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**MEMORANDUM alongside with the 9th NPT Review Conference**

# France confronting Nuclear Disarmament. Double-talk and Hypocrisy.

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Publication date: Saturday 25 April 2015

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**1st publication, Vienna, 3 December 2014.**
**2d updated edition, New York, 25 April 2015.**

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# PREAMBLE

The abolition of nuclear weapons - formal prohibition and total elimination - is today a categorical imperative of practical reason, as the philosopher Kant would say. The overriding need to abolish them, and also to phase out nuclear power-generation, has been demonstrated elsewhere. We will not cover that ground here.

To make the planet a world without nuclear weapons or power-plants is one of the major tasks for the 21st century. The abolition of these weapons is even the absolute top priority. It is only by accomplishing this that humankind will be able to avoid self-destruction even before we solve the other essential problems that must be dealt with, like climate change, energy shortage, lack of primary resources, the food crisis, pandemics, the deterioration of the environment and its biodiversity, or the risk of overpopulation.

Given that principle, how can abolition becomes one of the facts ?

Numerous obstacles stand on the road to nuclear disarmament. Some are small, some great.

The technical questions, relating for example to procedures for dismantling nuclear weapons or verifying disarmament, are not insurmountable, provided the political will is found. But the first and chief obstacle consists precisely in the absence or insufficiency of political will on the part of the players in question : the nuclear-armed states themselves. Among them, France is a major obstacle : France not only shows ill will, she has the determined will to never renounce her own nuclear weapons. It is not just that France is not disarming ; her fear that one day she may be somehow forced to disarm is leding her to put up obstacles to disarmament by other states.

Hence these two questions:

***How is France confronting the question of nuclear disarmament ?***

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***How can nuclear disarmament nevertheless impose itself on France?***

We will try here to deal with the first question, without which no answer can be found to the second.

But there is a prior question: which France are we talking about?

# 1. Which France ?

Politically, there are two Frances : the French people and the French state. A third entity, the « French Nation » is said to unify the people and the state. But that is a fiction. **(1. Pleass look at the end of the article.)**

Since the Révolution of 1789, the French people are officially « the sovereign ». It is in the name of the people that great declarations are proclamed and constitutions adopted.

The people are also, in practice and in the long term, the real subject of History, for better or for worse : they produce and create, they transform the country, make revolutions, Republics, Empires, colonisation and decolonisation, collaboration, resistance and liberation, they make and suffer from wars while waiting to make peace.

But the drama for the French nation is the gap, the cleavage between the French people and the French state. The state is not close enough to the people, the policies it pursues in their name are too often disconnected from the population's wishes (expressed or repressed). In the case of nuclear matters, the separation is a gaping gulf. For nuclear technology in France (both military and civil) has always escaped totally from popular sovereignty.

In the Republic, the Parliament is the body representing the people. The people can express themselves also by referendum, and the constitution makes provision for this. But in matters of nuclear arming and disarming the French people have never been consulted either directly by referendum or indirectly through their « national representatives ». The Parliament's role has been limited to voting the military budgets, almost without debate. And that remark applies also to decisions about nuclear power-generation. **(2)**

We can therefore say that in France nuclear matters are the exception that disproves the democratic rule. Worse - that reverses and abolishes it. Can one really call a country a democracy where the Head of State has the authority to condemn and execute by one single gesture some millions of his fellow-humans, without consultation, trial or appeal ? That is not democracy or monarchy, that is dictatorship, unheard-of tyranny. Presently we will suggest why nobody (almost nobody) seems to have noticed this in France.

# 2. The origins of France's nuclear weapons

From the State's point of view, the actions of « France » from 1945 till today shows a remarkable continuity, despite frequent changes in government during the IVth Republic every six months on average), and the transition in 1958 from the IVth to the Vth Republic.

General de Gaulle played a leading role in the formation of what has become France's nuclear « strike-force ». As early as July 1944, when he visited Ottawa, three French scientists exiled in Canada informed him that there existed

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a Manhattan Project in which they had a part, and drew his attention to the atom bomb. He immediately understood its political and military importance. Back in France after the liberation of Paris, he was strengthened in this conviction by discussions, notably with Frédéric Joliot-Curie in December 1944. After the bombings of Hiroshima & Nagasaki and his meeting with President Truman in August 1945, his provisional government created by decree the Commissariat à l'Energie Atomique (CEA), on 18 October 1945.

This commissariat was given a special status, with two directors (administrative and scientific), a direct link with the Council President (i.e. the prime minister of the day), and with special secret funds not subject to any parliamentary control. The CEA's first task was to develop nuclear research for civilian purposes (scientific and industrial) and military purposes. Its first scientific director, Frédéric Joliot-Curie, who was also a Communist Party member, opposed the military purpose and launched the « Stockholm Appeal » against nuclear weapons (which won him the Stalin Peace Prize). In 1950 he was dismissed without explanation from his post as High-Commissioner by the Council President of the time, Georges Bidault. The military purpose, although discreet, was really the chief mission of the CEA.
Under the IVth Republic, all successive governments of all colours, after the marginalising of the communists in 1947, encouraged or authorised and in all cases financed the CEA's ongoing work. Pierre Mendès-France (a socialist) was the man who guided through the interministerial council on 26 December 1954 the decision to build the French atom bomb, above all so as to have « a leading voice » in the UN and in world affairs.

As a result, when de Gaulle returned to power via the Algerian War and the putsch of 13 May 1958, and founded the Vth Republic, he found the French bomb almost ready. The government of Bourgès-Maunoury had already scheduled tests for the first months of 1960. De Gaulle's specific contribution was to make public « France's will » to acquire her own nuclear weapons, and to give them absolute priority. « The defense of France cannot wait! The army must immediately convert and adapt to deterrence! » he declared on 27 June 1962.

On 13 February 1960 there took place at Reggane the operation called « Gerboise Bleue », the first of the known 210 French nuclear tests between 1960 and 1996, of which 50 were atmospheric. Half a century later, France has about 300 « nuclear warheads » able to cause nearly a billion deaths.

# 3. France's deterrence strategy

If we believe Charles de Gaulle, the mission of the nuclear strike-force was exclusively deterrent. *« Deterrence begins »,* he declared in January 1963, *« as soon as you have the capacity to kill enough of the aggressor's people to persuade him that it's not worth attacking you... When we are sure (as we will be in seven to nine years) that you can kill 40 or 50 million of an aggressor's people, we will be sure to not be attacked. »* Already in May 1962 he said : *« Between now and the end of (1963) we will have the necessary to kill twenty million men two hours after we have been attacked. »* He then added : *« We will not kill them, because it will be known that we can. For that reason, nobody will again dare to attack us. This is not waging war, as men have done for millenia, this is making war impossible, as no one had ever succeeded in doing. We are going to become one of the four invulnerable countries. »*

Those who thought through France's strategy set de Gaulle's discourse to music, and added to it a number of remarkable ornaments :

- The weapons are « deterrent » : therefore intended to deter, not to be used. It is a strike-force, intended not to strike. It is not a weapon for use, but a « weapon for non-use. »
- Deterrence aims at any potential aggressor, whether nuclear-armed or not, whether located in the West, East, North or South. It is « full-compass deterrence».
- Above a certain threshold of lethality, it is effective irrespective of the force differential, and thus is « deterrence by

the weak on the strong ».

- That threshold does not have to be exceeded by much ; it can and does obey the « principle of strict sufficiency ». Its threshold is also its ceiling.
- An aggressor who went beyond mere threats would receive a « final warning »: a nuclear strike on his military forces, prior to any strike on his cities. Proof of civility.
- Deterrence is not aggressive but defensive ; it serves only to defend our « vital interests». (3)
- These vital interests do not have to be specified. They can be assessed freely by the Head of State : this is a « principle of uncertainty » which the potential aggressor is subject to.
- But there should be no doubt in the aggressor's mind what the Head of State's retaliation would be : that's the only certainty which the Head of State's «deterrent posture» gives to the potential aggressor.
- Since nuclear weapons make us « invulnerable » (de Gaulle), deterrence is « the nation's life-insurance » (Sarkozy).

France's atom bombs, as « deterrent weapons » placed in the hands of a Head of State who is peace-loving by definition (being French) are thus by their very nature « instruments of peace »: deterring others from waging war on us, saving us from the need to fight them, and making everybody, even the most ferocious people, peaceful.

Jacques Chirac, for his part, in a speech at Ile-Longue, Britanny, on 19 January 2006, extended these vital interests to defending our allies and protecting our supplies of « strategic materials » *Cf.* The "King" is mad. Remove him! **And note 4,** below.

All of de Gaulle's successors, without exception, have taken over this well-practised discourse, which at least has a semblance of logic, and seems to serve generally positive intentions. It became and remains the discourse of French diplomacy, except that the diplomats, less direct than de Gaulle, avoid mentioning the tens of millions of people that France would be ready to kill in order to « preserve her vital interests ».

Nevertheless, French nuclear strategy cannot be understood unless one sees the double mission - political and military - that has accompanied it since its baptism : to strengthen France's position at the top table, as Mendès-France noted ; to make France « one of the invulnerables », as de Gaulle said. That means one of the five nations (China followed France's example) endowed eternally with nuclear weapons, with permanent seats of the UN Security Council and with a power of veto which - according to the current Minister of Foreign Affairs - they ought not to use in cases of « mass crimes », except if the national vital interests of a permanent member of the Council were in jeopardy » (Laurent Fabius, article of 4 October 2013).

Thus, to retain these miraculour weapons that have the double privilege of making France « invulnerable » and serving peace, or (better) of *"making the protection of human life an effective priority"* in the words of Laurent Fabius, France has to be free to commit "mass crimes" with full impunity

This paradox - to protect human life by massacring humans - leads to a second paradox » : to retain this power, France needs to grant it to her peers in the « Club of Five », and thus authorise them to massacre her own populaton in all impunity, i.e. to commit what France's deterrent is specifically supposed to prevent !

# 4. The incoherences of French strategy

On 9 March 2013, a delegation from ACDN delivered to the Elysee Palace an open letter to the President of the Republic signed by 113 French and foreign personalities and hundreds of French citizens. This letter declared that France's strategy:

"**- flouts human life and Human Rights,** for an atom-bomb explosion means "hundreds of thousands of deaths,

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women, children, old people incinerated in a split-second, plus hundreds of thousands dying in the following years in atrocious suffering" : it is a "crime against humanity" (as Alain Peyrefitte said to Charles de Gaulle on 4 May 1962) ;

**- flouts international law,** which obliges the nuclear states that have signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, including France, "to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."

**- flouts the French Constitution,** which places above everything else respect for human rights, and imposes this as a duty, along with respect for treaties ;

**- flouts good sense,** since it is absurd to defend France's republican values, which include fraternity, by threatening to commit crimes against humanity; it is absurd to link France's "vital interests" with the use of suicidal weapons against another nation that may also possess them; it is absurd to claim to guarantee our nation's security with these arms while forbidding others to obtain them; it is absurd to want to economize while still wasting billions of euros on unusable devices of death;

**- and flouts democracy,** since the French people have never been consulted on the creation, maintenance and permanent modernisation of this strike-force that has already cost 300 billion euros. And yet we know that today, according to convergent polls, at least 80% of French citizens wish for the abolition of nuclear weapons, including France's ».

President Holland, in 28 March 2013 during a televised interview on France 2, gave an indirect public reply to this open letter:

« We have nuclear weapons. One can think what one likes about them. I know there are a certain number of our compatriots who are hostile to them. I say to them 'They are our guarantee, our protection'... We must keep and even modernise them. »

More directly, he sent us this message via the head of the president's office, on 3 April 2013:

*« The Président de la République has received your new correspondence.*

*« The Head of State wishes to tell you that France's action in the matter of combating proliferation, mastering arms and disarmament, remains guided by constant principles and conforms with the objectives set by the Non-Proliferaton Treaty.*

*« France will therefore play her full role in negotiations and discussions on nuclear disarmament, without renouncing our deterrence force, an essential element of our security which contributes to guaranteeing peace. »*

The waffly language of fobbing-off is rich in oxymoron...

The most absurd thing is that this deterrence strategy is not even effective in deterrent terms. A former president, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, implicitly admitted this in his memoirs: he said he would have preferred France to be occupied than annihilated by an invader that was capable of replying to our atomic « final warning » with an atomic attack. He would not have used ours, he said, except to avenge France for a destruction « begun already » by the enemy (i.e. after France was hit by a first atomic strike)... so that the rest of France was sure to be drawn into the

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general destruction.

What a beautiful deterrence this is! You suspend it when the threat (usually imaginary) becomes concrete - and all it then does then is to widen the catastrophe! Far from making us invulnerable, the nuclear strike-force, in the face of nuclear-armed aggressor, is no more effective than the Maginot Line was in 1940.

This raises a question : what can enable us to explain, if not understand, the obstinacy of France's leaders in wanting to keep their nuclear weapons ?

# 5. The deep roots of France's strategy

Beyond the historic Gaullism which played an essential role in establishing it, the so-called deterrence policy can doubtless be explained at first by the persistence of a certain « gaullian » tradition that spreads far beyond the borders of the Gaullist party (which is currently decomposing).

This tradition, keeping the memory of the painful defeat of 1940 and the German Occupation that followed, cultivates a legitimate though shadowy concern about national independence, and refuses to « align » with any foreign power whatever. It mixes these confusedly with nostalgia for French « grandeur » as was manifested in Europe in the Age of Monarchies, the Revolution, the Napoleonic Empire and then in the world through her colonial empire. She is obsessed about France's "rank" and believes in the civilising mission of "Eternal France", founded on grand declarations and universal values ("the Declaration of the Rights of Man", "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity") and perhaps even on her lost status of the "eldest daughter" of the Roman Catholic Church.

The circles close to the president thus see nuclear weapons as a way for France to keep a little of her lost power. And politicians aspiring to become head of state do not have the spontaneous inclination to renounce this phallic symbol of potency. It would take someone like Mikhail Gorbachev to be sufficiently intelligent and courageous. Besides, these weapons which, demonstrably, have never been useful for defense even in terms of deterrence during the Cold War, have cost and continue to cost a fortune : 1500 billion francs between 1945 and 1998, over 300 billion euros so far. To renounce that today would be to recognise that francs and euros have been thrown down the drain, when they could have been used to improve people's lives and even form the basis of a more concrete power, for example in research and development of renewable energy. One does not give up such an onerous and futile object without trying to gain a profit, political in this case. France therefore needs despite everything to keep the radioactive seat that puts her among the happy few nuclear powers and ensures (in principle) that she stays permanently in the Security Council.

Besides, this assurance is not just political, it is also commercial. The atom bomb is the visiting card, the quality cachet of France's « savoir-faire» in one of the nation's « domains of excellence » : nuclear technology, which the military-civilian nuclear lobby intend to « promote for export ».

An anecdote can illustrate this. On 18 July 1962, Gaston Palewski, as Minister of State for Scientific Research and Atomic and Space Questions in the administration of Georges Pompidou, announced to the Council of Ministers chaired by de Gaulle : *« Our plutonium A-bomb is definitively ready. The future H-bomb will be tested from 1970 on. Several countries are asking for our help and cooperation in nuclear matters, such as India and Israel ».* After the meeting, de Gaulle said to the government spokesman, Alain Peyrefitte : *« See, it just has to be known round the world that France is becoming a nuclear power, and they request our technical aid. They prefer it to the Americans' or the Russians', which would make them dependent, or that of the British who are known to be dependent on the American ».* In reality, de Gaulle was not quite right : nuclear cooperation with Israel had started in 1956. Yet nuclear

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technology, branded with national independence, was a good export product. The French bomb was a locomotive to pull the train of nuclear power-plants abroad, even if it also meant first pulling the train of bombs by promoting proliferation. It was the weapons, of course, that most attracted the two nations named by Palewski as potential customers, and others were to follow (notably Iran and Iraq).

This link between military and civilian technologies brings us to the heart of the nuclear machinery.

# 6. The infernal machine

Since 1945, nuclear-loving scientists, politicians, military leaders and captains of industry have patiently and discreetly woven the institutional and human web that enabled them to put France in the hands of the « nucleocrats », by imposing their policies. The Commissariat à l'Energie Atomique (CEA) « agent of nuclear deterrence and national security » and in particular its Direction des Applications Militaires (DAM), which controls everything involving nuclear armaments, has become since 1954 a State within the State.

The CEA maintains close relations with the other actors in arms and nuclear power : they are AREVA (a corporation bringing together COGEMA and Framatome) and EDF (Electricité de France). Staff pass easily from one sector to the other. Together they form what can be called the « military-industrial nuclear lobby» or simply "le Lobby", which offers them perfect access to all the seats of power : presidency, government, administrations, Parliament, large entreprises, press, media, most political parties, certain trade unions, and even the French Catholic Church, which ignores the Vatican's condemnations of nuclear weapons. The elite colleges, the « grandes Ecoles » and primarily the School of Mines, provide recruits for the Lobby. In Parliament, the OPECST (Parliamentary office for evaluating scientific and technological choices) supports the Lobby, as of course do the Defense Commissions of the National Assembly and the Senate.

One of the fathers of French nuclear strategy, General Ailleret, declared in 1968 : « I have always been concerned that civilian nuclear technology and nuclear weapons should advance together. The latter would die if the former disappeared. » In fact the former, known chiefly through medical radiology before the advent of power-plants, was associated with Science's great exploits and great names (Becquerel, Pierre and Marie Curie, Irène Curie, Frédéric Joliot, Einstein even...) and had a much more positive image in public opinion than nuclear weapons, since the latter were military, and were known for Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and associated with the tensions of the Cold War. That difference in perception led the Lobby to treat differently the two faces of the nuclear Janus, leaving its worrying face in the shadow and highlighting the smiling face (thus some EDF poster in the metro trumpeted the « nuclear drill » and AREVA in the 2000s linked its image and name to wind and sea with the yacht Défi français , etc.).

The civilian nuclear technologies were meant to make nuclear things lovable, even the military ones, and so the Lobby felt threatened by the two catastrophes of Chernobyl and Fukushima. In each case it mobilised to systematically minimise the catastrophe and make the public forget it as soon as possible. In this it was greatly helped by its accomplices in various milieux - scentific, medical, political of course, but also and chiefly in the national press and the principal media (national radio and TV, with the relative exception of the Arte, whose audience is limited). These accomplices are very obliging to the Lobby. Theirs is a complaisance that resembles radioactivity in being invisible and inaudible and in manifesting chiefly by silence. A few brave journalists try, usually without success, to break the veil of silence that surrounds nuclear matters and particularly nuclear weapons, but the silence usually prevails.

# 7. Omerta (conspiracy of silence)

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Evidence of this omerta is abundant. Here are two cases, one recent military case and one from politics.

On 5 May 2013 when a M51 missile costing 120 million euros was shot from the nuclear sub Le Vigilant in the bay of Audierne (Britanny), it exploded in flight - but the national press and media did not breathe a word. The debris from this firing was filmed by a civilian who published the video on May 7. The firing was mentioned in another video: 2mn long, it looks like a live clip made presumably on May 5 by a regional TV station (FR3 Bretagne, perhaps), probably alerted by eye-witnesses who are interviewed. 18 months later these videos had received 1,027 and 1,634 visits respectively. If we add television viewers, we can estimate only a few thousand, let's say generously that only 1 French citizen in 10,000 had knowledge of this glorious success of French « savoir-faire » in the service of national security and independence. Not a big percentage.

The lid on the nuclear pot is a heavy leaden cover that weighs on French society permanently, but especially in election campaigns, at the time when the French people could change the country's policies.

According to the Constitution of 4 october 1958 which governs the Vth Republic, the President is « the guarantor of national independence, of the integrity of the territory, and of respect for treaties » (article 5). « The President of the Republic is the chief of the armed forced. He chairs the high councils and committees of national defense » (article 15). So we can imagine that in an electoral campaign, a debate ought to take place between various candidates and within public opinion concerning the exercise of the president's kinglike powers. Does the constitution imply that he should have atom bombs at his disposal ? Since 1958 - although a section of votes, especially on the left, contested de Gaulle's *"bombinette"* - the French people have never had any say in the matter. At the start of summer 1962, the general-president had considered having a referendum on the « establishment of a national deterrence force » but abandoned the idea before autumn in favour of another referendum about electing the president by universal suffrage. None of his successors saw fit to revisit the strike-force, even after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the USSR, the emergence of new nuclear powers (1998, India and Pakistan), or the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001...

In October 2001, hoping to finally introduce the question of nuclear disarmament and nuclear power-plants into France's electoral debate, a general meeting of ACDN (Action des Citoyens pour le Désarmement Nucléaire) mandated its president to be a candidate for the 2002 presidential election. This unusual candidacy, one of the first to be announced, provoked interest from radio, TV and newspapers on the local and regional level. The daily *Sud-Ouest* gave it a whole page in its Sunday edition distributed over eight départements and followed its campaign to the end. On the national level, *France-Soir* explained the candidate's struggle and published his photo alongside other « minor candidates » to whom this popular daily devoted a page in its issue of 18 December. A well-known TV presenter of a prime-time show on the 2nd channel spoke of it. And Karl Zero's *Vrai Papier Journal*, imagining an « ideal government », saw him as a future minister of defense, disarmament and international cooperation, alongside José Bové as Minister of Agriculture. For the Lobby, that could be a problem. Fortunately in their view, despite a dozen AFP releases mentioning this anti-nuclear candidate, *Le Monde* ignored him completely. This respected « journal de référence » never printed the name of Jean-Marie Matagne, not even in a special report devoted to the « minor candidates ». So if *Le Monde* says nothing about him, why would the others? *Le Figaro* ignored him too. It is of course a pure coincidence that *Le Monde* is owned by the arms-merchant Lagardère, and *Le Figaro* is owned by the aircraft corporation Dassault that makes the Mirage planes. As for *l'Humanité*, the daily close to the Communist Party, it did publish in its correspondence columns some extracts from a certain Jean-Marie Matagne. It merely failed to mention his candidacy. It must have made the communist candidate tremble.

Ten years later the same form of omerta permitted France's new president, François Hollande, to ignore a 42-day humger-strike made with the object of meeting him as President and submitting a request for a referendum on France's participation in the abolition of nuclear weapons. Never mind that the world has undergone immense upheavals in recent decades, « la France » is undaunted and holds firm to its same position on deterrence. But, if you hear France's discourse, she is the champion in all categories of disarmament.

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# 8. Fluctuat nec mergitur (She floats and does not sink)

In the handsome bilingual brochure (French/English) put out in 2005 by the Minister of Defense, the Secretariat for National Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and distributed at international meetings, France trumpets her actions against proliferation, and for the mastery of armaments and for disarmament.
It is true that France played a positive role in the banning of anti-personnel mines and chemical weapons.

The same cannot be said for conventional weapons - France is a major exporter of these, ranked 3rd or 4th, depending on year. It is hard to pass off weapons sales as an active contribution to the « general and complete disarmament » which France claims to support.

But what about her nuclear weapons ? Let's examine the following assertions point by point.

-« *France considers that the purpose of the deterrent forces is to gurantee that its vital interests will never be threatened by any other power* »
Yes, but these « vital interests » are left, as we have seen, to the free assessment of the Head of State, who will have to decide alone in a matter of minutes, according to a statement by one of them (François Mitterrand). Varying from one president to another, these vital interests may become weird and even aberrant. **(4)**

-« *As such, the French deterrent is not directed against any particular country.* »
This is true, it threatens all. If it does not threaten any one in particular, that's because none in particular has threatened France for over 60 years (since 1954 and the Franco-British Suez expedition, which the USSR halted, with US support, by waving its nuclear threat). But since one can always imagine that one day some state, nuclear or not, might threaten France, she will never renounce her nuclear weapons. France's deterrence, being « full-compass », is also full-future. Eternal. That's the great advantage of the « deterrence concept ».

-« *French nuclear weapons form no part of any strategy based on the military use of such weapons...* »
That is true in one half of the discourse, but it is disproved in another, since in order to deter, their use has to be guaranteed. By technical means, which explains the constant effort at « modernisation ». And in political terms, hence the formula of François Mitterrand : *« la dissuasion, c'est moi » [deterrence is me].* This prerogative has been affirmed by all his successors, notably François Hollande : *« Even if it should never stop adapting, I will be the guarantor of France's deterrence capacity. That is a specific prerogative of the President of the Republic: I claim it and assume it fully »* (article in Nouvel Observateur, 22 December 2011)

-« *...and have never been considered by France to be war-fighting assets.* »
That claim is false. In May 1980 President Giscard d'Estaing ordered manoeuvres in what was then the French Zone of West Germany. The aim was to test at what moment the commanders of the « Blues », attacked by the tanks of the « Reds » (hypothetically four times more numerous) would ask the President to authorise the use of Pluton missiles in order to compensate for their handicap and halt the « Reds' » advance. In the event, the Blue commanders did not do so, since the « Reds » also had tactical missiles. But that proves that the missiles were then seen as « war-fighting assets ».

The surest conclusion from these declarations of principle is that France has no intention of renouncing her nuclear strike-force, « the essential foundation of its security ». The brochure goes on to enumerate the « important unilateral measures » France has taken in favour of nuclear disarmament. Let's examine them one by one, which might be nitpicking but could be spicy.

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# 9. Smoke and mirrors

*-« In order to adjust the format of its nuclear forces to the strategic environment, France has chosen not to continue of several programmes... »*

Does this refer to the « mobilité » programme, which aimed to hide the Hadès missiles by carting them around in ordinary trucks through the population? If not, what? Perhaps they were programmes France could not afford? In any case, it is certain she never renounced any of these modernisations of subs, missiles, carriers etc : 4th SNLE, M51, ASMP-A, TNO, AIRIX, LMJ (to give just the acronyms)...

*-« ...and has significantly reduced its nuclear stockpiles since the end of the end of the Cold War. France has therefore abandoned and dismantled the surface-to-surface weapons system on the Plateau d'Albion... »*

The weapons in question (18 modernised S3 missiles, of one megaton each, with a range of 3,500 km), right from the beginning, never had any other purpose than to be a target for a first strike which would have prevented them from leaving their silos, or de-programmed them by electromagnetic shock. In May 1994, wishing to keep them despite the ending of the Cold War, François Mitterrand found an original use for them: to serve as proof that we were subject to aggression ! *« If one morning we wake and learn, perhaps from the radio, that Albion has disappeared under explosions that may or may not be nuclear, that would be a sufficient signal that we had entered a dangerous period. »*

« ...and the short-range surface-to-surface weapons sytems Pluton and Hadès. »

These ones had no possible uses, for political reasons. « Every Pluton missile had a destructive power corresponding to 150-200 % that of the Hiroshima bomb. There is no need for a capacity to sprinkle the banks of the Rhine in that manner» (Mitterrand, 5 May 1994). With a (theoretical) range extended to 450 km, the Hadès missiles would land on East Germany, and our German allies wouldn't like that. In the end that was all scrapped.

*-« The number of nuclear submarines carrying ballistic missiles (SSBNs) has been reduced from six to four. »*

Four new-type in place of six old-type, that gives no advantage to the « enemy » (who is he?), since the range of those missiles is increased by 2000 km. In reality it was money that forced the reduction from six to four. « In June 1997, the Republic's treasury noted that the cost of developing the SNLE-NGs had gone up by 43.2 % above what was predicted in 1993, and considered that the cost of « four, even three » would be equal to the originally planned cost of six submarnies » (Bruno Barrillot, Audit Atomique, p. 152).

*-« Today, one SSBN, at least, is at see at all times, compared with three until 1990. »*

Another economy measure. Nothing would stop France from putting two or three to sea leaving one in dock. In any case, the sub on patrol has 16 missiles on board with 96 nuclear warheads of 150 kilotonnes, which makes the power equivalent of 1000 Hiroshima bombs - enough to cause 200 millions deaths... Just one SNLE-NG is still one sub too many.

*-« Lastly, the number of weapons carried by the airborne component has also been reduced. »*

Indeed, the number of squadrons has fallen from three to two (one of Mirage 2000-N, one of Rafale). Another economy measure. And because it is now far from clear how the « airborne component » could be used, except to please the Air Force and Dassault. Or is it because between 1986 and 2011, 38 Mirage were lost in accidents?

*-« Today France has only two nuclear weapons systems... »*

We have seen why: for technical and political reasons the earth-based component (Pluton, Hadès, and S3) was useless. And was expensive.

*-« France announced on 20 January 1996 the cessation of all nuclear testing following completion of a final series of*

*tests. »*

A final series of 8 so-called indispensable explosions, reduced to 6 under international pressure, was justified by Jacques Chirac on the grounds of needing to prepare the establishment of simulation programmes (France coming later to this than the USA or Russia). These simulation programmes are now in place preparing the weapons of the future. The Laser Méga Joule complex is working at this, among others.

*- « This decision took practical shape in the complete dismantling of testing facilities in the Pacific, which was announced on 22 February 1996 and completed by the end of July 1998. »*

France no longer needed to do explosive testing, yet is still doing research to acquire new weapons. The Pacific Test Centre had become useless, so closing it down was not a disarmament measure, it was just budgeting and good sense. It also enabled France to show herself particularly active in the CTBT (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty), which does not aim to impose disarmament on the existing nuclear states but only to prevent others from arming themselves, i.e. proliferation.

France pursues the same objective when she works for a *« Cut off »* Treaty that would prevent the non-nuclear states from obtaining fissile materials. France herself has oodles (over 80 tonnes of plutonium - enough to make 20,000 bombs), but doesn't need them and aims rather at the making fusion weapons triggered by lasers. That is why she dismantled the factories for « producing fissile materials for nuclear weapons at Pierrelatte and Marcoule » meanwhile opening the Laser Mega Joule at Le Barp (near Bordeaux).

Despite all this play of smoke and mirrors, it is clear that France aims

- to keep and modernise her nuclear weapons ;
- to prevent them being questioned, by whitewashing them in « humanist » rhetoric ;
- to oppose any initiative (e.g. the withdrawal of US weapons stationed in Europe) that might start a real disarmament process ;
- if need be, to stay on the outer (e.g. for conferences about the humanitarian aspects of the nuclear question) ;
- to confine discussions to the NPT framework, thus permitting her to distract attention from disarmament to non-proliferation and the promotion of nuclear power (her own technology especially) ;
- to remain in the club of the five nuclear-armed states with permanent seats on the Security Council ;
- to retain there both her veto power and her right to use nuclear weapons, all the while affirming humanist values in order to forbid other nations from possessing and using chemical and biological massacre weapons (see the article by Laurent Fabius) ;
- to prevent as much as possible any further enlargement of the club of 9 nuclear powers.

But this discourse (stressing national independence, deterrence of the strong by the weak, and defense of « vital interests »...) only serves to encourage proliferation : all nations have the right to national independence, to defend their vital interests, to deter a stronger country (especially a nuclear one) from attacking... If France has that right, why not the others ? France's actions - vertical proliferation, arms sales, sale of nuclear technology - also stand in contradiction with her claim to be a model of disarmament. In fact France is trying to use verbiage to square the circle. That is the explanation for the incoherences of her strategy.

**10. After President Hollande's speech at Istres**

On February 19, 2015, at the Istres airbase that is home to France's airborne nuclear forces, President Hollande made a speech in the tradition of his predecessors (Mitterrand in Paris, on 5 May 1994 ; Chirac at Ile Longue, on 19 January 2006 ; Sarkozy at Cherbourg on 21 March 2008). Deemed to be a major speech, it sets out France's nuclear defense policy.

In the first part Hollande speaks of « the very foundations of our deterrence policy » ; in the second part, he reviews

the « forces that enable its implementation » and clarifies France's positions with regard to her allies and the rest of the world.

In this speech, tradition is what dominates. « National independence », « vital interests » varied in their geometry and monopolised by the president, « final warning », France's « responsibilities » and global rank, « economic fallout », « strict sufficiency », « never lowering our guard ». All the clichés, nothing is left out.

*Independence:* nuclear deterrence, indispensable to « France's independence », needs to « protect our nation from all aggression of state origin against her vital interests, wherever the aggression comes from and whatever form it takes » and must « ward off any threat of pressure of state origin that might aim to paralyse us » [our italics].

*Vital interests:* « The integrity of our territory and the safeguarding of our population constitute the heart of our vital interests. Whatever means a state adversary uses [our italics], we must preserve our nation's capacity to live. « Nevertheless « the definition of our vital interests cannot be limited only to the national scale » and it is « the supreme responsiblity of the President of the Republic to constantly evaluate the nature of our vital interests and the attacks that may be made on them. » For « our deterrence is our own ; we are the ones who decide, we are the ones who assess our vital interests. » [And « we » means myself.]

*Final warning:* If a state adversary were to « misunderstand the delimitation of our vital interests » and think it could attack them, the President of France would «indicate her will to defend our vital interests, by means of a warning of a nuclear nature aimed at reestablishing deterrence. »

*The rank of France:* Thanks to her nuclear forces, which are « capable of inflicting absolutely unacceptable damage to the adversary on his centres of power, i.e. his political, economic and military nerve-centres », France is « one of the rare nations whose influence and responsibility are situated on the global level. This is because France can exercise her responsibilities. Because everyone knows that when France speaks, she can act. »

*Economic fallout:* deterrence stimulates our research and development efforts and contributes to the excellence and competitiveness of French industry. The fact that there has been research is the reason why there are innovations. The fact that we have been supremely capable in nuclear deterrence has enabled us to disseminate, in industry, the know-how, the incomparable technologies that have served our economy and therefore created jobs. Make bombs and your unemployed will live it up !

*Strict sufficiency:* «France decided - in 1996 - to terminate one of those components, the ground-to-ground one, by shutting down the Albion Plateau [in SE France] and dismantling the short-range missiles. We have kept two components, one airborne the other oceanic. This has not prevented us from reducing the volume of our forces, so as to maintain them at the level of strict sufficiency. This principle of strict sufficiency is also the basis of the organisation of our deterrent force. »

*Not lowering our guard:* « as Head of State I have the imperative duty to take account of these threats, since nothing must touch our independence. The international context does not allow for any weakness. That is why the era of nuclear deterrence is not over. There must be no question of lowering our guard, even in this field. »

But what is it, in the « international context » that forces France, in Hollande's view, to retain « nuclear deterrence » ? Not terrorist threats, since it can't ward them off (their increase proves that). It's just that the admission that nuclear deterrence doesn't work against terrorists, explicit in the speeches of Presidents Chirac and Sarkozy, is here discreetly implicit. After the attack on Charlie Hebdo in January 2015, Hollande prefers to say, that it works against aggressions and threats on state origin. A felicitous phrase, since what perpetuates the legitimacy of French

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deterrence is precisely the resurgence of state threats : « the possibility of state conflict concerning us directly or indirectly cannot be ruled out. »

In this regard, the Ukraine crisis is not Hollande's only cause of worry, far from it. No, what concerns him most is the arms race which « has resumed in numerous parts of the world, with a considerable, even rapid increase in military expenses and arsenals, in a context of mounting tension. » It is the fact that « States which were already nuclear-armed and which claimed that it was urgent to disarm the the others, have even increased their capacity with the development of new nuclear components ». In other words, nuclear proliferation (which has not increased since the North Korean test in 2003, but which Hollande predates so that he can make it weightier by including India and Pakistan).

« In this context, what should France do ? Appeal constantly for the organising of a more secure world : and that's what our diplomcy does. But France must be lucid. She knows that it is not enough to proclaim immediate and total disarmament, because the reality of each country's actions must be consistent with its words. »

Here's what France in fact *does,* in full coherence, obviously, with her diplomatic *words* : simultaneously she sells 24 Rafale aricraft (plus a frigate) to Egypt's military regime, and 36 Rafales (with more to come, perhaps up to 126) to India, so as not to fuel the arms race between India, Pakistan and China, three nuclear powers in potential conflict in an explosive region.

In that way, President Hollande justifies the need for French nuclear arms by an evolution in the security situation elsewhere which he deplores... but to which he is a very active contributor. In sum, the sales of conventional weapons by France - 3rd or 4th world exporter, depending on the year - are what justifies her keeping non-conventional weapons, nuclear ones.

There is another reason for concern : « the development of new nuclear components » by the NWS. The fact that France has continued to do this (like the other NWS) matters little : France, at least, has never been a nuclear power that « professes the urgency of disarmament ».

Ignore that : France is obviously a very model of disarmament. Exemplary as always :
« Exemplary in applying the principle of strict sufficiency... exemplary in terms of irreversibility... exemplary in the total stock, i.e.300. Why 300 ? Because that corresponds to the evaluation we make of the strategic context. » Oh, that context, it can be made to say anything !

France even wants nuclear disarmament ! She « does not intend to lower her guard... yet that does not mean she is renouncing the objective of disarmament, even nuclear disarmament. France is a power of peace, and that is why she defends herself, for the sake of peace [!] I therefore share the long-term objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, but I add : when the strategic context permits it. »

A long term, therefore. A very long long term.

As it happens, there is the short term : « The military programme law for 2014-2019 is what allows us to continue adapting our SNLE subs for M51 missiles, and this will enable us to deploy the seaborne nuclear warheads from 2016 onwards, begin studies for the 3rd-generation subs, and replace by 2018 the last Mirage 2000N aircraft with Rafales armed with ASMPA missiles.»

But we must also « prepare for the more distant future which will be the renewal of our components... so that there is

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continuity, a chain of adaptation for our deterrent forces that cannot be interrupted. » We must begin « future adaptations of the M51 missiles... and explore what the successor to the ASMPA could be » [although it is only just in service] and also « prepare the necessary evolution of our nuclear warheads for when their lifespan ends. »

Much has to be done « to renew our weapons, without conducting nuclear tests. This is our simulation programme ». In this regard, according to the Treaty of London signed in November 2010 by President Sarkozy and David Cameron, «we have committed to cooperate for at least 50 years, sharing two simulation facilities, one in France, the other in the UK ».

So we're good for half a century. Just like the EPR reactor at Flamanville (if it ever works) and (who knows) the future ones at Hinkley Point.

**Conclusion**

All the measures presented by France as « unilateral disarmament measures » have in reality been measures dictated by financial, technical or political necessity, and inspired by geostrategic considerations. Never at any moment, in the past or present, has France envisaged renouncing her nuclear strike-force. On the contrary, she continues to modernise it.

In President Hollande's speech there is absolutely nothing to give us hope for any wavering in French policy. The « solemn commitment » given to the NNWS belonging to the NPT, that France would not use nuclear arms against them is not new at all. It dates from 1995. The « solemn commitment » that « France is not making and will not make new types of nuclear weapons » is perplexing when it accompanies a simulation programme intended to « renew our components. » Lastly, the vaunted effort in transparency about the size of France's nuclear forces reveals nothing that was not already know, and the opening of former bases such as the Albion plateau will not tell visitors anything.

A French president respectful of France's commitments and Constitution ought to say : « France has committed, under Article VI of the NPT, to pursue negotiations in good faith, with the other nuclear-armed stated, on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, and to bring those negotiations to a conclusion. I call on the other NWS, whether or not they are parties to the NPT, to meet soon in Geneva, Vienna or New York, to negotiate the complete elimination of our nuclear arms. They are massacre weapons, weapons for crimes against humanity. France is ready to eliminate hers. She invites all the NWS to do the same, and invites the NNWS to renounce them for ever. »"

But in the land of the Lobby, that's a pipe-dream.

The President could be even briefer : « I will never use any nuclear weapons against anyone. » That would, in five seconds, be the first act of unilateral disarmament - an exemplary act - but would probably have even less chance of being followed by the other NWS, just as the South African example was not followed by India, Pakistan and North Korea.

That's not even a dream, it's a mirage.

So the real question is: *How can nuclear disarmament be imposed on France despite herself ?*

There are probably ways of answering this. At least one : to hear the voice of the French people, those who would -

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if a nuclear exchange occurred involving France - be at once the involuntary accomplices of crimes against humanity and their expiatory victims.

France's people are the nation's supreme source of legitimacy, yet they have never been consulted on nuclear policy by any of her successive governments. It is time to put to her citizens the following question:
*« Do you want France to participate with the other states concerned in the total elimination of nuclear weapons, under strict, effective, mutual and international control? »*

A referendum is needed on this question. And that is what ACDN is calling for.

The time has come for the people of France and the peoples of the world to seize their own destiny and ensure their own survival.

New York, 25 April 2015

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**FOOTNOTE 1.**
In reality, France is not double or triple, but multiple. Geographically, this « country » (metropolitain France and overseas France) is very diverse. Sociologically too. But all the components nevertheless make a people and a country, on a territory with frontiers that are almost stable. The « real country » is the real entity of France, much more than the state is, or the Nation.

**FOOTNOTE 2.**
The nuclear energy programme which has made France, with 58 reactors, the world's most nuclearised state per head of population, was decided in an authoritarian way on a single day (5 march 1974) by the PM Pierre Messmer, at a time when President Pompidou was sick with the illness that caused his death four weeks later. The Parliament was not consulted, let alone the people.

**FOOTNOTE 3.** These *« vital interests »* are not limited to « the integrity of France's national territory. » They are vague. *« As for defending our vital interests, a formula I find useful, it is not possible to foresee all possible situations. The chief interests of the motherland cannot always be tied to the strict literal notion of the integrity of the nation's territory. There can be other vital interests that concern the nation's future and very existence just as much. This assessment remains vague today, for the Head of State would have to consider concrete situations in the future (and*

*consult with others, if circumstances gave him enough time) and then as a last resort assess whether there is danger for the motherland and whether our vital interest is in jeopardy. »* (François Mitterrand, speaking on 5 May 1994)

**FOOTNOTE 4.** *« The heart of our vital interests will always be the integrity of our national territory, the protection of our population, and the free exercise of our sovereignty. Our perception of these interests evolve over time, in a world marked by the growing interdependence of European countries and by globalisation. For example, the guaranteeing of our strategic supplies and the defense of our allies are, among others, interests to be protected. It will be over to the President to assess the size and potential consequences of an aggression, a threat, or an intolerable pressure against these interests. This analysis could, depending on the case, lead to the view that they enter the field of our vital interests. »* (Jacques Chirac, 19 January 2006) So if a country deprives us of uranium, we bomb it !

**FOOTNOTE 5** *Cf.* Request to invalidate the candidacies of Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande

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