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BRITISH AND FRENCH NUCLEAR FORCES AND EUROPEAN SECURITY

by Ettore Greco

1. Introduction

The nuclear weapons modernization programs Britain and France are currently committed to implementing were worked out and started in a phase of the international policy profoundly different from the present one. Gorbachev's new foreign policy and the 1989 democratic revolution in Eastern Europe have begun a historical process which is rapidly changing the strategic environment on the old continent.

The threat of a surprise attack or a large-scale offensive from the East which had been the greatest source of concern for the Western countries since the end of the World War II has disappeared. The powerful centrifugal force developed by the yearning of the new democracies to shake off the Soviet tutelage has virtually deprived the Warsaw Pact of any residual credibility as an efficient military alliance. It has indeed become a mere political illusion which owes its survival to the common will to make the Soviet withdrawal as painless as possible and avoid complications for the conventional arms control process.

On the other hand, the dissolution of the Eastern bloc arouses new types of concern as it is accompanied by a broad spectrum of uncertainties. There is a wide consensus that the old European order based on bipolarism needs to be replaced with a multilateral security arrangement. However, that goal is only attainable after the completion of the liberalization process in the post-communist countries and through the strengthening of the European institutions, particularly the European Community and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Such a transition will probably be neither automatic nor without obstacles. Signs of a resurgence of intra-European rivalries - both ethnic and nationalistic - have been increasing since the explosion of the political upheaval in the Eastern countries. The State unity of some of these countries is threatened by strong separatist forces. Thus, the strategic vacuum which is emerging in Central Europe and in the Balkans as a result of the desovietisation process is perceived as a possible factor of instability. Furthermore, the risk of a failure of perestroika in the Soviet Union remains very high because of the persistent economic crisis and the pressure of nationalities toward indipendence from the central power.

The response of Britain and France to these changes can take two opposite

directions. Faced with the growing uncertainties, made worse by the emerging US attitude to lowering its level of engagement in Europe, they could be tempted to give their nuclear policy a more marked nationalist orientation by trying to play their respective 'national cards': Britain its special relationship with the US; France its nuclear autonomy. As an alternative, they could seek to enhance the military cooperation between them and with their European partners by extending it to the nuclear field. At the same time, they could agree to integrate their nuclear deterrents gradually into arms control. In this second scenario, they would submit their nuclear policy to the restraints deriving from a growing responsibility, but would gain a greater international legitimation of their status of nuclear powers.

Indeed, the recent political developments in Europe have not occurred without affecting the military programs of Britain and France. Both countries have recently decided to begin a restructuring of their armed forces with the declared aim of adjusting them to the new strategic environment. Yet their attitude regarding the nuclear weapons appears to be fundamentally conservative and aimed at the traditional national priorities.

In the longer term, however, a policy of statu quo could become increasingly difficult to pursue for the two European nuclear powers. Two major political processes tend to push them towards a rethinking of their nuclear policy.

First, progress in the Western European integration, in particular the increasing responsabilities of the European Community in the field of foreign policy, challenges London and Paris to clarify the role their nuclear forces can play in the defense of their European partners and the strategic stability of the continent.

Secondly, the arms control negotiations are becoming increasingly comprehensive. The signing of an agreement on conventional forces in the CSCE framework will pave the way to a new negotiation on short-range nuclear forces. Moreover, a second phase of the START negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union is likely to begin once the first one is completed. International pressure - not only by the Soviet Union - could thus develop for the inclusion of French and British nuclear forces in both negotiations. As a result, the two countries could face the need to define a credible arms control policy which they have lacked so far.

The central thesis argued in this paper on the basis of the following analysis is that both countries should not further postpone starting a major revision of their nuclear policy. Such a delay could indeed weaken the contribution they could make to the new European order which is emerging on the ashes of the cold war.

2. The rationales of the enlargement of the strategic forces

Britain and France have historically adopted similar criteria in promoting the enlargement of the strategic component of their nuclear arsenals.

The first is that of sufficiency, i.e. the capability of causing an intolerable damage to a potential aggressor which both countries have always identified with the Soviet Union. This criterion has evolved over time as the damage levels regarded as sufficient have progressively been raised. As a result of the current modernization programs, the number of the strategic warheads of Britain will climb from 128 in 1989

to 512 in late 1990s, while those of France would increase from 294 to 612 in the same period (1). According to a computer simulation (2), that force enhancement will enable Britain to cause up to 68 million Soviet fatalities and the destruction of up to half of the Soviet production base. France, in turn, will acquire the capability of causing up to 81 million Soviet fatalities and the destruction of up to two thirds of the Soviet production base. That estimate is, however, based upon the assumption of a generated alert of all nuclear delivery systems. But the damage would be considerably less if the two countries should loose a portion of their nuclear forces, in the case, for example, of a Soviet first strike. Indeed, given their relatively small size, the two European deterrents are particularly exposed to a counter-force attack.

This fact has led the British and French nuclear planners to put a particular emphasis on a second criterion, i.e. that of survivibility. In order to satisfy this criterion, the natural choice for both countries was to rely on a force of nuclear powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBN), the most survivable element of the strategic triad. Britain and France respectively have one and two submarines on patrol at any time. Although France has also developed air- and ground-based delivery systems for its strategic weapons, its second-strike capabilities continues to be fundamentally based on the SSBN fleet. The most important factor which could threaten the survivibility of the two deterrents would therefore be an enhancement of Soviet anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities. To face this eventuality, France and Britain are seeking to improve the perfomance of their SSBN by reducing their noise, increasing their immersion depth and extending their patrol areas through a greater range of the missiles. However, according to most analysts, the probability that the development of the ASW technologies can endanger the survivibility of the submarines remains, for the foreseeable future, very low.

The third criterion is the ballistic missiles' capability of penetrating the enemy's strategic defenses. Both countries have repeatedly expressed their concern that the strategic defense programs of the two nuclear superpowers can undermine the military stability based on the mutual vulnerability. Thus, they welcomed the signature of the ABM treaty and critisized the US SDI program as a possible destabilising factor for the strategic environment. Although the hope for a technological breakthrough in the field of strategic defense which motivated the launching of SDI has so far proved illusory, some more limited applications of the military space technologies to strategic defense continue to be a major source of concern for Britain and France as does the employment of direct-energy weapons in an anti-satellite (ASAT) role as the arms systems of both countries will increasingly rely on satellites. Further, the destiny of the ABM treaty regime still remains highly uncertain despite the progress made by the US and USSR at the Start talks. Washington and Moscow have indeed decided to keep the negotiations on the offensive weapons separate from those on the ABM treaty. Yet only a very efficient Soviet ABM - which is unlikely to be built in the foreseeable future - could significantly reduce the damage capability of the two deterrents once modernized.

To sum up, the size of British and French strategic arsenals at the end of the current enlargement effort will give both countries a high damage capability, certainly more than a 'sufficient' one, if the criterion of sufficiency is connected with the concept of 'intolerable damage'. Even in the worst case, a Soviet counter-force first-strike attack, the survival of only the submarines on patrol would enable the British to launch 134

nuclear warheads and the French 192 (3). Nevertheless, the two governments will continue to plan the enlargement of their strategic nuclear arsenals also taking into account the possibility of military and technological developments which could reduce its effectiveness and survivibility. The greatest uncertainty remains the future of the ABM regime and the development of USSR's space and strategic defense technologies.

3. The modernization programs

The modernization of Britain's SSBN fleet is based on the Trident program which provides for the deployment of the eight-warhead Trident II D-5 missiles by 1998. In addition, the four Polaris submarines will be replaced with as many submarines of the new Vanguard class by the end of the ninenties.

The conservative government which launched the Trident program in 1980 is highly committed to complete it. Thus, despite the growing costraints of the British budget, the Trident program is unlikely to be revised if the Tories should win the next political elections. Yet critics of the Trident program are also present in the Conservative Party. They argue that the program is absorbing too many resources and hence making it impossible to improve or maintain at the current level other vital military missions such as the protection of the sea lanes and the out-of-area projection capabilities. The Labour Party, in turn, has declared that, once entered into office, it would cancel the fourth Trident submarine (4). Three submarines would be enough according to the Labour Party because the Trident submarines can be on patrol longer than Polaris as they need servicing less frequently. Yet the giving up of the fourth submarine would imply a growing economic cost as the Trident program develops.

From the very beginning, the Trident program has proved more expensive and proceeded more slowly than expected. In the past, the greatest factor of the increasing costs was the rise of the dollar as the missiles are bought from the United States. As regards the costs, the exchange rate fluctuations will remain the main source of uncertainty. As regards the program's timetable, further delays could be caused by the emerging US Congress attitude to cut funding for the production of the Trident missiles. Moreover, the production of the warheads is threatened by the staff shortage at the British centre of Aldermaston where the nuclear weapons research and development takes place.

At the sub-strategic level, the main choice Britain must take regards the replacement of the WE-177 free-fall bombs, whilst the problem of the modernization of British Lance missiles deployed in West Germany has lost its topicality since Nato declared, in the last London summit, its readiness to renounce the ground-based component of its sub-strategic arsenal after a negotiations with the Soviets.

The WE-177 bombs will be replaced with a stand-off missile. The alternative is between the US SRAM-T on development and an improved version of the French ASMP (air-sol á moyenne portée) missile, known as ASLP (air-sol á longue portée). The first choice would probably be cheaper and technically easier but it would further increase Britain's nuclear dependency on the US. The second choice would, in contrast, weaken the 'special relationship' with the US and start a nuclear cooperation between Britain and France which would represent a significant change in British nuclear policy.

The possession of a new stand-off missile would provide British nuclear forces with a greater flexibility which could prove useful in a strategic landscape full of uncertainties and one that is probably more unstable than before.

France's nuclear modernization programs are more articulated as they concern air- ground - and sea-launched weapons systems both at the strategic and sub-strategic level. Thus, the problems France will cope with in pursuing them will be rather different from those relating to the British programs.

The deployment of the six-warhead SLBM M-4 on the French submarines, begun in 1985, will be completed by 1993. The SLBM M-5 should start replacing the M-4 since 2005. However, the number of warheads to be placed on the M-5 has still to be decided. Moreover, the SSBN fleet should be completely renewed with the deployment of six submarines of the Triomphant Class between the 1994 and 2010. The cost of production and maintainance of a six-submarine fleet could yet prove prohibitive owing to the financial restraints France is already facing and will probably face in the future.

In 1988 the socialist government suspended the decision taken by the former conservative government to modernize the ground-based portion of the strategic arsenal through the replacement of the single-warhead S-3D missiles deployed at Plateau d'Albion with the three-warhead S-4 missiles since 1996. The deployment of a new missile generation at Plateau d'Albion was judged premature in light of the evolution of arms control and the strategic environment. The idea of a new ground-based strategic missile was not abandoned once and for all. Indeed, the last Loi de Programmation calls for the development of a successor of the S-3D, even if its eventual deployment has been postponed to the beginning of the next century. Thus, a final decision has still to be taken. The conservative opposition continues to emphasize the need of an early modernization of Plateau d' Albion arguing that it is indispensable to assure a second-strike capability and the sanctuarization of the French territory. However, after the establishment in Europe of the INF treaty regime, the possession of an IRBM force (the missiles at Plateau d' Albion have a range of 3500 kilometers) places France in a situation of singularity. This fact has so far created no particular problems for Paris, but an eventual decision to modernize such a force is likely to cause negative reactions by the other European countries especially if the nuclear arms control process on the continent should in the meantime take significant steps forward. In that scenario France could thus run the risk of diplomatic isolation.

The modernization of French sub-strategic nuclear forces poses even more demanding problems. The employment doctrine of these forces has always been a major point of debate. Depending on the government in office and the changes in the strategic landscape, the emphasis was placed in different periods on their polical role as weapons of deterrence or on their military capabilities as battlefield weapons. Chirac's government did not exclude this second type of employment and was also in favour of the introduction of the enhanced-radiation weapons (ERW), the socalled neutron bombs, which are typical battlefield weapons. Instead, the socialists have coherently rejected the battle concept and held fast to that of 'last warning' which assigns the sub-strategic forces the task of testing the aggressor's intentions and manifesting France's readiness to escalate. It was the socialist defense minister Charles Hernu who coined the term 'armaments pré-stratégiques' (pre-strategic weapons) instead of 'armes

nucléaire tactiques' (tactical nuclear weapons) in 1984 in order to emphasize their indissoluble link with the strategic weapons. President Mitterrand has repeatedly stressed that the pre-strategic weapons can by no means be regarded as an extension of conventional weapons, i.e. a sort of 'super-artillery', as by definition they would be use at the beginning of the nuclear process (5). Furthermore, he has tried to explain the doctrine of last warning employment better by asserting that it would only be launched on military targets and, in the first istance, on the attacker's territory (6). These declarations are clearly aimed at reassuring the European partners, especially the Germans, whose territories lie within the range of French pre-strategic weapons. In the context of other cuts in the equipment budget France has also decided recently to significantly reduce the number of its aicraft and missiles capable of performing last warning nuclear missions.

Yet the last warning doctrine poses two relevant problems. First, despite the enlargement of French nuclear arsenal its credibility remains doubtful. On one hand, one can envisage more efficient methods than the launching of pre-strategic weapons to signal the resolution to escalate, such as resorting to the strategic arsenal for a single limited strike capable of violating the attacker's sanctuary. Furthermore, the passage from a pre-strategic strike to a full-out strategic attack, which could in turn provoke the destruction of France as a reaction, appears far from being as automatic as argued by the last warning advocates. Secondly, the recent political developments in Europe which have removed the conventional threat and set in motion a rapprochement of the Eastern countries with the West raise serious doubts about the military usefulness and the political sustainibility of nuclear weapons incapable of reaching the Soviet Union's territory and thus designed to be launched on that of the Western partners or the new democracies.

The air-launched component of the pre-strategic arsenal is being modernized through the replacement of the Mirage-IIIE and Jaguar A aircraft carrying gravity bombs with the Mirage-2000N aircraft armed with the ASMP supersonic air-to-surface missile. The ASMP, which has a 100-300 km range, will also be placed on the carrier-based Super Etendard aircraft. In addition, the ground-based 120-km range Pluton missiles are scheduled to be replaced with the nearly-500-km range Hads missiles from 1992. These modernization programs are designed to assure the pre-strategic manoeuvre a greater employment flexibility. The ASMP, in particular, can strike along unpredictable lines. It is yet more vulnerable than the Hads which has a shorter reaction time and can be spread over the territory. Both arms systems, however, suffer from drawbacks. The large yield (300 kt) of the ASMP warhead is surely excessive for a last warning strike like that contemplated in the French doctrine. The problems linked with the deployment of the Hadès are instead mainly political. Although the current French defense minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement has repeatedly hinted at a useful role of the Hadès for the defense of Europe (7), as did Chirac previously (8), he has failed to explain it. President Mitterrand, in turn, has confirmed that France cannot renounce the Hadès as last warning weapon (9). In the meantime, he has yet acknowledged that, "given the considerable changes that have taken place in Europe", the fact that the Hadès cannot reach a territory beyond the new democracies represents a major handicap (10). Indeed, explicit criticism of the Hadès is not absent within Socialist Party ranks (11). The greatest concern is that the deployment of the

Hadès can frustate the French effort to maintain a special relationship - both political and military - with the Germans, a goal that became more complex after the beginning of the German riunification process. So far, the West German government has avoided raising the issue (12), but polemic declarations against the deployment of the Hadès have come from all parties present in the West German Parliament. Thus, it is possible that the Hadès will become a source of trouble for the French-German relationship following the creation of a unified German State. Moreover, the development of arms control in Europe could further increase the political cost of the Hadès. In fact, the negotiations at the Csce conference will extend, after a first agreement on the conventional forces, to the ground-based less-than-500-km range nuclear forces. The French government has so far rejected the idea of an inclusion of its pre-strategic arsenal in a post-CFE negotiation, but that refusal is unlikely to be accepted by the Soviet Union and could also arouse objections from other European countries.

4. The French-British nuclear cooperation

The advocates of a French-British nuclear cooperation put the emphasis on the considerable similarities existing in the nuclear posture and doctrine of the two countries despite their different declaratory policies. As a matter of fact, both London and Paris justify the possession of national deterrents by stressing the need for a second centre of nuclear decision and stand by a concept of minimum deterrence against the Soviet threat. Nevertheless, their traditionally different stances towards Nato and the relationship with the United States creates a series of problems for any project of a closer military cooperation. The British government has repeatedly voiced its concern that Nato's cohesion could be threatened by the establishment of bilateral or multilateral arrangements outside its formal structures. In the nuclear field, Britain's choice to arm its SSBN fleet with the Trident missiles has further increased its dependency on the US, making impracticable a cooperation with France for the procurement of strategic weapons on submarines - the most important component of the two deterrents. Mutual suspicions also have a negative influence. Britain reacts coldly to any initiative which could pave the way to a French leadership in Europe, whereas France tends to regard Britain's resistance to a further strengthening of the European institutions as motivated by the will of safeguarding the US interests.

The most relevant attempts to strengthen the French-British defense cooperation took place in connection with an improvement in the political relationship between the two countries. In particular, Britain's entry into the European Community (1973) seemed to make possible a greater cooperation on defence matters. Then French President Pompidou and British Prime Minister Heath strongly favoured an enhancement of the French-British relations. Furthermore, there was a common concern for the growth of West Germany's political role following the launching of the Ostpolitik. Yet the only important result was the institutionalisation of an annual French-British summit in 1976. No joint nuclear project was seriously taken into consideration.

A new intensification of the bilateral relations took shape in the 80s, prompted by the common worried reaction to the SDI program and the US-Soviet Reykjavik

summit. The exchange of views on military matters became more frequent and detailed. During the 1984 summit a mutual preventive consultation on the respective modernization programs was decided. In 1986, during a visit to Paris, the British Social Democrat David Owen proposed a joint program for the construction of a cruise missile (instead of the Trident) with the aim of making possible a common contribution to the defense of Europe. More recently, France showed that it was ready to begin cooperation in the strategic field. In 1987 it proposed that the two countries share information on strategic nuclear targeting and submarine patrols in order to avoid duplicating each other's efforts. Yet the fear of damaging the special relationship with the US led Britain to reject such a proposal. In the last bilateral summit (4 May 1990) President Mitterrand and Prime Minister Thatcher agreed on some major programs in the conventional field (joint manoeuvres, the study of a joint military unit, the access by the British forces to the French ports in case of an increasing danger in Europe), but no concrete step forward was taken in the nuclear field. The possibility mentioned above of a French-British long-range nuclear cruise missile remains, if Britain should decide to acquire it instead of a US one.

A French-British nuclear cooperation would only make a sense if it represented a clear contribution to the defense of Europe and became part of the global European integration process. It poses at least three main problems. First, it could require a certain degree of restriction of the national control on nuclear strategy (in the case, for example, of joint targeting) or on the comand itself of the nuclear deterrent (in the case of a joint force), a prospect which has traditionally met with opposition in both countries. Secondly, it could be viewed as a threat to the Atlantic link or one that would accelerate the US nuclear disengagement from Europe. Thirdly, if it should take shape on a strictly bilateral basis, the other European partners could regard it as an attempt to create a French-British 'directory' aimed at supremacy in Europe.

For these reasons, it is of vital importance that some fundamental requirements be satisfied. France and Britain should formally consult the United States on their joint nuclear projects, especially if they involve the strategic weapons. A triangle between the three Western nuclear powers appears to be indispensable if a weakening of the cohesion of the Western alliance is to be avoided. Indeed, the US could only accept the emergence of a French-British nuclear partnership if it were able to influence its establishment and role. Moreover, any nuclear arrangement between the two countries should be agreed to or at least discussed within a European istitutional framework. The natural seat would be the Western European Union, the only European body with the competence for security policy. To this end, it is necessary that the so-called 'revitalization' process of the WEU make new progress, in particular as regards its institutional strengthening, and that increasingly strong institutional links be established between the WEU and the European Community. Furthermore, the French-British nuclear cooperation should develop gradually, in parallel with the political integration of the European Community. A step-by-step process would allow the domestic resistance in both countries to be more easily overcome. It would also be appropriate for the necessity of a gradual emergence of a more equal partnership between the US and Europe.

5. The arms control issue

The Soviets have made recurrent attempts to obtain the inclusion of British and French nuclear arsenals in arms control. During the Salt I negotiations they argued that the SLBMs owned by the two countries ought to be counted together with the US ones. Although that request was rejected by the US, the Soviet Union declared in a unilateral statement that, if France and Britain had increased the number of their modern submarines which were operational or under construction on the date of signature of the agreement, it reserved the right to a corresponding increase in the number of its submarines. Such a threat however had no effects and was not reproposed in the SALT II negotiations. The Americans also managed to resist a Soviet demand to include in the SALT II agreement a clause banning the trasfer of strategic missiles, their components and the relative technology to third parties. If accepted, that clause would have disrupted the Anglo-American nuclear cooperation. In 1982, then Soviet leader Andropov tried to justify the deployment of the SS-20 with the argument that they represented a compensation for the French and British missiles. The Soviets used that argument massively in the campaign against the Pershing-II and Cruise. Gorbachev's decision to drop it was a major move towards the signature of the INF treaty.

Undoubtedly, past Soviet efforts to extend the arms control to the two European deterrents were often aimed at extracting concessions from the United States at the negotiation table or had mainly propagandistic motivations. However they were also a natural implication of the traditional Soviet point of view that the three Western nuclear arsenals represent virtually a single threat to the USSR. The Soviets are thus likely to raise the issue again in the future, especially as they can advance the additional argument of the increased size of the French and British nuclear arsenals. These will indeed account for an increasingly high percentage of the Soviet arsenal as a result of the implementation of the modernization programs, even if this percentage amounts to little more than 20% at the most in the year 2005 (13). In particular, the probability of Soviet pressure to place the French and British strategic forces on the bargaining table of future START II negotiations is very high.

The arguments used by the US against the integration of the French and British nuclear forces in arms control are far from being entirely convincing and free from contradictions. The argument that the European deterrents are national forces and as such are not committed to the defense of the West as a whole is contradicted by the integration of the British nuclear forces in Nato's nuclear planning and by the fact that the French ones would probably be used in coordination with the Nato command (14). Furthermore, the US has maintained inconsistent views on the military characteristics of the two deterrents. It insisted on their theater role during the SALT negotiations, while it put the emphasis on their strategic role during the INF negotiations. In the future, however, two main factors could induce the US to press Britain and France to accept an inclusion of their nuclear forces in the arms control process. First, the enhancement of the two European deterrents threatens to jeopardize the US control on the nuclear escalation process. Maintaining such control as strict as possible is a traditional goal of US policy. Hence, the US could be interested in a limitation of the size of the French and British arsenals through the arms control. The greater the US military commitment in Europe remains, the greater such an interest will be. Secondly, Washington could

agree to a possible Soviet demand for the integration of the French and British nuclear forces in arms control in order to pave the way to further reductions in strategic weapons. Yet, in each of these scenarios the US would risk causing a crisis in the relations with two key allies like France and Britain thus damaging the cohesion of the whole Western alliance.

Historically, Britain has been more open than France to arms control for two reasons: the presence of a strong anti-nuclearist current within public opinion and the nuclear cooperation with the US, making possible an extension to Britain of some arms control measures agreed on by the US. Under Mrs Thatcher's government, however, London has adopted a more skeptical view on arms control. Paris, in turn, has never made a secret of its concern that participation in arms control could undermine its nuclear autonomy.

London and Paris have set some conditions for their participation in strategic arms control. The first is a large reduction in US and Soviet strategic arsenals. The exact size of that reduction has never been specified, but, according to the official declarations of the two countries, it should be by much more than 50%. The French government has used the stiffer formula, speaking of a level for the US and Soviet strategic forces "comparable with ours" (15). The second condition is a guarantee that no further improvements take place in the Soviet (for the French, also in the US) defensive systems, i.e. anti-submarine, anti-missile and anti-satellite weapons. As a continental power, France has also insisted on a third condition: the establishment of a conventional balance in Europe and a ban on chemical weapons.

This last condition, however, appears to be the least preemptory. Indeed, it is often ommitted in the official French declarations. Furthermore, a first agreement on the conventional balance in Europe is soon to be signed in the context of the CSCE. Finally, the two superpowers have recently agreed on a large reduction of their chemical arsenals and on a moratorium on their production.

The first two conditions are more decisive and, at the same time, more demanding. As regards the superpowers' strategic defenses, there remains, as seen before, a high degree of uncertainty concerning their future developments and the survival of the ABM treaty regime. As regards the US and Soviet offensive weapons, it must be noted that in Start negotiations Washington and Moscow agreed to a level of reductions far lower than initially foreseen (50%) as they excluded the sea-launched cruise missiles (SLCM) from the overall ceiling and adopted broad counting rules for the missiles on bombers Even once the Start treaty is signed, a period of time will have to pass before it proves to be effective and new agreements on strategic reductions are signed.

Consequently, an involvement of Britain and France in the strategic arms control is unlikely to take place in the short run. Nevertheless, if the superpowers should make new significant steps forward in their bilateral negotiations, agreeing on the opening of a second START process (after completing the current one) and on the preservation of an effective regime of constraints on strategic defenses, London and Paris could hardly avoid making concessions on their participation in arms control. One can envisage different ways in which such a participation could take shape. They could each negotiate bilaterally with the USSR with the aim of reaching agreements separate from a Start II US-Soviet treaty (16). Yet separate negotiations between each of the Western

nuclear powers and the USSR are likely to complicate rather than facilitate one another. Furthermore, they would be based on the very questionable assumption that separate military balances exist between the French and British forces and the Soviet ones. A multilateral negotiation including both the superpowers and the two European countries, with the possible participation of China, appears to be a more feasible option. In the framework of such a negotiation, France and Britain could declare their readiness to respect a ceiling on their strategic nuclear warheads in exchange for drastic post-START cuts in the US and Soviet arsenals. However, they could also choose to propose this exchange without entering into formal negotiations. In this case, their commitment not to enlarge their arsenals quantitatively would be declared through a unilateral statement. It would thus be politically, but not legally, binding.

The improved relationship between the US and the USSR could also produce new relevant agreements in other areas of arms control which involve vital interests of France and Britain. In particular, the two superpowers have recently reached an agreement for the ratification of the Threshold Test Ban Treaty (TTBT) and made significant progress towards a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) by solving some major technical problems . The British government has declared that it is in favour of a CTBT or a moratorium on the tests on condition that technically efficient measures against infrigements are established. The Labour Party, in turn, has promised that it would end testing of British nuclear devices once in office. In general, it is difficult to imagine that Britain would not partecipate in a CTBT signed by the US. In the past - particularly in the period 1977-1979 - it has strongly favoured a CTBT. Moreover, it is dependent on the US for its tests as it uses the US test site at Nevada. France has pursued a less open policy towards the problem of the nuclear tests. Unlike Britain it has not joined the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) signed in 1963 although it has complied with it since 1974. The only move made recently by France is the decision to resume providing information on its tests in the Pacific. However, in case of a US-Soviet agreement to ban the nuclear tests, the only politically tenable choice for France would be to join it. It would otherwise risk political isolation. President Mitterrand's recent declarations on this matter, although rather sybilline, seem to confirm this prediction (17).

A last point can not be neglected. An active participation of Britain and France in nuclear arms control would be consistent with the goal of strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime which appears to be increasingly threatened by the rearmament process in the Third World. Indeed, Article VI of the NPT pledges the signatory nuclear states to engage in arms control. France has not adhered to NPT, but it has signed political documents containing a similar commitment such as the final declaration of the Paris conference on chemical weapons. Indeed, although the most effective measures to stem the nuclear proliferation are those aimed at the control of nuclear technology transfer, the link between vertical and horizontal proliferation continues to be significant at the political and diplomatic level.

6. Conclusions

Europe has entered into a new phase of its history in which the dissolution of the divisions inherited from the World War II could pave the way to a new political order based on an increasingly greater level of cooperation and integration. The establishment of such an order depends mainly on further progress in arms control and in the processes of political integration. France and Britain should reconsider their nuclear policies in light of these two priorities.

As a result of their strategic modernization programs, at the beginning of the next century the two countries will have at their disposal a number of strategic warheads much higher than the current one, certainly sufficient to support a credible policy of deterrence against the USSR, which, in turn, will maintain its nuclear supremacy on the continent for the foreseeable future.

London and Paris should thus declare their readiness to renounce further increases in their nuclear warheads on submarines and respect a ceiling on them, if the US and the USSR, after signing the START treaty, reach a new agreement on further considerable reductions in their strategic arsenals. Such a diplomatic move would not imply giving up qualitative improvements in nuclear devices. Furthermore, it should not necessarily be accompanied with the participation of the two countries in formal negotiations. However, that participation would probably give them greater diplomatic leverage, especially if they should reach a common position on the minimal size of their nuclear arsenals necessary to assure a deterrence capability. Moreover, France should definitely abandon any modernization project of its missiles at Plateau d' Albion which have doubtful military utility and certain political disadvantages.

At the sub-strategic level, both countries are mainly interested in acquiring a greater military operational flexibility. They should hence concentrate their resources on the modernization of their air-launched component of sub-strategic forces by deploying new generation stand-off missiles. The French government should instead freeze the project of replacing the Pluton with the Hadès which is in blatant contrast with the trend towards a negotiated elimination of all ground-based short-range nuclear forces from Europe. Paris could make the final destiny of the Hadès program conditional on the outcome of the future negotiations on the SNF.

In the foreseeable future, the defense of Western Europe will continue to rely on the Atlantic Alliance. By deciding to start a major revision of the military doctrine and posture of NATO, Western leaders have showed that they regard the Atlantic link as being essential to the security of their countries. Nevertheless, the likelihood of a more or less gradual disengagement of the US from Europe prompted by the new priorities emerging in the US military policy and the financial constraints of the US budget remains very high. A closer European cooperation in the field of defense appears to be the only possible response to that trend. It would not necessarily disrupt the US-European partnership if it should develop upon consultation with Washington and through a step-by-step process. Nuclear cooperation agreements between Britain and France could become part of a more general effort by the Western European countries to extend the integration process to the military field provided that it takes place in a multilateral European framework such as the WEU. First steps in this direction would be the acceptance by Britain of the French proposal for a joint development of the

ASLP missile and for an exchange of information on strategic targeting and submarine patrols.

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NOTES

(1) See Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, SIPRI Yearbook 1989 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp.18-19; C.Philipps and J.M.Freeman, "British and French Strategic Nuclear Force Modernization. Issues for Western Security and Arms Control" (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 1989), pp.14, 17.

(2) See J.Prados, J.S.Wit and M.J.Zagurek, "The Strategic Nuclear Forces of Britain and France", in Scientific American, Vol.255 No2 (August 1986), p.26.

(3) See I.H.Daalder, "Evaluating SDI Deployment Options", in Survival, Vol. XXXII No 1 (January/February 1990), pp.29-46; Dietrich Schroeer, "Technological Progress in the SDI Programme", in ibidem, pp.47-64.

(4) In 1989 Brighton Annual Assembly the Labour Party adopted a new military policy by replacing the goal of a unilateral disarmament with that of a negotiated disarmament.

(5) See Mitterrand's speech to the Institut des Hautes Études de Défense Nationale (IHEDN), 10 October 1988, in Bulletin d' Informations, Ambassade de France in Bonn, No203-204 (20-21 October 1988).

(6) See ibidem.

(7) See Chevènement's interview to Der Spiegel, 11/1990, p.194.

(8) See Chirac's speech to the IHEDN, 12 December 1987, in Bulletin d' Informations, Ambassade de France in Bonn, No240 (15 December 1987).

(9) See Mitterrand's interview to TF1 and Antenne 2, cited in Le Monde, 17 July 1990, p.6 and Rocard's declarations cited in Le Monde, 3-4 June 1990, p.7.

(10) See ibidem.

(11) The security expert of the PSF, Gèrard Fuchs, has declared for the inclusion of the Hadès in arms control. Pierre Mauroy has asserted that the deployment of the Hadès should be discussed again (see Le Monde, 27 January 1990, p.8). A more open view than the official one was also expressed by the Foreign Minister Roland Dumas in the interview to Der Spiegel, 23/1990, pp.170-172.

(12) During the 26 April 1990 French German summit Helmut Kohl has excluded that the Hadès can be a source of concern for Germany.

(13) See C.Philipps and J.M.Freeman, "British and French Nuclear Force Modernization: Issues for Western Security and Arms Control", cit., p.21.

(14) See Richard H. Ullman, "USA und Frankreich: die verdeckte nukleare Beziehung", in Europa-Archiv, 44 (10 July 1990), pp. 342-343.

(15) See Mitterrand's press conference at Palais d' Elysée, 18 May 1989, in Bulletin d' Informations, Ambassade de France in Bonn, No96-97 (22-23 May 1989). See also Chirac's speech to the IHEDN, 2 January 1987, in ibidem, No233 (5 December 1987).

(16) The British Labour Party, in particular, has declared that it would reserve the option to enter direct negotiations with the Soviet Union to rid Britain of nuclear weapons in exchange of concessions. See The Times, 18 May 1989, p.6.

(17) See Le Monde, 20-21 May 1990, p.7 and Mitterrand's press conference at Palais d' Elysée, cit.

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