult to 'understand all the fruits of our labour as one was entitle to expect' with

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<sup>7</sup> Moreau Defarges, 'L'Europe à re-formuler. La Communauté au lendemain de la clarification d'Athènes' in *Politique étrangère*, xlix (1984), p.32.

<sup>8</sup> Glenn H. Synder, *Alliance politics* (Ithaca, 2007), p.2.

<sup>9</sup> SHD, Analyse du Rapport sur l'Opération d'Egypte, 31 décembre 1956, GR/9/U/11.

<sup>10</sup> Philip G. Cerny, *The politics of grandeur; Ideological aspects of de Gaulle's foreign policy* (Cambridge, 1980), p.177.



regards to the creation of a *force de frappe*.<sup>11</sup> Under the advice of the Prime Minister Michel Debré, Interior Minister Roger Frey and Minister of the Armies Pierre Messmer, de Gaulle issued Decree 62-206, calling for the ‘reorganisation of responsibilities concerning territorial defence’ on 24 February 1962.<sup>12</sup> In earnest, Messmer and the coordinator of nuclear strategy Ailleret began devising scenarios which would test France’s ability to exercise its defence policy without the support of NATO allies in the event of a nuclear attack from the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup> Thus from 1962 to 1966, the French priority lay at redefining their defence policy outside of the Alliance framework, which went against the prevailing trends in European politico-military discourse, especially as Italian President Giuseppe Saragat stressed ‘Europe’s destiny is inseparable from the Atlantic entity.’<sup>14</sup>

The redefinition of French defence was achieved by two separate military exercises entitled AZAZEL and AQUILON, conducted in February 1962 and December 1963 respectively. Both exercises were designed on the basis that France would introduce a strategic nuclear deterrent. AZAZEL began as a review of existing French military structures to revolutionise the national defence groundwork. Ailleret considered the creation of a nuclear element for all sections of the French armed forces as a means of overcoming the perceived fallibility of NATO in orchestrating a response to Soviet nuclear attack. In a letter to Messmer, Ailleret wrote that ‘the NATO Blue Forces [military units which act as friendly forces in exercises] were inferior in establishing an initial response to a surprise action on one of their stations.’<sup>15</sup> Part of assessing the viability of a new nuclear deterrent outside of the Alliance purview required extensive testing of military facilities. On 4 September 1962, after coordinating tests of *Base Aérienne 942* in Mont Verdun, Lyon, Ailleret reported that the base could act as an efficient centre for strategic decision-making following its ‘activation in a period of grave tensions’ – namely, a national invasion or nuclear attack from Soviet forces.<sup>16</sup> *Commissaire Principal* Galtier of the *Cours Supérieur Inter-armée* oversaw the necessary preparations of *Base Aérienne 942*, including the construction of an underground

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<sup>11</sup> SHD, Note de Présentation du « Dossier Allège » des Manœuvres Nationales 1962, [undated], Pièce 0-1, GR/23/S/8.

<sup>12</sup> SHD, Journal Officiel du 25 février 1962, no. 47, 24 février 1962, GR/23/S/8.

<sup>13</sup> Freedman and Michaels, *The Evolution of nuclear strategy*, p.356.

<sup>14</sup> ‘Le destin de l’Europe est inséparable de l’entité atlantique’, see *Le Monde*, 21 février 1964, cited in Serge Bernstein, ‘L’Italie dans la pensée et le discours du général De Gaulle de 1958 à 1969’ in *De Gaulle et l’Italie. Actes du colloque de Rome, 1<sup>er</sup>-3 mars 1990* (Rome, 1997), p.77.

<sup>15</sup> SHD, Ailleret to Messmer, 1 septembre 1962, GR/23/S/8/A.

<sup>16</sup> SHD, Exercice AZAZEL – Note de Présentation, Pièce G-01, [undated, but 1962], GR/23/S/8; Philip M. Williams, David Goldey and Martin Harrison, *French Politicians and Elections, 1951-1969* (Cambridge, 1970), 188.

command facility to withstand a nuclear attack.<sup>17</sup> The centring of French military in the south of the country was a strategic decision linked to de Gaulle's European ambitions, as the integration of states in the south of continent would strengthen any aspect of a European defence union.<sup>18</sup> While Frédéric Mauro and Olivier Jehin criticised the rationale of AZAZEL, supporting NATO's role in protecting Western Europe from the 'brutal stranglefall' of Soviet attack; AZAZEL allowed de Gaulle to resurrect a pre-conceived idea from the Fourth Republic centred on organising a 'common foreign policy' between EC countries, which would force the United States to treat France as a power of equal stature within the international community.<sup>19</sup> This *Europe puissance* idea possessed a military dimension, which affirmed France could survive as a nuclear power while abandoning integration into NATO.<sup>20</sup>

The push towards an independent European defence entity under French control aroused the suspicions of the British government. British Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart was particularly concerned since 'Gaullist France already stands aside from the Western Alliance', and warnings from the President of the Commission of the EEC Professor Walter Hallstein in early 1966 appeared to be coming to fruition.<sup>21</sup> Hallstein envisaged a three-tiered European Community project, which promoted unity on political and economic issues, but most importantly on the question of continental defence – 'the Community [is] a three-staged rocket of which the first stage is economics, the second politics and the third defence.'<sup>22</sup> The main issue for Stewart was the threat France would pose outside of the NATO remit. In February 1966, prior to de Gaulle's announcement of French secession, Stewart proposed a change to British defence strategies in direct opposition to Gaullist policy. Stewart stated:

...we had two major areas. The first was to be a position to defend the United Kingdom and our freedom. The Atlantic Alliance was of primary importance in this regard and it would be important that we should not disrupt it by decisions relating to the stationing of our forces in Europe... The second aim was to play in an unstable

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<sup>17</sup> William M. Arkin and Richard W. Fieldhouse, *Nuclear Battlefields: Global links in the arms race* (Cambridge Mass., 1985), 284.

<sup>18</sup> Jean-Louis Guigou and Pierre Bechouche, *Afrique, Méditerranée, Europe; La verticule de l'avenir* (Brussels, 2017), p.19.

<sup>19</sup> Schwabe, 'The Three Designs', p.10.

<sup>20</sup> Frédéric Mauro and Olivier Jehin, *Défendre l'Europe; Plaidoyer pour une armée européenne* (Paris, 2019), pp.31-2.

<sup>21</sup> TNA, France: General de Gaulle's foreign policy over the next two years, C(66)16, 28 January 1966, CAB/129/124/16; Frank Bärenbrinker, 'Hallstein's conception of Europe before assuming office in the Commission' in Wilfried Loth, William Wallace and Wolfgang Wessels (eds), *Walter Hallstein; The forgotten European?* (Basingstoke, 1998), p.84.

<sup>22</sup> TNA, Extract from 1966 Euro Paper, [undated, but January 1966], FO/371/118579.

world a proper part, commensurate with our resources, in the preservation of world peace.<sup>23</sup>

Membership of the Atlantic Alliance was essential to the progression of the British idea towards European integration. Therefore, the decision to quit the Atlantic Alliance placed Britain and France on conflicting trajectories, with the former considering it impossible to play a world role outside of an already established multilateral organisation. De Gaulle sought to reform the EC in line with Hallstein's view of a three-tiered organisation. The French President's move towards creating a Third Power on the European continent went against the grain of French political opinion, as Democratic Leftist Édouard Bonnefous argued that European defence should be concentrated around a Franco-British axis.<sup>24</sup> On 21 February 1966 President de Gaulle announced the beginning of French departure from the command structure of the Atlantic Alliance. French Prime Minister Georges Pompidou and his deputy minister René Galy-Dejean hailed this move as it protected national sovereignty, which allowed the French to further finance the 'responsible administration' of the developing nuclear force.<sup>25</sup> The French solution to European defence was to renounce dependence on the United States with the ulterior aim of undermining NATO as a counterbalance to the Warsaw Pact countries.<sup>26</sup> Ultimately, France was unsuccessful in achieving this as its NATO allies were fully aware of their intentions. In January 1966, Stewart delivered a memorandum to the Cabinet underpinning Gaullist intentions towards NATO, thus depriving the French departure of any real shock. British policy-makers clearly understood the French approach towards military integration in the context of the Atlantic Alliance. Stewart stated France 'frequently resorted to an attitude of obstruction... she rejects co-ordinated policy or military integration.'<sup>27</sup> He went further and criticised France's secession from NATO as an 'expensive' and 'time-wasting' move, but was adamant that the Alliance must 'survive without France.'<sup>28</sup> This aggressive attitude towards French withdrawal contradicted heavily with the more amicable state of Franco-British relations, which marked Prime Minister Harold Wilson's first official visit to Paris on 2 April 1965. Wilson stressed the importance of Franco-British cooperation, especially in the military field since both

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<sup>23</sup> TNA, Conclusions from a meeting of the Cabinet, 14 February 1966, CC8(66), CAB/128/41/8.

<sup>24</sup> Bonnefous was a political philosopher and French senator (1958-86), as well as an anglophile and anti-German, see Antoine Marès, 'La genèse de la pensée d'Édouard Bonnefous en politique étrangère' in Thierry de Montbrial and Georges-Henri Soutou (eds), *La défense de l'Europe; Entre Alliance Atlantique et Europe de la défense* (Paris, 2015), p.36.

<sup>25</sup> AN, correspondences de Pompidou, [undated, but March 1966], AG/5(2)/1200.

<sup>26</sup> Todorov, 'L'Europe puissance', p.12.

<sup>27</sup> TNA, France: General de Gaulle's Foreign Policy over the next two years, C (66) 16, 28 January 1966, CAB/129/124/16.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

countries agreed on the construction of the SEPECAT Jaguar aircraft in 1966 as a project for progressing European military planning during the Cold War.<sup>29</sup> While not sparking the collapse of the Atlantic Alliance, French departure from NATO caused a period of instability for the Franco-British partnership as Britain reaffirmed its commitment to providing submerged submarines as hardware to the command structure on 13 April 1966.<sup>30</sup>

By the middle of 1966, the French departure from the Atlantic Alliance adversely impacted European expansion within the EC rather than its desired effect. The withdrawal from NATO took place against the backdrop of division between the Six. France had removed its permanent representative Jean-Marc Boegner from EC institutions due to the proposed introduction of agricultural reforms for EC member states on the 1 July 1965. The Five European partners considered French actions as ‘a more long-term tactical manoeuvre’ since de Gaulle had clarified his opposition to supranationality from the Franco-German Colombey summit of September 1958.<sup>31</sup> The lack of any ‘specific mention in the Treaties’ [of Rome] concerning the move from sovereign decision-making apparatus to a supranational body responsible for Community organisation opened the door to the empty chair crisis according to Étienne Davignon, the Head of Cabinet of the Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, this withdrawal from EC and NATO hierarchies prompted accusations of undermining West European political and defence integration from France’s allies. The British agreed that French withdrawal from these organisations required a re-evaluation of existing policies given the absence of such a vital power to European integration processes.<sup>33</sup> Stewart determined that a review of existing procedures was necessary since the French grand design strategy was ‘designed to cause confusion and division within the Western Alliance and [was] operating against any fundamental improvement in East-West relations.’<sup>34</sup>

British and US pressures induced a dramatic reappraisal of the Alliance characteristics. The pre-existing military strategy – MC 14/2 – was considered inflexible

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<sup>29</sup> TNA, Jaguar aircraft: prototype contract, May 1966, AVIA/65/1970; Joanne Wright, ‘The Cold War, European Community and Anglo-French relations, 1958-1998’ in Alan Sharp and Glyn Stone (eds), *Anglo-French Relations in the Twentieth Century; Rivalry and Cooperation* (London, 2000), p.329.

<sup>30</sup> NATO, Summary Record of 704<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Group, Record 704, 20 April 1966, SG/704/66.

<sup>31</sup> Archives Nationales du Luxembourg [ANL], Rolf Lahr to Pierre Pescatore, Note concerning the position of Luxembourg and Germany on the empty chair crisis, 20 July 1965, AE 15436.

<sup>32</sup> CVCE, Interview d’Étienne Davignon, 11 December 2007.

<sup>33</sup> Jérôme Penez, ‘La France et L’Otan (1949-1996) ‘ in *Vingtième Siècle, revue d’histoire*, liii (1997), p.155.

<sup>34</sup> TNA, France: General de Gaulle’s foreign policy over the next two years, C(66)16, 28 January 1966, CAB/129/124/16.

since it focused solely on increasing conventional defence on the European continent.<sup>35</sup> The deployment of manpower and hardware was well-defined in the Atlantic context. However, a reasonable framework against Soviet nuclear and psychological warfare remained unconstructed. Following the French withdrawal, Britain and the United States could not agree on a means of multilateral nuclear cooperation. The dissolution of the multilateral nuclear force in May 1965 left a void in NATO nuclear strategy. Thus on 16 December 1966, a NATO ministerial committee accepted a proposal from the Belgian Foreign Minister Pierre Harmel to ‘undertake a broad analysis of international developments since the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949.’<sup>36</sup> The lack of a combat structure against Soviet nuclear and psychological warfare contrasted to the ‘third way’ for European defence which de Gaulle had devised. While the *force de frappe* was the nuclear alternative to European defence, de Gaulle suggested that this force, which lacked surface-to-surface nuclear missiles, was sufficient as a basis for a European defence community.<sup>37</sup> Even with the divisions between France and NATO member states on nuclear matters, the former was also prepared to combat Soviet psychological tactics. During the immediate aftermath of the Suez Crisis, the French military hierarchy developed a capacity for tackling the growth of Communist ideology in Eastern and Central European states. This capacity culminated in the *Arc-en-Ciel* programme which sought to dilute the dissemination of Austrian Socialist Party pamphlets in March 1963 to ‘maintain a period of real stability as part of [French] foreign policy.’<sup>38</sup> The pre-existing capabilities combined with the French government’s ability to exercise its own sovereignty meant that France could develop alternative concepts for European defence while the NATO allies debated more flexible possibilities in response to Soviet action.<sup>39</sup>

By January 1968, the nuclear question returned to the forefront of European military discussions. Frédéric Bozo argued that France’s departure from NATO disrupted the evolution of a new policy since a ‘double strategic dimension’ in European defence affairs would undermine US influence on Continental Europe.<sup>40</sup> This interpretation merits re-evaluation. The United States’ NATO allies turned against France and focused their

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<sup>35</sup> Despite being perceived as inflexible, MC 14/2 dictated the ‘Overall Strategic Concept for the Defence of the NATO Area’ and was designed to ‘supersede’ previous interpretations of European defence planning; NATO, Brief for the Council on Military Committee 14/2 (revised) and MC 48/2, 17 April 1957, SGWM/255/47.

<sup>36</sup> NATO, Report on the Future Tasks of the Alliance, 1 January 1968, IS/04/PDD/NP/1968.

<sup>37</sup> Crémieux, *Vers une Europe-puissance*, p.44.

<sup>38</sup> SHD, Situation de l’Autriche, Pièce D.20, mai 1963, GR/23/S/8.

<sup>39</sup> Patel and Kaiser, ‘Continuity and Change in European Cooperation during the Twentieth Century’, p.182.

<sup>40</sup> Frédéric Bozo, *La France et l’OTAN; De la guerre froide au nouvel ordre européen* (Paris, Masson, 1991), 81.

attentions towards the development of a new and flexible policy. Throughout 1967, Pierre Harmel, C.L. Patijn, Foy Kohler, J.H.A. Watson and Paul-Henri Spaak compiled reports on the future of Alliance activities. The result was conclusive with NATO strategy being divided into two distinct strands and the Harmel Report of 1967 was to be adopted as official policy. Harmel wrote that ‘Military security and a policy of détente are ... complimentary.’<sup>41</sup> Therefore NATO adopted a strategy of flexible response with diplomacy being considered a safer alternative to a possibility of military engagement.<sup>42</sup> When the conclusions of the Harmel Report were implemented, they were underpinned by the bipolarity of the international system. The previous strategic agreements concerning non-proliferation of nuclear weapons undermined their threat, with a policy of détente dictating interactions between the superpowers in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Bozo’s assessment of the impact of French secession must be overturned considering that France only granted lukewarm support as a means of establishing fruitful East-West relations.<sup>43</sup> De Gaulle’s preferred vision of using France’s newly-developed deterrent to create a European superpower, acting as an interlocutor between the United States and the Soviet Union, was in ruins. In sum, France’s departure from the integrated NATO command structure succeeded in spurring a shift in policy towards flexible response, rather than the intended purpose of the weakening the Atlantic Alliance and developing a European power bloc to mediate between the superpowers.<sup>44</sup>

Underpinning the conflicting trajectories of British and French defence planning was the threat of Soviet expansionism. While the PTBT restricted the testing of nuclear weapons, the Soviet atomic missile manufacturing outstretched anything which the Western allies could manage as ‘air defense installations would be destroyed by ICBMs or SLBMs [Submarine-launched ballistic missile] before they could be useful in a general nuclear war.’<sup>45</sup> The British particularly stressed the need for unity around the topic of European defence. The Minister for Housing and Local Government Richard Crossman ‘was concerned at the views of the Foreign Secretary... on our relations with Europe’ when Stewart openly criticised the French government’s decision to conduct nuclear tests in French Polynesia in

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<sup>41</sup> NATO, Report on the Future Tasks of the Alliance, 1 January 1968, IS/04/PDD/NP/1968.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Kupiecki, ‘The Harmel Report and Lessons from NATO Dual-Track Policy’, *Polish Quarterly of International Affairs*, xxvi (2017), p.5.

<sup>43</sup> NATO, Summary record a meeting of the Council, item 184, 24 April 1968, C-R/(68)/19.

<sup>44</sup> Frédéric Bozo, *La politique étrangère de la France depuis 1945* (Paris, 2012), p.75.

<sup>45</sup> Lee C. Carpenter, *Memoirs of a Cold Warrior; The struggle for nuclear parity* (New York, 2009), p.64.

direct opposition to the conditions of the PTBT.<sup>46</sup> Thus, the progression of Soviet nuclear expansion added pressure to European integration. This division led to a critical juncture in the Franco-British working partnership. In spite of the agreement to manufacture the SEPECAT Jaguar aircraft, the Foreign Office informed Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh to enter negotiations with his 14 NATO counterparts to marginalise France from Atlantic Alliance and WEU military matters.<sup>47</sup> Britain's efforts to isolate France within the international community were successful, but they had two significant impacts. Britain cemented its subservience to the United States by agreeing to a re-evaluation of Alliance structures, as NATO now acted as Britain's 'centre of gravity' in foreign policy decision-making; while the consolidation of European defence relations within the integrated military command framework succeeded in undermining the Franco-British relationship as it forced France to develop its nuclear capacity outside of the European continent – with testing being carried out in French Polynesia and North Africa.<sup>48</sup>

### **1968: The year of change and divergence**

The optimism surrounding integration into the European Communities crumbled as a result of an unproductive Franco-British relationship. For Britain, the adaptation of the Alliance structures following French withdrawal took place against the backdrop of their second failed application to join the EC on 27 November 1967. Despite de Gaulle's second rejection of British membership, de Gaulle stated in a speech to British Ambassador to Paris Sir Patrick Reilly that although Britain and France remained at odds over the European project, he was thankful that they had reached a stage of 'reciprocal friendship' and 'cooperation.'<sup>49</sup> De Gaulle's sudden openness to cooperation with Britain requires discussion. In fact, political interplay between both countries was at a new low. This was in direct contrast to the strong collaboration between British and French industries over technological innovations. Concorde and the SEPECAT Jaguar represent these new developments. The Jaguar entered squadron service in 1973.<sup>50</sup> Beneficial bilateral relations did not extend into the politico-

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<sup>46</sup> TNA, Conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet, CC 34(66), 7 July 1966, CAB/128/41/34.

<sup>47</sup> TNA, FO to UK Delegation to NATO, 8 March 1966, PREM/13/1042.

<sup>48</sup> SHD, Exercice BLEU-OUTRE-MER, Exempleire 175/180, [no specific date], GR/23/S/8; Joseph Frankel, *British foreign policy 1945-1973* (London, 1975), p.173; Georges-Henri Soutou, *La guerre de Cinquante Ans; Les relations Est-Ouest 1943-1990* (Paris, 1990), p.447; James Ellison, 'Defeating the General: Anglo-American relations, Europe and the NATO crisis of 1966' in *Cold War History*, vi (2006), p.93.

<sup>49</sup> AN, Toast prononce par le Général de Gaulle à l'issue du déjeuner offert, au Palais de l'Elysée, 10 Sept 1968, AG/5(1)/1448.

<sup>50</sup> CAC, Note sur la coopération franco-britannique dans le domaine de l'aéronautique civile [undated], SOAM 4/2/1.

military field. Reilly's successor, Christopher Soames, spoke of needing 'to rise above present controversies' with regards to nuclear weapons development.<sup>51</sup> The French advocated separate policies with an abrupt distinction to treaties already subscribed to by the British - namely the Report of the Council on the Future Tasks of the Alliance and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Cross-channel rivalry marked the period from March 1966 to May 1968. David Reynolds has described Franco-British rivalry experiencing a period of renewal over an integration framework for Continental Europe.<sup>52</sup> The divergence over economic affairs also finds its footing in the military field. De Gaulle authorised Ailleret to begin a new series of nuclear tests despite the general consensus of Western allies towards pursuing non-proliferation. From 19 July 1966 to August 1968, the French military carried out a series of nuclear and atomic bomb tests at Moruroa-atoll in the Tuamotu Archipelago in French Polynesia.<sup>53</sup> The purpose of these tests was simple: to refine and develop the strategic nuclear force to cement French standing between the superpowers in the international community. The Labour government found the French nuclear tests difficult to countenance as there was a correlation in thinking between those who supported a European customs union and the development of a European 'Third Force.'<sup>54</sup> Unlike the French military, which was preparing for incorporating its *force de frappe* into a European defence community, the Atlantic Alliance was critical to the orientation of British nuclear defence policy.<sup>55</sup> As part of this orientation, 50 per cent of British overseas defence expenditure was to be 'roughly divided' to the Atlantic Alliance.<sup>56</sup>

This divergence became more apparent after the signing of the NPT. When the PTBT came into effect in September 1968, it soon became clear that nuclear tests in earth's atmosphere, outer space and underwater could proceed undetected.<sup>57</sup> However, the political will existed between Britain, the United States and Soviet Union to correct these oversights and advance discussions around the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. By 1967, the

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<sup>51</sup> CAC, 'French Defence Policy', speech delivered to selected audience at the Institute for Strategic Studies, 4 July 1968, SOAM 4/2/1.

<sup>52</sup> David Reynolds, *Britannia overruled; British policy and World power in the Twentieth Century* (Harlow, Longman, 2000), p.21.

<sup>53</sup> AN, Force de frappe, F60bis 5950, [undated], 19820745/63.

<sup>54</sup> Stephen George, *An awkward partnership; Britain in the European Community* (Oxford, 1990), p.18.

<sup>55</sup> TNA, Conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet, 14 February 1966, CC8(66), CAB/128/41/8.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> M.I. Shaker, 'The third NPT review conference: Issues and prospects' in David B. Dewitt (ed), *Nuclear non-proliferation and global security* (New York, 1987), pp.5-6.



United States reached a zenith of 31,225 nuclear weapons at various states of readiness, with the Soviet Union exceeding this figure. Thus the 1963 controls were seen as untenable given the continuing nuclear tests taking place. The General Assembly of the UN adopted non-proliferation solutions throughout the 1960s, and the British Foreign Secretary added his country's support to the growing trend of nuclear disarmament.<sup>58</sup> On 18 January 1968 disarmament spokespeople from the United States and Soviet Union met in Geneva to finalise the details of the NPT. The outcome of this meeting was decisive. Non-nuclear weapons states (NNWSs) could no longer develop a capacity for such a combat system. In addition, the Soviet Union, United States and other states with nuclear weapons could not aid NNWSs in acquiring such a capacity.<sup>59</sup> Foreign Secretary Stewart argued that 'there was a possibility that the treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons... would be open for signature in London, Washington and Moscow at an early date, perhaps 1<sup>st</sup> July.'<sup>60</sup> Stewart viewed adherence to this treaty as a necessary settlement to ensure the Soviet Union 'accommodated the UN Charter' and that the main crux of allied foreign policy was 'the quest for true détente' between the opposing power blocs.<sup>61</sup> British accession to the NPT weakened the bilateral partnership with France once again. Article IV of the NPT forbade the sharing of military nuclear capabilities between nation states, thereby hindering de Gaulle's proposal for a *Europe puissance* gaining any practical momentum.<sup>62</sup> Further institutionalisation of nuclear non-proliferation followed the trend of the PTBT. Once again, Franco-British politico-military ambitions did not feature prominently in US-USSR confabulations on non-proliferation, even though they were critically undermined by the restrictions on non-transfer of nuclear materials between states particularly as the British nuclear deterrent depended on the supply of up-to-date US hardware to remain effective.

In conjunction with French withdrawal from NATO, de Gaulle's decision not to endorse the NPT isolated France on the global stage. The threat of Soviet incursion into Western Europe persisted despite the creation of the NPT. On 21 August 1968, Soviet soldiers marched into Prague to suppress the liberalisation of Czechoslovakia. The Soviet intervention was a result of a series of liberalising reforms, which brought Czechoslovak

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<sup>58</sup> TNA, Non-Proliferation [sic] treaty, 16 January 1968, FO/371/187462.

<sup>59</sup> These states included the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council – the United States, Soviet Union, Britain, France and China; see Jean Jalouneix, *Elements of security and non-proliferation* (Paris, 2017), p.56; Manseok Lee and Michael Nacht, 'Challenges to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty' in *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, xiv (2020), p.99.

<sup>60</sup> TNA, Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, CC(68), 20 June 1968, CAB/128/43/31.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid; CAC, Lord Gladwyn to Eugene V. Rostow, 28 October 1975, GLAD/1/4/17.

<sup>62</sup> Jean Klein, 'Vers le Traité de non-prolifération' in *Politique étrangère*, ii (1968), p.236.

trade further in line with the capitalist nations of Western Europe.<sup>63</sup> The allied response was to condemn Soviet actions, but Britain and the United States did not ‘rush to the support of the “flexible response”’ which underpinned NATO strategy.<sup>64</sup> While Britain and France supported the general European reaction of condemning the invasion of Czechoslovakia, they were in two different camps with regards to practical actions. French absence from NATO meant that pan-European discussions vis-à-vis further action against the Soviet Union was centred within the WEU. Even in a consultative forum, the divisions between member states were apparent. German Vice-Chancellor Willy Brandt led calls for cross-organisational discussions between the WEU and NATO as to a combined response to hostile Soviet intervention.<sup>65</sup> This call frustrated French Foreign Minister Debré who did not see the need for such collaboration, stating ‘the territory of the WEU states was not threatened by the processes’ which arose after the Soviet invasion.<sup>66</sup> German Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger preferred to consult with Britain over the Czechoslovak crisis. The Germans threw their weight behind the British whose main aim during the crisis was to ‘maintain the strength and efficiency of the North Atlantic Alliance’ and seek ‘conciliation with the Soviet Union... in greater things like practical proposals for disarmament.’<sup>67</sup> Thus, the French became increasingly isolated from its European partners. The remaining WEU partners agreed on referring the matter to the British as no arrangement around ‘a declaration of support for the Czechoslovak government’ could be reached due to French intransigence.<sup>68</sup> Despite this decision, the British were not in favour of a ‘declaration on Europe.’ Foreign Office officials dismissed any common declaration on the grounds that Western nations could not ‘help the liberals in Eastern Europe.’<sup>69</sup>

The differing stances over the Czechoslovak crisis made Franco-British reconciliation unlikely. Following the WEU meeting on 22 August 1968, the general European politico-military stance contrasted greatly with one held by the French.<sup>70</sup> In the immediate aftermath of the WEU consultation, French government spokesperson Jean-Claude Servan-Schreiber

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<sup>63</sup> René Lourau, ‘Prague la cite impossible’ in *L’Homme et la société*, xiii (1969), p.193.

<sup>64</sup> Response of the NATO countries to the invasion of Czechoslovakia, 4 November 1968, *FRUS* 1964-68, XIII, pp.778-80. For a detailed account of the British Labour government’s immediate response to the Czechoslovak crisis, see Young, *The Labour governments 1964-70*, pp.132-134.

<sup>65</sup> Henning Turk, *Die Europapolitik der GroBen Koalition 1966-69* (Munich, 2006), p.176.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> TNA, Czechoslovakia – Note by the Deputy Secretary of the Cabinet, C(68) 97, 23 August 1968, CAB/129/138/17.

<sup>68</sup> Turk, *Die Europapolitik der GroBen Koalition 1966-69*, pp.176, 190.

<sup>69</sup> Geraint Hughes, ‘British policy towards Eastern Europe and the impact of the “Prague Spring”, 1964-68’ in *Cold War History*, iv (2004), p.125.

<sup>70</sup> Nicolas Quillet, *Une Europe de la sécurité?* (Paris, 2011), pp.9-10.

told *Régie française de publicité* (RFP) that ‘Russian action in Czechoslovakia is due to “Yalta.”’<sup>71</sup> Servan-Schreiber’s assertion that the self-determination enshrined in Central and Eastern European countries acted as a pretext to Soviet invasion was incompatible with the general consensus of Western European politicians. For instance, Sir Geoffrey de Freitas, the President of the Council of Europe deplored Soviet actions stating:

The fact that Soviet Russia has once again chosen to use force against an independent and friendly neighbouring state cannot fail to affect the attitude of the Assembly to East West cooperation.<sup>72</sup>

In the same vein, the Liberal Party representative on Foreign Affairs Lord Gladwyn criticised Servan-Schreiber’s comments that ‘the Russian aggression would never have happened if Czechoslovakia had had one atom bomb.’<sup>73</sup> Gladwyn’s argument represented an instance of cross-party agreement over the Czechoslovak situation as the government aimed at avoiding confrontation with the Soviet Union.<sup>74</sup> De Gaulle came under intense criticism from the British for his interpretation of events in Czechoslovakia. The French President openly disparaged the NATO policy of détente, which he viewed as ineffective ‘in the face of a belligerent Soviet Union.’<sup>75</sup> De Gaulle refused to openly support János Kádár’s Czechoslovak government since the Gaullist government was dependent on Soviet support to persuade Communist voters in France to endorse their position of power. French reticence towards Kádár’s threat to Communist rule in Czechoslovakia stemmed also from de Gaulle’s desire to build a European politico-military entity ‘from the Atlantic to the Urals.’<sup>76</sup> The converging domestic and foreign factors placed France – and its grand design idea – at odds with the other allied nations, thus isolating it from its Western partners.

French isolation had undesired consequences for the British and US desire of ratifying the NPT. The ‘arid frigidity’ of France towards the growing trends around nuclear non-proliferation and détente also impaired any chance of improving the poor state of Franco-British relations, according to Foreign Secretary George Brown.<sup>77</sup> The French government

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<sup>71</sup> CAC, ‘Yalta Legend’ in *The Times*, 24 August 1968, GLAD/1/4/15.

<sup>72</sup> CAC, Council of Europe President deplores Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, 8 August 1968, GLAD 1/4/15.

<sup>73</sup> CAC, Lord Gladwyn to Editor of *The Times*, 23 August 1968, GLAD 1/4/15.

<sup>74</sup> ‘There was at present a general understanding that the West would not intervene against the Soviet Union in Soviet bloc countries and that Soviet intervention in Berlin or in a NATO country would involve risk of general war’, see TNA, Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, CC(68), 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1968, CAB/128/43/38.

<sup>75</sup> Cerny, *The politics of grandeur*, p.148.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p.156; Pierre Bouillon, ‘La politique hongroise de la France entre 1967 et 1973’ in *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire*, cxxv (2015), p.98.

<sup>77</sup> George Brown, *In my way; The political memoirs of Lord George-Brown* (London, 1971), p.131.

refused to endorse the NPT, which once again not only placed it at cross purposes with Britain and the United States, but also its European partners. Indeed from 19 February 1968, the Italian government had backed the principal powers within NATO in adding safeguards to the proliferation of nuclear materials for military purposes.<sup>78</sup> Despite US Secretary of State Dean Rusk considering the NPT as inadequate in comparison to ‘other arms control measure,’ the US government pushed for the ratification of the NPT in order to restrict countries ‘in China’s shadow’ from following their lead in developing a credible nuclear deterrent.<sup>79</sup> Rusk understood the NPT was a viable alternative to ensuring the progressive cessation of nuclear arms development. In turn, the policy of détente became entrenched in exchanges between Eastern and Western nations, as Article VI of the treaty encouraged nation states ‘to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating... to nuclear disarmament.’<sup>80</sup> Eventually, in March 1969, the US Congress officially ratified the NPT meaning the treaty became a launching point for further negotiations concerning arms control measures. French intransigence towards the NPT derived from the *force de frappe*’s role in ‘maintaining France’s global standing.’<sup>81</sup> Since the French nuclear force was designed to be the crux of a European deterrent, the idea of non-proliferation of atomic weapons contradicted the Gaullist vision for a European politico-military entity. France, therefore, found itself amid a period of isolation whereupon its desire to play a leadership role on the European continent looked very distant.

### **‘This war which is going on between us’**

The differences in nuclear weapons’ policies had a detrimental impact on Franco-British politico-military relations, and for British foreign policy towards European integration. Despite the two previous vetoes, the British government continued to pursue accession to the EC. The other Five EC members were frustrated with de Gaulle for blocking Britain’s entry into the Communities. The ratification of the NPT was one of two key decisions, which allowed Britain to bring its defence expenditure under economic control. The Labour government experienced a serious balance-of-payments crisis since 1964 and decided to authorise the devaluation of sterling currency. This decision impacted heavily on the maintenance of British military deployment overseas. To countenance the impacts of

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<sup>78</sup> Françoise Moussu, ‘Chronologie des faits internationaux d’ordre juridique – 1967’ in *Annuaire Français de Droit International*, xiii (1967), p.928.

<sup>79</sup> Dean Rusk, *As I saw it: A Secretary of State’s memoirs* (London, 1990), p.286.

<sup>80</sup> Biad Abdelwahab, ‘Between shadow and light: The Treaty of the Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons forty years on’ in *Nuclear Law Bulletin*, lxxxvi (2010), p.6.

<sup>81</sup> Fresnoy, ‘Une force nucléaire indépendant’, p.390.

devaluation on British defence policy, the Navy Department conducted studies to use nuclear submarines East of Suez.<sup>82</sup> These studies were important to maintaining British defence policy, since ‘individual decisions will have implications which affect the size and shape of all three Services.’<sup>83</sup> Geo-politics clearly influenced the decision to review British defence East of Suez. A top secret Cabinet file revealed political thinking in British decision-making, as France was perceived as the main beneficiary of British devaluation.<sup>84</sup> Wilson stated ‘it had been right to consider the issue of devaluation in the context of the approach to Europe.’<sup>85</sup> In this case, Wilson was mindful of the continued French presence in Polynesia, where nuclear weapons tests continued from 24 August 1968 until 29 July 1972. Thus, being one of three main signatories of the NPT, Britain understood the need to keep French nuclear tests in check.<sup>86</sup> The British Cabinet considered the lack of a counterbalance to French nuclear tests might encourage ‘certain cases for retaliatory’ action, thus the need to maintain a presence East of Suez was apparent, especially since John Birch, a foreign official attached to UK Delegation in Geneva characterised British nuclear policy as ‘the hope... we would be able to resume the partial Test Ban Treaty talks and turn them into a Comprehensive Test Ban, thereby banning all nuclear weapon test explosions.’<sup>87</sup> However after much debate, the British Cabinet decided to accelerate the withdrawal of all forces from East of Suez as Commonwealth Secretary George Thomas stated there was an ‘inseparable difficulty’ in maintaining NATO forces and deployments East of Suez.<sup>88</sup> Thus, France continued to carry out nuclear tests in French Polynesia unhindered as Britain prioritised the organisation of European defence within the Atlantic Alliance.

Wilson recognised that to achieve his new vision for the country, Britain needed to remedy its bilateral relationship with France. On the military front, Britain’s nuclear policy was secure. In 1968, the first Polaris submarine entered operations resulting in the United Kingdom becoming a secondary pillar of strategic decision-making.<sup>89</sup> However, the British needed to cement its military strategy within a European context. As a result of the balance-

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<sup>82</sup> Matthew Jones and John W. Young, ‘Polaris, East of Suez: British plans for a Nuclear force in the Indo-Pacific, 1964-1968’, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, xxxiii (2010), p 855.

<sup>83</sup> TNA, Public Expenditure: Post-devaluation measures – Further Defence Cuts; Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Defence, CC(68)11, 3 January 1968, CAB/129/135/11.

<sup>84</sup> TNA, Top Secret – No circulation record, CC(67)25, 30 April 1967, CAB/128/46/26.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Hervé Coutau-Bégaire, *Traité de stratégie* (Paris, 2006), p.730.

<sup>87</sup> CAC, Interview with John Birch, 23 March 2004, GBR/0014/DOHP 87.

<sup>88</sup> TNA, Public Expenditure: Post-devaluation measures – Further Defence Cuts; Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Defence, CC(68)11, 3 January 1968, CAB/129/135/11.

<sup>89</sup> Len Scott, ‘Labour and the bomb: the first 80 years’ in *International Affairs*, lxxxii (2006), p.690.

of-payments crisis, defence spending on Britain's NATO commitments declined to £4,142,000 from 1966.<sup>90</sup> The withdrawal from the East of Suez had a negative impact on British public consciousness. Wilson's vision of Britain being a leading European power in technological and military innovation was considered a failure, particularly by the Prime Minister's political adversaries. The chairman of the Conservative Group for Europe, Miles Hudson, argued that the United Kingdom needed to integrate further into organisations on the continent, otherwise 'Britain will have no special capability for use outside Europe.'<sup>91</sup> To combat the perception of British decline, the Defence White Paper of 1968 envisaged a reorientation of national defence towards a greater role on Continental Europe. Defence Minister Denis Healey wanted to use the White Paper to 'emphasise the positive aspects of the now primarily European role of the Services.'<sup>92</sup> The requirement for a European defence role meant that Franco-British relations needed to be repaired. The Defence Department within the Foreign Office was given responsibility for improving the bilateral partnership.<sup>93</sup> However, the government's Chief Scientific Adviser Solly Zuckerman advocated to the Prime Minister that the appointment of a new British Ambassador to Paris was paramount to achieving this aim, given Patrick Reilly's recent decision to step down from the role.<sup>94</sup> Zuckerman suggested Christopher Soames as a potential replacement for Reilly. Wilson, who had exchanged correspondence with Soames, agreed about his suitability for the role, given that he was an ardent European. Following his acceptance of the position, Soames argued to George Brown that 'it would be wrong to think of Britain in terms of an injured suitor' when trying to affect a deal with de Gaulle around EC accession.<sup>95</sup>

While de Gaulle argued in front of Patrick Reilly that Franco-British relations had improved by mid-1968, the historical reality is more complex. According to Alan Campbell, the Head of Chancery during the transition between Reilly and Soames in the embassy, de Gaulle 'did not attempt to rebut Sir Patrick Reilly's objection that France continued to oppose the main purpose of British European policy that is her desire to enter the European Community.'<sup>96</sup> The French President denounced the facets of British policy towards Europe.

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<sup>90</sup> CPA, 1965-66 Supplementary Estimates Defence (Central), [undated], E/3/3/69.

<sup>91</sup> CPA, East of Suez – Conservative Research Department, 21 April 1969, E/3/3/69.

<sup>92</sup> TNA, Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, 4 July 1968, CC (68), CAB/128/43/34.

<sup>93</sup> TNA, Defence White Paper – July 1968, Minutes of Meeting No. 22 of 1968, 4 April 1968, DEFE/4/227/22.

<sup>94</sup> CAC, Unpublished personal memoir, chapter 6 – first draft, 1985, SOAM 10/21; Mark Dunton, *Prime Ministers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century* (Yorkshire, 2021), p.63.

<sup>95</sup> CAC, Christopher Soames, Unpublished personal memoir, chapter 6 – first draft, 1985, SOAM 10/21.

<sup>96</sup> CAC, Alan Campbell, Memoir draft – *Embassy to France; An account of Anglo-French relations, 1968-1972* (London, 1982), p.8, SOAM 10/6.

De Gaulle's Anglophobia emanated from a historic resistance to cross-channel cooperation in the context of European integration. Alain Peyrefitte commented that de Gaulle criticised Britain for believing that it 'had safeguarded its autonomy' with its bilateral relationship with the United States.<sup>97</sup> The hostility of de Gaulle's political allies further exacerbated the French President's attitude towards British accession to the EC. Hervé Alphand, the Secretary General of the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, did not express much interest in 'brokering Britain's entry into EC,' going as far as to counsel de Gaulle against the advice of Michel Jobert, the Elysée Secretary General.<sup>98</sup> Jobert positively believed that British entry would be beneficial to the growth of the EC, placing him at variance with his colleagues in the French government. The friction which existed between French politicians only served to increase the tension in the Franco-British relationship. Thus, the installation of a pro-European Ambassador of Soames' calibre was a necessary move in mending the bilateral partnership.

On 17 September 1968, Soames and his wife arrived in Paris at Gare du Nord, where the acting *Chef du Protocole* received him on behalf of the French President.<sup>99</sup> De Gaulle did not invest much effort into the renewal of the Franco-British partnership at the time of Soames' installation. Rather his 'main interest was over the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia.'<sup>100</sup> Even though Soames quickly built up a rapport with high-ranking members of the French political classes, he had little interaction with de Gaulle. The French President wrote a note to Soames, which gave little optimism for renewing the bilateral relationship: 'We know who you are, and we know what you are here for!'<sup>101</sup> Despite the suspicion implied in the note, Soames had succeeded in his primary objective since his appointment – namely, building a recognisable profile among French political elites.<sup>102</sup> Debré networked closely with Soames in order to earn the British Ambassador an audience with de Gaulle, believing that the 'war which is going on between us' needed to be concluded.<sup>103</sup> Debré frequently referred to the Franco-British relationship as a 'war', thus illustrating the extent of the divisions between the two countries.<sup>104</sup> French isolation in the immediate

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<sup>97</sup> Alain Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle* (Paris, 1995), p.341.

<sup>98</sup> Op cit, p.46.

<sup>99</sup> CAC, The Arrival of Mr. And Mrs. Soames on 17 September, [undated], SOAM 3/1/4.

<sup>100</sup> CAC, Soames, Unpublished personal memoir, chapter 7 – second draft, 1985, SOAM 10/21.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Daniel Furby and N. Piers Ludlow, 'Christopher Soames, 1968-72' in Rogelia Pastor-Castro and John W. Young (eds), *The Paris Embassy; British ambassadors and Anglo-French relations 1944-79* (Basingstoke, 2013), p.142.

<sup>103</sup> CAC, Soames, Unpublished personal memoir, chapter 6 – first draft, 1985, SOAM 10/21.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

aftermath of the Czechoslovak crisis persuaded de Gaulle and his political allies to search for a new role in European affairs. The close cooperation between French and British industries over the SEPECAT Jaguar and Concorde forced de Gaulle to temper his resistance towards further enlargement of the European Communities.<sup>105</sup> Therefore, while France had succeeded in the mid-1960s by gaining a certain degree of freedom from NATO involvement, the events of 1968 – both internationally and domestically – forced the French government to re-evaluate its need for independence.<sup>106</sup>

De Gaulle's desire for France to play a leadership role in the European Communities remained a prerequisite to British accession. The parity between Britain and France in the military field was to affect economic considerations. Franco-British dialogue remained quiet between November 1968 and January 1969 as Ambassador Soames recuperated from a minor heart attack.<sup>107</sup> From the outbreak of the Czechoslovak crisis, Franco-British discourse changed from discussions around nuclear cooperation to technological collaboration which would involve fostering closer economic ties, as it became clear that achieving parity in atomic weapons with the superpowers was completely unrealistic. Prominent politicians including British MP Enoch Powell and French Prime Minister Maurice Couve de Murville were essential proponents of this new belief. Following the controversy of his well-known 1968 'Rivers of Blood' speech, Powell stated 'only conceivably if the object [sic] were to create a third nuclear arsenal to rival those of America and Russia could it be asserted that a very large economic unit would be necessary.'<sup>108</sup> Powell, who during the early 1960s toed the party line and begrudgingly supported nuclear weapons development, justified his departure from mainstream Conservative policy by pointing to the change in NATO defence planning. From February 1968, Powell called for an increase in NATO maritime forces to counteract the growing Soviet superiority in this area as it would increase the likelihood of a conventional war on sea or land, as opposed to the nuclear alternative.<sup>109</sup> De Gaulle followed a similar line of thinking and in January 1969 devised a new concept for Franco-British cooperation in economic affairs. This new project represented a move away from the Common Market, which was at the centre of the French 'Empty Chair' crisis from four years

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<sup>105</sup> Andrieu et al, *Dictionnaire de Gaulle*, p.35.

<sup>106</sup> James Ellison, 'Stabilising the West and looking to the East : Anglo-American relations, Europe and détente, 1965 to 1967' in N. Piers Ludlow (ed), *European integration and the Cold War; Ostpolitik-Westpolitik, 1965-1973* (Abingdon, 2007), p.124.

<sup>107</sup> CAC, Soames, Unpublished personal memoir, chapter 7 – second draft, 1985, SOAM 10/21.

<sup>108</sup> CAC, Speech by the Rt. Hon. J. Enoch Powell, MP at a public meeting at the Warley College of Technology, 5 September 1969, POLL 4/1/5.

<sup>109</sup> Corthorn, *Enoch Powell*, p.33.



earlier. On 4 February 1969, de Gaulle met with Soames in the Élysée Palace and presented his proposal for a FTA with Britain, Italy, West Germany and France as its leaders. In addition to this proposal, Franco-British military cooperation was to be strengthened. British accession to this FTA lynched on two important concessions. Britain's readiness to act as political leader within an EPU, and the need for both countries to cooperate over the creation of a nuclear arsenal thus aiding France in achieving its grand design concept of rendering NATO ineffective.<sup>110</sup>

### *L'affaire Soames*

The French President's proposal provoked a strong response from the British government. De Gaulle's proposal critically undermined the current trend in British military planning. British Defence Minister Denis Healey argued in his *Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1969* that 'the essential feature of our current defence policy is a readiness to recognise that political and economic realities reinforce the defence arguments for concentrating Britain's military role on Europe.'<sup>111</sup> Part of this new defence orientation was the development of a group of European nations devoted towards the design of a military aircraft. In 1968, Healey tried to foster cooperation between Britain and European nations within the NATO command structure.<sup>112</sup> In December 1968, the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee endorsed Healey's proposal for multilateral cooperation over a new Multi-role Combat Aircraft (MRCA), with West Germany persuaded into collaborating over this venture. The British Aircraft Corporation (BAC) and Messerschmitt-Bölkow established a General Memorandum of Understanding on the feasibility of a MRCA, where it would 'meet the future combat aircraft requirements... of one basic design.'<sup>113</sup> The cooperation over a MRCA preceded the establishment of the EUROGROUP in 1973, which contradicts Raymond Courand's point that the period 1954 to 1973 was completely void of military initiatives in the field of defence aeronautics.<sup>114</sup> Regardless, the de Gaulle proposal threatened this new Anglo-German avenue

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<sup>110</sup> Claire Sanderson, *Perfide Albion? L'affaire Soames et les arcanes de la diplomatie britannique* (Paris, 2011), p.71; Melissa Pine, 'British personal diplomacy and public policy: The Soames Affair' in *Journal of European Integration History*, xx (2004), p.64.

<sup>111</sup> TNA, Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1969 – Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Defence, C(69) 14, 27 January 1969, CAB/129/140/14.

<sup>112</sup> Philip Goodhart, 'La défense de l'Europe et la coopération franco-britannique' in *Politique étrangère*, xxxix (1974), p.219.

<sup>113</sup> TNA, The European Project for a Multi-role Combat Aircraft – Note by the Secretary of State for Defence, C(69) 31, 17 March 1969, CAB/129/141/6.

<sup>114</sup> Raymond Courand, *L'Eurocorps et l'Europe de la défense* (Strasbourg, 2009), p.40.

for cooperation. The imposition of France in a European leadership role as part of the FTA offer challenged the equilibrium Healey wanted to establish in Continental defence affairs.

Wilson did not accept the de Gaulle proposal. Many reasons have been given for Wilson's rejection of the offer. Claire Sanderson has stated that the British Defence Ministry sought to maintain its world role rather than establishing this role through cornering the European defence market.<sup>115</sup> However, Wilson's reason for rejecting the offer was much more nuanced. It is true that Wilson considered the de Gaulle proposal in terms of Britain's military standing. Although to say Wilson's only consideration concerned military affairs risks oversimplifying the British reaction. The MCRA – alongside the Concorde and SEPECAT Jaguar projects – was seen as critical to maintaining the output of the British aeronautics industry, particularly as the United States and Soviet Union were financially competitive in the global market.<sup>116</sup> While BAC was responsible for the manufacture of the MRCA, the British government held a majority share in the military airframe and guided weapons systems in the Hawker Siddeley group.<sup>117</sup> Thus the economic and military considerations ultimately swayed Wilson to decline de Gaulle's offer of an FTA.

The de Gaulle proposal also needs to be viewed within the context of multilateral defence cooperation on the European continent. On 4 February, when the meeting between de Gaulle and Soames took place, seven WEU foreign ministers met in Luxembourg to discuss reforms which would result in further consultations around British accession to the EC.<sup>118</sup> The French Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Jean de Lipkowski favoured using the WEU as a consultative forum for European foreign policy discussions and advocated supporting a Benelux proposal to compose a list of topics for scrutiny, which would further undermine the French proposal of a *directoire à quatre*. However, de Gaulle dashed de Lipkowski's desire for multilateral deliberations on European defence policy, particularly as the French President sought to construct a basis for Franco-British nuclear weapons cooperation.<sup>119</sup> Contrary to de Gaulle's wishes, the British and the remaining Five EC members agreed to adopt the Benelux plan in order to have 'harmonised to the fullest possible extent' multilateral cooperation

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<sup>115</sup> Sanderson, *Perfide Albion?*, p.82

<sup>116</sup> Neil McNaughton, *Understanding British and European political issues* (Manchester, 2003), p.3.

<sup>117</sup> TNA, Plowden Report: Aircraft Industry, [undated], C999(4), CAB/165/82; CAC, Public Ownership of the Aircraft Industry: Consultative document, January 1975, PLDN 5/7/2.

<sup>118</sup> Pine, 'British personal diplomacy and public policy', p.66.

<sup>119</sup> Lord Chalfont, Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, held a meeting with de Lipkowski where the Frenchman made clear that his President wanted 'to discuss seriously the possibility of nuclear weapons co-operation', see TNA, Record of Conversation between Lord Chalfont and M. De Lipkowski, French Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, at Luxembourg, 6 February 1969, FCO/30/414.

within a European context.<sup>120</sup> Thus, Britain and France found themselves divided once again. In addition, the Wilson government cannot be accused of engaging transparently with the French over the de Gaulle proposal. Lord Chalfont stressed to Stewart that Britain should ‘hedge [its] bets’ with regards to the WEU meeting so as to commit ‘to a policy designed... to outflank the French, to paralyse the Common Market.’<sup>121</sup> Therefore, Britain’s endorsement of the Benelux plan along with a rejection of the de Gaulle proposal further isolated France from its European allies. The Harmel Report and the emergence of the French *force de frappe* added to this strategic disadvantage, given that the growing trend in political cooperation leaned towards multilateralism.<sup>122</sup>

The division between Britain and France became quite pronounced by mid-February 1969. Wilson carried out a visit to Bonn on 12 February where he informed Kiesinger of de Gaulle proposals. The Foreign Office agreed that total transparency with Britain’s European allies was required. This fell into Wilson’s general policy of fostering closer relations with EC states.<sup>123</sup> Kiesinger reacted negatively to the de Gaulle proposals. The Federal Chancellor considered the proposed ‘loosening of the Community’ as a ‘terrible danger’ as it was ‘not possible to deal’ with the offer.<sup>124</sup> Wilson’s decision to discuss the proposal with Kiesinger and the leaking of de Gaulle’s offer to the British media has been commonly referred to in academic discussion as the ‘Soames Affair.’ However, René Groussard argued Wilson’s actions in February 1969 mean that this episode of high tensions in the Franco-British partnership should be characterised as the ‘Wilson Affair.’<sup>125</sup> This criticism seems reasonable given that Ambassador Soames’ Private Under-Secretary Adrian Fortescue advised the government to only detail the de Gaulle proposal ‘in conditions of full secrecy.’<sup>126</sup> On 10 February, before the trip to Bonn, the British Prime Minister in conjunction with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary disregarded Fortescue’s recommendation. Further, they briefed WEU allies ‘in the spirit of consultation’ concerning the FTA proposal so to counteract de Gaulle’s grand design idea for undermining the effectiveness of the Atlantic Alliance and the

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<sup>120</sup> TNA, Telegram from Stewart to FCO, No. 43, 7 February 1969, FCO/30/537.

<sup>121</sup> TNA, Confidential Note from Lord Chalfont to Stewart, 19 December 1968, PREM/13/2641.

<sup>122</sup> Peter Corterier, ‘L’Europe et les relations Est-Ouest: problèmes actuels et perspectives’ in *Politique étrangère*, xlvii (1982), p.22.

<sup>123</sup> Ratti, ‘The Anglo-American Special Relationship and West Germany’s Eastern policy from “Bridge-Building” and Vietnam to Ostpolitik’, p.620.

<sup>124</sup> Turk, *Die Europapolitik der GroBen Koalition 1966-69*, p.189.

<sup>125</sup> René Groussard, ‘Les agriculteurs français et la politique agricole du Royaume-Uni’ in *Histoire, économie et société*, xiii (1994), p.150.

<sup>126</sup> CAC, Fortescue to Soames, 26 February 1969, SOAM 3/1/9.

European Communities.<sup>127</sup> Therefore the poor state of Franco-British relations can be traced to the reorientation of Wilson's foreign policy in the aftermath of the withdrawal East of Suez. The result of this reorientation towards EC accession was a renewal of the Anglo-German relationship. This bilateral *contre-coalition* showed that France had become truly isolated on the European stage.<sup>128</sup> Cooperation with the FRG led to a period of West German dominance within the EC, especially since the monetary crisis of autumn 1968, Germany's economic strength had afforded it the freedom to manoeuvre as it held the second-highest rate of Gross National Product within the Atlantic Alliance.<sup>129</sup>

The reaction of the French government to British consultations with West Germany was one of frustration. On 21 February, the Secretary General of the Élysée Palace Bernard Tricot issued a formal protest to the French press stressing that Wilson's discussion with Kiesinger 'distorted the *Président de la République*'s words.'<sup>130</sup> However on 29 February Tricot elaborated on Britain's transgressions. According to Tricot, there were 'discrepancies with the indications that General de Gaulle had given him on the substance' of the meeting between the French President and Ambassador Soames.<sup>131</sup> Despite Tricot's comments, the Anglo-German discussions around the French proposals for an FTA firmly expressed Britain's European credentials.<sup>132</sup> In sum, the Soames Affair was the culmination of a period of heightened tensions ranging from the French withdrawal from NATO in 1966. The diplomatic row between Britain and France had no meaningful long-term impacts on the bilateral relationship. On 28 April 1969, President de Gaulle resigned from his position. This marked a critical turning point for Britain and Wilson's ambitions around membership of the European Communities. George Pompidou replaced de Gaulle leaving Wilson and the other members of the Five optimistic towards a reappraisal of British membership.<sup>133</sup> This new-found confidence towards re-negotiations was exemplified by Soames. In October 1969, Soames wrote to the Permanent Under-Secretary Sir Denis Greenhill saying he 'was

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<sup>127</sup> TNA, Record of a Meeting between the Prime Minister and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, 10 February 1969, PREM/13/2628.

<sup>128</sup> Coralie Delaume, *Le couple franco-allemand n'existe pas; Comment l'Europe est devenue allemande et pourquoi ça ne durera pas* (Paris, 2018), p.219.

<sup>129</sup> Germany held the highest rate of GNP in West Europe. Second in the Atlantic Alliance only to the United States, see Anne Marie Le Gloannec, 'La montée en puissance de la République fédérale d'Allemagne' in *Revue française de science politique*, xxx (1980), p.295.

<sup>130</sup> CAC, Minute by Master Sergeant E. Burton: Press Handling of the 'Soames Affair', 29 February 1972, SOAM/3/1/9.

<sup>131</sup> 'des divergences avec les indications que le Général de Gaulle lui avait données sur la substance de cet entretien' – Author's translation, *ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> Pine, 'British personal diplomacy and public policy', p.76.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

convinced that Pompidou would let us into EEC.’<sup>134</sup> Therefore, the Soames Affair only served as the crescendo to Franco-British tensions between 1966 and 1969, with no meaningful long-term impacts.

### Conclusion

Constant tensions marked the Franco-British relationship since the withdrawal from NATO until Pompidou’s induction as *Président de la République*. For the British, this period was one of re-coordination given the monetary problems encountered as a result of the balance-of-payments crisis. The effects of this fiscal emergency influenced British decision-making towards France and its global military outlook. Similarly, the withdrawal from NATO and introduction of the *force de frappe* led to a change in military policy for France. Indeed, the Gaullist grand design policy for a creating a *Europe puissance* now extended away from reforming the Atlantic Alliance area towards generating a more cooperative environment within Continental Europe and fostering a *contre-coalition* outside of the WEU or NATO remit.<sup>135</sup> The French decision to remove its strategic nuclear force from the NATO command structure represented a desire to maintain a global leadership role through membership within the European Communities. To deflect criticism from the other Five EC members, the Gaullist government would argue that a French *force de frappe* would service a deterrence system solely dedicated to European defence.<sup>136</sup> This period also saw Britain and France thrust into the centre of military planning in a Europe deeply divided by not just the bipolarity of the Cold War conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, but also the multilateral negotiations taking place within NATO and the EC. For instance, the French sought to share nuclear weapons information with the Czechoslovak government in the immediate aftermath of the Prague Spring to restrict the expansion of the Soviet Union into Eastern Europe. However, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia Alexander Dubček refused citing no appetite for divergence from the Soviet bloc, especially as President John and Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin announced a schedule of strategic arms limitation discussions between the United States and the Soviet Union on the day that the Prague Spring crisis began.<sup>137</sup> Nuclear sharing was endemic of French foreign policy as *Général d’Armée* Ailleret argued that a meaningful number of nuclear armaments ‘of a

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<sup>134</sup> CAC, Letter from Soames to Greenhill, 8 October 1969, SOAM/3/1/9.

<sup>135</sup> Delaume, *Le couple franco-allemand n’existe pas*, p.219.

<sup>136</sup> Beatrice Heuser and Kristan Stoddart, ‘Difficult Europeans: NATO and Tactical/Non-strategic nuclear weapons in the Cold War’ in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, xxviii (2017), p.459.

<sup>137</sup> John G. McGinn, ‘The politics of collective inaction’ in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, i (1999), p.137.

world-wide range' were required to ensure détente could be maintained.<sup>138</sup> Nevertheless, the NPT undermined this approach to nuclearisation. Britain, as one of the main signatories of the NPT, used the de-escalation in nuclear tensions from 1968 onwards to encourage partners within the WEU to accept British accession to the European Communities. This was the crux of Wilsonian foreign policy as the devaluation of the sterling currency forced a move away from a world role towards a European one.

The British move forced de Gaulle into adopting a more inclusive stance towards the incorporation of their cross-channel ally into the European Communities. The French President's proposal for an FTA provoked an international backlash as the German Chancellor entered the fray to openly criticise de Gaulle's concept, characterising it as dangerous to the possible enlargement of the European Communities, which the remaining five members considered essential. Nevertheless, the corresponding Soames Affair was a relatively minor episode in the overall Franco-British relationship. It acted as a culmination to the existing series of events. Melissa Pine has compared the Affair to a 'storm in a teacup.'<sup>139</sup> In fact, this appraisal is true given that the departure of de Gaulle from the Élysée Palace in April 1969 brought this period of continuous acrimony to a conclusion. The entry of Pompidou into the Élysée Palace represented a marked change from the Gaullist rhetoric, which, in turn, had a significant impact on the Franco-British relationship. In the eyes of British diplomatic staff, Pompidou was a much easier leader to negotiate with given his acknowledgement of France's lesser position in the bipolar international system. For example, Richard Hannay, part of the British EC negotiating team from 1970 to 1972 stated that Pompidou was more amenable since 'France had really extensive former overseas territories [when] it suddenly became 9 countries of whom two including Britain had global interests and world-wide links.'<sup>140</sup> Thus, there were green shoots for the Franco-British relationship in 1969 when an honest openness towards British accession emerged between the leadership of both countries.

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<sup>138</sup> Freedman and Michaels, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, p.355.

<sup>139</sup> Pine, 'British personal diplomacy and public policy', p.76.

<sup>140</sup> CAC, Interview with Richard Hannay, 22 July 1999, GBR/0014/DOHP 38.

## Chapter Five – Franco-British reconciliation, 1970-73

President de Gaulle's departure in April 1969 paved the way for a change in French nuclear and defence policy. The presidency of Georges Pompidou saw a reconceptualising of the controls over the French nuclear deterrent. In earnest, Pompidou replaced Michel Debré as French Foreign Minister with Maurice Schuman. This decision represented the beginning of a change in French defence policy towards Britain. Schuman was charged with overseeing the construction of a 'nuclear monarchy.'<sup>1</sup> Despite being a committed Gaullist during the 1960s, Schuman was a dedicated Euro-Atlanticist and pressed for further cooperation between France and its cross-channel partner over nuclear affairs. Schuman considered a joint Franco-British deterrent essential for combating the Soviet nuclear threat in spite of the existence of the NPT.<sup>2</sup> Britain also went through a political change as Harold Wilson narrowly lost the 1970 General Election to Conservative leader Edward Heath. Similar to Schuman, Heath remained faithful to the idea of European integration. So much so, he perceived a more amicable nuclear relationship as a means of strengthening Europe's voice on the international stage.<sup>3</sup>

The Franco-British reconciliation in the nuclear arena occurred against the backdrop of further non-proliferation agreements between the superpowers. Within the context of the Atlantic Alliance, the sharing of nuclear materials remained acceptable following the signing of the NPT provided that the United States kept stewardship over nuclear weapons on the European continent.<sup>4</sup> For the United States, this was seen as essential to counterbalance the threat of the Soviet Union to countries outside of the Warsaw Pact. However, the British considered that US ownership of nuclear weapons contravened the 'Moscow Criterion', which envisaged Britain possessing the ability to attack the Soviet capital.<sup>5</sup> Delegates from

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<sup>1</sup> *La monarchie nucléaire* was a term used to refer to the French nuclear weapons capacity. The monarchy aspect was ironic since it referred to the decision-making apparatus of the French nuclear force as the *Président de la République* ultimately decided on the use of nuclear weapons in strategic situations, see Samy Cohen, *La monarchie nucléaire: Les coulisses de la politique étrangère sous la Ve République* (Paris, 1986); Camille Grand, 'French nuclear policy after the cold war: How to combine deterrence and arms control' in *Strategic Analysis*, xxii (1998), p.529; Marie-France Toinet, 'La politique (anti?) américaine de Georges Pompidou' in *Revue Française d'Études Américaines*, xxxiii (1987), p.408.

<sup>2</sup> Maurice Léman, 'Les neutrons: l'arme anti-invasion pour une défense européenne' in *Politique étrangère*, xlvi (1981), p.420.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Jones, *The official history of the UK strategic nuclear deterrent; Volume II: The Labour Government and the Polaris programme 1964-1970* (London, 2017), p.226; John Campbell, *Edward Heath: A biography* (London, 1993), p.248.

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Mattelaer, 'Nuclear sharing and NATO as a "Nuclear Alliance"' in Stephen Frühling and Andrew O'Neil (eds), *Alliances, nuclear weapons and escalation* (Canberra, 2021), p.125.

<sup>5</sup> The British government considered the 'Moscow Criterion' as essential to deter the Soviets from taking 'aggressive action' against Western European capital cities, see Thomas Robb, 'Antelope, Poseidon or a hybrid:

the United States and the Soviet Union convened at the bilateral Glassboro Summit of 1967, where US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara deemed the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) launcher deployments would undermine deterrence and the policy of détente.<sup>6</sup> It is important to understand that the discussions between US Secretary of State Rusk and Soviet Ambassador to the United States Anatoli F Dobrynin preceded the signing of the NPT in 1968. Both the Glassboro Summit and the NPT triggered a greater move towards further non-proliferation particularly around ABM launchers. Given the strength of their nuclear arsenal, the superpowers engaged in discussions pursuant to Article VI of the NPT – namely aiming to full disarmament rather than merely discourage any increase to current supplies – since the ‘responsibility is imposed on both of [them]. This responsibility requires that we be in frank and frequent contact on matters affecting the peace of the world.’<sup>7</sup> The main thrust of these discussions risked critically undermining the Forward Based Systems, which characterised the crux of the European deterrent against Soviet action. Understanding how Britain and France sought to counteract disarmament efforts will be one of the main focuses of this chapter. In doing so, this chapter casts light on the essential role played by the likes of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Geoffrey Rippon and their influence in restoring a positive Franco-British partnership. Thus, this chapter breaks new ground by examining the discussions around a European Nuclear Force (ENF) and how these would cultivate a strong European identity in the face of non-proliferation, whilst achieving a secondary objective: the improvement of Franco-British politico-military relations. In sum, this case study reveals the commonality in Franco-British decision-making given the secondary effects of the SALT processes. It is important to reaffirm that SALT I was not designed to undermine Franco-British nuclear ambitions. Rather, the purpose of the SALT processes was to protect US and Soviet nuclear monopolies while imposing safeguards in line with the NPT to prevent atomic secret sharing and therefore limit the development of further nuclear competitors.

In addition, this chapter will go beyond the academic debate around whether Pompidou was a Gaullist president, who simply carried on the work of his predecessor since such an argument would oversimplify his influence over French foreign policy. Rather this analysis will take a new approach, which accounts for the nuances between both presidents’ policy decisions and argue that Pompidou was key in the transition from an Atlantic-centric

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The upgrading of the British strategic nuclear deterrent, 1970-1974’ in *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, xxxiii (2010), p.798ff.

<sup>6</sup> Ralph L. Dietl, *Equal security: Europe and the SALT process, 1969-1976* (Stuttgart, 2013), p.17.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Telegram from the President’s Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson, in Texas’, 31 August 1968, *FRUS* 1964-1968, XVII, p.265.



defence, security and foreign policy planning to a more European one. However, this mistaken opinion has taken shape over the ensuing decades as almost half the French people (46 per cent) surveyed in a poll saw Pompidou as a 'faithful follower' of Gaullist policies during his presidency.<sup>8</sup> This chapter also takes account of the developments in the superpower relations. As such it will cover the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty discussions, which were a result of the first steps taken towards disarmament during the Glassboro Summit.

By shining a light on the nuclear aspect of Franco-British relations, this chapter illustrates that, having finally achieved clarity and agreement over atomic cooperation, integration for Britain into the European Communities framework was now possible. Despite Heath's regret over failing to establish an *entente nucléaire* upon leaving office, this chapter contends that, unlike previous studies which advance that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was the primary sticking point, disagreement over military issues remained the key stumbling block to British integration within the European Communities. Nonetheless, this chapter also maintains that correlation in French and British nuclear decision-making was brought about by necessity, considering superpower strategic interests were more pressing on the international stage with the imposition of SALT I.

### **Fresh starts**

In 1970 when Edward Heath entered office as British Prime Minister, he sought to develop a new relationship with Britain's European allies. Heath stressed the need for stronger bilateral relations with France given the inadequacy of nuclear integration on the European continent as a countermeasure to Soviet nuclear strikes. This was in spite of 'British nuclear forces [being] wholly integrated into NATO strike plans.'<sup>9</sup> The British expressed an interest in assisting the French with the development of their prototype nuclear weapon PLUTON, thus advancing technical cooperation that was already taking place in the military aviation field.<sup>10</sup> Heath stressed that Britain should 'work out of our own military and political destiny; and an important part of that would be in partnership with France.'<sup>11</sup> Fortuitously this was music to the ears of the French President who sought to rekindle nuclear cooperation with European

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<sup>8</sup> Maurice Vaïsse, 'Changement et continuité dans la politique européenne de la France' in Jean-René Bernard, François Caron, Maurice Vaïsse and Michel Woimant (eds), *Georges Pompidou et l'Europe* (Brussels, 1995), p.30.

<sup>9</sup> CPA, Peter Jenkins, 'A bomb under Heath' in *The Guardian*, 18 March 1969, E/3/3/9.

<sup>10</sup> Christopher Irwin, 'Nuclear aspects of West European defence integration' in *International Affairs*, xlvii (1971), p.680.

<sup>11</sup> Jones, *The official history of the UK strategic nuclear deterrent; Volume II*, p.260.

allies, following the French withdrawal from NATO. Pompidou lamented that of all the nuclear nations France was ‘to be the only one to fail.’<sup>12</sup> The newly-installed Pompidou government moved away from deeply unpopular Gaullist policies, such as blocking British entry into the European Communities. The rationale behind this decision was clear. France required further collaboration with Western European powers to ensure the superpowers could not divide the responsibilities for non-proliferation and thereby shore up their imperium over nations, particularly in North Africa and on the European continent.<sup>13</sup> Thus, Pompidou consented to opening negotiations with Britain for EC membership in 1970, with the implication of creating an *entente nucléaire* in addition to further economic alignment. Renewed negotiations with the French over European accession played into British hands somewhat. The Ministry of Defence had questioned the effectiveness of the Polaris nuclear deterrent with negotiations around an alternative weapons system with the United States stalling since Harold Wilson rejected US offers for the Multiple Independently Re-Targetable Vehicle (MIRV) system Poseidon.<sup>14</sup> Heath was equally enthusiastic in pursuing nuclear cooperation with the French as this would further pressurise the United States into accommodating British requests for an update to Polaris. The converging ambitions between Heath and Pompidou with regards to nuclear cooperation introduced the possibility of Franco-British reconciliation as the French *force de frappe* afforded the Europeans ‘leverage’ over their Atlantic partner.<sup>15</sup>

Pompidou still rejected any American interference in European affairs. More so, he chose to challenge French isolationism and collaborate with Britain over radar to detect nuclear missile attacks. For example, the French government pressed the technical director of Compagnie Fabre to purchase the Decca 914 radar to be incorporated into French nuclear submarines, following the latter’s decision to reject British involvement in their national industry.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the technical director of Compagnie Fabre had bluntly stated to Sir Edward Lewis, the business lead for the Decca Recording and Technology Group, ‘you are

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<sup>12</sup> ‘Des cinq puissances nucléaires, devons-nous être les seules à échouer ?’ [original quotation], see Alain Peyrefitte, *Le mal français* (Paris, 1976), p.66.

<sup>13</sup> Wright, ‘The Cold War, European Community and Anglo-French relations, 1958-1998’, pp.330-331; Rod Kedward, *La vie en bleu; France and the French since 1900* (London, 2005), p.435; Roger E. Kanet, ‘The Superpower quest for empire: The Cold War and Soviet support for “Wars of National Liberation”’ in *Cold War History*, vi (2006), p.332.

<sup>14</sup> TNA, Strategic Nuclear Deterrent : Level of Effectiveness, Minute of COS 31<sup>st</sup> meeting, 3 November 1972, DEFE/4/273/1.

<sup>15</sup> Irwin, ‘Nuclear aspects of West European defence integration’, p.684.

<sup>16</sup> CAC, Commande d’un Decca-914 pour l’ESPADON de la Cie FABRE S.G.T.M., 19 June 1970, SOAM 3/1/11.

not the only radar manufacture to whom we can apply' for the technology.<sup>17</sup> Franco-British reconciliation was needed in 1970 as the balance of power on Continental Europe shifted in West Germany's favour, prompting France to reassess its foreign policy orientation towards Britain. The threat of a German axis in Europe forced the Pompidou government to soften their stance towards British membership as it wished to be the leading force in a European power bloc. Foreign Office official W.J. Adams inquired as to whether the newly-fostered amity between British and French industry was a good basis for the United Kingdom's entry into the European Communities, given it 'contained none of the supranational limits to which [Britain] attach importance.'<sup>18</sup> Despite Adams' concerns, the British direction of travel tended towards European accession, given that both Conservative and Labour politicians consented to a withdrawal of forces from Singapore as a part of the implementation of their 'East of Suez' policy.<sup>19</sup> Removing military forces from Singapore was in line with a French demand for a more Europe-centric attitude to British foreign policy. Otto von Habsburg told *Dateline London* that Britain needed to pull back their overseas military influence in order to propagate the application for European membership.<sup>20</sup> The ministerial lead for the British negotiating team, Geoffrey Rippon, explained the French will 'fight hard' to ensure that British accession would not impinge their national interests since 'none of the Five or the Commission seem able to stand up to them.'<sup>21</sup> Although the French stance on British involvement in European affairs had changed significantly, Conservative defence policies in their current format would limit the success of the third EC application, so a reassessment of Britain's international relationships was needed.<sup>22</sup>

Instability in the Anglo-American 'special relationship' also featured in the decision to re-evaluate Britain's bilateral relationships. The lack of US commitment in verifying an alternative to the British Polaris system occurred alongside a Soviet move to test the strength of the Atlantic Alliance. On 29 September 1970, the Soviet air traffic controller based within the Berlin Air Safety Centre informed his British and US counterparts that Soviet authorities were restricting access to the northern and central air corridors into Berlin airspace.<sup>23</sup> In

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> TNA, UK JOINING THE EEC, [undated], FCO/30/411.

<sup>19</sup> Loh Kah Seng, 'The British military withdrawal from Singapore and the anatomy of a catalyst' in Derek Heng and Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied (eds), *Singapore in global history* (Amsterdam, 2011), p.197.

<sup>20</sup> CPA, Interview with Otto von Habsburg, *Dateline London*, January 1971, E/3/3/69.

<sup>21</sup> TNA, Rippon to Heath, 30 October 1970, PREM/15/62.

<sup>22</sup> Vaisse, 'Changement et continuité dans la politique européenne de la France', p.30; Geir K. Almlid, 'Bureaucratic politics on Europe: inside Whitehall 1970 to 1972' in *British Politics*, xvi (2021), p.78.

<sup>23</sup> TNA, Conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet, CM25(70), 1 October 1970, CAB/128/47/25.

response to US calls for probing flights, Britain was once again torn between two allies. The French rejected the US demands for probing flights into Berlin, citing an inability to undertake such exercises ‘because no French aircrew was available.’<sup>24</sup> This incident between the Soviet Union and the West barely registers in existing historiography – principally due to limited duration. On 30 September, following the Soviet decision to violate the Suez Canal cease-fire after the installation of surface-to-surface missile, there was an immediate reversal. By 1 October 1970, the air corridors over Berlin were re-opened to Western aviation companies, and the missile installations removed from the contested territory in the Suez Canal. The Heath government viewed this minor incident as a ‘deliberate action to test [Western] reactions.’<sup>25</sup> And while it has been often overlooked in the recent historiographies of British defence policy, this incident characterises the difficulty for policymakers as to whether to pursue European military integration, a stronger Anglo-American ‘special relationship’ or alternatively, seek a subtle balance between the two. In order to achieve stability in the Franco-British partnership, Heath considered it necessary to strengthen bonds between Britain and France in the nuclear field. Therefore, Britain had to adapt the Super Antelope proposal as a replacement for Polaris – to appease the United States – whilst overlapping nuclear weapons cooperation with both France and NATO.<sup>26</sup>

Crucially, the French Minister for National Defence Debré supported nuclear collaboration, with the provision that the British government took ‘account of the financial cost of joint developments.’<sup>27</sup> Soon the British government received pressure from Christopher Soames, in his capacity as Ambassador to Paris, to pursue European nuclear integration. Soames spoke of ‘harmonisation and integration’ as achievable goals in the Franco-British relationship given the advancements in technological cooperation, particularly over the Jaguar aircraft.<sup>28</sup> While the primary discussions around British membership of the European Communities focused on economic cooperation, a prospective partnership in this area would have been more difficult to secure if it were not for pre-existing assistance over military and technological developments. The technological cooperation primarily focused on

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> J.P.D. Dunbabin, *The Cold War; The Great Powers and their allies* (Harlow, 1994), p.383; Kristan Stoddart, *The sword and the shield; Britain, America, NATO and nuclear weapons, 1970-1976* (Basingstoke, 2014), p.69.

<sup>27</sup> See *Twelfth Report from the Expenditure Committee - The House of Commons: Nuclear Weapons Program*, 1972-73 session, cited in Jean Klein, ‘La France, l’OTAN et la sécurité en Europe’ in *Études internationales*, viii (1977), p.89.

<sup>28</sup> CAC, Speech at a dinner in French Chamber of Commerce, Palais de la Bourse, 21 September 1970, SOAM/4/2/1.

aviation projects, which split the focus of French industry since the Franco-German Alphajet was set for its official debut in early 1971.<sup>29</sup> Despite the possibility of Franco-German-British friction over scientific divisions, technological cooperation created an avenue by which the French-led European Nuclear Force (ENF) might become a reality. The British and French technical prowess coupled with the financial superiority of West Germany following 1968 currency devaluations meant that an ENF would ‘eliminate the hostage value of US troops in Europe.’<sup>30</sup>

Moreover, Franco-British cooperation strengthened French resolve towards challenging US hegemony in Europe. Even after the French military had been removed from the command structure, they were unable to adequately disrupt the influence of the Atlantic Alliance on continental Europe.<sup>31</sup> William Wallace has argued that Pompidou relaxed the French stance towards the input of the United States in continental security and technological matters.<sup>32</sup> However, this assertion does not hold up upon analysis. The increasing emphasis which the United States placed on European nations to fall into line with the former’s pursuit of nuclear weapons reductions succeeded in fostering a stern anti-American disposition within French political circles. US pressures were derived from an agreement between the superpowers to further impose the conditions of the NPT as a means of securing détente.<sup>33</sup> Thus, British and French governments had to look beyond the United States for an avenue for cooperation. Within this drive towards nuclear cooperation was the third British application for EC membership. Fleet Admiral Peter Hill-Norton argued that following US foreign policy was counter-intuitive to the British position on nuclear matters. In his report to the Chief of the British Defence Staff Sir John Lapsley, Hill-Norton stated US leadership in arms limitation matters ‘posed difficulties for the relationships between the US and her European NATO partners.’<sup>34</sup> Therefore the arms control measures being pursued by the United States placed it on a different trajectory from its European allies.

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<sup>29</sup> Soutou, *L’alliance incertaine*, p.324.

<sup>30</sup> Lawrence L. Whetten, *Germany’s Ostpolitik ; Relations between the Federal Republic and the Warsaw Pact countries* (Oxford, 1971), p.214.

<sup>31</sup> Thierno Diallo, *La politique étrangère de Georges Pompidou* (Paris, 1992), p.25.

<sup>32</sup> William Wallace, ‘Old states and new circumstances : The international predicament of Britain, France and Germany’ in William Wallace and W.E. Paterson (eds), *Foreign policy making in Western Europe; A comparative approach* (Farnborough, 1978), p.37.

<sup>33</sup> Soutou, *La guerre de Cinquante Ans*, p.496.

<sup>34</sup> TNA, Meeting with Air Marshal Sir John Lapsley – Lately Head of the British Defence Staff, Washington, 2 June 1973, DEFE/4/277/3.

In fact, the shifts in defence policy resulted in a period of disagreeable relations between Britain and the United States. By contrast, Soames stated ‘without fear of contradiction that Anglo-French relations have improved, and the barometer is set to fair.’<sup>35</sup> In addition, Lord Carrington brought forth further defence expenditure cuts, which resulted in a decline in spending from 4.65 per cent to 4.39 per cent of British Gross Domestic Product.<sup>36</sup> The decrease in defence spending hit hardest in the field of the deploying conventional forces in NATO countries, as mutual land forces were reduced in the NATO Central Region since the SACEUR General Andrew Goodpaster stressed ‘only...could the two pillars of détente and deterrence be assured’ in the period following the ratification of the NPT.<sup>37</sup> As a result Britain and France turned to the WEU to cultivate a European political identity based on nuclear defence and security. Discussions within the WEU around a European identity achieved a secondary goal of progressing discussions around British EC membership.<sup>38</sup> British integration allowed Pompidou to achieve another foreign policy objective – namely, reforming the governing apparatus for the European Community. Quoting from his favourite poet Arthur Rimbaud, Pompidou ‘placed his hope in a resurrection’ of the *entente cordiale*.<sup>39</sup> He echoed this sentiment in a press conference on 21 January 1971 when he described the European Commission as a ‘technical illusion’ unfit to take specific decisions at the national level.<sup>40</sup> He went on to say ‘I deeply hope that Franco-British relations will immediately regain the warmth of the past.’<sup>41</sup> His openness towards British membership was mirrored by Edward Heath, a man who held similar perceptions of Europe. For Heath, this was a welcome change in stance as the relationship between de Gaulle and Macmillan was laboured by the latter’s prioritising of the Anglo-American ‘special relationship.’ This change of view dispels the comparison that Pompidou merely continued the Gaullist political ideology in the field of Franco-British relations.<sup>42</sup>

Additionally, the first steps towards Franco-British reconciliation in the nuclear field were crucial in developing an effective challenge to US hegemony in Europe and cultivating

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<sup>35</sup> CAC, Speech at Annual dinner of Confederation of British Industries, London, 20 May 1970, SOAM 4/2/1.

<sup>36</sup> TNA, Presentation of Defence Policy, 1 October 1970, PREM/15/35.

<sup>37</sup> NATO, SECRET - Record of a Private Meeting of the Council, 1 March 1969, PR(69)13.

<sup>38</sup> Simon Duke, ‘The second death (or the second coming ?) of the WEU’ in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, xxxiv (1996), p.168.

<sup>39</sup> For Pompidou’s collection of poems, see Georges Pompidou, *Anthologies de la poésie française* (Paris, 1974).

<sup>40</sup> Institut nationale audio-visuel [hereafter INA], ‘Pompidou L’Europe – Grande Bretagne’, 21 janvier 1971 (<https://www.ina.fr/video/CAF9406038/pompidou-l-europe-grande-bretagne-video.html>) (9 December 2020).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Vaïsse, ‘Changement et continuité dans la politique européenne de la France’, p.33.

a continental defence identity, which was envisaged to secure British and French roles as influential powers in military decision-making on the continent. Nonetheless, despite British accession being possible without the creation of a European Nuclear Force, the agreement in principle towards fashioning such an organisation was critical in illustrating to Pompidou that the British government was a necessary partner to formulate a pan-European Communities approach to military matters. Integration between Britain, France and European Community nations was also brought about by economic necessity. The gradual dissolution of the Bretton Woods system brought about by overvaluation of the US dollar and the Nixon administration's unilateral decision to collapse the scheme threatened European currencies.<sup>43</sup> The collapse of the international finances significantly weakened the currency values of the Pound and the Franc in comparison to the US dollar.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the need for Britain and France to unite their nuclear arsenals represented the only credible challenge they could pose to the hegemony of the superpowers, given the economic fragility of European nations during the early 1970s.

### **The impact of the SALT process**

The impetus behind the breakdown in the Anglo-American 'special relationship' can be traced to the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, which began on 17 November 1969. The talks arose as a result of the NPT to institutionalise nuclear arms control measures. Initially the British played an active role in organising the talks, which were originally to be conducted trilaterally between Britain and the superpowers. In September 1969, Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Michael Stewart met with US Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko in New York to discuss the parameters for non-proliferation discussions. However when Richard Nixon entered the Oval Office, US foreign policy was reconfigured to favour an East-West regime concentrated on US and Soviet leadership of their respective blocks.<sup>45</sup> Nixon's push towards systemic bipolarity succeeded in isolating Britain from taking part in key negotiations concerning the future of arms control. For instance, Stewart reported to Cabinet that Rogers effectively sidelined Britain by arguing 'that the two Powers [United States and Soviet Union] should hold talks on the limitation of

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<sup>43</sup> Stephens, *Britain alone*, p.177.

<sup>44</sup> TNA, The collapse of the Bretton Woods System (of international finance) 1968-1973, Treasury Historical Memorandum No.30, 1 October 1976, T/267/36.

<sup>45</sup> Thi Thuy Hang Nguyen, 'A shift in U.S. Foreign policy under the Nixon Administration and European political cooperation : A historical analysis' in *Baltic Journal of European Studies*, vi (2016), p.165.

strategic armaments.<sup>46</sup> Stewart further elaborated that the US stance made Britain's case 'an extremely complex one on which to formulate a negotiating position.'<sup>47</sup> Roger's argument for bilateral talks placed the US negotiating position more in line with that of the Soviet Union.<sup>48</sup> The Soviet government insisted on an initial condition that any prospective treaty must contain a prohibitive conduct clause forbidding any 'substantial transfer' of nuclear weapons between the United States and its NATO allies.<sup>49</sup> Therefore in order for Nixon to achieve his foreign policy objective of developing a US-USSR directorate, the 'special relationship' with Britain had to be sacrificed. The resulting damage meant that Britain and France needed to embrace a stronger bilateral partnership over nuclear affairs. Otherwise, the European nations would find themselves simply relegated to the status of 'second-rate nations' permanently. However, US strategic strength over its European partners in purely economic and nuclear terms rendered any variation of the Franco-British atomic cooperation redundant owing to the imposition of SALT I guaranteeing superpower hegemony over the processes of non-proliferation.

The arms control measures proposed by the US government contrasted significantly with Franco-British nuclear ambitions. A prospective freeze on the production of ICBM launchers and ABMs would neutralise the effectiveness of European deterrent forces.<sup>50</sup> The only chance Britain and France stood to challenge the establishment of a superpower directorate over global affairs was to cultivate a credible alternative to the SALT process. The ENF represented the only viable option in which both countries could contest their alienation from the international debate. With the Nixon administration pursuing a broad approach to arms limitations on ABMs and the prohibition of MIRV, the British and French governments required a different hardware solution in order to create a delivery system for an ENF. The technological cooperation between both countries once again paid dividends. Building on the relationship developed between BAC and Aérospatiale during the SEPECAT Jaguar and Concorde projects, both industrial companies were entrusted with developing an aircraft to act as a nuclear delivery system. BAC representative R.J. Jones and his French counterpart M.B. Bouygue were tasked with the construction of a new combat aircraft to be brought into

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<sup>46</sup> TNA, Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, 25 September 1969, CC(69), CAB/128/44/45.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Michael J. Brenner, *Nuclear power and non-proliferation; The remaking of U.S. policy* (Cambridge, 1981), p.27; George F. Kennan, *The nuclear delusion; Soviet-American relations in the atomic age* (London, 1983), pp.41-44.

<sup>49</sup> Dietl, *Equal security*, pp.45-6.

<sup>50</sup> TNA, Arms Control Measures, [undated, but November 1969], FCO/66/111.



service in 1971.<sup>51</sup> This new development caught the attention of the superpowers. On 16 April 1970 – which coincided with the early phase of SALT negotiations – Gromyko demanded that ‘regulation for Franco-British aircraft and IR/MRBM had to be found.’<sup>52</sup> Therefore, the continuation of Franco-British technological cooperation provided an added threat to the SALT negotiations and kept both countries’ nuclear ambitions alive in the short term.

The commission of a new combat aircraft created a new avenue for Franco-British reconciliation, particularly in the European political sphere. The potential for military aviation cooperation achieved a secondary aim of counter-acting the progressive decline of the French aeronautical industry, typical of the final years of the *Trente Glorieuses*. Henri Ziegler, the President of Airbus and the CEO of *Société Nationale Industrielle Aérospatiale* (SNIAS), was initially reluctant towards Franco-British military cooperation in the aviation field. Ziegler argued further aeronautical cooperation would hamper French foreign policy of reclaiming a global power role, since the combat aircraft project would only reinforce the aims of the Concorde project – namely, the establishment of Europe as a leader in aeronautic design and manufacture at a time when the superpowers attempted to conquer the aviation market.<sup>53</sup> Ziegler was a key supporter of de Gaulle and bought into the idea of France leading a European power bloc on the international stage.<sup>54</sup> Britain was deeply supportive of aeronautical cooperation especially as it would rearrange European defence infrastructure, and prove to France ultimately that the British were ‘good Europeans.’<sup>55</sup> Thus, Geoffrey Rippon authorised BAC to finalise contracts with SNIAS in order to cement aeronautical cooperation.<sup>56</sup> Rippon’s committal to forging closer bilateral links with France succeeded in strengthening ties created through the SEPECAT Jaguar and Concorde projects, thereby superseding the initial scepticism which Ziegler expressed. By 1972, both countries decided on the direction of the new combat aircraft with a formal agreement drawn up and signed by project leaders Jones and Michot on 14 June.<sup>57</sup>

The confirmation of Franco-British aeronautical cooperation in the military field coincided with the beginning of a third round of negotiations between Britain and France

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<sup>51</sup> CAA, Essai d’étanchéité du circuit hydraulique jaune, D/6/11/75, 20 janvier 1971, 633/3K2/220.

<sup>52</sup> Dietl, *Equal security*, pp.52-3.

<sup>53</sup> Dawna L. Rhoades, *Evolution of international aviation; Phoenix rising* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Hampshire, 2008), p.63.

<sup>54</sup> Bernard March, *Dictionnaire universel de l’aviation* (Paris, 2005), p.280.

<sup>55</sup> Philip Ziegler, *Edward Heath* (London, 2000), p.276.

<sup>56</sup> TNA, Contract clauses in launching aid contracts, [undated, but September 1971], FV/14/50.

<sup>57</sup> CAA, Verification cinématique/efforts de la commande de direction, 14 juin 1972, 633/3K2/220.

over EC membership. Britain benefitted massively from the resolution adopted at the EC Hague Summit in 1969 to enlarge the membership of the European Community.<sup>58</sup> Christopher Soames played a key role in preparing Heath for the negotiation with Pompidou. Much has been written about Soames' intervention in the field of economic convergence, but little attention has been paid to the ambassador's role in military discussions. Following the announcement concerning Community enlargement, Soames opened a dialogue with General du Guillebon, president of the *Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale*, in December 1969. The intention of this dialogue was to lay the groundwork for Franco-British nuclear integration.<sup>59</sup> Soames advocated that the Heath government took 'the position that it has no preconceived political detail on Britain's entry [into Europe].'<sup>60</sup> Both gentlemen forged a framework for nuclear cooperation focused on the expansion of the MacMahon Act and closer cooperation over weapons delivery systems. Despite the ratification of the NPT that stressed the abolition of atomic weapons dissemination, the question of nuclear integration remained at the forefront of Franco-British discussion.<sup>61</sup> Strikingly, the idea of nuclear cooperation for the strengthening of bilateral links gained traction with Conservative and Labour politicians. In a Commons debate in February 1972, Conservative MP Peter Blaker and Labour MP Frank Allaun pressed Foreign and Commonwealth Junior Minister Anthony Royle that it 'is particularly auspicious for a move forward towards greater cooperation with France in foreign policy, whether bilaterally or within the context of the Ten.'<sup>62</sup> The Labour Party fell into line behind Conservative policy over the concept of a nuclear entente with France since the success of the NPT and the decline in the influence of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament meant the fear of annihilation no longer fostered similar support for non-proliferation.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, Soames' original work in developing a closer partnership between Britain and France was successful by creating a structure for challenging the global trend towards non-proliferation and superpower control over nuclear weapons dissemination.

Successes in forging military cooperation soon became overshadowed and hampered the growth of the Franco-British relationship. Discussions over fishing rights and British accession to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) obscured the potential development of nuclear cooperation. CAP existed as a founding policy of the European Communities to

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<sup>58</sup> Asa Briggs and Patricia Clavin, *Modern Europe, 1789-present* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Harlow, 2003), p.359.

<sup>59</sup> CAC, Lecture to Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale, 2 December 1969, SOAM/4/2/1.

<sup>60</sup> CAC, Verbatim Transcript of Item on BBC Television 'Panorama', 3 November 1969, SOAM/4/2/1.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas E. Doyle II, *The ethics of nuclear weapons dissemination; Moral dilemmas of aspiration, avoidance and prevention* (London, 2015), p.89.

<sup>62</sup> *The parliamentary debates*, Hansard, House of Commons, 14 February 1972 (vol dccccxxi).

<sup>63</sup> David James Gill, *Britain and the bomb; Nuclear diplomacy, 1964-1970* (California, 2014), p.54.

ensure a steady stream of agricultural supplies that reached common consumers at affordable prices.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, French demands for Britain to phase out its Commonwealth trading arrangements and adhere to the CAP existed to protect the emerging European agricultural sector, albeit at the expense of Britain's fruitful trading relationship with Commonwealth countries.<sup>65</sup> With British accession to the EC lynched on fishing rights and agricultural concerns, former French Finance Minister Baumgartner organised a meeting of the European Presidents' Club and the British Industrial Policy Group to address this. Belgian Comte René Boël pushed Baumgartner to agree to Sir William Mather's request to allow British accession without delay, given that Britain would bolster Europe's ability to 'counter-balance the tendency on the part of the United States to act in too precipitate a fashion.'<sup>66</sup> Joining the EC would allow Britain and France effectively to counteract US moves in confirming the SALT process. Michel Jobert, the Secretary-General of the Élysée Palace who organised the summit between Heath and Pompidou, boasted of Franco-British military cooperation in June 1972. The renewed military cooperation, he argued, achieved a vital tenet of French foreign policy – in essence, disputing superpower supremacy over international decision-making. According to Jobert, bilateral cooperation over a combat aircraft gave Britain and France 'the will to play a crucial and constructive role in this changing world.'<sup>67</sup> The establishment of a stronger Franco-British relationship can be credited to the Pompidou government, since the French president sought to move away from a pro-German axis within European affairs. Thus, the creation of a Franco-British defence infrastructure gave an impetus to challenge US and Soviet dominance.<sup>68</sup>

Despite its pre-conceived objective, the Franco-British reconciliation did little to beneficially challenge the superpower hegemony over nuclear matters. Representatives from both superpowers agreed to continue the SALT process. Negotiations continued apace between representatives from the Soviet Union and United States in Helsinki several times from 1969 to 1973. The true nature of the negotiations was to determine a bilateral understanding of mutual deterrence in line with further non-proliferation. This explains the

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<sup>64</sup> Katja Seidel, 'Britain, the common agricultural policy and the challenges of membership in the European Community: a political balancing act' in *Contemporary British History*, xxxiv (2020), p.184.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, p.180.

<sup>66</sup> CAC, Note on a Meeting between the European Presidents' Club and the Industrial Policy Group in Paris, 16 September 1971, PLDN/5/16.

<sup>67</sup> '... la volonté – jouer un rôle capital et constructif dans ce monde en mutation' see report in CAC, Financial Times Forum, Hôtel George V – 'Britain and France as Common Market Partners', 14 June 1972, SOAM/4/2/1.

<sup>68</sup> Stephanie C. Hofmann and Frédéric Mérand, 'In search of lost time: Memory-framing, bi-lateral identity-making, and European security' in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, lviii (2020), p.161.

Soviet call for regulation on the development of a Franco-British aircraft. What was most telling about the nature of the SALT process was US and Soviet intentions to limit the amount of nuclear weapons delivery systems, or ABM launchers. Aleksandr Liepunskii, the director of the Soviet breeder reactor program, pushed for the limitation of nuclear weapons in an attempt to divert resources towards the use of atomic energy for commercial reasons and was one of the main decision-makers for this policy.<sup>69</sup> The negotiation of a ‘freeze’ on ABM launchers was detrimental to Franco-British ambitions as the imposition of a limit on launching capabilities was devised to underpin quantitative competition.<sup>70</sup> Moving toward qualitative improvements to nuclear deterrence undermined the introduction of a Franco-British tactical combat aircraft. The UK NATO Permanent Representative Bernard Burrows criticised the SALT negotiations stating that ‘arms limitation talks should preserve European security’ when in actuality the terms under discussion between the superpowers sought to cultivate a monopoly in the field of nuclear defence organisation.<sup>71</sup> In addition, the SALT process also hampered Britain’s position as a partner to the United States, given that the upcoming SALT I treaty overrode the terms of the Nassau Agreement. The conditions of SALT I prohibited the transfer of nuclear weapons and therefore violated the terms of the Polaris sale agreement from 1962. Thus, the competitive cooperation enjoyed by the United States and Britain was now under threat as a freeze on offensive nuclear weapons stymied the arms race, whilst protecting the strategic positions of the superpowers.<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless, the first SALT treaty was not designed to undermine British nuclear ambitions. Rather, the impetus of SALT I centred on the protection of US and Soviet sovereignty whilst furthering the guarantees of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. US representative – and former President – Gerald Ford explained the SALT treaties were envisaged ‘to curb the arms race’ since ‘strategic competition... has grown apace in recent years – despite the capacities for overkill on both sides’<sup>73</sup> The geopolitical rationale for the SALT treaties demonstrates that superpower ambitions lay at cross purposes to those of the Europeans. Thus, domestic

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<sup>69</sup> Paul R. Josephson, *Red atom; Russia’s nuclear power program from Stalin to today* (Pittsburgh, 2005), p.49; Stefan Guth, ‘The nuclear landscape as a garden; An envirotechnical history of Shevchenko/ Aktau, 1959-2019’ in Susanne Bauer and Tanja Penter (eds), *Tracing the atom; Nuclear legacies in Russia and Central Asia* (Abingdon, 2022), p.23.

<sup>70</sup> Andrew J. Pierre, ‘The SALT Agreement and Europe’ in *The World Today*, xxviii (1972), p.283.

<sup>71</sup> Dietl, *Equal security*, pp.27-8.

<sup>72</sup> James Cameron, ‘Soviet-American Strategic Arms Limitation and the limits of Co-operative Competition’ in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, xxxiii (2022), p.113.

<sup>73</sup> Remarks by Rep. Gerald R. Ford - a Telelecture to Political Science students, South West Missouri State College, 30 April 1971 (21 April 2023)

(<https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/exhibits/salt/salt.asp#m:text=The%20Strategic%20Arms%20Limitation%20Talks,side%20could%20possess%20and%20manufacture>)

defence policies and the joint French and British ambitions for the development of a European Nuclear Force were the collateral damage of a series of agreements designed to protect the hegemonic status of the superpowers in the face of emerging competition from Europe and China.

Restricting the sharing of nuclear matters between the United States and Britain was viewed as a negative – although necessary – shift within the Anglo-American ‘special relationship.’ The Nixon presidency took a markedly different approach to détente on Continental Europe than its immediate predecessor. While the Johnson administration, for the most part, maintained its commitment to position a deterrent force in Europe to discourage any conventional Soviet attacks, the Nixon government sought to finalise the SALT process to stamp its mark on nuclear weapons deployment in Europe.<sup>74</sup> Dr Henry Kissinger argued the United States needed ‘to avoid... differentiated détente in which the Soviets buy themselves time by making a selective relaxation with particular allies.’<sup>75</sup> Variations of détente imperilled the SALT process as, in the immediate aftermath of the 1968 Czechoslovak crisis; the Soviet Union began moving nuclear missile technology into Warsaw Pact countries. US Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird reported that the nuclear deployments in Eastern Europe were a pretext to a large European-wide nuclear strike in response to NATO conventional force movements.<sup>76</sup> While senior figures in the US administration contemplated the SALT process as essential to protecting their influence in global and European terms, their British allies did not hold the same opinion. Lord Carrington criticised the selfishness of the US administration following US Secretary of State Rogers’ statement that the SALT process existed to secure ‘international security by maintaining a stable US-Soviet strategic relationship.’<sup>77</sup> US moves to deter Soviet nuclear expansion ultimately undermined the Anglo-American relationship as it inadvertently weakened Britain’s position as a nuclear power given their dependence on the United States through the Nassau Agreements.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Nina Tannenwald, ‘Nuclear weapons and the Vietnam War’ in *Journal of Strategic Studies*, xxix (2006), p.678.

<sup>75</sup> ‘Memorandum of Conversation’, 18 December 1970, *FRUS* 1969-1972, XLI, p.1002.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Paper prepared by the National Security Council Staff’, [undated], *FRUS* 1969-1972, XLI, p.216.

<sup>77</sup> See Rogers’ speech to Congress, cited in Ian Smart, ‘The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks’ in *The World Today*, xxvi (1970), p.298.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas Robb, *A strained relationship ? US-UK relations in the era of détente, 1969-77* (Manchester, 2013), p.5.

The SALT process indicated a distinct change on the international stage. Even prior to the signing and ratification of SALT I, the superpowers could operate without much consideration of the British and French political opinion.<sup>79</sup> The arms limitation discussions between the superpowers effectively cornered the market over control of nuclear weapons. For Britain, the exclusion from the SALT discussions forced a shift from the Atlantic area of influence towards a more Europe-centric approach. This was essential for the British to maintain a role of influence in international affairs, particularly as the SALT accords effectively obligated the United States and Soviet Union to consult one another over nuclear matters.<sup>80</sup> By December 1971, Britain and France needed to accelerate the process of permitting the former's accession to the EC. In essence, British accession was envisaged to achieve two major goals. Firstly, membership of the Communities was imagined to have cultivated 'greater military independence for Europe, [in] both conventional and nuclear' matters.<sup>81</sup> Second, the inclusion of Britain would bring the European Communities more support in a political and military sense, which was conceived to limit the damage of the SALT I treaty.<sup>82</sup>

### **SALT I and the European identity**

Britain's third and final application to join the European project took on a new meaning as a result of the SALT process. The Heath government's new aim was to bring British and European defence policy into closer alignment. Once again, the British Embassy in Paris played a crucial role in achieving a more amicable state of Franco-British relations. Speaking at the *Financial Times* Conference on 14 December 1972, Soames stated that 'united we have the chance for us to fill again the vacuum we left in the world over the past decades.'<sup>83</sup> Soames' sentiments were reciprocated by policy-makers with the French government. French Prime Minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas was extremely receptive of Britain's desire to collaborate over nuclear matters. Chaban-Delmas pushed Pompidou to be more open towards Britain's application as the joining of both countries' nuclear arsenals was perceived to overhaul a misconception that Europe could not act as a centre of power to counterbalance the superpowers.<sup>84</sup> For the French, the prospect of British nuclear integration into Europe

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p.141.

<sup>80</sup> Georges Fischer, 'Le traité américano-soviétique relatif à la limitation des essais souterrains d'armes nucléaires' in *Annuaire français de droit international*, xx (1974), p.160.

<sup>81</sup> CPA, Record of Meeting of the Conservative Foreign Policy group, [undated], CCO/500/48.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> CAC, Revised draft of Speech for Financial Times Conference, 14 December 1972, SOAM/4/2/1.

<sup>84</sup> Françoise de la Serre, *La Grande-Bretagne et la Communauté européenne* (Paris, 1987), pp. 20, 30.

benefitted their coal industry, and therefore improving the bilateral relationship was seen to be domestically advantageous. Coal and Carbon energy manufacturing became increasingly unsustainable for European countries owing to rising tensions between Middle Eastern nations, thus Chaban-Delmas considered his country's efforts in acquiring British nuclear capabilities essential 'in the search for greater diversification' of French industry.<sup>85</sup> The majority of academic discussion concerning the negotiations around British accession to the EC has tended to focus on the economic implications.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that without agreement over politico-military concerns, an economic union meant relatively little in the greater geopolitical context.<sup>87</sup> Evidently, since British and French industries suffered during the early 1970s as a result of the Middle Eastern oil crisis and the breakdown in the Bretton Woods system. A convivial military relationship was necessary, particularly as British and French nuclear technologies were viewed as advantageous in the preservation of their international standing. The assistance with the Jaguar aircraft also benefitted British entry into the EC as it afforded Britain and France a solid foundation upon which to build a competitive aeronautical industry to challenge the United States and Soviet Union. Thus, even with the imposition of restrictions on nuclear weapons enshrined in SALT I, Franco-British politico-military cooperation was still imperative for European integration.

Given Soviet intervention in Eastern Europe and the institutionalisation of bipolarity, the British and French governments needed to agree over a military outlook if their viewpoint was to remain of relevance in geopolitical discourse. In early bilateral discussions around accession, British and French policy-makers agreed that the protection of Eastern Europe was essential for the maintenance of a credible foreign policy for a Continental politico-military entity.<sup>88</sup> In Pompidou's eyes, a European military concept loosely modelled on the EEC template was required to establish this foreign policy. Pompidou's new-look *Europe puissance* was envisaged to stop the unbalancing of nuclear powers in Europe, which the SALT process would cause by protecting US and Soviet hegemony over nuclear weapons. Rather, the European military model would counteract this nuclear climb-down and unify

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<sup>85</sup> AN, Chaban-Delmas à Président du Conseil d'administration des charbonnages de France, avril 1971, 19830739/10 F 60 bis 6358.

<sup>86</sup> Stephen C. Schmidt, 'United Kingdom entry into the European Economic Community: Issues and implications' in *Illinois Agricultural Economics*, xii (1972), pp.1-11; Arthur Marwick, *A history of the modern British Isles, 1914-1999* (Oxford, 2000), pp.222-224; Peter Clarke, *Hope and glory; Britain 1900-1990* (London, 1996), pp.299-343.

<sup>87</sup> For the historical context to geo-political implications of British EC membership, see Robert Saunders, *Yes to Europe! The 1975 referendum and seventies Britain* (Cambridge, 2018).

<sup>88</sup> Hans Stark, 'Paris, Berlin et Londres : vers l'émergence d'un directoire européen?' in *Politique étrangère*, iv (2002), p.971.

continental forces to cultivate a new identity clearly separate from the United States and Soviet Union.<sup>89</sup> On 17 May 1971 the French delegation for EC negotiations met with Rippon and Heath to gauge whether the British would accept Pompidou's concept.<sup>90</sup> The French approach to Britain over a potential European Defence Community was largely welcomed in Whitehall. The structured approach to détente through the SALT process allowed the superpowers to turn their attention to increasing their conventional military forces on the European continent. Lord Carrington was very interested in the French proposal as he believed US support for the SALT process would result in falling 'into the trap of striving for détente and forgetting about defence.'<sup>91</sup> While the British were involved in arranging the NPT, they were unwilling to pursue détente in the same vein as the US government. Heath insisted on following a European model where détente issues would be discussed within a multilateral forum akin to other EC matters, much to the annoyance of Kissinger.<sup>92</sup> Thus, reconciliation with the French over a new European-centric defence posture was viewed as necessary to protect the policy of détente, while ensuring that Continental defence remained unaffected by the political and strategic interests of the superpowers.

The need for a Franco-British alternative to détente was pressing. On 26 May 1972, Richard Nixon and General Secretary of Communist Party of the Soviet Union Leonid I. Brezhnev signed two treaties – principally, the treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (SALT I). The Interim Agreement on Certain Measures with Respect to the Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms was also signed during this bilateral summit between the Soviet Union and United States. The main threat of SALT I towards Franco-British nuclear ambitions was Article IX of the treaty, which forbade either party from transferring 'ABM systems or their components limited by this Treaty... to other States.'<sup>93</sup> In addition to the strict controls written into SALT I, there existed between the superpowers a motivation to impose arms control measures on a more permanent basis. In September 1972, Soviet

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<sup>89</sup> Jean-Pierre Teyssier, 'L'année 1973 dans la politique étrangère du président Pompidou' in *Politique étrangère*, xxxix (1974), p.480.

<sup>90</sup> Douglas Johnson, 'La politique européenne de Georges Pompidou, vue de Grande-Bretagne' in Jean René Bernard, François Caron, Maurice Vaisse and Michel Woimant (eds), *Georges Pompidou et l'Europe* (Brussels, 1995), p.217.

<sup>91</sup> Brian White, *Britain, Détente and changing East-West relations* (London, 1992), pp.126-127.

<sup>92</sup> Kissinger wrote 'While the United States should welcome any European structure that reflects the desires of the Europeans, it would be unwise to stake everything on one particular formula. ...Is it really possible or useful to lump the countries of Europe together on all issues?', see Henry A. Kissinger, 'Coalition diplomacy in a nuclear age' in *Foreign Affairs*, xlii (1964), p.543. Cited in R. Gerald Hughes and Thomas Robb, 'Kissinger and the diplomacy of coercive linkage in the "Special Relationship" between the United States and Great Britain, 1969-1977' in *Diplomatic History*, xxxvii (2013), p.878.

<sup>93</sup> 'Treaty Between the United States and the Soviet Union', 26 May 1972, *FRUS* 1969-1976, XXXII, p.911.



Ambassador Dobrynin spoke to Kissinger about whether ‘the Provisional Agreement [could] be made permanent?’<sup>94</sup> The possibility of a permanent agreement between the United States and Soviet Union was disastrous for European ambitions as SALT I significantly capped the amount of Submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM). Submarines comprised the main crux of the NATO sea-based forces. Therefore, as Lord Carrington predicted, SALT I undermined the European nuclear response. Carrington criticised the Nixon administration as merely responding to Soviet striving for politico-military influence:

The Soviet Union has seen itself in competition with the Western world. This has been most apparent in the ideological struggle and the bid for political influence. More recently it has taken the form of an expansion of military power and the West has had no choice but to respond. This drives the arms race.<sup>95</sup>

Therefore, despite Nixon’s attempts to smooth any tension between Britain and the United States at the meeting between himself and Heath in Bermuda in January 1972, the relationship between both countries remained unsociable. In essence, US unilateralism over the regulation of nuclear weapons controls disrupted the ‘special relationship’ and pushed Britain further away from pre-existing agreements and towards its continental partners – namely, France.<sup>96</sup>

The general academic consensus over Franco-British discussions over European Community membership described the relative coolness with which Pompidou and Heath treated each other.<sup>97</sup> However, the imposition of SALT I radically altered Franco-British military standing on the international stage. Where previously it could be argued that Britain and France played a crucial role in the European military polity, this was no longer the case after the ratification of SALT I as the United States effectively superseded European aims over aspiring nuclear programs. Both Heath and Pompidou sought to overcome the new geopolitical reality. Pompidou departed from the Gaullist desire to preserve French national identity within the European project. This new foreign policy aim uninhibited Franco-British negotiations on entry into the European Communities since Heath desired a similar outcome and even shared the French aim of rejecting US supremacy within Europe and move towards

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<sup>94</sup> The Provisional Agreement was another term for the Interim Agreement signed alongside SALT I, see ‘Memorandum of Conversation’, 5 September 1972, *FRUS* 1969-1976, XXXII, p.978.

<sup>95</sup> Peter Carrington, ‘Arms Control and International Security: Some practical problems’ in *Vital Speeches of the Day*, xlvii (1980), p.115.

<sup>96</sup> Andrew Scott, *Allies apart: Heath, Nixon and the Anglo-American relationship* (Basingstoke, 2011), pp.115-119.

<sup>97</sup> See by way of example, Robert Gibson, *Best of enemies; Anglo-French relations since the Norman Conquest* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Exeter, 2004), pp.281-305.

a more structured and, more importantly, European political entity.<sup>98</sup> Establishing a European identity over military matters was viewed as essential to building an EDC. Heath authorised two Cabinet Committees – GEN28 and GEN29 – under the supervision of Carrington and Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home to investigate the possibility of developing a European-centric defence partnership with France.<sup>99</sup> The Chiefs of the Defence Staff also gave their seal of approval to the idea, with the Assistant Under-Secretary of the Defence Staff P.D. Nairne informing General Sir Geoffrey Baker of the decision to pursue a nuclear entente with the French.<sup>100</sup> Thus, with parliamentary and military backing, Heath brought forward proposals to develop a European nuclear bloc to offset the superpowers.

During the bilateral negotiations for British accession, Pompidou asked whether Britain had decided to become European, ‘whether it was ready to moor with the continent and to detach itself from the Open Sea to which it had always turned.’<sup>101</sup> Heath needed to persuade Pompidou that Britain’s engagement with a European politico-military body was absolute. Heath’s decision was the correct one to stabilise the bilateral relationship after previous French vetoes. In his memoirs, Heath reflected on his exchanges with Pompidou stating ‘my feeling was that the security of Europe would depend on the maintenance of the US commitment and increased co-operation between Western European governments over the question of European defence.’<sup>102</sup> Going further, Heath stressed that the Anglo-American ‘special relationship’ was not possible.<sup>103</sup> Heath’s view can be justified through the unilateral actions on the part of the US government to standardise nuclear weapons development through the SALT process. Pompidou acknowledged the British Prime Minister’s renewed pledge to improving the European Community through membership. Following the guarantee of supporting European defence, Pompidou agreed to Britain joining the EC, and thus becoming a fully-fledged member of the European project on 1 January 1973.<sup>104</sup> Unlike de

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<sup>98</sup> Vaïsse, ‘Changement et continuité dans la politique européenne de la France’, p.35; Helen Parr, “‘The nuclear myth’: Edward Heath, Europe, and the international politics of Anglo-French nuclear co-operation 1970-3’ in *The International History Review*, xxxv (2013), p.539.

<sup>99</sup> TNA, GEN25 – Anglo-French Defence Collaboration – Meeting Paper 1, 22 February 1971, CAB/130/506; TNA, GEN26 – Anglo-French Defence Collaboration – Meeting Paper 2, 13 September 1971, CAB/130/506.

<sup>100</sup> TNA, European Defence Co-operation, 23 February 1971, DEFE/4/254/3.

<sup>101</sup> Pompidou paraphrased William Shakespeare in his question to Heath, see Peter Dorey, ‘Entry into the European Communities’ in Andrew S. Roe-Crines and Timothy Heppell (eds), *Policies and politics under Prime Minister Edward Heath* (Basingstoke, 2021), p.218.

<sup>102</sup> Edward Heath, *The Course of My Life; My autobiography* (London, 1998), ch. 13.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, p.370.

<sup>104</sup> ‘We’re in’ in *Daily Express*, 1 January 1973, p.1.

Gaulle, Pompidou accepted British influence being ‘amplified’ within the European Community.<sup>105</sup>

While Heath successfully gained Britain entry into the European Communities and therefore accomplished a long-term ambition of successive governments, the nuclear entente remained elusive. The pre-existing relationship established through the Nassau Agreements undermined any chance of creation of an ENF. Heath kept Nixon in the loop with regards to the economic and military progress during the discussions concerning British accession. Nixon was originally quite thankful to Heath for maintaining the close relationship between the British and US governments, citing his mindfulness towards Britain’s Atlantic partner as ‘a testimony to your personal leadership and the wisdom of your policy.’<sup>106</sup> British entry into the European Communities can be viewed as a foreign policy success on multiple fronts. Notwithstanding Britain’s success in joining an enlarged Community project, the United States also considered this to be a positive venture for Atlantic-European relations as Secretary of State Kissinger had sought to reform NATO relations on a trilateral basis, with the United States, Europe and Japan working to quell Cold War rivalries, particularly as China’s nuclear program was in its infancy.<sup>107</sup> Bringing Japan into the conversation alongside Britain as a key US ally achieved a secondary goal for the Nixon administration. Having Japan as a main ally allowed the United States to scale back its commitments to European defence by creating a new power bloc focused on opposing Chinese nuclear ambitions. The Nixon administration expected Britain to take on responsibilities that the US government had originally held. In doing so, Nixon and Kissinger adopted the Connally proposal in order to avoid creating ‘in Europe a Frankenstein monster, which could prove to be highly detrimental to our interests in the years ahead.’<sup>108</sup> The former Secretary of the Treasury John B. Connally Jr suggested that the United States’ achievement of EC ‘monetary unity’ should act as a catalyst for creating ‘an inward-looking, defensive bloc’ thereby allowing the Nixon

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<sup>105</sup> The enlargement of the European Communities allowed a new grouping of European states which abated French fears of a German axis, as a new counter-party involving closer political cooperation emerged between the UK, France and Germany, see Vaïsse, ‘Changement et continuité dans la politique européenne de la France’, p.40; Saunders, *Yes to Europe!*, p.52.

<sup>106</sup> TNA, Nixon to Heath, 29 October 1971, PREM/15/715, quoted in Alex Spelling, ‘Edward Heath and Anglo-American relations 1970-1974: A reappraisal’ in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, xx (2009), p.642.

<sup>107</sup> Takeshi Yamamoto, ‘Bilateral or Trilateral? Japan, the EC and the United States in the “Year of Europe”’ in *Journal of European Integration History*, xxv (2019), p.37.

<sup>108</sup> ‘Draft Memorandum From President Nixon to the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)’, 10 March 1973, *FRUS* 1969-1976, XXXII, p.119.

government to expand its foreign policy mandate.<sup>109</sup> The shift in US defence policy had a domino effect on American allies, particularly with regards to Continental European defence strategies and cooperation.

The US decision to prioritise global defence over its European commitments afforded France the opportunity to achieve its ambition, albeit at the expense of a Franco-British nuclear entente. Pompidou favoured the concept of a European Europe, fully cognizant of its foreign interests, whilst sidestepping the power blocs under the control of the superpowers. Maurice Vaïsse has previously argued that this approach is exactly what President de Gaulle was trying to promote during his tenure. However, there are certain nuances between both presidents' approaches, which mean that this is not the case. While de Gaulle criticised the Kennedy and Johnson administrations for furthering their own interests, it is well-established that the United States encouraged British involvement in Europe as a matter not only of economic progression, but also of ensuring European security against the Soviet Union – a principal concern of the United States following the Cuban Missile Crisis.<sup>110</sup> The reorientation of US policy towards a more globalist approach contradicts Vaïsse's assertion since more responsibility was placed on Britain and France. When Nixon and Brezhnev signed the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War at San Clemente on 22 June 1973, they committed both nations to a reduction in nuclear armaments.<sup>111</sup> Pompidou recognised the actions of the superpowers once again placed their agenda ahead of the European one, thus a separate identity was required in conjunction with Britain.<sup>112</sup> Continuing on a similar vein, he stressed that Europe must be the 'master of its own destiny' following the San Clemente Agreement.<sup>113</sup> Lord Carrington responded to Pompidou's call by preparing a command paper on the establishment of a European political identity. Incorporating the WEU into the European Communities framework as a model for continental defence was the main stipulation for Britain adopting a separate military identity.<sup>114</sup> The subsumption of the WEU into a European framework would have achieved a key foreign policy objective for Britain.

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<sup>109</sup> Connally to Council on Foreign Relations, 15 March 1972 in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the Finances for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1972* (Washington, 1973), pp.411-416.

<sup>110</sup> Lucia Coppolaro, 'US policy on European integration during the GATT Kennedy Round negotiations (1963-67): the last Hurrah of America's Europeanist' in *The International History Review*, xxxiii (2011), p.410.

<sup>111</sup> This reduction in arms was in line with the basic principles outlined in the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, see 'Draft agreement between the United States of American and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Prevention of Nuclear War', 22 June 1973, *FRUS 1969-1973*, XV, p.524.

<sup>112</sup> Freedman, *Britain and nuclear weapons*, p.46.

<sup>113</sup> Vaïsse, 'Changement et continuité dans la politique européenne de la France', p.36.

<sup>114</sup> TNA, European Political Co-Operation : Preparation of paper on European Identity, [undated, but July 1973], FCO/30/1750.

While former British governments had worked to maintain the ‘special relationship’ through acting as an interlocutor between its European and US allies within NATO, SALT I had allowed Britain to build a close relationship with France to rectify the uncertainty of the US role in European affairs.<sup>115</sup> Pompidou also pushed this agenda in July and December 1973 with marked success. In his end-of-year address to the nation and its dependants, Pompidou spoke of the ‘great progress that had been made in diverse areas,’ for while economically France was suffering as a result of the 1973 oil crisis, the Pompidou government had succeeded in getting the Nine European states to adopt a ‘European identity.’<sup>116</sup> The adoption of a European identity fulfilled Pompidou’s long-held policy of freeing the European Communities from politico-military dependence on the United States. Although this was indeed a similar policy to that envisioned by de Gaulle, the European-centric nature of how this policy outcome was brought about would not have aligned itself with the ‘France first’ mentality of de Gaulle’s politics of *grandeur*.

The Heath government was known for its advocacy of European unity. Prominent Whitehall civil servants and Conservative MPs including EEC membership negotiator Con O’Neill, Michael Butler and Airey Neave cherished the idea of Franco-British reconciliation in the guise of European defence cooperation.<sup>117</sup> However in the military sense, the new orientation towards an EDC within the European Communities was unsustainable in the short term as Britain still relied on the United States for the majority of its nuclear capability. The United States remained ambivalent regarding the sharing of nuclear knowledge between Britain and France. In particular, British accession to the European Communities was viewed as a chance for the United States to scale down their commitments to Europe, while still providing nuclear prospects through the NATO command structure.<sup>118</sup> The Nixon administration effectively vetoed British cooperation with France over nuclear matters. In a National Security Study Memorandum, Kissinger evaluated the ‘security risks inherent in furnishing assistance’ to European states given the United States’ position as a partner to the

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<sup>115</sup> G. Wyn Rees, ‘Constructing a European defence identity: The perspectives of Britain, France and Germany’ in *European Foreign Affairs Review*, ii (1996), p.232.

<sup>116</sup> AN, Archives d’Edouard Balladar, Premier Ministre, ‘projet de declaration comme transcrit d’un manuscrit de Georges Pompidou (septembre – octobre 1973)’, 543AP/32 ; INA, ‘Vœux Pompidou’, 31 décembre 1973 (<https://www.ina.fr/video/CAF94060492/voeux-pompidou-video.html>) (9 December 2020).

<sup>117</sup> Hall, *Dilemmas of decline*, p.180. For a clear overview of the alignment between British civil service and Conservative positions, see N.J. Crowson, *The Conservative Party and European integration since 1945; At the heart of Europe?* (Abingdon, 2007).

<sup>118</sup> Gabriele Clemens, ‘A History of failures and miscalculations? Britain’s relationship to the Europeans Communities in the postwar era (1945-1973)’ in *Contemporary European History*, xiii (2004), p.231.

Soviet Union through the bipolar framework of SALT I.<sup>119</sup> Kissinger advised Nixon that Britain was the only alternative to continue nuclear cooperation for continental defence, especially as the Nassau Agreement preceded SALT I and therefore was not subject to its limitations.<sup>120</sup> Kissinger went further to stress that ‘the preservation of the UK “special relationship” as the main vehicle for US-European nuclear relations’ was preferable to ‘the development of roughly equivalent nuclear relationships with the UK and France’ as collaborators.<sup>121</sup> Kissinger’s advocacy went against the general trend of US political decision-making since Congress was actively in favour of pursuing non-proliferation measures through SALT I – and later SALT II – rather than maintaining the pre-established alliances between the United States and its European allies.<sup>122</sup> Thus, the devised nuclear defence alternative for Britain and France’s continued importance on the international stage was rendered redundant by the United States’ veto to further cooperation over a nuclear force. This had a profound impact on the Franco-British partnership. US influence clearly undermined Franco-British hopes for reconciliation over nuclear affairs. Indeed when Harold Wilson returned as Prime Minister following the February 1974 General Election, Heath regretted that no arrangement was possible to institutionalise the Franco-British nuclear entente as a counterbalance for the superpowers.<sup>123</sup> Nevertheless, bilateral relations had successfully improved to the point where Heath had achieved his main objective of accessing the European Communities, particularly as a fruitful network had been established between Aérospatiale and BAC for the construction of Franco-British military aircraft – namely, the SEPECAT Jaguar and Spey-Mirage which ensured Britain and France maintained a measure of influence in defence affairs.

### Conclusion

The SALT process effectively decided the fate of Britain and France’s nuclear ambitions by December 1973. The lack of support for Franco-British cooperation over the development of the credible European Nuclear Force relegated both countries to the role of medium nuclear

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<sup>119</sup> ‘US Nuclear Defense Policy toward France’, 13 March 1973, *FRUS* 1969-1976, vol E-15, p.935.

<sup>120</sup> Despite its stance on non-proliferation, the United States maintained a position whereupon its strategic forces were involved in the Atlantic Alliance for ‘the function of war prevention’; see David S. Yost, ‘Analysing international nuclear order’ in *International Affairs*, lxxxiii (2007), p.553.

<sup>121</sup> *Op cit*; Barbara Zanchetta, *The transformation of American international power in the 1970s* (Cambridge, 2014), pp.67, 88.

<sup>122</sup> James Cameron and Or Rabinowitz, ‘Eight lost years? Nixon, Ford, Kissinger and the non-proliferation regime, 1969-1977’ in *Journal of Strategic Studies*, xl (2017), p.841.

<sup>123</sup> The Labour Party won the largest share of the vote, but was short of an overall majority. Regardless Wilson was returned as Prime Minister, see Stoddart, ‘Nuclear weapons in Britain’s policy towards France’, p.737.

powers.<sup>124</sup> The institutionalisation of the bipolar system was crucial to blunting European ambitions of maintaining a great power role on the international stage. Unlike military discussions during the 1960s, European defence was no longer the primary focus of superpower discussions. The negotiations between the Soviet Union and United States to regulate the development of nuclear weapons and deterrent forces by other world powers meant that, in a hierarchical sense, they were able to exert certain controls over arms testing and development over other nations. Britain and France did not benefit from this progression of the NPT, particularly as the superpowers now set the agenda with regards to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. In addition to SALT I and the San Clemente Agreement, the superpowers extended arms controls to cover testing of nuclear weapons on the ocean floor. The 1972 Seabed Arms Control Treaty was an extension of US and Soviet power over the nuclear affairs of medium powers and nations with lesser military capacity.<sup>125</sup> The various bilateral treaties promulgated throughout this period represent the final stages of military decline for France and Britain. As American political scientist Joseph S Nye states, the decline in military terms resulting from the SALT process meant that both European nations had lost in part their ability to influence the international agenda, particularly around the topic of non-proliferation – something Britain had helped to shape through the PTBT and NPT negotiating phases.<sup>126</sup>

The concept of a European defence alternative lost momentum following the ratification of SALT I. The reduction of US influence in military matters affirms the historical interpretation that European defence integration proved more difficult than economic matters. Nevertheless, this period can be viewed as one of reconciliation between Britain and France. The discord which had marked the 1960s had been overcome as a result of British accession into the European Community project. The institutionalisation of bipolarity helped to forge stronger politico-military links between the British and French governments. Franco-British solidarity revealed itself through European integration as it allowed both countries to contribute to the formulation of a European identity, separate from the superpowers. For instance, with the process of European enlargement taking place in January 1973, Britain and France were able to advance their influence in economic matters,

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<sup>124</sup> Olivier Debouzy, 'La dissuasion nucléaire à l'ère du vide' in *Politique étrangère*, lxii (1997), p.321.

<sup>125</sup> TNA, Seabed Arms Control Treaty, [undated, 18 May 1972], FCO/66/376.

<sup>126</sup> Joseph S Nye Jr, *Soft power; The means to success in world power* (New York, 2004), p.9.

but also they turned their attentions to cultivating a new defence identity.<sup>127</sup> Thus despite the US decision to turn from a European focus of their defence strategy to a more globalist approach, Britain was able to capitalise on its new position within the European bloc. The introduction of the SEPECAT Jaguar in 1973 represented Britain's new-found prominence on the European stage as a highly important partner to France, which had pre-established a European military aviation sector alongside the FRG.

More importantly for the Franco-British bilateral relationship, Britain and France also appeared to have made strides in overcoming the initial disagreements which hampered any prospects of cooperation in the 1960s. The enlargement of the European Communities cemented both countries' reputations as leaders in European military aviation, economics and general political diplomacy.<sup>128</sup> Prevailing over the difficulties of the de Gaulle years allowed both governments to achieve greater European integration after 1973.<sup>129</sup> Therefore for the first time since the Suez Crisis of 1956, Britain and France appeared to be in a similar position both politically, militarily and economically.<sup>130</sup> Exceptionally, bilateral relations became much more amicable, and the foreign policy outlook of both countries now was dependent on the positioning of the European Communities.<sup>131</sup> In sum, both British and French governments were forced into a position of abandoning their aspirations for great power roles.

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<sup>127</sup> Alain Joxe, 'Représentation des alliances dans la nouvelle stratégie américaine' in *Politique étrangère*, lxii (1997), p.329.

<sup>128</sup> David Edgerton, 'The "White Heat" revisited: The British government and technology in the 1960s' in *Twentieth Century British History*, vii (1996), p.53.

<sup>129</sup> Robson and Key, 'Just super!' in *Daily Express*, 5 March 1975, p.1.

<sup>130</sup> Robert Tombs and Isabelle Tombs, *That sweet enemy: Britain and France; The history of a love-hate relationship* (London, 2007), pp.630-632.

<sup>131</sup> Saunders, *Yes to Europe!*, p.25.



## Conclusion

The political discussions focusing on nuclear weapons have persisted to the present day, but it was during the Cold War when they reached their zenith.<sup>1</sup> The divisions around Franco-British relations within multilateral defence organisations remained as Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister between 1979 and 1990, prioritised the creation of a centralised nuclear decision-making apparatus within NATO to ‘strengthen deterrence’ against the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> Thatcher thought the installation of US Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) on the European continent would offset any perceived advantage for the Soviet Union; thereby the appearance of Anglo-American cooperation in Europe reopened old wounds regarding French uncertainty around US interference in the defence decision-making.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the return to US-UK interdependence was a result of Thatcher’s four pillar defence strategy, whereupon the construction of a nuclear deterrent and ‘the defence of the European central front’ were critical tenets.<sup>4</sup> The ease with which Thatcher fell in behind the direction of US foreign policy was a result of US unilateralism towards Soviet encroachment into Poland in 1980-1, a trend that found its roots following the Prague Spring uprising.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, when Thatcher formed her first government in 1979, she found that British foreign policy-making depended on cooperation with overseas partners. The reasons for this were two-fold. Her immediate predecessor Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan shifted from a pursuit of a European defence force and embraced Anglo-American ‘military-intelligence’ cooperation in a broad sense, returning Britain to a posture of ‘complex interdependence’, which the 1962 Nassau Agreement first established.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, the United States’ control of NATO made British independence over its defence decision-making unlikely. The Nassau Agreement directly linked British nuclear capacities with those of NATO, except for instances of national emergency, which gave Thatcher little room for manoeuvre other than acceptance of Britain’s subservient role to the United States. The framework for NATO decision-making undermined

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<sup>1</sup> Smith, ‘British nuclear weapons and NATO in the Cold War and beyond’, p.1395.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher; The authorised biography, Volume one: Not for turning* (London, 2013), p.558.

<sup>3</sup> TNA, Yuri Andropov to Mrs Thatcher, Translation from original Russian, 27 August 1983, PREM/19/979.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Hampshire, ‘Margaret Thatcher’s first U-turn: Francis Pym and the control of defence spending, 1979-81’ in *Contemporary British History*, xxix (2015), p.361.

<sup>5</sup> Andrea Chiampan, “‘Those European Chicken Littles’: Reagan, NATO and the Poland Crisis, 1981-2’ in *The International History Review*, xxxvii (2015), p.692.

<sup>6</sup> Tim Hames, ‘The special relationship’ in Andrew Adonis and Tim Hames (eds), *A Conservative revolution? The Thatcher-Reagan decade in perspective* (Manchester, 1994), p.126.

British sovereignty over its own defence policies.<sup>7</sup> Despite Thatcher's pursuit of US policy, Britain's position within the European Communities remained secure, with long-term difficulties surrounding the compatibility of British and French politico-military policies settled following Britain's accession in January 1973.

Although the divisions over the United States' interference in European affairs remained, the Franco-British relationship experienced a sense of stability, with both countries' position as European powers now ensured as a result of the SALT process. This thesis has probed the Franco-British relationship within the context of defence cooperation, with a particular focus on nuclear weapons decision-making – a focal point of academic and public discourse during the late-1950s and 1960s. The acquisition of nuclear weapons became intrinsically linked to a nation's status as a great power. After 1973, the locus of political debates within the European Communities moved away from the construction of a European Nuclear Force and towards the adoption of disarmament proposals with the aim of establishing a Common Defence and Security Policy.<sup>8</sup> Both Britain and France were intricately involved in the disarmament process. The British government historically placed great importance on the disarmament of nuclear weapons from the 1950s, with Conservative and Labour backbenchers sharing their concerns about non-proliferation.<sup>9</sup> By spring 1977, French President Giscard d'Estaing ordered the *Centre d'analyse et de provision* to draw up a proposal for disarmament as France could no longer disregard the issue following the installation of Soviet SS-20 missiles in Eastern Europe, particularly since French nuclear strength was completely asymmetrical to that of the Soviet Union.<sup>10</sup> President Giscard's pursuit of non-proliferation was the final break away from the French policies of *grandeur* that marked the de Gaulle administration, and to a lesser extent the Pompidou government.

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<sup>7</sup> Ghița Ionescu, *Leadership in an interdependent world; The statesmanship of Adenauer, de Gaulle, Thatcher, Reagan and Gorbachev* (Harlow, 1991), p.151.

<sup>8</sup> Angela Romano, 'Re-designing military security in Europe: cooperation and competition between the European community and NATO during the early 1980s' in *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, xxiv (2017), p.446.

<sup>9</sup> There were some backbenchers who did not see nuclear war as a viable threat to British security. Conservative politician Enoch Powell stated 'a Soviet offensive against Western Europe would mean war – not nuclear war, but just war – with American and Britain, and Russia would feel no certainty she would win that war, even if she overran the whole of Europe', CAC, Speech by the Rt.Hon. J. Enoch Powell at a public meeting at the Bourne Hall, Farnham, 7 March 1969, POLL/4/1/5. Similarly, Labour MP Robin F. Cook argued that the nuclear weapons industry needed to be maintained to protect 'a substantial expansion of nuclear power over the coming two or three decades', see *The parliamentary debates*, Hansard, House of Commons, 20 December 1976 (vol cmxxiii).

<sup>10</sup> Angela Romano, 'Parallelism, asymmetry and convergence in Cold War Europe' in *Politique européenne*, lxxvi (2022), p.153.

Nevertheless, there was a growing sense among European politicians that the United States and the Soviet Union dictated the direction of international policies with regards to nuclear weapons. In June 1979 US and Soviet representatives met to discuss further Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties in Vienna. The United States achieved a key strategic victory during the SALT II negotiations since they acquired more concessions from the Soviet representative Victor Karpov – namely, the limitation of cruise missile testing ranges, with the Soviet Union no longer able to carry out atmospheric weapons tests as the US representative introduced an arms control measure of 3,000 to 4,000 kilometre aerial distance for missile tests, citing environmental consequences as the rationale for this stipulation.<sup>11</sup> SALT II represented a further segregation of the Soviet Union and the United States from the European powers with more arms control measures being generally accepted as the international standard for possessing nuclear weapons. A secondary consequence of the SALT process was the increasingly courteous bilateral relationship between Britain and France as both nations now were interdependent on the other Eight countries within the European Communities.

### **Assessing bipolarity's impact on Franco-British ambitions**

US and Soviet interactions throughout the period 1956 to 1973 undermined British and French efforts to carve out a new role for themselves in the international system following the initial stages of decolonisation. The Soviet threat of nuclear attack in November 1956 was considered to be extremely sharp and forced both European powers to take stock of the reality that they were at a disadvantage to the emerging superpowers.<sup>12</sup> The immediate reaction to the Suez Crisis was two-fold. In the first instance, Britain and France focused their energies on cultivating a military role on the European continent. More importantly, both governments made the connection between nuclear weapons and the possibility of retaining their pre-war roles of great power nations.<sup>13</sup> Britain and France adopted separate nuclear weapons strategies with the French opting to create an independent nuclear force with a degree of European integration through the F-I-G accords. Yet, the French insistence on pursuing its independent nuclear deterrent proved problematic for the Franco-British relationship. Britain joined the Soviet Union and the United States in advancing non-

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<sup>11</sup> Paul C. Warnke and Ralph Earle II, 'SALT II and Beyond' in *International Negotiation*, i (1996), p.213.

<sup>12</sup> Warren Bass, *A surprise out of Zion? Case studies in Israel's decisions on whether to alert the United States to preemptive and preventive strikes, from Suez to the Syrian nuclear reactor* (Santa Monica, 2015), p.12.

<sup>13</sup> David Armitage, 'Disconnected in [World] History' (17 May 2022), Paper presented at Queen's University Belfast.

proliferation discussions within the United Nations, whereas France concentrated on nuclear tests in the Sahara, much to the chagrin of the British.<sup>14</sup> The pace of French nuclear tests rendered discussions on non-proliferation redundant with the building of nuclear arsenals growing exponentially until the Cuban Missile Crisis in November 1962.

The military divergence between the superpowers and France had a negative impact on the Franco-British relationship. Nuclear politics were central to this divergence as the French army attempted to reform their military structures to accommodate a tactical deterrence force. While France sought to possess an independent nuclear force, the British government curried favour with its US partners and agreed through the Nassau Agreement that the United States would provide a hardware delivery system for British warheads. Thus, Anglo-American interdependence frustrated de Gaulle particularly as it imperilled his vision for a *Europe puissance*, which would be essential to the construction of a European identity at least in military terms. De Gaulle used the treaty between Britain and the United States to support his narrative around ‘Anglo-Saxon’ interference in European affairs. The most obvious use of this narrative against the British government came in January 1963 when de Gaulle officially announced his veto against British accession to the European Communities. De Gaulle cited Anglo-Saxon links as the reason for denying British entry, criticising Britain’s ambiguity towards the construction and development of the European Communities.<sup>15</sup> Likewise, the French maintained a hostile approach to the United States, who they viewed as Britain’s Atlantic ally. This aggression was most acutely characterised within the Atlantic Alliance command structure. During the debates concerning hardware solutions for the US-sponsored Multilateral Force, the United States did not consider the French proposal for the Mirage IV aircraft as the basis for the bomber deterrence force, preferring instead the Lockheed Starfighter as it would ensure the United States maintained control over alliance activities in response to the Soviet Union.<sup>16</sup> French weariness of the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ grip over European defence planning reached a crescendo in March 1966. With the decision to withdraw its forces from the NATO command structure, France placed itself on a separate course over European defence concerns than Britain and the United States. The British Labour government openly criticised US involvement in the NATO MLF discussion,

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<sup>14</sup> Mervyn O’Driscoll, ‘Explosive challenge; Diplomatic triangles, the United Nations, and the problem of French nuclear testing, 1959-60’ in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, xi (2009), pp.39-40.

<sup>15</sup> Nicolas Tenzer, ‘À la recherche d’une nouvelle politique extérieure’ in Marc Chevrier and Isabelle Gusse (eds), *La France depuis de Gaulle ; La V<sup>e</sup> République en perspective* (Montréal, 2010), p.240.

<sup>16</sup> NATO, Coordinated Production of the F-104G Starfighter aircraft in Europe, 12 June 1961, Press Release (61)14.

inferring the lack of any ‘definite proposal for [sic] MLF’ as principal catalyst for French withdrawal.<sup>17</sup> Historian Irwin M. Wall has argued that US politicians merely imagined French isolationism towards European defence integration and that France would continue to remain an issue for NATO policy-making throughout the 1960s.<sup>18</sup> Until French withdrawal, the Gaullist government prioritised the rebalancing of the NATO command structure to reflect its membership. US influence undermined Gaullist ambitions of using the French *force de frappe* as a basis for NATO reform, therefore de Gaulle and General Ailleret, the commander of the French nuclear deterrent, had to revert to a separate nuclear strategy.<sup>19</sup> Divisions between French and US grand design strategies caused opportunities for Franco-British cooperation to fade into the ether, as the British government had joined its nuclear planning strategy to that of the United States. This was reflected in the formulation of a Ministry of Defence Working Group for the implementation of the Nassau Agreements.<sup>20</sup> However, the nuclear parity between Britain and France made cooperation difficult as the French now attempted to cultivate a Europe military identity within the WEU and European Communities following its departure from the NATO framework.<sup>21</sup> Despite the opportunity to express some authority on the international stage as a result of the Prague Spring, the French government was unsuccessful in achieving this aim as the inclusion of a *Europe puissance* received a cold reception from France’s European partners – especially, the FRG.

The bipolar framework weakened the effectiveness of European powers in attaining their military objectives. Ralph Dietl has argued that Europe was ‘an institutionalised sub-structure of the bipolar’ nature of the Cold War.<sup>22</sup> The superpowers dictated the direction of non-proliferation discussions, especially in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis. In July 1963, representatives from the United States, Soviet Union and Britain convened in Moscow to discuss the de-escalation of the nuclear arms race by constructing the Partial Test Ban Treaty. Lord Hailsham, the British representative, found himself increasingly marginalised during the discussions. US and Soviet representatives believed the United Kingdom was a ‘second-rate’ nuclear power given its dependence on the United States and that the adoption

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<sup>17</sup> CPA, *1965-66 Supplementary Estimate – Defence (Central)*, E/3/39.

<sup>18</sup> Irwin M. Wall, ‘De Gaulle, the “Anglo-Saxons”, and the Algerian war’ in *Journal of Strategic Studies*, xxv (2002), p.137.

<sup>19</sup> Frédéric Bozo, *De Gaulle, the United States and the Atlantic Alliance* (Oxford, 2001), pp. xiii-xv. Trans. by Susan Emanuel.

<sup>20</sup> TNA, Report from Working Group on the Implementation of the Nassau Agreement, [undated, various reports between 1963 and 1964], DEFE/7/2314.

<sup>21</sup> Sverre Lodgaard, *Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation; Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world?* (Abingdon, 2011), pp.51-52.

<sup>22</sup> Dietl, ‘The WEU: A Europe of the Seven’, p.431.

of certain limitations measures were required to curtail the ambitions of other fledging nuclear states.<sup>23</sup> Superpower pressures to conform to international arms control measures were coupled with a public outcry to cancel nuclear weapons programs and dismantle existing deterrent forces. This mainly took the form of intellectual criticism in France. In Britain, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) led demonstrations against nuclearisation throughout the late-1950s and 1960s, which engrained the perils of nuclear politics into the public consciousness. The CND certainly played a significant role in the debate around de-escalation in the nuclear arms race, with Prime Minister Macmillan concerned about public opinion around British nuclear development programs. Despite no official affiliation, the CND enjoyed support from numerous Labour politicians, which further fuelled the Conservatives' anxiety on nuclearisation. While the CND was influential in placing nuclear weapons at the heart of public debates, it achieved limited success in forcing British policy-makers into pursuing non-proliferation with the superpowers. When negotiations for the PTBT were first tabled, Britain found itself being progressively relegated to the role of a 'second-rate' nation following the signing of the Nassau Agreements. Thus, Hailsham was excluded from major decisions regarding the wording of the treaty. Thereby signifying Britain's decline as a world power, something CND member A.J.P. Taylor lamented following his organisation's downturn in popularity. Ultimately when the Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed in 1968, the United States and Soviet Union exerted their control over the non-dissemination process which the Irish Minister for External Affairs Frank Aiken had started within the UN General Council in 1959.<sup>24</sup> The superpowers had ensured with the agreement on Article II of the NPT that 'each non-nuclear-weapon-State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to receive the transfer from any transferor whatsoever of nuclear weapons', thereby safeguarding their influence as the prominent nuclear powers within the NATO alliance and Warsaw Pact countries respectively.<sup>25</sup> This stipulation frustrated the FRG Chancellor Kiesinger who raised his concerns to Solly Zuckerman and Sir Burke Trend during an official visit to the FRG. However, West German cries fell on deaf ears as Wilson was himself left with little alternatives following Johnson's unilateral postponement of MLF discussions, so the British Prime Minister acted on the advice of his

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<sup>23</sup> Through the 1960s, many countries began to develop nuclear weapons development programs with Sweden and Switzerland joining Britain and France as European nuclear states. The PTBT started the process of nuclear non-proliferation discussions, see Michel Richard, 'Military Dimensions' in Irmgard Niemeyer, Mona Dreicer and Gotthard Stein (eds), *Nuclear non-proliferation and arms control verification; Innovative systems concepts* (Cham, 2020), pp.87-88.

<sup>24</sup> O'Driscoll, *Ireland, West Germany and the new Europe, 1949-73*, p.136

<sup>25</sup> Kelsey Davenport, *The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty* (San Rafael, 2019), p.49.

Private Secretary Michael Palliser to ‘sign the treaty.’<sup>26</sup> The lack of any alternative for the Wilson government illustrates his country’s subservience to the foreign policy interests of the superpowers. The NPT acted as the final victory for the United States and Soviet Union in monopolising the nuclear market as non-nuclear states would need to look to them for access to the weaponry. Similarly it was the final nail in the coffin for British and French nuclear ambitions, marking the end of their influence in détente discussions. Unlike the PTBT which Richard Crockatt asserted was the primary reason for the decline in British influence over nuclear matters.<sup>27</sup> The NPT was the critical turning point for the institutionalisation of the bipolar framework for two key reasons. Firstly, the treaty tied the United States and Soviet Union into further negotiations over arms control measures. The NPT laid the groundwork for the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, which dominated superpower interplay throughout the 1970s. Further, the NPT became a deterrent to Britain in facilitating nuclear cooperation with the French from 1969 onwards. The Labour MP for Sheffield Park Fred Mulley expressed concern over Franco-British nuclear collaboration in 1969, stating that ‘proliferation [with France] is a serious danger’ characterising it as ‘extremely unwise to link’ Franco-British cooperation with EC accession under Britain’s obligations to the NPT.<sup>28</sup>

In this era of superpower pragmatism, Britain and France experienced reconciliation in their bilateral relationship. The San Clemente Agreement, which followed SALT I, ensured that ‘the US and the USSR hold the [same] view’ on nuclear non-proliferation matters with regards to other nations’ nuclear ambitions.<sup>29</sup> The June 1973 agreement followed Britain’s entry in the European Communities that symbolised the newfound amicability of the Franco-British politico-military relationship. The introduction of the SEPECAT Jaguar – the Franco-British aerial fighter – was the embodiment of the stable politico-military interaction. By 1973, the SEPECAT Jaguar had been in the pipeline since 1966, which in itself was a turning point in the Franco-British military partnership. 1973 also marked the culmination of economic and political integration following the Anglo-French Summit of May 1971, where Pompidou and Heath agreed that Britain would adopt EC

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<sup>26</sup> TNA, Palliser to Wilson, 3 March 1967, PREM/13/1888; Terry Macintyre, *Anglo-German relations during the Labour governments 1964-70; NATO strategy, détente and European integration* (Manchester, 2007), p.166.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Crockatt, *The Fifty years war: The United States and the Soviet Union, 1941-1991* (London, 1995), p.157. Cited in R. Gerald Hughes, *Britain, Germany and the Cold War; The search for a European détente 1949-1967* (London, 2007), pp.114-115.

<sup>28</sup> France was not a signatory of the NPT, and thus was not bound by the conditions of the treaty in the case of Franco-British cooperation over a European Nuclear Force, *The parliamentary debates*, Hansard, House of Commons, 25 July 1969 (vol dclxxxvii).

<sup>29</sup> ‘Memorandum of Conversation’, 23 June 1973, *FRUS* 1969-1976, XV, p.526.

budgetary and political policies.<sup>30</sup> This was a crucial concession to Pompidou for Heath to demonstrate that the British were in fact ‘good Europeans.’<sup>31</sup> Despite the convergence of military policy creating an avenue for economic and monetary cooperation, Britain and France were consigned by the supremacy of the superpowers to collaborating within a broadly European organisation. Therefore, both had to accept their new positions as European or regional powers, rather than seeking global power roles – a key consideration of both powers’ defence and foreign policies following the Suez Crisis of 1956.<sup>32</sup>

### **The postponement of the *Europe puissance* – for now**

The concept of the European superpower to rival the United States and the Soviet Union was a mere memory by 1973. However, the idea has experienced intermittent resurgences in the ensuing decades. Most recently, the current French President Emmanuel Macron returned to the idea of a *Europe puissance* in the wake of Britain’s departure from the European bloc. Macron – an uncompromising critic of both Brexit and NATO – stated that he wants a common nuclear policy for Europe, which guarantees ‘strategic military sovereignty.’<sup>33</sup> In addition, the French president also states that Brexit was a ‘mistake’ and that Britain must pay for turning its back on the ‘common ambition’ of the European Union.<sup>34</sup> There is an aspect of continuity between Macron and de Gaulle’s defence policy outlooks. The Gaullist narrative against US influence in European defence decision-making remained the primary motive for a *Europe puissance* in spite of the changing political visions of Conservative and Labour governments. The 1967 Labour defence policy matched the Gaullist grand design policy only in part since the British Cabinet was unwilling to integrate their nuclear forces in a *Europe puissance* with a French *force de frappe* as its military hardware.<sup>35</sup> Following the 1970 General Election, British and French policies on European defence integration converged. Entry into the European Communities fulfilled Britain’s longstanding policy but it came too late for the *Europe puissance* to become a reality. British accession to the European

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<sup>30</sup> O’Driscoll, *Ireland, West Germany and the new Europe, 1949-73*, p.190.

<sup>31</sup> Ziegler, *Edward Heath*, p.276.

<sup>32</sup> A global power is one which plays a key role, both militarily and diplomatically, in world politics. See Zaki Laïdi, *Norms over force; The enigma of European power* (New York, 2008), p.4.

<sup>33</sup> Julian Lindley-French, ‘Europe puissance or Macro-Gaullisme?’ ([www.defencesynergia.co.uk/europe-puissance-or-macro-gaullisme/](http://www.defencesynergia.co.uk/europe-puissance-or-macro-gaullisme/)) (accessed 8 March 2021).

<sup>34</sup> « Emmanuel Macron appelle le Royaume-Uni à « choisir » sa relation avec l’UE » in *Le Figaro* (<https://www.lefigaro.fr/international/emmanuel-macron-appelle-le-royaume-uni-a-choisir-sa-relation-avec-l-ue-2021>) (5 March 2021).

<sup>35</sup> ‘The risk of inadvertent contradiction between future United Kingdom and Community [policies] was not great’, see TNA, Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, 27 April 1967, CC (67), CAB/128/42/23; D.E. Butler and Anthony King, *The British General Election of 1966* (London, 1966), p.165.



Communities is generally considered to be part of a transition from the role of a great power to a 'second-rate' one.<sup>36</sup> This transition affected various aspects of British diplomacy while external factors also influenced the United Kingdom's decline into the role of a European power. The institutionalisation of US-Soviet diplomatic interactions over détente hindered any chance of the *Europe puissance* experiencing resurgence since it would entail Britain – along with other European Community states – following French geopolitical ambitions, which often were contrary to the foreign policy aims of the superpowers.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, Heath's refusal to embrace Kissinger's 'Year of Europe' placed Britain and the United States at loggerheads, especially at a time when Heath wished to purchase more Polaris submarines. Once again, the United States was in a position to cripple European ambitions of formulating a common foreign policy. In the wake of the Arab-Israeli oil crisis of 1973, Kissinger knew the EEC was in the midst of a fiscal depression. Using this as part of a negotiating ploy, he stated that the British 'can't insist that MBFR, nuclear treaty... operate without consultation.'<sup>38</sup> Thereby, the US Secretary of State succeeded in tying together British economic and defence policy as part of US-UK Polaris consultations. While Britain received upgraded Polaris technology, it came at the cost of strict adherence to SALT I, thus limiting any potential counter-balance a *Europe puissance* could manifest against Soviet aggression and ensuring US defence hegemony in Europe remained.<sup>39</sup>

Regardless, the administrative difficulties in establishing a *Europe puissance* remained from the initial attempts at creating the European Defence Community in 1954. While the bipolar structure of Cold War diplomatic interaction restricted the *Europe puissance* from gaining any momentum in its primary aim of becoming a third superpower, its proposed framework also made it generally unworkable. Following the first Congress of Europe after British accession the issue with the *Europe puissance* became apparent. The Minister of State for Housing Paul Channon criticised aspects of governance in the European Communities. He wrote to fellow minister Julian Amery arguing 'the effectiveness of the Community is hindered by the requirement of unanimity which applies even to minor

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<sup>36</sup> For a recent overview of this argument see Timothy Heppell and Andrew S. Roe-Crines, 'The Heath premiership: A transitional era?' in Andrew S. Roe-Crines and Timothy Heppell (eds), *Policies and politics under Prime Minister Edward Heath* (Basingstoke, 2021), p.435.

<sup>37</sup> Laurent Warlouzet, 'L'Europe puissance relancée?' in *Études*, vii (2022), p.8, pp.7-20.

<sup>38</sup> Conversation among President Nixon, the President's Assistant for Nation Security Affairs, and Secretary of the Treasury, Schultz, 3 March 1973, *FRUS* 1973-76, XIII, pp.84-5.

<sup>39</sup> Robb, *A strained relationship?*, p.77; Catherine Hynes, *The Year that never was; Heath, the Nixon Administration, and the Year of Europe* (Dublin, 2009), p.140.

problems, and by the absence of an institution expressing the popular will.’<sup>40</sup> The idea of an EC representative legislative body took precedence throughout the rest of the 1970s, culminating in the 1986 Single European Act which granted the Community executive functions over policy-making.<sup>41</sup> Progressively, discussions around the creation of a *Europe puissance* waned. In its wake the discourse between EC countries was dominated by responding to monetary concerns, effectively replacing discussions focused on exclusive military activities.<sup>42</sup>

### **The state of Franco-British relations**

The demise of the *Europe puissance* gives credence to the interpretation that European defence integration has proven more difficult than economic cooperation.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, Franco-British politico-military relations experienced a period of relative calm. The ties between Sud-Aviation and BAC over the Concorde and Mirage IV projects achieved substantial gains for British and French industries with regards to their superpower counterparts. The roll-out of the SEPECAT Jaguar in 1973 represented the success of an amicable Franco-British relationship, insofar as it achieved closer military cooperation between both countries’ political elites but also strengthened the technological collaboration between their respective aeronautical industries. The SEPECAT Jaguar was the first military hardware borne out of Franco-British cooperation. Its role in fostering closer collaboration cannot be understated. Rolls-Royce and Turboméca, both countries’ leading aeronautical engine manufacturers, were responsible for the design and construction of the Adour turbofan engine.<sup>44</sup> This makes the Jaguar aircraft a unique example of Franco-British technological cooperation since the engine was a by-product of their joint efforts, unlike the Concorde aircraft which relied solely on turboprops designed by Rolls-Royce.<sup>45</sup> The May 1966 agreement signed by Dennis Healey and Pierre Messmer firmly secured bilateral cooperation over military hardware. This international agreement occurred in the immediate aftermath of

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<sup>40</sup> CAC, Congress of Europe 1973 – Declaration, 20 March 1973, AMEJ/1/9/8.

<sup>41</sup> Berthold Rittberger, ‘The creation and empowerment of the European Parliament’ in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, xli (2003), p.206.

<sup>42</sup> This argument was first brought to the fore by political commentary Joseph C. Harsch, see ‘A Monroe doctrine for Europe?’ in *The Christian Science Monitor*, 3 June 1975, p.35.

<sup>43</sup> Anne Deighton, ‘Introduction’ in Anne Deighton (ed), *Western European Union 1954-1997: Defence, Security, Integration* (Oxford, 1997), p.3.

<sup>44</sup> Henri Ziegler, ‘Aéronautique et espace’ in *Bulletin de l’Institut d’Histoire du Temps Présent*, vi (1984), p.22. pp.17-36.

<sup>45</sup> The Industrial Policy Division reported on the redundancies that Rolls-Royce were forced to make and their impact into the construction of Concorde from 1968; TNA, ‘Post devaluation work’, 1968, EW/27/299; Marwick, *A history of the modern British Isles, 1914-1999*, p.235.

French withdrawal from the NATO command structure. Yet, the agreement effectively circumvented the difficulties between France and Britain with regards to military interaction following the former's departure from NATO. For instance Bristow Helicopters, a British aviation company based in Aberdeen, provided feedback to Aérospatiale over the development of the SA330 Puma helicopter, designed for troop carrying purposes as a result of the bilateral cooperation secured through the 1966 agreement.<sup>46</sup> Thus, Britain and France renewed their bilateral partnership over conventional military hardware matters demonstrating that despite the differing views which affected their ability to cooperate within a multilateral framework – NATO, WEU, *Europe puissance* – they maintained a professional association, allowing both countries to bolster their military influence through supplementing other nations with the fruits of their combined labour.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the importance of the nuclear weapons debate, it was in the field of conventional military cooperation where the Franco-British relationship found its footing. The launching of the SEPECAT Jaguar aircraft in 1973 heralded a period of new-found stability in the Franco-British working partnership. The roots of the SEPECAT Jaguar and Mirage IV's success stem from the decision to sign the Anglo-French Agreement in November 1962. While the agreement was signed with the intention of creating a supersonic transport capable of commanding 'a leading position on the air routes of the world,' the offshoots of the Concorde treaty – namely, the SEPECAT Jaguar – firmly cemented the legacy and technological supremacy of Franco-British industrial partners that, in turn brought stability to their military and security partnership.<sup>48</sup> The industrial success of Jaguar represented a strengthening of their bilateral military relations which were measurably damaged following the Suez Crisis. The Ministre de la Défense Yvon Bourges illustrated this new inclusivity of the Franco-British relationship by consenting to the British proposal of featuring the SEPECAT Jaguar in NATO policy decisions, despite concerns from the regional engineers in the flight laboratories in Nancy.<sup>49</sup> The NATO Committee for Defence Planning subsequently hailed the SEPECAT Jaguar as the replacement for the overly expensive US-produced F-16s for the aerial defence of Atlantic Alliance countries in the wake of the enforced policy reorientation towards nuclear arms reductions following SALT

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<sup>46</sup> TNA, Anglo-French aircraft cooperation, [undated, but September 1968], DEFE/13/515.

<sup>47</sup> Droff Josselin, 'European cooperation in maintaining defence equipment in operational condition: an analytical framework from economic geography' in *Defense & Security Analysis*, xxxviii (2022), p.172.

<sup>48</sup> CAC, Speech by Julian Amery in House of Commons, 29 November 1962, AMEJ 7/2/2.

<sup>49</sup> AN, Compte-rendu d'étude, Nancy, [undated, but 1974], ARCH-0837/10.

I.<sup>50</sup> The mistrust and bitterness that hampered the Franco-British relationship in the early 1960s no longer influenced either country's policy regarding military planning. The success of SEPECAT Jaguar quickly compensated for the decline of Britain and France as influential nuclear powers in the aftermath of SALT I, as it opened an avenue for bilateral cooperation, which spearheaded further innovation in the military aviation sector throughout the remainder of the Cold War period.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, French and British successes in the field of aeronautics demonstrate that the superpowers did not dictate the tempo of technological innovation in the same manner that they controlled the pace of non-proliferation discussions following the ratification of SALT I.<sup>52</sup>

### Epilogue

More importantly, how can the development of Franco-British relations during this period inform the renewal of the bilateral partnership in the post-Brexit period? While Britain and France once again go through a deviation in their foreign policies, despite still being members of NATO, it is important for both countries to view this period as one of new opportunities for collaboration, rather than one of intense division. With the current French President Emmanuel Macron returning to the idea of a *Europe puissance* in the wake of Britain's departure from the European bloc, it is imperative that the President learns from the mistakes of the past to inform future decisions. Macron – an uncompromising critic of both Brexit and NATO – states that he wants a common nuclear policy for Europe, which guarantees 'strategic military sovereignty.'<sup>53</sup> Macron's desire has become more pronounced, particularly following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In October 2022, the French President stated that a common defence policy was essential to protect France's 'vital interests' after Russian President Vladimir Putin's threat of atomic weapons use returned the question of nuclear non-proliferation to the fore.<sup>54</sup> Macron contextualised his comments by stating that

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<sup>50</sup> NATO, Communiqué final, 10 décembre 1975, M-DPC-2(75)19.

<sup>51</sup> Both Britain and France were involved in the EC-consortium which cooperated from 1975 to develop and construct a European Collaborative Fighter, which ultimately became the Eurofighter Typhoon introduced in 1994. Aérospatiale did not stay with the project until its completion but were responsible for early aeronautical research.

<sup>52</sup> Daniel W Drezner, 'Technological change and international relations' in *International Relations*, xxxiii (2019), p.288.

<sup>53</sup> Julian Lindley-French, 'Europe puissance or Macro-Gaullisme?' ([www.defencesynergia.co.uk/europe-puissance-or-macro-gaullisme/](http://www.defencesynergia.co.uk/europe-puissance-or-macro-gaullisme/)) (accessed 8 March 2021).

<sup>54</sup> Elise Vincent, « Emmanuel Macron sème le doute sur la position française en cas d'attaque nucléaire russe sur l'Ukraine » in *Le Monde*, 14 octobre 2022 ([https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2022/10/14/emmanuel-macron-seme-le-doute-sur-la-position-francaise-en-cas-d-attaque-nucleaire-russe-sur-l-ukraine\\_6145786\\_3210.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2022/10/14/emmanuel-macron-seme-le-doute-sur-la-position-francaise-en-cas-d-attaque-nucleaire-russe-sur-l-ukraine_6145786_3210.html)) (17 May 2023).

‘France's vital interests now have a European dimension.’<sup>55</sup> Thus, the need for a nuclear aspect to current European military responses is essential considering the Russian President’s decision to suspend its involvement the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (New START). Therefore, Russia is no longer bound by existing arms control measures, which further intensifies the nuclear threat as the non-proliferation regime has been critically undermined by Putin given that for the first time since 1972, there are no limitations or weapons checks on superpower’s nuclear arsenals. However, the French President’s proposal for an exclusively EU-based nuclear response conflicts with the existing Atlantic influence on the European continent, with the United States and United Kingdom possessing credible nuclear deterrents outside of the proposed EU military bloc. Thus, Macron who, stated that Brexit was a ‘mistake’ and that Britain must pay for turning its back on the ‘common ambition’ of the European Union, must conceptualise a *Europe puissance* within the confines of pre-existing military relationships.<sup>56</sup> For this second attempt at creating a *Europe puissance* to be successful, Macron must permit British involvement as France’s only other European nuclear power and abandon the federalist approach, since this will allow both countries to expand the Franco-British Security and Defence Treaty, signed in 2010.<sup>57</sup> Similarly, a *Europe puissance* designed as the military wing of the EU would succeed in dividing Western responses to the Russian threat. If Macron, like former President de Gaulle, maintains his federalist stance towards Britain then his ‘hubristic’ military aim ultimately will not come to pass as the European Union member states would not have the resources available to become a credible nuclear superpower akin to the People’s Republic of China, the Russian Federation or the United States.<sup>58</sup>

Macron’s call for a French nuclear deterrent to play a role in a European nuclear defence program reflects a return to the trends of the late-1950s and early-1960s, with both the Mollet and de Gaulle governments changing their defence policies to favour a continental approach, rather than one marked by American hegemony.<sup>59</sup> Nonetheless, in the public

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> « Emmanuel Macron appelle le Royaume-Uni à « choisir » sa relation avec l’UE » in *Le Figaro* (<https://www.lefigaro.fr/international/emmanuel-macron-appelle-le-royaume-uni-a-choisir-sa-relation-avec-l-ue-2021>) (5 March 2021).

<sup>57</sup> Op cit; René Schwok, *Théories de l’intégration européenne ; Approches, concepts et débats* (Geneva, 2005), p.22.

<sup>58</sup> Lindley-French, ‘Europe puissance or Macro-Gaullisme?’.

<sup>59</sup> A French-led European nuclear program is key to the ‘fundamentals of [the French] defence strategy’ according to Emmanuel Macron. The case was similar for Guy Mollet during this period. However, there are significant differences which will be examined throughout this chapter. For the Macron quotation see, Discours du Président Emmanuel Macron sur la stratégie de défense et de dissuasion devant les stagiaires de la 27<sup>ème</sup>

sphere, perceptions on previous issues concerning the difficulties in Franco-British nuclear cooperation are influenced by the United Kingdom's recent departure from the European Union. The previous animosities in the nuclear field have reignited politico-military tensions between Britain and its staunchly European ally, particularly as the non-proliferation regime has failed due to the sovereignty of the superpowers. In addition, British and US moves towards establishing nuclear partnerships outside of the Atlantic Alliance has greatly angered the French government. For example, the September 2021 AUKUS pact between Britain, the United States and Australia, marked a key flashpoint in Franco-British relations as it represented a reorientation of British defence policy away from its European centre towards a more globalist approach - a characteristic of post-Brexit foreign policy. The AUKUS pact, which guarantees the United States and Britain assist the Australian navy with nuclear submarines in order to counteract China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific, frustrated France as the Australian government had reneged on a \$90 billion military deal between itself and the French government.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, the French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian went as far as to describe the AUKUS pact as a 'stab in the back' because Britain, the United States and Australia had negotiated it for months without consultation with the French government.<sup>61</sup>

Cumulatively, the nuclear tensions synonymous with the Cold War have generally increased between Britain, France and the United States since 2019, alongside strain in the military field which has grown in the wake of the Brexit debate. NATO remains the centre of tension between European and Atlantic partners. As recently as 2019, French President Emmanuel Macron stated that NATO is in the midst of 'brain death.'<sup>62</sup> Regardless of political stance, the US presidency has disagreed with the French President's judgement. However, Britain's departure from the European Union has handed the French President fresh impetus to call EU members to rally behind a *Europe puissance*. Nevertheless as this thesis has shown, with the Nassau Agreements and the Anglo-American discussions around offering the French nuclear assistance through the MLF proposals, Britain plays a key role as an intermediary – not between the superpowers as it desired – but between France and the

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promotion de l'école de guerre, 7 February 2020, ([Discours du Président Emmanuel Macron sur la stratégie de défense et de dissuasion devant les stagiaires de la 27ème promotion de l'école de guerre | Élysée \(elysee.fr\)](https://www.elysee.fr/fr/discours/2020/02/07/discours-du-president-emmanuel-macron-sur-la-strategie-de-defense-et-de-dissuasion-devant-les-stagiaires-de-la-27eme-promotion-de-l-ecole-de-guerre)) (15 December 2020).

<sup>60</sup> Eglantine Staunton and Benjamin Day, 'Australia-France relations after AUKUS: Macron, Morrison and trust in International Relations' in *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, lxxvii (2023), pp.11-18, p.12.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> 'Nato alliance experiencing brain death, says Macron', BBC news online (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-50335257>) (21 June 2021).

United States. In fact, Britain's advocacy for the Atlantic Alliance in its present form goes beyond bridging French and US discussions. Former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was instrumental in persuading former German Chancellor Angela Merkel to forego her usual support of the French position, given the Franco-German axis within the EU, and defend the use of NATO in organising combined forces on Continental Europe. Regardless, despite Brexit, Britain's commitment to NATO from its inception maintains its influence in European military affairs and thus guarantees that an EU military position, which Macron advocates will become increasingly difficult to manage given British, US and German support for NATO.<sup>63</sup>

While the debates around the use of nuclear forces in Europe continue apace, the impact of Franco-British disagreements persists to the present day. The current Conservative government's position, which focuses on recapturing the idea of 'Global Britain', hems from the same desires of former party prime ministers during the early 1960s. Macmillan, contrary to his position in the *Winds of Change* speech, considered the extension of British influence to be inevitable.<sup>64</sup> Unlike the former prime minister, current British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak must maintain good relations with his cross-channel partner, especially in the wake of the crises concerning NATO and the Russo-Ukraine war. The *Europe puissance* in the Macronian guise would only succeed in achieving the same as his predecessor and divide opinion among European leaders. The French objective remains to create a common defence policy among EU partners. However, with the growing risk emanating from the Russian Federation, European and transatlantic partners must work cooperatively to combat this threat. Therefore, a *Europe puissance* devised with the intention of renouncing US dependence is ill-conceived at best.<sup>65</sup> Despite the strain related to economic affairs which currently hamper Franco-British relations à la 1963, the smoothing of these tensions is necessary for the creation of sustainable politico-military cooperation.

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<sup>63</sup> 'Macron: « L'Europe disparaîtra si elle ne se pense pas comme puissance dans ce monde »' in *Le Point international* ([https://www.lepoint.fr/monde/macron-l-europe-disparaitra-si-elle-ne-se-pense-pas-comme-puissance-dans-ce-monde-07-11-2019-2345917\\_24.php](https://www.lepoint.fr/monde/macron-l-europe-disparaitra-si-elle-ne-se-pense-pas-comme-puissance-dans-ce-monde-07-11-2019-2345917_24.php)) (21 June 2021).

<sup>64</sup> CCA, Minute, 12 July 1962, AMEJ 1/6/2.

<sup>65</sup> Todorov, 'L'Europe Puissance', p.12.

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