

## Does France have an arms export policy ?

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France's arms exports hardly received world wide attention until its government's stand on the Middle East. The criticism that this public stand stirred up, revealed the existence of these quite impressive exports and emphasized the mercantile aspect of this activity.

Our intention is to question some recurrent positions on this topic, for instance the ones that state that France has no policy on arms exports, that it seeks only good business proposals for the improvement of its balance of payments, exports old equipment mainly to the Third World, that its prices are not competitive, and that it cannot offer the financial terms that other countries are able to propose.

We shall try to establish that France has an arms export policy, which is a function of its general global policy, in particular of its European policy.

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In 1971 France received foreign orders worth 7.2 billion Francs (1), while actual sales were 3.5 billion Francs compared to 3 billion in 1970. 1971 sales were distributed as follows :

- 73 % aeronautic equipment ;
- 21 % ground force equipment ;
- 5 % electronic equipment ;
- 1 % naval equipment (2).

The figures are not completely reliable due to difficulties arising from classification, which does not differentiate exactly between military and civil items. An additional difficulty stems from the computing of arms

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(1) *Livre Blanc sur la Défense Nationale*, 1972, p. 55. (Here after « *Livre Blanc...* ».

(2) *Le Monde*, 12 mai 1972.

exports produced jointly with another country and shipped to a third one (3).

French arms exports have increased from 1960 to 1971 by an annual rate of 16 %, so that since 1969 France seems to have become the third largest international seller of arms, after the United States and the Soviet Union (4). Lewis A. Frank has emphasized that « France with one eighth of the G.N.P. of the United States, and spending only one fifteenth as much on defence, has sold one fourth as much in military equipment as the United States » (5).

However there has been a pause in this trend during the last two years, since in 1972 as well as in 1973 French arms sales were about 700 millions dollars, and orders in 1972 about 7 billion Francs (6). As a matter of fact France has had to fight very hard in order to prevent Great Britain from recapturing this rank.

The arms industry is the third largest manufacturer of finished products sold abroad following the automobile and the textile industries, and arms exports account for 25 % of all equipment exports (7), which have tripled during the last four years, and are now 8 % of France's total sales abroad.

The exports are destined to three main groups of countries :

1. Third World countries, especially : North Africa, Arabs States and Latin America.

2. Problematic countries which, although politically western orientated, and even Western affiliated, are refused arms supplies, or on which heavy restrictions are imposed, because of their internal political regime (for instance Greece, South Africa), or because of their international position (Israel). It seems that France has tried systematically to exploit such cases.

3. Western countries, especially Western developed countries.

(3) In a report submitted to the National Assembly (Committee on Finances), Mr. Hubert Germain explained the drop in French arms exports by the fact that since 1964 France has concluded several important contracts for joint production. *Le Monde*, 26 novembre 1969.

(4) *L'Express*, 1-7 février 1971 gave the figures of 11 billion francs export for the USSR and 15 billion for the United States. These figures are not corroborated by the « SIPRI Yearbook 1972, World armaments and disarmaments ».

(5) LEWIS A. Frank, « The arms trade in international relations », Praeger, 1969, p. 57.

(6) *Le Monde*, 6 janvier 1974.

(7) *L'Express*, 23-29 octobre 1972, p. 14. J. Barbery in his article on the industrial impact of the III<sup>e</sup> military Plan gave a figure of 13 %, in *Revue de la Défense Nationale* 1971. (Here after R.D.N.)

What has to be emphasized here, is the fact that about twothirds of France's arms exports are sold to Western developed countries (8), a fact which does conflict with two of the current assertions mentioned above :

- The weapons exported are of top quality and high technological development.
- These arms must be competitive price-wise, otherwise France could not have penetrated the western market.

France's arms industry employs 270,000 workers, 80,000 of them directly by the government, and 45,000 of them on contracts meant for export. This branch of industry is divided between the various sectors as follows :

- The Public sector, 12 % of total orders.
- The Semi-Public sector, 13 % of total orders.
- The Private sector, 75 % of total orders.

The orders of the French army still constitute a very valuable part of the turnover of several well-known firms such as Snecma (80 %), Dassault (75 %), Snias (60 %), Thomson-CSF (60 %), Matra (60 %) (10), in spite of the decrease in the percentage spent on total defence expenditures in the government's budget (11).

Thus, this is a very important activity, fed heavily by the defence budget, and which takes place mainly in the private sector.

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Since 1967, several developments have created the impression that little by little, this activity was imposing on the French government the very logic of its development, i.e. the need to conquer and secure more and more markets. In other words it seemed that the French arms sales were

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(8) *Livre Blanc...*, 1972, p. 55. For instance the United States is a very good client of the French arms industry ; between 1960 and 1968 they have been the second best client of this industry, after Israel, *Le Monde*, 28 février 1970. Recently important contracts were concluded, for instance the purchase by the United States of various types of missiles, *Le Monde*, 12 juillet 1972, *Le Monde*, 2 octobre 1972, *Le Monde*, 19-20 novembre 1972.

(9) *Livre Blanc...*, p. 46.

(10) *L'Expansion*, janvier 1971, p. 98 ; *R.D.N.*, février 1971 ; *Le Monde*, 10 février 1971.

(11) The share of the defence expenditures in the total budget has decreased from 28.8 % in 1959 to 23 % in 1964 and 17 % in 1972. As a share of the G.N.P. the respective figures are 5.78 %, 4.34 % and 3.13 %. But what have to be emphasized is that the structure of the defence budget has sharply changed since the share of equipments has grown from one third to a half of the total budget. *Livre Blanc...*, p. 58 and p. 60.

mainly governed by pure economic-mercantile criteria, and were not subordinate to a more general policy.

De Gaulle's decision (3 June 1967) to enforce an embargo on the 50 Mirages V ordered by Israel was probably the first spectacular move which did draw public attention to these developments. One of the wide spread explanations concerning this move was that France was ready to forfeit its special (« friendly ») ties with Israel, for the sake of ensuring its access to the huge prospects of the Arab arms markets.

Actually this view was strengthened two years later when France decided to sell more than 100 Mirages jets to Lybia, and at the same time maintaining and even enlarging its embargo on Israel. Several other deals were concluded with Saudia, and with Iraq. Paris' efforts to justify its move by putting forward a new doctrine discriminating between the countries of the « battle field » and the others did not lessen the impression that an overwhelming weight was given to mercantile considerations.

Much more convincing were views which stated that the French approach to international arms trade was justified as a legitimate step to further France's national interests (12), and especially to secure oil supply for its economy.

The French arms transactions with Arab States, as well as with South Africa and Greece were viewed by observers and publicists in a new perspective. In order to increase its arms sales France has moved to exploit every constraint preventing arms purchases from some states, and seemed ready to ignore of any political and moral considerations. The climax of this trend was reached recently when some of the ideas and propositions discussed by Hughes de l'Estolle and Michel Jobert with several Arabs leaders at the beginning of 1974 were published in the international press (13). Thus the restated assertion of Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber that the possible sale of nuclear devices by France could no more be considered as absolutely non-sense (14).

France sought to penetrate and to conquer new and promising markets with the assistance of new marketing channels: permanent and temporary exhibitions and shows, publicity and intense promotion of sales, drawing up and distribution of voluminous catalogues (15), conventional and non-conventional methods of promotion (16).

(12) See Balta's articles in *R.D.N.*, mai 1970, juin 1970.

(13) Hughes de l'Estolle is director for international affairs at the D.M.A. (Délégation Ministérielle pour l'Armement).

(14) *Israel National Radio*, february, 4, 1974.

(15) *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 12 janvier 1970, *L'Express*, 23-29 octobre 1972, *Le Point*, 29 octobre 1973.

(16) Jack GEE, *Le Mirage*, Albin Michel, 1971, chapter IV. In spite of all, bribery remains one of the more effective means of promotion, as displayed once more by the revelations about the crotale system deal with Lebanon.

Sales and distribution are done by a multi-branched system of factors : the defence ministry and its military attachés who hold the initial contact with the foreigners, and invite military chiefs of staff to visit France (17) various export authorities which assist the exporters, and the Finance ministry which handles support in the financing of armaments development, especially in the field of research and development (18).

Therefore it seems sound to classify as did J.P. Deriennic (19) French arms exports under the type governed by economic considerations (as in Italy and Canada) in contrast to the type directed by political considerations (as in the United States and the Soviet Union) and the type characterized by a restrictive policy (Sweden). Nevertheless, what is specific to France is the deep and wide involvement of its government in all the promotional and the commercial aspects of this trade.

Actually the scope and the importance of governmental interventions have contributed to strengthen the charges of mercantilism, a slogan often used by the parties of the opposition on the domestic scene. However the « Programme commun de gouvernement » to the socialist and the communist parties did not denounce at all the mercantile dimension of French arms exports, but has asked for the « suspension of all the sales of arms and war equipments to colonialist, racist or fascist states (South Africa, Portugal, Spain, Greece) » (20). In this respects it is also worth mentioning the very cautious position adopted on this subject by the French Trades-Unions, which did not criticize the mercantile character of French arms international trade, but the private profits it was generating (21).

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In fact it seems quite possible to establish that French arms exports are not mainly directed by mercantile considerations and that these deals are subordinate to a more global policy.

In order to check our claim we have first to overcome a problem of methodology. Should we start with some definition of what is a public policy and check if it does fit our case or not ? Should we use for instance

(17) See the humorous hint of the title of an article published in *Le Monde*, 23 septembre 1972, « Military chiefs or salesmen ? ».

(18) For instance the Law of Finance for 1967, which enables the Treasury to supply loans in order to launch the production of series (Art. 5), and which enables the financing of the production to be exported (Art. 29).

(19) J.P. DERRIENNIC, « Points de vue sur la course aux armements », *R.D.N.*, mai 1972, p. 823.

(20) « Programme commun de gouvernement du Parti communiste et du Parti socialiste », (27 juin 1972), *Editions sociales*, 1972, p. 172.

(21) See the declaration of Michel Warcholack, general secretary of the C.G.T. Federation of the State workers. *Le Point*, 29 octobre 1973, p. 76.

Ranney's or W. Harrison's definitions which stress the fact that a policy refers to a deliberate selection of one line of action from among several possible lines and is pursued or intended to be pursued? (22). In this case it seems obvious that we shall not be able to prove anything. First of all because we lack complete and exhaustive access to governmental sources. Secondly because the universe of intent is quite intangible and in any case a very tricky one to check. And thirdly because these definitions seem to imply that a non-deliberate residual course of action stemming from various constraints (including self imposed constraints) is not to be defined as a policy; in other words that in a specific field decisions which are deduced from a policy or from several policies are not to be considered as structuring a policy in this field. This seems precisely to be our case. So we shall look for another method.

As a preliminary step we should emphasize the existence of very tight administrative mechanisms and procedures encompassing all the facets of the arms industry and trade, which enables the government to dominate and to control this topic.

The DMA (Délégation Ministérielle pour l'Armement) is a public body established in 1961 under the Defence minister's authority. It was meant to prevent excessive collusion between civilian and military firms, but its main functions are to define specifications, to manufacture to purchase and to control equipment needed by all the three branches of the armed forces (23).

The « Center for prospective and evaluation » collects suggestions for alternative weapons systems which will enable the armed forces in the long run to carry out their missions and proposes an order of preference for their research and development based on their military usefulness, the time needed to develop them, and considerations of by-products in other fields than the military one. It assembles the DMA and the General chief of staff's recommendations and finally submits them to the Minister of Defence who every year issues directives in this field (24).

The DMA has a Department for International Affairs (DIA) which is in charge of stimulating arms exports and of easing red tape between the French industry and the foreign clients.

Decision making within the arms industry is moulded by precise frameworks and procedures on the basis of a new approach which is similar to the PPBS and is called RCB (Rationalisation des Choix Budgétaires).

(22) Austin Ranney Ed., « Political Science and Public Policy », *Maricham Publishing Co*, 1968, pp. 6-7.

(23) See the interview of J. Blancard, délégué ministériel pour l'armement, « Conceptions et réalisations des armements », *R.D.N.*, 1972, pp. 179-200.

(24) On the « Centre de Prospective et d'Evaluation », see the interview of Michel Debré by M. Chodkiewicz, *La Recherche*, n° 7, décembre 1970, p. 618.

The Center for prospective and evaluation has developed a wellknown method called « multi-criteria » for choosing between alternatives, which incorporates as one of its criteria the significance and the effects of developing specific arms systems on the economy (25).

The export of arms is one of the considerations taken into account in the early stages of the evaluation of projects (26).

This tight control encompasses also the stages of execution, the manufacture and the trade of arms, and even penetrates the very functioning of all enterprises manufacturing armaments. These activities of supervision and insight are carried out by « commissaires du gouvernement », each one in charge of some of these enterprises, and whose mission is among other things to evaluate them in general terms as a sector and to check if it fits national interests. Sometimes, they are asked by the defence minister to explain and make clear his policy to their managers (27).

Of course these facts alone do not prove the existence of a policy in this field. However they do recall that what is occurring in this field had the assent and the backing of the government, whether it is the result of a deliberate policy or not. Besides one can find more than mere provisions securing virtual control and dominance : Decision making on arms exports are made within a general framework built to taken into account the chief aspects of France global policy.

Decisions on arms exports are elaborated within the framework of the « Secrétariat Général de la Défense Nationale » (SGDN) by a special interministerial committee on arms exports (28). The SGDN was created in 1948 in order to reduce the influence of the army on defence matters (29). It is headed by a civilian official. Placed under the authority of the Prime Minister, it passed actually under the control of the Defence Minister. Now, under the fifth Republic, it is again directed and super-

(25) For a detailed presentation of this method see H. de l'Etoile et Quentin, « Le système 3 PB au Ministère des Armées, in *Rationalisation des choix budgétaires*, Dunod, Paris, 1970, pp. 49-70, and also H. Levy et H. Guillaume, *La rationalisation des choix budgétaires*, PUF, 1971, pp. 78-82.

(26) See for instance the directive given to the heads of the general chief of staff, and to other services in charge of armaments, to try to take into consideration in the preparation of the third military Plan, the export possibilities. *Le Monde*, 28 janvier 1970.

(27) For an authoritative view on this subject see the article of J. Faveris, contrôleur général des armées, « Le contrôle des industries d'armements », in *R.D.N.*, février 1973, pp. 49-69.

(28) This committee, the C.I.E.E.M.G. (Commission interministérielle pour l'étude des exportations de matériel de guerre) is attended by the representatives of the Ministry of Defence, of the Foreign Affairs, of the Treasury, and is headed by the General Secretary for National Defence (SGDN).

(29) For a full and precise account of the development of this institution see Chanetebout Bernard, *L'Organisation générale de la Défense nationale en France depuis la seconde guerre mondiale*, Paris, Pichon, 1967, pp. 77 et suiv.

vised by the Prime minister. Its task is to prepare the deliberations and decisions of the various committees in charge of defence, and which are headed by the President of the Republic (30).

The policy on arms exports is decided at this level. Specific decision authorizing export of military equipment are prepared by the special inter-ministerial committee mentioned above. The Ministry of Defence gives its advice on the French army priorities and on the sensitiveness of some equipment; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is guided by political criteria such as the denial of supplying arms to countries involved in open conflicts or in the repression of guerilla warfare. The Ministry of Finances considers the solvency of the clients and pays a special attention to the financial conditions of each agreement. The single opposition of one of these three ministries is enough to cancel a agreement, except in those cases in which the Prime Minister intervenes (31).

The search for coherence and consistency is also furthered by the existence of national planning in France. For instance in the sixth plan it was emphasized that the French aeronautic industry has to change the structure of its markets and to rely more heavily on the international civilian market (32). As a matter of fact, the goal was to change the present situation of two-thirds military exports to two-thirds civilian ones (33).

This perspective is substantiated by the fact that for the years 1971-1975 out of the ten new programmes which were taken into account by the aeronautical industry, five were civilian and five military (34). This proves the French authorities were aware of the possible dangers which could stem from the mercantile feature of French arms exports.

Several steps were taken to avoid this undesirable development, especially by trying to limit the amount of public financial aid assigned to this industry (35). There is no doubt that the men in charge of the aeronautical industry have perceived the intention of the French government to change the present trend of its assistance. They have tried to convince it that this industry might suffer a very severe set back if on the basis of the new civil programmes it was decided to cut down on military programmes. Experience proves said Mr. Adenot, one of the leaders of the

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(30) Patrice VERRIER, *Les services de la Présidence de la République*, PUF, 1971, pp. 48-49.

(31) Général J. BEAUVALLET, « Cybernétique de défense et Secrétariat général de la Défense nationale », in *R.D.N.*, août-septembre 1973, p. 20.

(32) Commissariat général du plan, Préparation du VI<sup>e</sup> Plan, *Rapport sur les principales options*, p. 173. VI<sup>e</sup> Plan de développement économique et social, 1971-1975, annexes au rapport général, p. 119.

(33) *Le Monde*, 10 octobre 1970.

(34) *Le Monde*, 19-20 juillet 1970.

(35) VI<sup>e</sup> Plan de développement économique et social, 1971-1975, annexes au rapport général, p. 120.



employers association for spatial and aeronautical industries (USIAS) that « all the big aeronautical industries in the world are based on a strong military sector, which generates technical and technological innovations » (36). Two years later the same Mr. Adenot had to mention the existence of strong American competition to secure the government's help for this industry (37).

In any case, there is at least some formal link between decisions on arms exports and considerations of more general policies. Our further step will be to check whether, besides this formal link, the decisions about arms exports are aimed at furthering goals of general and global policy, or whether they are at least consistent with them. For this purpose we shall assume that France has and still has a global policy whose main features are to be defined as follows :

1. The will to reach « independence », that is to say the will to reach the « autonomy of decision », not in the narrow sense of territorial sovereignty, but as rather the capacity to decide its own destiny (38). In French opinion, particularly in the gaullist view, it implies the existence of an independent arms industry and the creation of a nuclear force (Force de frappe) (39). It is worth remembering that the decision to develop a nuclear option entailed a very huge industrial and financial effort, at a time when France was facing many severe problems, such as the integration of one million refugees, deep economic and demographic transformations in agriculture, in the industrial structure and in higher education.

2. The will to replace the bipolarity system with an international system more favourable to France ; i.e. an international system which will escape the logic and rigidity of bipolarity. Thus France strove to appear as the champion of peace and of the independence of peoples and nations.

3. The ambition to build Europe around France. As De Gaulle stated : « many people are shouting : let us create Europe. But which Europe ? This is the question... According to us, the French, Europe has to be European. A European Europe means that it will exist by itself in other words that it will have its own policy... » (40).

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(36) *Le Monde*, 10 octobre 1970.

(37) *Le Monde*, 5 octobre 1972.

(38) Edgard FAURE, *Prévoir le Présent*, Gallimard, 1966, Chapter III.

(39) On this subject see the book of the late Général Ailleret, *L'Aventure atomique française*, which reviews the different stages of the decision to build a nuclear force. Chapter IX, and Chapter X.

(40) Press conference, 23 juillet 1964.

These were precisely some of the main points developed by the President of the French republic in his speech before the « Institut d'Etudes Politiques » in January 1973 where he explained the principles of France's general policy.

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Were the arms exports decisions aimed at promoting the « autonomy of decision ? Undoubtedly arms exports were viewed as lightening the financial burden of the nuclear option and as enabling the existence of a relative independent French arms industry. In the last years arms exports have also been considered as almost the sole mean of overcoming French vulnerability in the field of oil supply, at a relatively fair price, and without being compelled to accept american help and leadership.

With respect to the promotion of a new international structure, one can show that several decisions may fairly be connected with these aspirations.

For instance, instead of understanding French policy towards Israel as an attempt to reach richer markets, one can view it as seeking to prevent the outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East, which would push this regional system back into the bipolar structure. This development would cast its shadow over Western Europe and oblige it to lean heavily again on the United States for support. In order to prevent the stiffening of bipolarity France tried to promote the interference of the Four Powers in the conflict.

Various observers emphasized the fact that France's step to enforce the embargo did push Israel into the open arms of the United States, which was contrary to France's declared policy of strengthening the independence of other countries. This claim seems correct, although a bit too simple one, because the strong ties between Israel and the United States began already to develop in the field of arms supplies in 1963-1964, when Israel sent a special military mission to the United States asking for Hawk missiles and Skyhawk jets. Therefore the attempt to prevent the outbreak of an armed conflict in the Middle East can also be understood as a last endeavour to slow down the process of tightening the ties between Israel and the United States. The moment this attempt failed and France discovered that this process could not be stopped, it had to look for another way to further multipolarity. In this respect the international position of several arab states seems to open better perspectives.

This interpretation of the French steps during the middle east crisis of 1967 is also strengthened by the fact that the partial embargo decision was a very risky one from an economic point of view, because at this

time France had not yet secured alternative markets for its arms production.

By contrast to the embargo decision, there is no doubt that the Libyan deal had mercantile aims — the penetration of a new and profitable market — as well as commercial ones — the reduction of the commercial deficit with Libya —. Nevertheless official statements on this matter should not be dismissed or be considered as pure apologies when denying a policy to sell arms and stressing the existence of a middle east policy (41). In fact the Libyan transaction was also intended to prevent the increase of the soviet influence in the Mediterranean sea. According to some sources the replacement of the Anglo-saxons by the French was an old plan conceived in 1963 by General De Gaulle (42). In any case one should give some credit to French official declarations stressing the importance of the Mediterranean and its surroundings for the defence of France and Europe (43).

Even in the cases of South Africa and South America which on the surface seemed to be based on purely economic considerations ; there were also political ones. In the former case, France wanted to protect its political and strategic interests in the Indian ocean and in Africa, which were consistent with its global policy (44). In the later case, one of France's main considerations was probably to exploit the United States self limitation which prohibited the sale of supersonic jets to South America, in order to loosen these countries dependence on North America.

These perspectives and points of view were stated publicly in official documents such as the White Paper on defence, and repeated by several French officials. For instance Hughes de l'Estaille explained that some states are turning to France « to free themselves from a too great dependence from the USSR and the United States. Therefore there is no reason why we should refuse to help them acquiring the equipment they consider necessary, providing that their policy does fit the principles of the United Nations Charter » (45).

Of course this doctrine on arms exports can be viewed as an attempt to justify French arms international trade, and not as meant to determine it. However it is worth noting that this French doctrine fits well with Paris' conceptions about disarmament : « the unilateral renouncing of

(41) *Le Monde*, 29 janvier 1970.

(42) *L'Express*, 26 janvier, 1er février 1970, pp. 10-11.

(43) *Livre Blanc...*, p. 6.

(44) See Michel Debré speech at Djibouti and also at St.-Denis (island of Reunion), *Le Monde*, 25 août 1970.

(45) Interview to *Aviation Magazine*, n° 553, du 1er janvier au 14 janvier 1971, p. 17.

export arms would be no more than a unilateral form of disarmament, a step which as such is unacceptable » (46).

On the whole there seems to be some connection between decisions on arms exports and the aspiration to change the international system, although the embargo decision to the Middle East may be viewed as contradicting this assertion. It is perhaps possible to explain this loose connection by the fact that no spectacular change in the international system is expected by the French government from its arms exports.

It is likely vis-à-vis the promotion of the third dimension of its global policy that the French government has consciously and systematically used its arms exports, in order to further its conception of Europe, a Europe built around France.

This stress on Europe may be somewhat surprising, especially when referring to De Gaulle's regime. Today, under the presidency of G. Pompidou, this assertion seems valid after the various steps initiated by the French diplomacy and associated with the slogan of the « economic and monetary union » launched at the meeting of Lahaye, the agreement on the entry of Great Britain into the common market, and the decision to build a « European Union » within eight years taken at the meeting of Paris by the Leaders of the nine, in October 1972. Of course since then set-backs and rebuffs did occur (the decision of France to float its currency, the Washington conference on oil supply). Once more, new doubts have arisen about the future of the Common Market and about the French adherence to it. The same process occurred in the past, and it seems that these ups and downs are to be related to the pragmatic stop and go approach agreed upon and adopted by the European countries to build the common market.

However, even during de Gaulle's reign the building of Europe was a fundamental dimension of his global policy. But during his period, the emphasis was on the two other dimensions, because in a sense they could be regarded as pre conditions to the third one. According to the French view, the autonomy of decision and the modification of the international system were to set up the conditions for the constitution of Europe around France, « the most strong creative element » of Europe (47). De Gaulle once disclosed in greater detail his conception when he stated that a structure « does aggregate around a hard core » (48). Undoubtedly, his

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(46) Général Beauvallet, former General Secretary for National Defence, in *R.D.N.*, août-septembre 1973, p. 20.

(47) Michel DEBRE, *La politique Nationale de Défense*, lecture given at the Institute for the study of National Defence, October, 20, 1970 ; in *R.D.N.*, décembre 1970, p. 1771.

(48) This was reported in 1965 by the late Edmond Michelet in a lecture given to the « Ollivaint Conference » in Paris.

ambition was that France would be this hard core of Europe, and would shape and mould it. Michel Debré the former minister of defence, said bluntly : « A Europe which will not be activated and enlivened by our spirit will be activated and enlivened by an opposite one. If in a coalition, association or even integration, France is not an essential leading element, it risks subordination, in other words disappearance » (49).

In order to become this hard core of Europe, France has to use every relative advantage at its disposal. Its arms production, nuclear and conventional and its arms exports are such an advantage. Although its economic and especially its industrial structure is improving as compared for instance to west Germany, it remains a palpable weakness, and it is still difficult to think of France as being presently the industrial hard core of Europe (50). In other words the French ambition to build Europe around itself ; according to its conceptions and style has induced France to use its relative advantages in this respect, advantages which are mainly to be found in the military field. By the way it must be emphasized that the stress put on the military factor fits exactly the gaullist conception which considers the « military factor » as the basic skeleton of a nation.

It seems that France has tried to further its conception of Europe through the constitution of a « Europe of armaments ». This expression was coined by Jacques Isnard, « Le Monde »'s correspondant on military matters, who intended to describe the efforts undertaken by France to mobilize its European partners as an attempt to match the rising and very sharp american competition on the international arms market (51). This French initiative was meant chiefly to maintain the level of the European arms sales, and of course above all the French one. Actually, this explanation conceals what is more essential in the concept of a « Europe of armaments »«, that is to say it being one of the formulas worked out by France to further its conception of Europe.

It is worth mentioning that on various occasions, the French government has proposed to its European partners within the framework of NATO to organize jointly their arms production, but without any success (see for instance the memorandum of 1955 proposing the creation of a European agency for the production of armaments) (52).

From the early sixties, France has embarked on various initiatives in view of its ambition to promote the development of cooperative ties in

(49) *R.D.N.*, décembre 1970, p. 1771.

(50) Recently several studies formulate the opinion that in the late eighties France will be the big power in Western Europe (Hermann Kahn), or the third big economic power of the western world (The Soviet Institute of International Economic Relations).

(51) *Le Monde*, 1er novembre 1972.

(52) For a review of other suggestions and propositions and their failure, see P. GALLOIS, *Les paradoxes de la paix*, Presse du Temps présent, 1967, pp. 297-302.

this field with several European countries. Different formulas were used in this respect. The first one: the production of arms under French licenses by foreign manufacturers were preferred to pure French arms exports (53). The second one: « *contrats d'association* » by which in exchange for an arms deal with a foreign country France proposed compensative adjustment in terms of cooperating in the production of various products and parts. This is the case for instance, with Belgium and Spain (54).

The most striking formula is perhaps the « *joint production* » contract. Contracts of this type were signed among others with Great Britain and with West Germany. With Great Britain, the major joint productions are the Jaguar jet, various kinds of helicopters and missiles (Martel and Exocet) and jet engines (Rolls-Royce-SNECMA). With Germany the main joint production contracts are for the production of the Transall-cargo, the Alpha jet, various types of missiles (Hot and Milan) and jet engines (SNECMA and the German HTU).

No less important than the joint production itself is the administrative and political framework built to organize, sustain and supervise this cooperation. The defence ministers meet twice a year, and the various committees set up to deal with the different projects were merged (55). A quite considerable progress has been made with regards to these sorts of agreements between France and the Federal Republic with the conclusion of a special agreement for the export of military equipment produced jointly (56). With the broadening of the Common Market further developments of the same kind can be expected, which may also have far reaching implications in the civilian industry connected with this field, especially the aeronautical and electronical industries (57).

A very remarkable fact is the pursuing of the joint production formula, in spite of bitter disappointments as illustrated by the embarrasements incurred by the Jaguar jet, by the WG 13 helicopter, and even by the missile « *Europa III* ».

In our opinion what France was looking for through these several formulas were not only to find a way to save economic and financial means

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(53) Because as outlined by Hughes de l'Estolle, it protracts the links, *Le Monde*, 25 octobre 1972.

(54) For the agreement with Spain, see *Le Monde*, 23 juin 1970.

(55) *Le Monde*, 24 novembre 1970.

(56) Agreement of February 1970.

(57) See the document prepared by the « *Manholt committee* » about « *the actions of industrial and technological policy to be taken by the Community in the aeronautic sector* ». Pay also attention to the agreement of February 1, 1972, by which the Informatic department of Siemens in France was absorbed by the « *Compagnie Internationale pour l'Informatique* » (C.I.I.).

in the « realization of national armaments » (58), but to exploit its relative advantages and to spread them in other fields, in order to advance a Europe largely moulded and influenced by France.

In any case this was not an easy path ; it seems that the French initiatives have been thwarted by steps initiated by other European countries within the framework of the NATO Euro-group (59). Recently France has tried to overcome this tendency by proposing new formulas for the European cooperation in the field of arms production within the framework of the Western European Union (60), and even by looking at some kind of French participation in the Eurogroup.

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In conclusion it seems important not to be dazzled by salient impressions arising from spectacular increase or decrease in arms exports figures. The emphasis put on the mercantile aspect of the French arms exports and on its fluctuating amplitude, contributes to concentrate the attention only on the superficial aspects of this activity, and not on its deep political implications and significance.

In fact through tight mechanisms and procedures the French government has gained a strict control on these activities. Decisions on arms exports are elaborated within a general framework which enables it to link effectively these decisions with more general policies operating in this case as a filter device. It is almost possible to find in these decisions an element of conscious intent aimed at furthering global objectives. This seems particularly the case in respect to the efforts in developing an independent armaments industry, and in building Europe according to the French view.

Two main remarks are to be emphasized in our endeavour to establish that France has an arms export policy.

On the theoretical level of policy making this case study has drawn our attention to policies which are deduced from other policies by some kind of filtering device which as such tends to generate the impression that there is not really a specific policy in this field. This last conviction has the unfortunate effect of preventing the actual evaluation of the so called « no policy », because in this case the filtering device is supposed to structure efficiently the sequence of decisions according to the goals

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(58) This view was analyzed and developed in a document prepared by the « Centre des Hautes Etudes de l'Armement », and presented in March 1972 to President Pompidou, *Le Monde*, 29 avril 1972.

(59) *Le Monde*, 24 novembre 1973.

(60) Michel Jobert's statement, 21 novembre 1973.



to be attained by the directing policies. Actually direct evaluation may lead to quite surprising conclusions.

As a matter of fact one can sketch as follows a direct evaluation of French arms exports in the light of the three main dimensions of France global policy.

*1. Independence and the autonomy of decision.*

It is not certain at all that nuclear arms, independent arms industry, and therefore in the case of France arms exports are the proper response to new situation of dependency, especially with regard to finance and energy. On the contrary, one can argue that arms exports in order to secure energy supplies may lead to the annihilation of the autonomy of decision of the arms exporters which, in some peculiar situations may be forced, contrary to their will to sell arms or certain type of arms because energy is more fundamental for the daily running of the economy.

*2. The promotion of a new structure in the International Relation.*

In this respect, French arms exports did not attain any palpable and visible success. If there were some shifts in the bipolar structure of the international system, they are not to be imputed to French policy, and still less to its arms exports. It is likely that as long as this policy will remain the policy of France alone, and not the policy of the European countries, the above mentioned potentialities latently embodied in French arms exports will not be realized. The feature of ridiculous pretensions which are sometimes attached to French arms exports may explain that they caused very little annoyance to the United States. At the same time the Soviet Union has been pleased by this policy which does serve to annoy the West and does not conflict really with the Soviet interests.

*3. The dominance of France in Europe.*

Although it was in this direction that France seemed to have concentrated the majority of its efforts as a matter of fact it is precisely on this level that the results are the most doubtful. From the very start the French policy of promoting a French dominated Europe around itself, has been considered with some suspicion by its European partners. The feeling that in fact, the French steps and initiatives were aimed at imposing the dominance of France, and especially its military supremacy over its European partners, has entailed growing distrust among them and for the time being has been viewed by them both as irritating and insufficient in constituting a valuable substitute to the American leadership.

Therefore although there is no reason to question the existence of a French arms exports policy, it has made a very dubious and volatile contribution to the attainment of France main goals.



**Summary.**

*Although taking place mainly in the private sector, the French arms industry is a very tightly controlled activity, and decision making on arms exports are made within a general framework which takes into account the chief aspects of France global policy.*

*Mercantile considerations are not the main factor in French arms exports. Actually, France has used very consciously and systematically its arms exports to further its global policy, especially its ambition to build Europe around itself.*

*However, the effective contribution of these arms exports to the attainment of France main goals has been rather dubious and volatile.*

