

## CHAPTER 7

### FRANCE'S NUCLEAR DETERRENCE STRATEGY: CONCEPTS AND OPERATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION

David S. Yost\*

This essay offers a survey of operational implementation issues in France's nuclear deterrence strategy since the late 1970s.<sup>1</sup> The survey begins with a brief account of the development of France's nuclear posture. It then turns to the political and strategic purposes of the posture. While the French have consistently upheld basic objectives such as ensuring the nation's decision-making autonomy and its security from aggression by major powers, they have modified a number of operational principles and priorities. In some cases, they have signified these modifications by introducing new terms to describe their strategic conceptions. They have usually abandoned the previous terms without fanfare or explanation, and only specialists have taken note of the evident adjustments in strategic policy. The insistence that France's strategy remains one of non-use enables the French to minimize the potential awkwardness of certain issues, including relations with allies and potential adversaries and the strategy's moral and political legitimacy.

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New international circumstances have been more important than technical factors in leading the French to modify their strategic priorities and operational concepts since the late 1970s. Concepts of “proportional deterrence” and “anti-cities” targeting occupied center stage in French strategic discourse when the main object of France’s nuclear posture was the Soviet Union. During that era, several arguments against flexible targeting carried the day: above all, the limitations of French means in any contest with the Soviet Union. However, while the utility for France of targeting flexibility options was implausible vis à vis the USSR, in post-Cold War circumstances more discriminate nuclear options have gained importance in French analyses of contingencies involving regional powers armed with weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The history of French nuclear employment policy has been a gradual movement away from underscoring “anti-cities” threats with massive demographic effects to a greater emphasis on administrative, political, and military targets. The French have nonetheless continued to uphold the principle of non-use, thereby expressing their rejection of nuclear “war-fighting” concepts and their confidence that their threats of punishment will deter their adversaries and that actual nuclear strikes will not be required.

Indeed, French commentators have at times implicitly praised Paris for developing a strategy of *non-emploi* — that is, of non-use — and have contrasted the French approach with that of Washington and Moscow, accused of designing strategies for the operational use of nuclear arms. France’s nuclear deterrence strategy has nonetheless obviously had operational dimensions, because a nuclear posture incapable of being employed operationally would deter no one. The French have made substantial investments in capabilities for the practical implementation of their strategy. Technical and operational credibility is intended to reinforce deterrence and thereby ensure the continuing relevance of the non-use principle.

The French rarely employed the American term “assured destruction” to describe their strategy during the Cold War but they endorsed the principle of deterring aggression and preventing war by maintaining survivable second-strike forces capable of causing massive damage to enemy cities. The French repeatedly accused Washington and Moscow of developing and maintaining arsenals far in excess of what would be required for deterrence via threats to

attack cities. The policies of the two largest nuclear powers, French commentators said, stood in contrast with the strict “sufficiency” sought by Paris. The French have for decades held, however, that their strategy is not constrained by an “all or nothing” rigidity. Operational flexibility has become more important since the early 1990s as the French have adapted their strategy to deter WMD-armed regional powers while retaining capabilities that constitute a hedge against the emergence of a new major-power threat.

## France’s Nuclear Posture

The French instituted their nuclear weapons program through a complex process that included the contributions of the French scientists associated with British, Canadian, and U.S. efforts during World War II, General de Gaulle’s establishment of the Commissariat à l’Énergie Atomique in 1945, the series of limited decisions during the Fourth Republic (1946-1958), and the wide-ranging decisions of the Fifth Republic (1958 to the present) on specific weapons designs, delivery systems, and deterrence strategies. France conducted its first nuclear explosive test in February 1960 in Algeria, then under French rule, and its first thermonuclear explosive test in August 1968 in French Polynesia. The French have not conducted any nuclear explosive tests since the series of six tests in 1995-1996.<sup>2</sup>

*Aircraft and standoff missiles.* France’s initial delivery means, from 1964 on, consisted of Mirage IV bombers, each carrying a single bomb. In the late 1980s 18 more advanced models of these aircraft were equipped with ASMP standoff missiles, each with a single warhead and a nominal range of 300 km; and these 18 ASMP-armed aircraft remained in service until 1996. From 1972 to 1991 several types of aircraft were equipped with “tactical” AN-52 gravity bombs. ASMP standoff missiles, with warheads of a reported yield of 300 kt, began to replace the gravity bombs in the late 1980s. Today most of France’s ASMP missiles are allocated to 45 Mirage 2000N aircraft. In contrast with Britain, Russia, and the United States, France continues to maintain nuclear weapons for its surface fleet: ASMP missiles for Super-Étendard aircraft on the aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle*. The warhead on the improved 500 km-range ASMP-A missile, which is to be deployed on Mirage 2000Ns in 2007, will reportedly have a more “robust” design, to compensate for the lack of testing; and

the missile itself will be capable of diverse trajectories to enhance its prospects of defeating air defenses. Beginning in 2008 Rafale aircraft, both ground and carrier-based, will also be armed with the ASMP-A.

*Land-based missiles.* From 1971–72 to September 1996, when they were deactivated, France maintained 18 ballistic missiles on the Plateau d'Albion with a range of 3,000 to 3,500 km. Each missile carried a single warhead with a reported yield of about a megaton. From 1974 to 1992, the French army had 30 Pluton missile launchers (not counting spares and training launchers), and a stockpile of 120 km-range Pluton missiles. 30 follow-on Hadès missiles, with a published range of 450 km, were produced in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but never operationally deployed. In February 1996, President Jacques Chirac announced that the Hadès missiles, then still in storage, would be dismantled.

*Submarine-based missiles.* The first generation of French SSBNs entered service between 1971 and 1980. France's first SLBMs carried single warheads, but the M-4 SLBMs introduced in 1985 carry 6 independently-targeted warheads, each with a reported yield of 150 kt. A new SLBM type, the M45, also equipped with 6 warheads, entered service in mid-1996, on *Le Triomphant*, the first of France's four new-generation SSBNs. In 1996, it was announced that the successor SLBM, the M51, will have almost double the range of the M45 — that is, the M51 will have a range of over 8,000 km — in the interests of increased target coverage and SSBN survivability.<sup>3</sup> The M51 will reportedly have greater throwweight to accommodate penetration aids as well as larger and heavier warheads of a more cautious and “robust” design. Rather than devices with highly efficient yield-to-weight ratios verified through explosive testing, the TNN warheads that are to replace the TN 75 on the M51 SLBM in 2015 may have more shielding, high explosive, fissile material, and safety features. Current plans call for the fourth and final new-generation SSBN, *Le Terrible*, to enter service in 2010, equipped with the first M51 SLBMs.

*Current capabilities.* Since September 1996, France's operational nuclear forces have consisted solely of four nuclear-powered submarines, each equipped with 16 MIRVed ballistic missiles, plus aircraft equipped with ASMP standoff missiles. In addition to the force cutbacks, alert rates have been modified for air-delivered

systems and submarines. For example, from January 1983 to June 1992, the French maintained three SSBNs on station at sea at all times. From June 1992 to February 1996, two were on station at all times. Since February 1996, at least one has been on station at all times; and France is capable of maintaining two on station, if necessary. France could even deploy three “during a crisis, after a certain delay, if need be.”<sup>4</sup>

In January 2000, President Chirac reviewed the unilateral reductions in France’s nuclear posture in the course of reaffirming long-standing principles of French nuclear deterrence policy:

The place of our nuclear deterrent is simple and central. Our nuclear forces, reduced to a level of strict sufficiency, are the ultimate guarantee of the survival of our nation. They threaten no one, but they assure whoever might wish to attack our vital interests that he would in return suffer unacceptable losses, out of proportion with the stakes of a conflict. France must therefore have reliable and safe nuclear weapons. This objective necessitated the conduct of six tests in 1995 and 1996 which provided us with the scientific and technical data that we lacked before committing ourselves definitively to the path of simulation. We have reduced the size of our nuclear forces by withdrawing from service, in particular, [the intermediate-range ballistic missiles on] the plateau d’Albion and the [shorter-range] Hadès missiles. France has signed and ratified the comprehensive test ban treaty, and has dismantled its test center. France has stopped producing fissile materials and has undertaken the dismantling of its production facilities. And we invite our partners to follow this example. But no one should make any mistake about it. As long as risks persist and we have not achieved a general and verified disarmament, which does not concern nuclear weapons alone, France will retain the capability to protect itself from any threat to its vital interests, which might come notably from countries armed with weapons of mass destruction. To deal with the diversity of situations with which we might be confronted in the course of the coming decades, France must have a credible and properly designed nuclear arsenal, offering a maximum of flexibility.<sup>5</sup>

Chirac’s reference to “a maximum of flexibility” raises the question of operational employment concepts. Owing in part to France’s relatively modest capabilities (in relation to those of the

Soviet Union or Russia) for extended nuclear operations – in terms of numbers of weapons, delivery accuracy, and survivable command and control – the French have historically been reluctant to endorse operational concepts that might be seen as “licensing” limited nuclear strikes. French discussions of nuclear operations during the Cold War usually emphasized a “single salvo” of warning to an aggressor, to be delivered by shorter-range nuclear systems, prior to the unleashing of France’s full strategic nuclear arsenal against the enemy’s population centers, economic assets, and administrative control system.

However, as suggested earlier, in post-Cold War conditions the French have increasingly emphasized the utility of nuclear deterrence threats against WMD-armed regional powers; and these threats imply a willingness to conduct limited nuclear operations. At the same time, the French have refined capabilities and nuclear employment concepts inherited from the Cold War and intended to counter any major-power threats that may emerge. This shift in policy is examined below: a brief overview of the policies in the period from the late 1970s to the end of the Cold War in 1989-1991 sets the scene for the post-Cold War preoccupation with devising policies capable of deterring regional powers equipped with WMD.

## **Operational Employment Concepts during the Cold War**

From 1964 to 1971, France’s sole means of delivering nuclear weapons to the Soviet Union consisted of Mirage IV bombers, each armed with a single sixty-kiloton bomb. With these capabilities, the French concluded, they had little choice but to aim at Soviet population centers as a deterrent. President Charles de Gaulle argued in 1964 that the disproportion in destructive capabilities between Paris and Moscow was irrelevant: “[O]nce reaching a certain nuclear capability and as far as one’s own direct defense is concerned, the *proportion* of respective means no longer has absolute value. In fact, since a man and a country can die but once, deterrence exists as soon as one can mortally wound the potential aggressor and is fully resolved to do so, and he is well convinced of it.”<sup>6</sup>

French proportional deterrence theory, or the “deterrence by the weak of the strong” (*la dissuasion du faible au fort*),<sup>7</sup> holds that France could deter a much stronger power, such as the Soviet Union

or Russia, through the “equalizing power of the atom” (*le pouvoir égalisateur de l’atome*). The argument is that France could deter a stronger power because the damage France could cause would exceed what the aggressor would stand to gain in conquering or destroying France.

As late as the 1970s and early 1980s, this was often defined in mainly demographic terms. In 1980, in a rare use of the American term “assured destruction,” Prime Minister Raymond Barre referred to France’s ability to cause an aggressor “the assured destruction of a notable part of his cities and of his economy.”<sup>8</sup> In 1981 Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy said that France’s anti-cities strategy aimed “to be able to inflict on the aggressor . . . damage judged superior to the stake that the vital interests of the country represent for him.”<sup>9</sup> General Jeannou Lacaze, then Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, specified that the adversary would suffer “damage ‘judged superior’ to the demographic and economic potential that we represent,” and that deterrence is “a matter of persuading him that such an action would present unacceptable risks because of the losses in human lives that he could suffer.”<sup>10</sup>

It was nonetheless around 1980 that French declaratory policy began to place greater emphasis on threatening to destroy the infrastructure of the Soviet economy and administration than on targeting the population.<sup>11</sup> Expositions of official policy that year suggested that the shift was motivated by the prospective deployment of multiple-warhead M-4 SLBMs as well as a determination to respond to Soviet civil defense programs:

The neutralization of the adversary [state’s] administrative, economic, and social structures, the destruction of the framework of life and activity of millions of persons constitute damage that would be difficult to accept, even if a part of the population concerned by these destructions escapes immediate death. Let us imagine, for example, the situation of the USSR with 100 or 150 of its largest cities destroyed, some tens of millions of people killed, and as many persons displaced who must be taken in charge by a state emptied of its substance.<sup>12</sup>

The response is undoubtedly to be sought in the multiplication of targets and selectivity, the aim being to reduce to nothing the structures and the “vital works” [*oeuvres vives*] of the adversary state, even if part of the population of the objectives targeted

escapes destruction. Thus one differentiates between an “anti-cities” strategy and a strictly “anti-demographic” strategy. This strategy will without doubt lead to obtaining an important number of medium-yield warheads, preferred over megaton yields. In this respect the M-4 program constitutes a remarkable increase in the value of our nuclear armament.<sup>13</sup>

This decision to respond to Soviet civil defense programs by targeting the infrastructure of Soviet administrative control as well as industrial and economic assets was referred to as “an enlarged anti-cities strategy,”<sup>14</sup> and described as “a concept of the same strategic nature but more complete and, therefore, more operational and credible.”<sup>15</sup> Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, President from 1974 to 1981, reported in his memoirs that he had approved “as the objective for our strategic strike ‘the destruction of 40% of the economic capabilities of the Soviet Union on this side of the Urals, and the disorganization of the country’s leadership apparatus.’ To be sure of obtaining this result, we had to be able to reach the totality of Moscow’s industrial region, including its extensions to the east.”<sup>16</sup> In 1981 Defense Minister Charles Hernu said, however, that the force modernization decisions in prospect did “not imply any change in our anti-cities strategy, corollary of deterrence by the weak of the strong.”<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, French officials rejected concepts of counterforce strikes in any conflict with a major power like the Soviet Union. As Prime Minister Barre put it, “For our country, the problem of choosing between an anti-forces strategy and an anti-cities strategy does not arise.”<sup>18</sup> As an exposition of the official strategy noted, only an anti-cities strategy conformed to France’s means:

We aim at the adversary’s cities because these targets are easy to reach, without great accuracy in the missiles required, and especially because one can thus cause important damage with a limited number of weapons. . . . It is only in the framework of an anti-cities strategy that the desirable level of damage can be guaranteed with the means that remain in proportion to the scientific, industrial, and economic possibilities of France. Any other strategy would necessitate much more important means, without doubt beyond our reach, and could not but weaken deterrence.<sup>19</sup>

In short, beyond France's lack of means for a counterforce strategy, it was argued that an anti-cities posture would maximize the probability of successful deterrence. French officials reasoned that implying that France would not respond as massively as possible could undermine the deterrent and invite Soviet aggression. General Guy Méry, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, condemned as "totally stupid" any suggestion of limited, initial counterforce strikes against the USSR by France: "even if we had sufficiently accurate weapons, we would destroy only a truly minor part of his entire order of battle, and we would then be assured of his immediate retaliation."<sup>20</sup> In other words, as another French official noted, the "equalizing power of the atom no longer applies in counterforce actions."<sup>21</sup>

In an actual crisis, it was envisaged that France would undertake a "deterrent maneuver" intended to reach a political resolution short of war. From this perspective, France's nuclear employment planning during the Cold War (like NATO's) was "more oriented toward the political management of crises than toward military effectiveness."<sup>22</sup> To achieve these political results, France would rely on capabilities complementing its strategic nuclear forces aimed at Soviet cities. In 1981 Defense Minister Robert Galley said that "This strategy relies in the first place on strategic nuclear forces capable of inflicting unacceptable damage [*des dommages insupportables*] on any possible aggressor in the very heart of his territory. It also relies on tactical nuclear forces and conventional forces which, by allowing France not to find itself driven into an 'all or nothing' situation, enhance the deterrent impact of the strategic nuclear forces."<sup>23</sup> Without such capabilities, Prime Minister Mauroy indicated in 1982, France could be driven to "either premature use or non-use of our strategic armament."<sup>24</sup>

France's "tactical nuclear" capabilities provoked extensive doctrinal and political discussions in France and NATO, particularly vis à vis the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States during the Cold War.<sup>25</sup> Various concepts of tactical nuclear employment – including battlefield use, "testing" enemy intentions, signaling resolve, and warning the enemy of France's readiness to employ its strategic arsenal – coexisted and competed until the late 1970s. It was in this context that President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing declared in 1976 that such weapons were "not only an instrument

of deterrence, but also an instrument of battle.”<sup>26</sup> After the debate in the late 1970s the predominant view of French political-military authorities was that such weapons were “not a ‘super-artillery,’ for we refuse nuclear battle,” in the words of Defense Minister Hernu in 1982.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the French added the term *non-bataille* (non-battle) to their strategic lexicon, a corollary of the term *non-emploi* (non-use). As on the strategic nuclear level, France’s means were too limited to contemplate combat with tactical nuclear arms. Concepts for large numbers of tactical nuclear weapons for battlefield use were rejected as likely to lead to undermining deterrence, a loss of political control of the escalation process, and a battle in which the superiority of Soviet numbers would give the enemy victory.

In an effort to clarify the role of France’s non-strategic nuclear weapons, Hernu in October 1984 directed that the term *armements pré-stratégiques* (pre-strategic weapons) replace the expression *armes nucléaires tactiques* (tactical nuclear weapons).<sup>28</sup> The intention was to make clear that any use of these weapons would constitute a threat of almost immediate escalation to strategic nuclear strikes. Although the term “pre-strategic” remained in use until the early 1990s, it fell into official disfavor in the late 1980s. In 1987 President François Mitterrand reportedly said, “I do not believe at all in the utility of pre-strategic weapons. To tell the truth, they should rather be called post-strategic weapons, because their use would necessarily signify that the Russians were already in Germany and one would find oneself beyond the moment when strategic deterrence should have worked.”<sup>29</sup>

While Mitterrand nonetheless continued to use the term “pre-strategic,” he increasingly favored the term *arme d’ultime avertissement* (weapon of final warning). In 1988, Mitterrand said that France’s “final and unique warning” strike would be delivered solely against “strictly military targets.”<sup>30</sup> During the late 1980s and early 1990s Mitterrand and other officials became more consistent in avoiding the term “prestrategic” and instead employing the term “final warning.” In September 1991, for example, Mitterrand said, “the targets of what is called the ‘final warning’ are military targets.”<sup>31</sup>

Jacques Chirac, who served as Prime Minister under Mitterrand in 1986-1988, said in 1988 that the “warning” strike “must be precise, effective and limited, because we refuse to enter into a cycle of repeated nuclear exchanges which would be the negation of deterrence. It

must also be able to be carried out as far as possible in the depth of the adversary's deployment."<sup>32</sup> Chirac specifically referred to the possibility of using highly accurate S-4 IRBMs (then scheduled to replace the S-3 IRBMs after 1996) to perform the "function of final warning against the 'sanctuary' of a potential aggressor."<sup>33</sup> President Mitterrand also evoked the potential limited use of "strategic" systems for the "pre-strategic" purpose of "ultimate warning" in the late 1980s.<sup>34</sup>

The preoccupation with the forces capable of strategic attacks was understandable, because the capability to hold Soviet assets at risk — the USSR's population centers, economic and industrial facilities, and administrative control mechanisms — was considered the bedrock basis of security through deterrence. France's interest in keeping Soviet and (after 1991) Russian cities vulnerable to French SLBMs was apparent in (a) France's support for the ABM Treaty until the U.S. withdrawal took effect in June 2002 and (b) French investments in multiple warheads, penetration aids, and other measures intended to defeat ballistic missile defenses.<sup>35</sup>

## **Adjustments in Declaratory Strategy Since the End of the Cold War**

As Bruno Tertrais of the *Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique* pointed out in 2000, "Since the mid-1970s, the foundations of French nuclear doctrine have remained unchanged in the speeches and public remarks of the political authorities."<sup>36</sup> Certain rationales for maintaining France's nuclear arsenal have been consistently restated: preventing war, maintaining national independence and decision-making autonomy, protecting the nation's vital interests, and making an indirect contribution to the security of France's allies by complicating the decision-making calculus of adversaries.

While these fundamental rationales have remained constant over the past quarter-century, some noteworthy adjustments have been made since the end of the Cold War in 1989-1991.

As suggested above, the distinctions between aircraft and missiles with "strategic" or "pre-strategic" or "final warning" missions became increasingly vague in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Since September 1991, all the nuclear-capable means in France's air force (including the ASMP missiles on Mirage 2000Ns previously described as equipped with "prestrategic" weapons) have been under the

command of the Forces Aériennes Stratégiques. Since the early 1990s the terms “prestrategic” and “final warning” have disappeared from official discourse; and the French have accordingly considered all their nuclear weapons strategic.<sup>37</sup> The government has nonetheless retained the idea that France could employ signaling options short of an all-out strategic nuclear attack. For example, in 1997 an Armed Forces Staff document noted that, “If the adversary was not convinced of France’s determination and went ahead, the President of the Republic, who alone can order the commitment of the nuclear forces, could signal to him without ambiguity at that time that he considers the vital interests of our country at stake, thus recalling his determination to safeguard them.”<sup>38</sup>

During the Cold War, following the statements in 1967-1968 by President de Gaulle and General Charles Ailleret, then the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, the French declared at times that their nuclear deterrent had an “all points of the compass” (*tous azimuts*) orientation. No references to the Soviet Union or the Warsaw Pact as the potential adversary appeared in the multi-year military program-laws while de Gaulle was President (1958-1969), and the explicit references to the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union as potential adversaries in the military program-laws in 1976 and 1983 were considered exceptional and newsworthy. The more typical wording during the Cold War was to refer simply to “the adversary” and to discuss the situation of a “medium power” (France) deterring a “great power” (the Soviet Union).

In 1990, when the Cold War was coming to an end, the French Ministry of Defense employed the Gaullist approach of declining to identify Moscow or any other foreign capital as a “designated enemy” of France. “The French nuclear deterrent is not directed against anyone in particular. France has no designated enemy. Our deterrent is at the service of our independence.”<sup>39</sup> In 1992, Pierre Joxe, then Minister of Defense, said that the *tous azimuts* concept “today finds its full meaning after the fading away of the potential Soviet adversary.”<sup>40</sup> As some French experts have pointed out, rather than saying that France’s deterrent is aimed at “all azimuths,” it would be more accurate to say that it is currently directed at “no azimuth in particular.”

In September 1997, President Jacques Chirac announced that, given the dismantlement of the IRBMs on the Plateau d’Albion, “none of the

nuclear means of the French deterrent force is henceforth targeted.”<sup>41</sup> This brought French declaratory policy into line with that adopted by Britain, Russia, and the United States in 1994. This implied no change in the fundamental rationales for France’s nuclear deterrent noted above, however.

Since the end of the Cold War, it has become apparent that the French discern two categories of threats to be deterred with their nuclear forces: a possible reappearance of a major-power threat, even one such as the USSR once constituted, and regional powers armed with weapons of mass destruction. According to the July 1992 draft military program-law for 1992-1994, “It is today difficult to discern clearly the types of threats that we might have to face – a return of the previous threat, [or] the emergence of new threats for which an anti-cities strategy would not necessarily be appropriate. It is therefore necessary, while remaining faithful to the concept of strict sufficiency, to seek means to respond to a broader range of scenarios than in the past and therefore to think about a new structure for our nuclear forces.”<sup>42</sup>

The February 1994 defense white paper raised the possibility that in the next twenty years, a new threat of major aggression against Western Europe could emerge “from a state or coalition of states with large nuclear and conventional forces.” If such a threat emerged, its military capabilities would include “means for selective or massive nuclear strikes, high-technology conventional forces, and means of internal subversion.” France must therefore maintain nuclear and C3I capabilities suitable for dealing with “the possibility of the reappearance of a large threat comparable to that which the Soviet Union represented.”<sup>43</sup> Such a major-power threat in Europe could not have come from a country other than Russia, so the discussion of the potential “resurgence of a major threat to Western Europe” in the 1994 white paper was among the last implicit public references to a specific country as a target of French nuclear deterrence capabilities.<sup>44</sup>

The major-power threat is in abeyance in the foreseeable future, but its potential reemergence has been repeatedly recalled in conjunction with the more immediate threat posed by regional powers armed with weapons of mass destruction (WMD). This significant shift in emphasis since the end of the Cold War has been evident in remarks on the utility of France’s nuclear arsenal in deterring WMD use. As Chirac put it in February 1996,

Nuclear deterrence remains the fundamental element of our strategy. Certainly, it no longer constitutes, as in the past, the expression of a defense organized essentially to meet a permanent and identified threat, but it remains the ultimate guarantee against any threat to our vital interests, whatever might be the origin and form [of the threat]. . . . *the clearly identified, massive, and permanent nuclear threat that prevailed during the period of the East-West confrontation has gone away, but during the same period other types of dangers capable of threatening our vital interests have appeared. Uncertainty persists about the balances that will be established in eastern Europe and therefore about the risks for our own security. On other continents there already exist weapons of mass destruction, nuclear or of other kinds, and it cannot be excluded that they might someday also affect our vital interests. In these conditions, nuclear deterrence remains a fully imperious necessity. It alone can avert the worst scenario. It is still today a determining factor of peace in Europe and for Europe.*<sup>45</sup>

Chirac's statement combined the persistent "uncertainty . . . about the balances that will be established in eastern Europe" (presumably a reference to Russia and possibly additional post-Soviet states) with the weapons of mass destruction already present "on other continents" in the arsenals of regional powers. The military program-law for 1997-2002, adopted by the French legislature in July 1996, used almost the same terms in explaining the importance of nuclear deterrence for France:

France's very survival is no longer threatened by the presence, in the immediate proximity of our frontiers, of considerable nuclear, air-ground, and chemical forces. But the threat, for long years yet, of thousands of nuclear weapons in the arsenals inherited from the Cold War, and the appearance of other types of dangers capable of threatening our vital interests, notably the development on other continents of weapons of mass destruction, mean that nuclear deterrence remains a fully imperious necessity. It must be capable of being adapted with flexibility to the uncertainty that surrounds the nature of the future threats and risks.<sup>46</sup>

Prime Minister Lionel Jospin also referred to both categories of threats in September 1997:

To deal with proliferation hazards that might get out of hand and with the risk of a resurgence of a major threat, France has

maintained a credible deterrent force but at a level of strict sufficiency, inferior to that during the cold war. Moreover, in a world still dominated by the play of power relationships, its nuclear status is one of the elements that allows France to maintain its freedom of action and assessment on the international scene.<sup>47</sup>

Jospin's vague allusion to "the risk of a resurgence of a major threat" was consistent with a trend since the late 1990s to note that a "major power" threat to France could take forms other than Russia's reconstitution of capabilities approximating those of the Soviet Union. French observers have noted, for instance, that China's developing arsenal might threaten France in some circumstances. However, of these two categories, the WMD proliferants – the regional powers equipped with nuclear, chemical, and/or biological arms – present the more immediate and novel challenges for French nuclear deterrence strategy.

### **Challenges in Deterring WMD Proliferants**

Prior to the 1990s France's public discourse gave little attention to possible threats arising from regional powers armed with weapons of mass destruction. Despite some official references in 1977 to possible use of what the French then called "tactical nuclear weapons" in situations outside Europe,<sup>48</sup> concern promptly arose regarding the potential "devaluation" of nuclear threats through such concepts:

Do we have the right, in order to support distant actions which would not put our vital interests into question, to envisage recourse to the atom, at the risk of desacralizing it, creating a customary phenomenon? Is it not necessary to reserve nuclear weapons to the immediate defense of our territory?<sup>49</sup>

This concern evidently led the French to emphasize that the "tactical nuclear weapons" deliverable by carrier-based aircraft had the "same vocation" as France's other tactical nuclear forces – that is, possible employment in deterrence maneuver actions intended to protect the national homeland.<sup>50</sup>

President François Mitterrand was therefore upholding a long-standing policy when, during the 1990-1991 Gulf War, he ruled out any nuclear retaliation for Iraqi use of chemical or biological weapons:

We must not use chemical weapons. We have conventional means that will permit us to defend ourselves and to make law triumph, but we must not succumb to this will to reply on the same level. . . I exclude it. Neither chemical, nor bacteriological, nor nuclear arms. . . To use arms of these types would be a retreat towards barbarism that I refuse.<sup>51</sup>

In explaining Mitterrand's policy, Foreign Minister Roland Dumas emphasized a distinction between deterrence for the protection of the homeland – the “hexagon,” as the French call it – and the security of forces projected overseas.<sup>52</sup>

In contrast with chemical weapons, nuclear weapons cannot be battlefield weapons, and cannot be used except as the ultimate recourse when the national territory is threatened. We are not in this hypothesis. The Gulf war is taking place in a theatre distant from the hexagon [that is, France]. The national patrimony is not directly threatened. The risk of world war, as the President of the Republic has said, does not exist. Therefore, to use the nuclear weapon now, and in this context, would constitute a sort of repudiation of ourselves, of our doctrine, and therefore a political and strategic error.<sup>53</sup>

The Mitterrand decision was sharply criticized at the time by some center-right political leaders – including Jacques Chirac – as likely to undermine nuclear deterrence. Since he became President in May 1995, Chirac has differentiated his approach to deterrence from that of Mitterrand in several ways. For one thing, the distinctions Mitterrand made about the circumstances in which nuclear deterrence might apply have been blurred. In August 1995, for example, Chirac made this simple statement:

Responsible before the nation for the future and the security of our country, it is my duty to remind the French that only the [nuclear] deterrent force guarantees France against the possible use of weapons of mass destruction, of whatever type they may be. The notion of deterrence in the face of threats from wherever they may come retains – and will retain for a long time to come – all its meaning.<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, Admiral Jacques Lanxade, then the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, in June 1995 also underscored the broad relevance of France's nuclear deterrence posture:

We will henceforth have to take two new considerations into account: on the one hand, [nuclear] deterrence will have to apply in much more varied and complex situations than in the past; on the other hand, conventional forces, called upon much more than in the past, will have to play a strategic role in their own right. The role of our nuclear weapons will nonetheless remain unchanged: that is, they will continue to exert the threat of unacceptable damage against any aggressor that might threaten our vital interests, whatever might be the circumstances, the form, and the origin of the threat.<sup>55</sup>

The current outlook seems to be that vague nuclear threats may help to deter regional powers from using WMD, not only against “the hexagon” of France but also against the nation’s armed forces overseas. The threats remain imprecise because there is some concern that excessively explicit or specific threats could help to provoke WMD proliferation. This concern applies both to declaratory doctrine and to the weapons procured. For an example of the linkage between the doctrine for deterrence and the policy intended to advance non-proliferation goals, one might consider the statement by Alain Juppé, then Prime Minister, in September 1995:

Our nuclear doctrine must be concerned with being compatible with the objective of non-proliferation. That is why it seems right to me to underline once again that France has ruled out the development of miniaturized weapons for employment, which would furnish a pretext for clandestine nuclear programs.<sup>56</sup>

The French have nonetheless consistently affirmed that they retain the right to employ nuclear weapons to defend their vital interests. For example, in April 1995, Alain Juppé, then the Foreign Minister, articulated France’s negative security assurances in the context of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

France reaffirms that it will not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states party to the NPT, except in the case of an invasion or any other attack conducted or supported by such a state, in alliance or in association with a nuclear-weapon state, against it, its territory, its armed forces or other troops, or against its allies or a state with which it has a security commitment. The

new formulation of our assurances is. . . circumscribed since it refers only to states party to the NPT, which is consistent with our will to favor the universality and indefinite extension of this treaty.

Juppé proceeded to add the following reservations:

. . . security assurances are compatible with our strategy of deterrence for three reasons. The first is that our strategy of deterrence has a strictly defensive character: France rejects the threat or use of nuclear weapons for aggressive purposes; our nuclear strategy is a strategy of non-war, based on nuclear capabilities limited to the strictly necessary level. . . . Secondly, our declarations regarding security assurances naturally do not affect in any way our inalienable right to self-defense as defined by article 51 of the United Nations Charter. . . . Finally. . . the French deterrent's purpose is the protection of our vital interests, whose definition is up to the President of the Republic. It is obvious that our deterrent covers any challenge to our vital interests, whatever the means and origin of the threat, including of course that of weapons of mass destruction produced and used despite the international prohibitions that concern them. No one can doubt. . . our will and our capability to inflict unacceptable damage on an adversary in such circumstances.<sup>57</sup>

In other words, if the French President decided that an adversary armed with chemical or biological weapons — or anything else, for that matter — had threatened France's vital interests, the negative security assurances would not apply.

The French have, however, exercised some caution in articulating threats of nuclear retaliation against WMD-armed regional powers, apparently for at least two reasons. First, explicit nuclear threats could encourage and/or "legitimize" nuclear proliferation in some cases. The French theory of deterrence by the weak of the strong (*la dissuasion du faible au fort*) has already provided an example and strategic rationale of interest to certain proliferant states. In relation to some proliferants France may be the power targeted by "the weak." Second, making such nuclear threats explicitly, to say nothing of carrying them out, could erode the legitimacy of nuclear deterrence in Western societies for the primary function of war-prevention.<sup>58</sup>

Some French observers have advanced a third rationale for restraint in making and carrying out nuclear threats. Conducting such strikes

would break the “nuclear taboo” and might undermine France’s general position that nuclear weapons support a strategy of “non-war” (*non-guerre*) and that they should not be used operationally. By this logic, it would be preferable and more prudent to maintain the equation that nuclear deterrence means non-use (*non-emploi*). In addition to perhaps demonstrating that nuclear weapons have political-military utility, the results of actual use might also convey the impression that the effects of nuclear weapons use are “manageable” or “sustainable.” If governments concluded that the consequences of nuclear weapons use are sustainable, at least in some circumstances, with genuine political-military utility, they might increasingly regard nuclear arms as suitable for operational employment. This might in turn promote the further proliferation of nuclear weapons, and raise the probability of actual use in subsequent conflicts. Various French observers have for years argued that it is imperative for these reasons to uphold and maintain the nuclear taboo as long as possible. Retired Admiral Marcel Duval, for example, wrote in 1995 that it is proper

to prepare for the eventuality of a conflict with an adversary armed with primitive nuclear weapons, with regard to whom the deterrent — that is, the threat of massive nuclear retaliation — would be inappropriate, psychologically ineffective, or morally inadmissible. It is prudent to conceive of other strategies, weapons systems, and means of protection for these eventualities. Emerging technologies, without recourse to nuclear weapons, might enable us to respond to these eventualities, because it is imperative in our view to preserve the ‘taboo’ against using nuclear weapons which is the basis of their peace-preserving effect. . . The banalization of nuclear weapons would not fail to lead to their use and then to the end of their peace-preserving effect.<sup>59</sup>

These arguments remain potent in French analyses in some circles, yet the French government evidently discerned a need in the late 1990s to prepare a new statement of nuclear strategy. President Jacques Chirac’s June 2001 speech deserves careful reading for its strategic implications and for what it reveals about the enduring French emphasis on non-use (*non-emploi*).

## Chirac's June 2001 Articulation of France's Current Strategy

While some recent adjustments in British deterrence policy have evidently derived in part from reactions to the terrorist attacks against the United States on 11 September 2001, the French have made few modifications in the declaratory policy announced in June 2001, three months before those attacks. In his speech of 8 June 2001 President Jacques Chirac revealed the results of decisions made over a period of almost three years in a series of around ten secret meetings involving members of the Conseil de Défense, including the President and the Prime Minister.<sup>60</sup> According to Chirac,

Deterrence must also enable us to deal with the threats to our vital interests that regional powers armed with weapons of mass destruction could pose. I mentioned a short while ago the development by certain states of ballistic missile capabilities that could one day give them the means to threaten European territory with nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. If they had hostile intentions toward us, the leaders of these states must know that they would expose themselves to damage that would be absolutely unacceptable for them. *In this case, the choice would not be between the total annihilation of a country and doing nothing. The damage to which a possible aggressor would be exposed would be directed above all against his political, economic, and military power centers.* Naturally, nuclear weapons are essentially different, and people understand this. I assure you that France, while faithful to its concept of non-use, has and will retain the means to maintain the credibility of its [nuclear] deterrent in the face of all the new threats. . . . Our nuclear capability relies on two types of means with different and complementary technical characteristics: ballistic missiles equipping the oceanic component, carried on submarines, and air-launched missiles for the airborne component. The renovation and modernization of these forces, as well as the advancement of the simulation program, designed to compensate for the abandonment of nuclear tests for the maintenance of our capabilities, constitute the principal objectives of the next military program-law in this domain. These means have been defined, in their quantity and characteristics, at a level of strict sufficiency determined as a function of the political and strategic context. In the application of this principle, France has always taken care to define the lowest level of capability possible that is, of course, consistent and compatible with its security. While restricted to a level of strict sufficiency, our nuclear deterrent is therefore,

more than ever, at the heart of our country's security. In France's geographic and political situation, it is the best guarantee against the threats born of proliferation, whatever the delivery system.<sup>61</sup>

Chirac's speech made clear an evolution in policy that had been underway for years. During the Cold War, as noted earlier, the French referred repeatedly to "deterrence by the weak of the strong" (*la dissuasion du faible au fort*) — that is, France's ability to deter the Soviet Union by posing a threat of unacceptable damage, despite the asymmetry in French and Soviet capabilities. In post-Cold War circumstances, as was noted in the 1994 defense white paper, France's nuclear deterrent could also be expected to prevent aggression against the country's vital interests by WMD proliferants — powers in relation to which France was not the "weak" party. However, some French policy statements implied that the retaliatory threat could be of the same nature as that which had been directed during the Cold War against the Soviet Union — strikes against cities (*des frappes anti-cités*). This impression prevailed despite the abandonment of the term "anti-cities" and the use in the 1994 defense white paper of the term "unacceptable damage" (*des dommages inacceptables*).<sup>62</sup> It is noteworthy that President Mitterrand, as late as May 1994, said that France was capable of destroying "the vital forces" (*les forces vives*) of a superpower, an expression reminiscent of the Cold War "vital works" (*les oeuvres vives*) requirement.<sup>63</sup>

Chirac's June 2001 speech revealed, as a French journalist put it, the government's decision to acquire "more accurate, less powerful, and longer-range [nuclear] weapons, in order, as the President of the Republic explains, to reach 'above all the political, economic, and military power centers of a possible aggressor.' To be capable, for example, of destroying Saddam's bunker without completely destroying Baghdad."<sup>64</sup> In other words, experts in Paris have observed, the objection that some commentators have advanced — that "political, economic, and military power centers" are in fact cities — is ill-founded, because the French are seeking nuclear means with greater accuracy and more limited and controllable effects.

The journalist's formulation should nonetheless be qualified in some respects. To begin with, the French evidently intend to acquire a wider range of options, and not simply lower yield or "less powerful" weapons capable of being delivered with greater precision, because

some targets (including targets not located in cities) might call for higher yield weapons and greater precision while others might also require greater ranges. The clear move away from the “anti-cities” strategy, historically based on the “deterrence by the weak of the strong” concept, to the acquisition of a wider range of options, including more precise and more discriminate strike capabilities, explains why Chirac said that “the choice would not be between the total annihilation of a country and doing nothing.”<sup>65</sup> Moreover, the journalist’s reference to a weapon suitable for attacking a bunker in Baghdad is probably not a reliable indication of French procurement or targeting priorities, for several reasons, including (a) the doctrinal shift away from an “anti-cities” strategy; (b) the interest in such a contingency in avoiding collateral damage, such as the radioactive contamination of a city; and (c) the emphasis on targeting an enemy regime’s instruments of power, not its leaders. By this logic, the French would be more likely to target assets distant from cities, such as military installations or oil extraction or refining facilities, than cities or leadership command bunkers. At the same time, French observers note, the enemy regime’s leaders could well be included in targeting directed against political “power centers.”<sup>66</sup>

According to an analysis by Bruno Tertrais, a former Ministry of Defense official,

It is a question in this regard of adapting the deterrent threat to the stakes of the conflict, which would not be our national survival in dealing with a regional power. It is therefore no longer possible to sum up the French concept with the idea of an anti-cities deterrence, an expression which moreover had long ago disappeared from our public language. . . . While conventional forces contributed, in the Cold War scenario, to avoiding the ‘circumvention’ of deterrence, henceforth the reverse may be true: in external operations, in regional crises, nuclear deterrence will guarantee the freedom of action of the political authorities by enabling France to avoid being subjected to blackmail placing its vital interests at risk.<sup>67</sup>

Chirac’s speech also included an adjustment in French policy on ballistic missile defense. Chirac announced that he had directed French authorities to study “the possibility of equipping our forces, within a period corresponding to the emergence of new ballistic

missile threats, with a defense capability against theater missiles.”<sup>68</sup> According to French observers, in supporting missile defenses for deployed forces overseas, Chirac was deliberately vague as to whether these forces would also be protected by the nuclear deterrent as part of France’s “vital interests.” Despite the reference in Chirac’s speech to “European territory” as the possible target of WMD proliferants that could provoke France’s nuclear retaliation, France’s military forces deployed outside Europe could also be covered among the country’s “vital interests,” because the definition of these interests depends on the President.<sup>69</sup> It should nonetheless be noted, as Thérèse Delpech has pointed out, that missile defense protection for forces deployed overseas will be “increasingly necessary” since the legitimacy of relying on nuclear deterrence alone for this purpose will “be contested because vital interests will not be clearly at stake.”<sup>70</sup>

In June 2001 the French government continued to hold, in Chirac’s words, that pursuing strategic missile defenses outside ABM Treaty constraints “would open the way to new uncontrolled competitions.”<sup>71</sup> Instead of seeking strategic missile defenses for the protection of the homeland to gain freedom of action against WMD proliferants in regional conflicts, the French emphasized a redefined and more precise nuclear retaliatory threat as the source of their freedom of action. Some French observers even reaffirmed the traditional French doctrine that missile defenses for the protection of national territory and population would be unaffordable and would tend to weaken the credibility of retaliatory deterrence, in that such defenses would imply that threats of nuclear retaliation might fail to deter.

In mid-2002, however, U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty took effect without leading to any U.S.-Russian confrontation or “new uncontrolled competitions,” to use Chirac’s phrase. Indeed, in the May 2002 Moscow Treaty Russia and the United States agreed on extensive reductions in their operationally deployed strategic nuclear warheads. Moreover, Washington and Moscow (and NATO and Russia) agreed in the same month to initiate (or carry forward) a wide array of collaborative activities, including dialogue and cooperation on missile defense. At the same time, missile proliferation trends have underscored the potential utility of missile defenses for the protection of national homelands. These circumstances may have contributed to France’s support for NATO’s November 2002 decision

to conduct “a new NATO Missile Defence feasibility study to examine options for protecting Alliance territory, forces and population centres against the full range of missile threats.”<sup>72</sup> In French expert circles, however, some skepticism persists about strategic missile defenses, owing in part to their cost and uncertainties about their operational effectiveness, and a conviction that the probability of a failure of nuclear deterrence is quite low. In June 2003, General Henri Bentégeat said, “The only true response to an emerging nuclear threat from ‘rogue’ states is the nuclear deterrent, for the simple reason that nobody can count on an anti-missile defence system — which is just as costly to build as a nuclear arsenal — being 100% effective.”<sup>73</sup>

While the greatest innovation in French nuclear deterrence strategy concerns dealing with WMD proliferants in regional crises, the original focus of the strategy remains — protecting the country against a major military power. In his June 2001 speech, President Chirac said,

Our [nuclear] deterrent guarantees, in the first place, that France’s survival will never be placed into question by a major military power with hostile intentions and ready to employ all means to give them concrete expression. As long as considerable arsenals still exist or are being developed in diverse parts of the world, this guarantee remains fundamental for us.<sup>74</sup>

Authoritative French observers have indicated that the phrase “a major military power with hostile intentions and ready to employ all means to give them concrete expression” could apply to Russia, China, India, or other states, depending on the circumstances.<sup>75</sup> Some French observers have said that Prime Minister Lionel Jospin’s October 1999 reference to “distant” threats as also covered by France’s nuclear deterrent was in fact an allusion to such remote contingencies:

The strategic situation’s rapid evolution, the pursuit by certain powers of significant efforts in the nuclear domain, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, notably ballistic missiles, justify France’s continuing to maintain a range of modern deterrent weapons. . . . The nuclear weapon is the basis of an essentially deterrent strategy. This strategy is guided by the strictly defensive conception of our policy. It guarantees that the survival of our country will not be placed into question by

a hostile power. It allows us to deal with the risks linked to the existence of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic delivery systems, while preserving our freedom of action in the face of a threat to our vital interests. It contributes in this way to Europe's security. In the current strategic situation, which is fluid, with many constraints, and marked by the appearance of new risks, *nuclear deterrence is based on autonomous capabilities that enable us to oppose the materialization of a threat to our vital interests, whatever might be its origin – even if it is distant – its nature or its form. We will therefore see to the modernization and adaptation of a nuclear arsenal which, while remaining limited in volume, in conformity with the principles of strict sufficiency that we uphold, must henceforth take into consideration the weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles that certain powers are acquiring.*<sup>76</sup>

Some observers have related this intention to hedge against “distant” and “major” threats to the acquisition of the M51 SLBM, with its range of over 8,000 km.

Despite various indications that France's nuclear deterrent posture will remain strictly under national control and dedicated to guaranteeing the country's security, President Chirac in June 2001 repeated long-standing French convictions that France's nuclear forces also contribute to the security of NATO and the European Union:

Finally, it is France's wish that our nuclear deterrent also contribute to Europe's security. It thus participates in the overall deterrent that can be exerted by the democracies joined together by the treaty of collective security concluded, over fifty years ago, by Europe, the United States, and Canada. In any case, it is up to the President of the [French] Republic to assess the harm that might be done to our vital interests in a given situation. This assessment would naturally take into account the growing solidarity of the countries of the European Union.<sup>77</sup>

President Chirac then recalled, without using the previous French “pre-strategic” or “final warning” formulas, France's long-standing policy of being prepared to use nuclear weapons to signal France's resolute willingness to defend its vital interests:

I wish finally to remind you that our concept of [nuclear] deterrence, founded on the principle of oneness, does not exclude the capability of showing a possible adversary, when necessary,

that our vital interests are at stake and that we are determined to safeguard them.<sup>78</sup>

The French word *unicité* is translated here with the word “oneness,” although it is often rendered as “uniqueness,” because the word also carries the connotations of “oneness,” “wholeness,” or “all of a single piece.” In other words, France’s nuclear deterrence posture constitutes a whole at one with the nation’s vital interests: any threat to France’s vital interests could oblige Paris to use its “capability of showing a possible adversary . . . that our vital interests are at stake.” Paris could thus choose to employ nuclear means, presumably in a fashion short of comprehensive strategic nuclear strikes, to communicate its determination to “safeguard” those interests.

In short, Chirac announced “the modernization and adaptation” of the nuclear arsenal to be able to strike a regional adversary’s “political, economic, and military power centers” in a comparatively discriminate fashion. While some critics have argued that such targets sound like cities, French officials clearly view the new policy as a step toward limited and controllable nuclear employment options that may reinforce deterrence by informing adversaries that France has usable options between “all or nothing.” However, it is noteworthy that Chirac reaffirmed in the same speech that France will remain “faithful to its concept of non-use,” an expression of confidence in the effectiveness and reliability of France’s nuclear deterrence posture and a confirmation of France’s rejection of nuclear “war-fighting” concepts.

In November 2002, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, General Henri Bentégeat, who served as President Chirac’s military adviser during the formulation of the new articulation of nuclear deterrence strategy in the president’s June 2001 speech, testified as follows to the National Assembly’s Committee on National Defense and the Armed Forces:

The Americans judge that deterrence does not work with “rogue states” that are considered irrational. However, the leaders of these states are sensitive to threats exerted against their center of power. Our doctrine and our means have therefore been adapted. France must have the nuclear capabilities that forbid any sort of blackmail. The countries that would threaten its population and its vital interests must know that they would expose themselves to damage that would be unacceptable to them, that is, notably to

their power centers. *Deterrence has been adapted to remain credible within the enduring framework of a non-use policy.* Nuclear weapons are not battlefield weapons for us. We have only acquired the means to oppose aggressors of a new type with a reliable and logical response.<sup>79</sup>

Similarly, in January 2003 the military program-law for 2003-2008 stated that France's nuclear deterrence strategy "remains characterized . . . by a concept of non-use."<sup>80</sup>

France's concept of non-use should not be construed as signifying a policy of "no use" or "no first use." The concept reflects, as noted above, confidence in the reliability of France's deterrent posture as well as a refusal to regard nuclear arms as banal "battlefield" weapons. The French are nonetheless fully prepared to conduct nuclear operations, if necessary. In June 2003 General Bentégeat referred in the same article to France's "doctrine of non-use of nuclear weapons" and to its ability "to deliver nuclear weapons, in the event of a failure of deterrence, rapidly and with a maximum of autonomy of action."<sup>81</sup> Indeed, Bentégeat confirmed that France's threat of nuclear retaliation applies to enemies armed with chemical and biological weapons as well as to nuclear powers:

If a dictator in a 'rogue' state understands that any attack on a French city with chemical or biological weapons would lead instantly to the destruction of his power centres and military capacity, he will desist. . . . France's deterrent has the precision and diversity tailored to meet any degree of threat. . . . We don't intend to develop battlefield weapons as the *force de frappe* is a political deterrent; instead, we rely on a diversified payload that can spare an adversary's population and cities.<sup>82</sup>

## **Advantages of the Non-Use Concept**

Insisting that the strategy remains one of non-use enables the French to avoid possible discomfiture regarding certain issues, including relations with allies and potential adversaries and the strategy's moral and political legitimacy.

*Non-use and relations with allies.* France's decision to acquire nuclear arms involved multiple motives in addition to reservations about relying on U.S. nuclear commitments. When de Gaulle said that

“France, by acquiring nuclear arms, is performing a service for the world equilibrium,”<sup>83</sup> he evidently had in mind France’s autonomy and international status and the political balance within the Alliance, as well as broader strategic purposes, such as enhancing deterrence by obliging Moscow to face an additional center of nuclear decision-making in Europe. France’s ability to “nuclearize” a conflict independently would, it was argued, underscore the risks to the Soviet Union in committing aggression. In the early 1960s, when the United States proposed that NATO adopt a strategy of “flexible response,” de Gaulle interpreted the new strategy as a U.S. attempt to weaken what he considered an already dubious nuclear guarantee by advertising America’s unwillingness to use nuclear weapons through an emphasis on strengthening conventional military forces. De Gaulle refused to accept the new strategy; and the other allies did not adopt it until 1967, after de Gaulle withdrew France from the Alliance’s integrated military structure in 1966.

The other allies could not establish the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) until late 1966, after France’s withdrawal from the integrated military structure. While Britain has made its nuclear forces available for Alliance planning since 1962, subject to national command and control and sovereign employment decisions, France has never participated in the NPG or associated NATO bodies for consultations regarding nuclear strategy and deterrence. Since the early 1960s, France has insisted on the distinctness and autonomy of the French approach to nuclear deterrence strategy in relation to U.S. and NATO concepts. While France participated in the Alliance’s 1990-1991 and 1997-1999 Strategic Concept reviews and approved the 1991 and 1999 documents, the French are excluded from two of the key paragraphs referring to nuclear deterrence.<sup>84</sup>

In currently foreseeable circumstances, there is no likelihood of France participating in the NPG’s deliberations. It would be difficult for France to join the NPG because the French themselves have made it a symbol of American “hegemony” and of the “subordination” they consider to be implicit in Alliance institutions such as the NPG, the Defense Planning Committee, and the integrated military structure. French absence from the NPG has correspondingly become a symbol of national autonomy and strategic independence. Aside from the French lack of interest in formal common planning, nuclear weapons have become identified with France’s sovereignty and status; and

participation in NPG deliberations would be portrayed by critics of the government, on the left and the right, as undermining the nation's autonomy.<sup>85</sup>

In this respect, as in some others, the French reveal the continuing tension between maintaining a strictly national nuclear deterrent policy and professions of solidarity with NATO and the European Union. France alone will decide whether and how to use its nuclear forces on behalf of its own security and/or in defense of broader NATO and/or EU security interests, and (to date at least) it has remained France's policy to do so without participating in NATO's Nuclear Planning Group. No analogous EU group for nuclear deterrence matters has yet been constituted, for various reasons in addition to French policy principles. Yet the view that France's nuclear deterrence posture contributes to the security of the Atlantic Alliance (a judgement repeatedly endorsed by France's NATO allies, most recently in the 1999 Strategic Concept) has enabled the French, in conjunction with the avowed policy of non-use, to minimize the potential awkwardness of France's abstaining from consultations about nuclear weapons employment policy in the NATO framework.<sup>86</sup>

Moreover, the French have not excluded consultations about nuclear deterrence in other frameworks. In February 1986, President Mitterrand expressed a willingness to consult with the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany regarding possible use of French nuclear weapons on German soil.<sup>87</sup> In July 1993, President Mitterrand and British Prime Minister John Major announced a decision to make permanent an Anglo-French Joint Commission on Nuclear Policy and Doctrine, a body that had been established on a provisional basis in November 1992. In October 1995, Major and Chirac declared that they would "deepen nuclear cooperation. . . while retaining the independence of our nuclear forces." They added that "We do not see situations arising in which the vital interests of either France or the United Kingdom could be threatened without the vital interests of the other also being threatened."<sup>88</sup> In the years 1995-1997 French officials suggested that France and other members of the European Union might discuss *dissuasion concertée*, a phrase that might be translated as "deterrence supported by continuing consultations and substantive consensus." While the *dissuasion concertée* initiative had few results, evidently owing to political

obstacles within the European Union and France itself,<sup>89</sup> it reflected a long-standing French conviction that France's nuclear forces serve European security interests. In the words of the 1994 defense white paper, "National independence and that of Europe in the future are without any doubt linked to the possession of such weapons."<sup>90</sup>

*Non-use and international legitimacy.* The broader utility of the non-use policy in international politics involves more speculative judgements, given the multiplicity of audiences and circumstances. The French have consistently and even emphatically noted that non-use does not mean "no first use," but rather confidence in the reliability of their nuclear deterrence posture and rejection of a nuclear "war-fighting" strategy.<sup>91</sup> At the same time, the French have tried to derive political benefit from their deterrent and non-use orientation. For example, France's official reaction to the July 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons included the following observation:

France's nuclear doctrine has an exclusively deterrent and defensive character. The French deterrent is oriented toward war-prevention. For France, nuclear weapons could not constitute instruments of coercion or combat arms. The nuclear deterrent aims to prevent any placing into question of our vital interests as they are defined, in the final analysis, by the chief of state.

The French deterrent constitutes a factor of stability and contributes to the maintenance of international peace and security. It is inseparable from the resolute action of our country in favor of collective security, arms reductions, and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, as the President of the Republic noted in his recent speeches before the IHEDN [Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale] on 8 June 1996, and then before the members of the Conference on Disarmament on 11 June 1996.<sup>92</sup>

Even during the Cold War, it was exceptional for official French policy statements to refer explicitly to the Soviet Union as the target of France's nuclear deterrence posture. In post-Cold War conditions, official references to specific countries as possible targets of French nuclear retaliation have become practically nonexistent. It would be politically awkward to refer publicly with any specificity to the scenarios that could arise with regional powers armed with weapons

of mass destruction. French officials have accordingly chosen to speak of such countries as a general category and to emphasize the merits of flexibility in the nuclear posture while reaffirming the concept of non-use.

It should be noted that France's reservations about the negative security assurances it has extended in the NPT context are linked to its interpretation of its disarmament obligations under Article VI of the NPT.<sup>93</sup> Because France's "vital interests" could be threatened by biological, chemical, or conventional attacks, France cannot exclude responding with nuclear weapons to such attacks. This deterrence policy is consistent with the nation's disarmament policy: that is, France could not consider nuclear disarmament in the absence of complete and general disarmament. As Hervé de Charette, then the Foreign Minister, noted in 1997,

France supports the objective of the final elimination of nuclear weapons in the framework of general and complete disarmament. From now until the realization of this objective . . . France intends to maintain in all circumstances the credibility and the effectiveness of its nuclear deterrent force.<sup>94</sup>

*Non-use and domestic legitimacy.* Discussions of nuclear operations have been comparatively rare in France. Far more emphasis has been placed on the idea that nuclear deterrence has made France an invulnerable "sanctuary" that no aggressor would dare to attack. Nuclear weapons have become associated with national independence and security against another world war and, more broadly, with de Gaulle's efforts to restore France's honor and international status after France's humiliating defeat in 1940. In the early 1990s, when some French politicians, military officers, and experts conducted a semi-public debate about developing more flexible nuclear employment options (with more accurate delivery systems and low-yield warheads with confined effects), they discovered that the mainstream consensus in France remains opposed to such options if they appear to increase the likelihood of conducting actual nuclear operations.<sup>95</sup>

Some French observers are concerned that planning and preparing for such employment options could undermine the domestic political legitimacy of France's nuclear forces by implying that the principles

of “no war” (*non-guerre*) and “no battle” (*non-bataille*) in French nuclear deterrence strategy could be overturned by aggression. French politicians and experts have traditionally maintained that discussions of nuclear operations are irrelevant and potentially dangerous because they imply that France’s deterrent posture could fail. The long-standing French doctrine has accordingly been that nuclear forces are “weapons of non-use” (*armes de non-emploi*); and this doctrine has been reaffirmed in official discussions of the strategy and posture modifications announced by President Chirac in June 2001.<sup>96</sup> As noted above, even in discussions since June 2001 of France’s more flexible and discriminate capabilities designed to deter WMD-armed regional powers, French officials have regularly restated the “non-use” principle and their corresponding confidence in the effectiveness of the nation’s nuclear deterrent posture.

The high level of confidence in the probable success of France’s nuclear deterrence strategy promotes the strategy’s domestic legitimacy. In the words of the 1994 defense white paper, France’s “strategy remains essentially defensive. The refusal of war or of conventional and nuclear battle that the doctrine of deterrence is based on will continue to inspire it. It remains one of the bases of the indispensable national consensus in defense matters.”<sup>97</sup> In the 1980s Pierre Hassner offered the following critique of French strategy:

[I]f one accepts the logic of the French doctrine, the search for discrimination and proportionality, the classic just-war criteria, would mean the acceptance of limited war, and hence of the failure of deterrence. . . . When challenged on these grounds the usual French response has been to dismiss the moral problem altogether in the name of deterrence (nuclear weapons are moral since they are meant to prevent war, not to wage it) and of retaliation (since France will never be the attacker, it bears no moral responsibility for what it might have to do in response to aggression or blackmail). . . . A critic of the doctrine, Pierre Lellouche, has pointed out that what made the French posture acceptable was precisely its lack of operational credibility, which reassured potential pacifists that French nuclear weapons were not meant to be used.<sup>98</sup>

French experts have pointed out that Hassner’s critique applied above all to France’s Cold War nuclear strategy, when the Soviet Union was the principal adversary and Paris emphasized “anti-

cities” threats. Since the early 1990s, the preoccupation with deterring WMD-armed regional powers has led the French government to seek forces capable of much greater “discrimination and proportionality” and to reaffirm the traditional purpose of successful deterrence and war-prevention.<sup>99</sup>

It is significant in this regard that President Chirac in June 2001 repeated that France will remain “faithful to its concept of non-use” while modifying the country’s declaratory strategy and revealing improvements in force characteristics in the direction of greater operational usability – that is, listing more specific targets and seeking more discriminate and controllable weapons.

Despite uncertainties about the operational utility of France’s nuclear weapons in dealing with specific threats, the consensus behind nuclear deterrence in France remains comparatively robust. As noted above, the strategy articulated by President Chirac in June 2001 was formulated with the concurrence of Lionel Jospin, then France’s Prime Minister and the leader of the Socialists. The French generally deem nuclear weapons an insurance policy in an uncertain and unstable world, and a guarantee of France’s political and strategic autonomy. All the major parties, including the Socialists, are committed to maintaining nuclear deterrence as a means of war-prevention and thus support the strategy of non-use and the operational instruments necessary to uphold it. As Lionel Jospin observed in September 1998,

The evolution of the strategic context has permitted a reduction in the number of weapons and in the alert level of the forces, but *nuclear deterrence remains at the heart of our defense. It manifests in an explicit fashion the adherence of our country to a strategy of preventing war and testifies to our will to protect the supreme interests of our country with autonomous capabilities.* France is therefore maintaining its effort in the nuclear domain, but adapting the level of its arsenal and its posture. For France, as for European security, so long as general and complete disarmament has not been achieved, nuclear weapons remain a necessity.<sup>100</sup>

## ENDNOTES - CHAPTER 7

1. For a valuable discussion of the intellectual origins and objectives of France's nuclear capabilities up to the late 1970s, see the chapter by Bruno Tertrais in this volume.

2. The 1995-1996 test series had three purposes: the final certification of the TN75 warhead, the validation of robust warhead designs, and the acquisition of data for simulation. See Jacques Bouchard, Directeur des Applications Militaires, Commissariat à l'Énergie Atomique, testimony before the Commission de la Défense Nationale et des Forces Armées, Assemblée Nationale, 20 February 1996, *Compte rendu* no. 27, p. 2. Since the 1995-1996 test series France has relied entirely on its simulation capabilities. France has dismantled its test site in the South Pacific and has ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

3. The M51 SLBM was attributed a range of 9,200 km in *Le Monde*, 9 June 2001. According to a dossier published by the Documentation Française (and prepared by a non-governmental organization, the Centre de Documentation et de Recherche sur la Paix et les Conflits, Observatoire des Armes Nucléaires Françaises), the M51 SLBM will have a range of 8,000 to 10,000 km, and the ASMP-A air-launched missile will have a high-altitude range of 500 km. See [www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/dossier\\_international/nucleaire/etat\\_lieux/france.shtml](http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/dossier_international/nucleaire/etat_lieux/france.shtml).

4. Bruno Tertrais, *The French Nuclear Deterrent After the Cold War*, P-8012 (Santa Monica, California: Rand, 1998), p. 37.

5. Jacques Chirac, interview in *Armées d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 246, January 2000, p. 8.

6. Charles de Gaulle, press conference of 23 July 1964, in *Discours et messages*, vol. IV, *Pour l'effort, Août 1962-Décembre 1965* (Paris: Plon, 1970), p. 233; italics added.

7. The French word *dissuasion* is normally translated into English (by the French themselves and others) as "deterrence." The French do not have a word for "dissuasion" with the meaning attributed to the term in the U.S. Quadrennial Defense Review in 2001, and therefore employ formulas such as *la dissuasion de l'acquisition des capacités militaires* to describe the U.S. concept in the 2001 QDR.

8. Raymond Barre, "La politique de défense de la France," *Défense Nationale*, November 1980, p. 12.

9. Pierre Mauroy, "La cohérence d'une politique de défense," *Défense Nationale*, October 1981, p. 21.

10. Jeannou Lacaze, "La politique militaire," *Défense Nationale*, November 1981, pp. 11, 12.

11. This declaratory policy may have expressed aspirations more than then-current capabilities. It is not clear whether France's capabilities at that time could support this declaratory strategy.

12. Guy Lewin, "La dissuasion française et la stratégie anti-cités," *Défense Nationale*, January 1980, p. 27.
13. Guy Lewin, "L'avenir des forces nucléaires françaises," *Défense Nationale*, May 1980, pp. 17-18.
14. Raymond Tourrain, *Rapport d'information par la Commission de la Défense Nationale et des Forces Armées sur l'état et la modernisation des forces nucléaires françaises*, no. 1730 (Paris: Assemblée Nationale, October 1980), p. 206.
15. Pierre Riou (the pseudonym of a high-level Ministry of Defense official), "La force des choses," *Défense Nationale*, July 1980, p. 17.
16. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, *Le pouvoir et la vie*, vol. II, *L'affrontement* (Paris: Compagnie 12, 1991), p. 180.
17. Charles Hernu, "Répondre aux défis d'un monde dangereux," *Défense Nationale*, December 1981, p. 15.
18. Raymond Barre, "La politique de défense de la France," *Défense Nationale*, November 1980, p. 14.
19. Guy Lewin, "La dissuasion française et la stratégie anti-cités," *Défense Nationale*, January 1980, pp. 24, 31.
20. Guy Méry in *Le Monde*, 19 November 1980, p. 12.
21. Guy Lewin, "La dissuasion française et la stratégie anti-cités," *Défense Nationale*, January 1980, p. 28.
22. Ivan Margine (the pseudonym of a high-level Ministry of Defense official), "L'avenir de la dissuasion," *Défense Nationale*, April 1978, p. 29.
23. Robert Galley, speech at the Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale, 3 February 1981, p. 13 of text furnished by the Délégation à l'Information et à la Communication de la Défense.
24. Pierre Mauroy, "Vers un nouveau modèle d'armée," *Défense Nationale*, November 1982, p. 24.
25. For a valuable discussion, see Bruno Tertrais, "La coopération militaire depuis 1969: La France, l'OTAN et la question nucléaire," in Maurice Vaisse, Pierre Mélandri, et Frédéric Bozo, eds., *La France et l'OTAN, 1949-1996* (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1996).
26. President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, "Allocution," *Défense Nationale*, July 1976, p. 15.
27. Charles Hernu, "Face à la logique des blocs, une France indépendante et solidaire," *Défense Nationale*, December 1982, p. 16.
28. Hernu's change in terminology was analyzed by Jacques Isnard in *Le Monde*, 31 October 1984, p. 9.
29. Mitterrand statement of 17 December 1987 to Hans Jochen Vogel, reported in Pierre Favier and Michel Martin-Roland, *La décennie Mitterrand*, vol. 2, *Les épreuves (1984-1988)* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1991), p. 645.

30. Mitterrand speech of 11 October 1988, reported in *Le Monde*, 13 October 1988, p. 9.
31. Mitterrand press conference of 11 September 1991, text furnished by Service de Presse, Présidence de la République, p. 11.
32. Jacques Chirac, "La France et les enjeux de la sécurité européenne," *Défense Nationale*, February 1988, p. 16.
33. Chirac quoted in *Le Monde*, 9 March 1988, p. 14.
34. Mitterrand quoted in indirect discourse in *Le Monde*, 22 October 1987, p. 4.
35. For background, see David S. Yost, *Soviet Ballistic Missile Defense and the Western Alliance* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), especially pp. 170-183.
36. Bruno Tertrais, "La dissuasion nucléaire française après la guerre froide: continuité, ruptures, interrogations," *Annuaire Français de Relations Internationales* (Bruxelles: Bruylant, 2000), p. 760.
37. Some French observers have linked the disappearance of the terms "pre-strategic" and "final warning" to the disappearance of the USSR. It is not clear whether the abandonment of the terms was influenced by British arguments (a) that calling the initial nuclear use a "final warning" was dangerous because it would oblige France to engage in larger follow-on strikes if that "final warning" failed to achieve the intended results and (b) that it would be wiser to maintain uncertainty (and political and operational latitude) about the magnitude of initial and follow-on strikes.
38. Division Emploi de l'État-Major des Armées, *Concept d'emploi des forces*, Lettre no. 827/DEF/EMA/EMP.1, 23 juillet 1997 (Paris: Service d'Information et de Relations Publiques des Armées, Ministère de la Défense, 1998), p. 18.
39. Ministère de la Défense, *La Défense de la France: Une action inscrite dans la durée* (Paris: Service d'Information et de Relations Publiques des Armées, October 1990), p. 13.
40. Pierre Joxe, interview with *Le Progrès-Le Journal de la Saône-et-Loire*, 21 February 1992, in *Propos sur la Défense*, January-February 1992, p. 90.
41. Discours prononcé par M. Jacques Chirac, Président de la République, à l'Institut d'État des Relations Internationales de Moscou, 26 September 1997, text provided by the Service de Presse, Présidence de la République, p. 11.
42. *Projet de loi de programmation relatif à l'équipement militaire et aux effectifs de la défense pour les années 1992-1994*, no. 2877 (Paris: Assemblée Nationale, July 1992), p. 14. This draft military program-law, unlike all previous military program-laws of the Fifth Republic, was never debated or approved by parliament. The draft text nonetheless reflected thinking in the executive branch of the government in mid-1992.
43. Ministère de la Défense, *Livre Blanc sur la Défense* (Paris: Service d'Information et de Relations Publiques des Armées, February 1994), pp. 70, 72.

44. Ministère de la Défense, *Livre Blanc sur la Défense* (Paris: Service d'Information et de Relations Publiques des Armées, February 1994), p. 70.
45. Speech by President Jacques Chirac at the École Militaire, Paris, 23 February 1996, in *Propos sur la Défense*, no. 57 (February 1996), p. 179; emphasis added.
46. "Loi no. 96-589 du 2 juillet 1996 relative à la programmation militaire pour les années 1997 à 2002," *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 3 July 1996, pp. 9987-9988.
47. Speech by Prime Minister Lionel Jospin at the Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale, 4 September 1997, p. 4 of text furnished by the French Foreign Ministry.
48. Raymond Barre (then Prime Minister), "Discours prononcé au Camp de Mailly le 18 juin 1977," *Défense Nationale*, August-September 1977, p. 16; and General Guy Méry (then Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces), "Conférence," *Défense*, no. 9 (May 1977), p. 22.
49. Ivan Margine (the pseudonym of a high-level Ministry of Defense official), "L'avenir de la dissuasion," *Défense Nationale*, April 1978, p. 26.
50. Charles Hernu, "La politique et la volonté de défense," *Politique Internationale*, no. 16 (Summer 1982), p. 13.
51. Mitterrand, 7 February 1991, in *Le Monde*, 9 February 1991, pp. 8-9.
52. Another factor in Mitterrand's decision-making was evidently his determination to promote adherence to the Chemical Weapons Convention, and therefore to assert the principle that chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons should not be considered operationally usable. Author's interviews in Paris, April 2003.
53. Roland Dumas interview in *Journal du Dimanche*, 10 February 1991.
54. Jacques Chirac, discours à l'occasion de la réception des ambassadeurs, Palais de l'Élysée, 31 August 1995, p. 10; emphasis added.
55. Admiral Jacques Lanxade, "La défense française dans le nouveau cadre géostratégique," *Défense Nationale*, August-September 1995, p. 19.
56. Alain Juppé, discours à l'Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale, 7 September 1995, p. 7.
57. Communication du Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, M. Alain Juppé, à la Commission des Affaires Étrangères, de la Défense et des Forces Armées du Sénat, Paris, 6 April 1995.
58. A thorough comparative analysis of British, French, and U.S. declaratory policies regarding nuclear deterrence and WMD proliferants might help to establish whether, as some French observers maintain, these arguments for caution have exerted even greater influence in London and Washington than in Paris. Some French observers hold that French nuclear deterrent threats to WMD proliferants have been more explicit than those articulated by the United Kingdom and the United States. Author's interviews in Paris, April 2003.

59. Admiral Marcel Duval, "De la non-prolifération à la contre-prolifération?" *Défense Nationale*, August-September 1995, pp. 37, 39.
60. The Conseil de Défense, a top-level decision-making body, is France's closest equivalent to the U.S. National Security Council. It should be noted that Socialist leader Lionel Jospin served as Prime Minister from June 1997 to May 2002, and that the policy announced by Chirac in June 2001 was determined in concurrence with Jospin.
61. Jacques Chirac, speech at the Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale, 8 June 2001, available at [www.elysee.fr](http://www.elysee.fr); emphasis added.
62. Ministère de la Défense, *Livre Blanc sur la Défense* (Paris: Service d'Information et de Relations Publiques des Armées, February 1994), p. 57.
63. Intervention de M. François Mitterrand sur le thème de la dissuasion, 5 May 1994, p. 5 of text furnished by the Service de Presse, Présidence de la République.
64. Jean-Dominique Merchet, "Chirac menace les 'États voyous' du feu nucléaire," *Libération*, 9 June 2001.
65. This affirmation of choices between "total annihilation" and "doing nothing" can be seen, some French observers have noted, as a less explicit way of saying (to use the old terms) that France has "prestrategic" and "final warning" options, now related to possible confrontations with regional powers as well as major powers.
66. Author's interviews in Paris, June-July 2001, March 2002, June-July 2002, and April 2003.
67. Bruno Tertrais, "Dissuasion nucléaire: Une doctrine adaptée au contexte stratégique," *Armées d'Aujourd'hui*, no. 262 (July-August 2001), p. 65.
68. Jacques Chirac, speech at the Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale, 8 June 2001.
69. Author's interviews in Paris, June-July 2001, March 2002, and June-July 2002.
70. Thérèse Delpech, "Le deuxième âge nucléaire?" *Le Figaro*, 8 June 2001.
71. Jacques Chirac, speech at the Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale, 8 June 2001.
72. North Atlantic Council, Prague Summit Declaration, 21 November 2002, par. 4g.
73. General Henri Bentégeat, interview in *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 4 June 2003.
74. Jacques Chirac, speech at the Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale, 8 June 2001.
75. Author's interviews in Paris, June-July 2001, March 2002, June-July 2002, and April 2003. An official explanation of Chirac's phase indicated that "The world has shrunk. Therefore, we are not completely indifferent to what is happening in China." An anonymous official source quoted in Jean-Dominique Merchet,

“Chirac menace les ‘États voyous’ du feu nucléaire,” *Libération*, 9 June 2001. A well-informed observer has suggested the following distinction: a major military power could destroy France or threaten its survival, while a regional power could threaten its vital interests but not its survival.

76. Lionel Jospin, “La politique de défense de la France,” *Défense Nationale*, December 1999, p. 9; emphasis added. This article reproduces the text of Jospin’s speech on 22 October 1999 at the Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale. In an interview in April 2003, an observer in Paris said that the word “distant” in Jospin’s speech meant “in Asia.”

77. Jacques Chirac, speech at the Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale, 8 June 2001.

78. Jacques Chirac, speech at the Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale, 8 June 2001.

79. Audition du général Henri Bentégeat, chef d’état-major des armées, sur le projet de loi relatif à la programmation militaire pour les années 2003 à 2008 (no. 187), Commission de la Défense Nationale et des Forces Armées, Compte Rendu no. 19, 13 November 2002, available at [www.assemblee-nat.fr/12/cr-cdef/02-03/c020319.asp](http://www.assemblee-nat.fr/12/cr-cdef/02-03/c020319.asp); emphasis added.

80. Loi no. 2003-73 du 27 janvier 2003 relative à la programmation militaire pour les années 2003 à 2008, section 2.3.1., “Les fonctions stratégiques,” available at [www.legifrance.gouv.fr](http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr).

81. General Henri Bentégeat, “Stratégie militaire française,” *Défense Nationale*, June 2003, pp. 34-35.

82. General Henri Bentégeat, interview in *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, 4 June 2003.

83. Charles de Gaulle, press conference of 10 November 1959, in *Discours et messages*, vol. III, *Avec le renouveau, Mai 1958-Juillet 1962* (Paris: Plon, 1970), p. 134.

84. In the 7 November 1991 Strategic Concept, the French are excluded by the “Allies concerned” formula (paragraph 57) and by the reference to “European Allies involved in collective defense planning in nuclear roles” (paragraph 56). In the 24 April 1999 Strategic Concept, the same formulas are used in paragraphs 63 and 64.

85. As President Mitterrand put it in May 1994, “This indispensable autonomy of the Chief of State’s decision excludes submitting this decision to international bodies and even to an Alliance and even to the most faithful, the closest, and the strongest of our allies. That it is why it was formerly decided to withdraw France from the integrated command of the Atlantic Alliance, of NATO, and that is why I firmly uphold this decision.” Intervention de M. François Mitterrand sur le thème de la dissuasion, 5 May 1994, p. 3 of text furnished by the Service de Presse, Présidence de la République.

86. “The supreme guarantee of the security of the Allies is provided by the strategic nuclear forces of the Alliance, particularly those of the United States;

the independent nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France, which have a deterrent role of their own, contribute to the overall deterrence and security of the Allies." North Atlantic Council, Strategic Concept, 24 April 1999, paragraph 62. This statement repeated an identical statement in the Alliance's Strategic Concept of 7 November 1991 (paragraph 55). This wording represented a recasting of the formula used in the Alliance's June 1974 Ottawa Declaration, which noted that two of the European Allies "possess nuclear forces capable of playing a deterrent role of their own contributing to the overall strengthening of the deterrence of the Alliance." See North Atlantic Council, Declaration on Atlantic Relations, Ottawa, 19 June 1974, in *Texts of Final Communiqués, 1949-1974* (Brussels: NATO Information Service, 1975), p. 319 (paragraph 6).

87. For background, see David S. Yost, "Franco-German Defense Cooperation," in Stephen Szabo, ed., *The Bundeswehr and Western Security* (London: Macmillan and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), pp. 223, 234-242.

88. Joint Statement by President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister John Major, 29-30 October 1995.

89. For background, see David S. Yost, *The US and Nuclear Deterrence in Europe*, Adelphi Paper no. 326 (London: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, March 1999), pp. 36-40.

90. Ministère de la Défense, *Livre Blanc sur la Défense* (Paris: Service d'Information et de Relations Publiques des Armées, February 1994), p. 52.

91. Some French observers deplore the government's repetition of the expression *non-emploi* (non-use) because it has sometimes been construed to imply that France might be prepared to endorse a policy of "no first use," whereas France has always rejected such proposals.

92. Communiqué of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 8 July 1996, in *Documents d'Actualité Internationale*, no. 17 (1 September 1996), p. 697.

93. According to Article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, "Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

94. Hervé de Charette, Foreign Minister, answer to a written question, National Assembly, 24 February 1997.

95. For background, see David S. Yost, "Nuclear Weapons Issues in France," in John C. Hopkins and Weixing Hu, eds., *Strategic Views from the Second Tier: The Nuclear Weapons Policies of France, Britain, and China* (San Diego, California: Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, University of California, San Diego, 1994), pp. 87-91; and Bruno Tertrais, *The French Nuclear Deterrent After the Cold War*, P-8012 (Santa Monica, California: Rand, 1998), pp. 21-25.

96. The terms *non-bataille* and *non-guerre* were prominent in 1970s and 1980s. Since the early 1990s, the expression *non-emploi* has been used most consistently.

97. Ministère de la Défense, *Livre Blanc sur la Défense* (Paris: Service d'Information et de Relations Publiques des Armées, February 1994), p. 49.

98. Pierre Hassner, "Ethical Issues in Nuclear Deterrence: Four National Debates in Perspective (France, Great Britain, the United States and West Germany)," in Hassner, *Violence and Peace: From the Atomic Bomb to Ethnic Cleansing*, trans. by Jane Brenton (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1997), pp. 126, 133. This essay was first published in German in Uwe Nerlich and Trutz Rendtorff, eds., *Nukleare Abschreckung – Politische und ethische Interpretation einer neuen Realität* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1989).

99. Author's interviews in Paris, April 2003.

100. Lionel Jospin, speech at the Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale, 3 September 1998, p. 14 of text furnished by the French Foreign Ministry; emphasis added.