

FROM RICHELIEU TO LE REDOUTABLE:

**France's Quest for an Independent Naval Policy within a Strategy of Alliance
1940-1963**

DU RICHELIEU AU REDOUTABLE:

**La recherche d'une politique navale française indépendante
au sein d'une stratégie d'alliance, 1940-1963**

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by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the renewal of French seapower from the fall of France during World War II through the first two decades of the Cold War. The 1940 armistice did not end the hostilities at sea for France. The *Marine nationale* continued fighting, divided against itself. The destruction of the means of French seapower – at the hands of the Allies, the Axis, and fratricidal confrontations in the colonies – continued unabated until the scuttling of the Vichy fleet in Toulon on 27 November 1942. And yet, just over twenty years after this dark day, President de Gaulle announced in a dramatic press conference on 14 January 1963 his intent to augment his budding nuclear deterrence force of Mirage aircraft with a sea-based component, a new class of nuclear-powered, ballistic missile-carrying submarines. Completing the rebuilding effort that followed the nadir in Toulon, these submersibles added the last vessels necessary for the *Marine nationale* to resume its status as a legitimate blue-water navy ready to face the complex circumstances of the Cold War in all dimensions of the maritime domain.

Many authors, especially those mesmerized by the Gaullist narrative, have argued that efforts at rebuilding the *Marine nationale* during this period amounted to little more than another French attempt at creating a “prestige fleet” reminiscent of previous episodes of misplaced aspirations. France’s NATO allies, more particularly the United States and Great Britain, grew concerned that such ambitions prevented Paris from fulfilling its alliance commitments on the continent. The Truman and Eisenhower administrations expressed frustration when French admirals refused their subordination to local convoy escort and coastal defence duties, instead promoting their interest for carrier aviation and, eventually, submarine nuclear propulsion and ballistic missileery. Such aspirations were perceived in other capitals as detrimental to alliance effectiveness, if not outright destabilizing, particularly as the development, production and control of these strategic assets occurred outside of the allied framework.

Rather than a reckless and misguided quest for vain grandeur at sea, the renaissance of French seapower was in fact shaped by a naval policy within a strategy of alliance closely adapted to the needs of a continental state with worldwide interests, from the desperate days of the Armistice to the early Cold War. Looking at this question fills a distinct void in the literature concerned with the evolution of naval affairs from World War II to the Cold War. The fall and rise of French seapower through these years is all too often dismissed as irrelevant to the gigantic struggle of the Second World War and the perilous confrontation between the Anglo-American navies and their Soviet opponent in the decades that followed. The present study draws upon extensive research through French, British, American and NATO archival holdings – including those made public most recently regarding the sensitive circumstances surrounding de Gaulle’s decision in the early 1960s to operationalize an independent deterrent in the form of a nuclear triad – to show the unique path adopted in France to rebuild a blue-water fleet in the nuclear era.

This paper challenges the overly strict periodization imposed by the traditional view of French historiography. An important continuum of cooperation and bitter tensions shaped naval relations between France and the Anglo-Americans from World War II to the Cold War. The rejuvenation of a fleet nearly wiped out during the hostilities was underpinned by a succession of forced compromises, in the words of one Chief of the Naval Staff, often the least bad possible as France successfully pursued an independent naval policy within a strategy of alliance.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette dissertation explore le renouveau de la puissance maritime française depuis la chute de la France au début de la Seconde Guerre mondiale et au cours des deux premières décennies de la Guerre froide. L'armistice de 1940 n'a pas mis fin aux combats en mer pour la France. La Marine nationale a continué de combattre, divisée entre ceux qui se sont ralliés aux Forces françaises libres du général Charles de Gaulle et ceux qui ont juré serment au régime collaborationniste du maréchal Philippe Pétain. La destruction des outils de la puissance maritime française – par les Alliés, les forces de l'Axe et au cours de combats fratricides dans les colonies – a continué de façon ininterrompue jusqu'au sabordage de la flotte de Vichy à Toulon le 27 novembre 1942. Néanmoins, à peine plus de vingt ans après ce triste jour, le président de Gaulle annonçait au cours d'une conférence de presse dramatique le 14 janvier 1963 son intention de compléter sa nouvelle force de frappe équipée de bombardiers Mirage avec une composante basée en mer, à bord de sous-marins nucléaires lanceurs d'engins. Achievant l'effort herculéen de reconstruction poursuivi depuis le drame de Toulon, ces sous-marins constitueraient les derniers outils nécessaires pour permettre à la Marine nationale de reprendre son titre de marine de haute-mer, dotée d'une flotte prête à faire face aux circonstances complexes de la Guerre froide dans toutes les dimensions du domaine maritime.

Beaucoup d'auteurs, fascinés par la trame gaulliste, ont décrit la reconstruction de la Marine nationale durant ces années comme un autre vain essai de créer une "flotte de prestige" tout au plus. Les alliés de l'OTAN, les États-Unis et la Grande-Bretagne en particulier, se sont inquiétés que de telles ambitions n'empêchent Paris de remplir ses obligations sur le continent européen. Les administrations Truman et Eisenhower se montrèrent toutes deux frustrées lorsque les amiraux français refusèrent d'accepter leur subordination aux rôles d'escorte de convois locaux ainsi que de défense côtière, développant plutôt leur intérêt envers les porte-avions et, éventuellement, les sous-marins à propulsion nucléaire et les missiles balistiques. De telles aspirations étaient perçues dans les autres pays comme déplacées et nuisibles à l'efficacité de l'Alliance atlantique, sinon menaçant le fragile équilibre de la Guerre froide alors que la France tentait de développer de tels moyens stratégiques en dehors du contexte allié.

Plutôt qu'une futile quête de grandeur en mer, la renaissance de la puissance maritime française découlait en fait de la formulation d'une politique navale bien adaptée au sein d'une stratégie d'alliance répondant aux besoins d'un état continental avec des intérêts mondiaux, des jours sombres de l'Armistice jusqu'aux débuts de la Guerre froide. L'étude de cette question contribue à combler un vide au sein de la littérature historique dédiée à l'évolution des affaires maritimes de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale à la Guerre froide. Le phénomène du déclin et de la renaissance de la puissance maritime de la France durant ces années est trop souvent rejeté comme de peu de pertinence dans le contexte de la lutte titanessque de la Seconde Guerre mondiale et de la confrontation périlleuses entre les marines anglo-américaines et celle des Soviétiques pendant les décennies suivantes. Cette étude basée sur une recherche en profondeur au sein des archives de la France, de la Grande-Bretagne, des États-Unis et de l'OTAN – incluant celles rendues publiques très récemment quant à la décision de créer une triade nucléaire indépendante au début des années 1960 – permet d'illuminer le parcours particulier adopté en France pour reconstruire une marine de haute-mer dans le contexte de l'ère nucléaire.

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INTRODUCTION

"WHAT GOOD WILL A NAVY BE TO US NOW?"

More than five hundred reporters sat in tight rows in a crowded room at the *Palais de l'Élysée* on Monday, 14 January 1963. *Président de la République française* (President of the French Republic) Charles de Gaulle had called for a press conference that day in his official residence, located near the famed *avenue des Champs-Élysées* in Paris. The tall patrician walked from behind dark drapes in the front of the room to a table on a raised stage and sat alone, facing two simple microphones and the throng of journalists from France and around the world. The event came after a tumultuous year. At home, *le Général* – as the former acting army brigadier was still referred to by supporters and detractors alike – had launched an aggressive programme of economic reforms. On 28 October, he won a referendum proposing an amendment to the constitution of the Fifth Republic to have the president elected by direct popular vote rather than by an electoral college. This change would gain the presidency even more independence from the political parties he held largely responsible for the ills that afflicted the Third and Fourth Republics.¹ Voters widely endorsed his proposal in part as a result of the wave of public sympathy he was still riding following a shocking assassination attempt on 22 August. At the Petit-Clamart, on the outskirts of Paris, a dozen men wielding machine guns had ambushed the presidential Citroën carrying the president, his wife and their son-in-law. The perpetrators, led by French air force Lieutenant-Colonel Jean Bastien-Thiry, were disgruntled over the General's agreement to grant Algeria its full independence after eight years of bloody rebellion.²

The end of the Algerian War of Independence meant that France was at peace for the first time since 1939 after violent insurgencies in Madagascar, Indochina and the Maghreb ripped the former colonial empire asunder in the wake of the Second World War. Guns had fallen silent across the *Communauté française* – the Fifth Republic's shrinking association of overseas territories – but tensions and conflicts continued on the international scene, rising to a climax during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Although uninvolved in the diplomatic and military manoeuvring during the days that brought the United States and the Soviet Union to the nuclear brink in October, de Gaulle stood resolutely at the side of his ally. He publicly supported the Americans when they claimed the right to defend their national interests in the western hemisphere and he reiterated to former Secretary of State Dean Acheson that France would fight if the Warsaw Pact moved on West Berlin in retaliation against the naval blockade on Cuba.³

But such commitment to the United States in time of crisis did not reflect the General's larger approach to the strategy of alliance adopted by his Fourth Republic's predecessors. He had grown weary of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). He recognized the importance

¹ The first presidential election by popular vote took place in two tours, on 5 and 19 December 1965, when de Gaulle defeated Socialist candidate François Mitterrand. This ballot made de Gaulle the last French president elected by an electoral college (1958) and the first one by popular vote (1965).

² For overviews of the year 1962 in France, see Éric Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle* (Paris, FR: Gallimard, 2002), 699-739; and Jonathan Fenby, *The General – Charles de Gaulle and the France He Saved* (London, UK: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 479-504.

³ Yale Law School – The Avalon Project, "Telegram from the Embassy in France to the Department of State (22 October 1962)," last accessed 18 March 2018, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/msc_cuba046.asp#1.

of the 1949 pact in committing the United States, Great Britain and Canada to the defence of continental Europe but he deemed the integrated organization overly subservient to *les Anglo-Saxons*, who repeatedly refused to recognize France's rightful place of influence – or at least his definition of it. On 4 July 1962, President John F. Kennedy sought to reinvigorate Atlanticism through a grandiose Declaration of Interdependence between the United States and a United Europe. On 14 January 1963, de Gaulle abruptly declined the offer, seeking to resurrect France's *grandeur* by leading a strong continental Europe instead.

As was his wont, de Gaulle did not begin the press conference with prepared remarks but simply opened the floor to questions.⁴ For more than one hour, while answering seemingly random queries, he actually laid out an ambitious programme of wide-ranging political, diplomatic and military initiatives to reaffirm his country's standing in the world. The government of Prime Minister Harold Macmillan sought to join the six nations that formed the European Economic Community through the Treaty of Rome on 25 March 1957 (Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany). France had not said no but negotiations over the British application (and that of Denmark, Ireland and Norway) had dragged on for nearly two years. That day, in a calm but determined tone, de Gaulle announced that France would veto Great Britain's request, denouncing its membership as a Trojan horse for US influence threatening to infiltrate and eventually dominate the affairs of Europe.⁵ In the same breath, he praised the ongoing Franco-German reconciliation and pronounced in favour of ever closer cooperation between the two continental powers. This statement set the stage for the signature of the Élysée Treaty with West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer the following week, on 22 January.⁶

De Gaulle then announced his refusal to join the NATO Multilateral Force (MLF) proposed by the Kennedy administration to provide a greater role for the European allies in the formulation and execution of the Alliance's nuclear strategy. Under that concept, multinational crews would sail in ships and submarines armed with American missiles but warheads would remain under US control. Just the previous month, at the Nassau Conference of 19-22 December 1962, Prime Minister Macmillan had abandoned the ambition of maintaining an integral and fully independent national deterrent, agreeing instead to acquire Polaris missiles from the United States to equip British submarines which would patrol as elements of the MLF, though not with

⁴ For a full transcript in French, as well as a video recording of the entire event, see Fondation Charles de Gaulle, "Conférence de presse du 14 janvier 1963 [Press Conference 14 January 1963]," last accessed 18 March 2018, <http://fresques.ina.fr/de-gaulle/fiche-media/Gaulle00085/conference-de-presse-du-14-janvier-1963-sur-l-entree-de-la-grande-bretagne-dans-la-cee.html>. For the English version, see Foreign Ministry, "Press Conference on January 14, 1963," in *Major Addresses, Statements, and Press Conferences of General Charles de Gaulle, May 19, 1958 – January 31, 1964* (New York, NY: French Embassy, Press and Information Division, 1964), 214-218.

⁵ On tensions with Great Britain at the time, see James Ellison, "Separated by the Atlantic: The British and de Gaulle, 1958-1967," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* Vol. 17, Issue 4 (December 2006): 853-870; and Jeffrey Glen Giauque, *Grand Designs and Visions of Unity: The Atlantic Powers and the Reorganization of Western Europe, 1955-63* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 158-195.

⁶ The original text of the treaty can be found in full at Portail franco-allemand, "Traité de l'Élysée (22 janvier 1963) [Élysée Treaty (22 January 1963)]," last accessed 19 March 2018, <http://www.france-allemande.fr/Traite-de-l-Elysee-22-janvier-1963>.

multinational crews.⁷ Kennedy immediately extended a similar offer to France but de Gaulle used the press conference to inflict a dramatic and calculated snub on the American design. Not only did de Gaulle not agree to participate in the MLF; he reiterated his intent to continue assembling the constituent parts of an independent and credible nuclear force, built and controlled by France alone.

Le Général declared that the future *force de frappe* – the “strike force” – would develop into a triad similar in nature, though not in scale, to those of the United States and the Soviet Union. Mirage IV long-range aircraft were already in production, capable of unleashing atomic devastation on the enemy with gravity bombs delivered at supersonic speed. Studies were well underway to develop a land-based, nuclear-tipped intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM). But the press conference witnessed the first public commitment by the French president to the addition of a sea-based element to the national deterrent with the construction of nuclear-powered, ballistic missile-carrying submarines. Though mentioned in a rather casual manner, this development constituted a momentous decision on the part of the French leader. His announcement launched a herculean effort to design and build a force which would eventually include six Le Redoutable-class vessels, each carrying sixteen missiles tipped with a thermonuclear warhead of 450 kilotons. They would sail out of their own complex on the Île Longue, across the bay from the Brest naval base on the Atlantic coast, enough in numbers to keep up to three submarines deployed at sea simultaneously. Dispatched to different locations, they would patrol silently and provide a nearly invulnerable first- and second-strike capability.

The lead vessel, *Le Redoutable*, only undertook her first deterrence patrol in 1972 and the last submarine of the class, *L'Inflexible*, did not enter service until 1985.⁸ Nevertheless, the 1963 decision launched the closing chapter of an unprecedented renewal for the *Marine nationale*. Within two decades of the end of the Second World War which witnessed the annihilation of the country's powerful prewar fleet, France had rebuilt her armada, having acquired or being actively engaged in the construction of every one of the instruments required of a credible blue-water navy.⁹ These included aircraft carriers (*Clémenceau*, *Foch*), a converted helicopter carrier (*Arromanches*), two anti-aircraft cruisers (*Colbert* and *De Grasse*), a helicopter-carrying training

⁷ On the Nassau agreement and the multilateral force, see Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 610-615; Eric J. Grove, *From Vanguard to Trident: British Naval Policy since World II* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1987), 235-239; and Andrew Priest, "In American Hands: Britain, the United States and the Polaris Nuclear Project 1962-1968," *Contemporary British History* 19, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 353-376.

⁸ *Projet Q-252*, which spawned the Le Redoutable-class, and France's larger nuclear deterrent will be treated in depth later in this text. For a brief introduction to the subject, see André Dumoulin, *Histoire de la dissuasion nucléaire* [History of Nuclear Deterrence] (Paris, FR: Argos, 2012), 189-193; and David S. Yost, "France's Nuclear Deterrence Strategy: Concepts and Operational Implementation," in *Getting Mad: Nuclear Mutual Assured Destruction, Its Origins and Practice* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 199-202.

⁹ No single and universally accepted definition of the term “blue-water navy” exists, especially as technology evolved through the centuries. For the purpose of this text, and given the period in question, the term will refer to a navy that can discharge independently the full range of military missions in the three dimensions of the maritime realm – that is in the air, on the surface and below – off the country's shores in permanence and in regions overseas for extended periods of time. For an insight into the complexities of using particular typologies or assigning ranking when discussing navies, see Eric Grove, *The Future of Sea Power* (London, UK: Routledge, 1990), 236-240.

cruiser (*Jeanne d'Arc*) as well as numerous destroyers, amphibious vessels and conventional submarines. The acquisition of the Le Redoutable-class also led to the requirement for nuclear-powered attack submarines, the future Rubis-class.¹⁰ By 1963, as in 1939, the French navy was not without defects but it had resumed its status as the first of the second-rank navies in continental Europe and its sailors, naval aviators, *fusiliers-marins*, and *commandos marine* (special forces troops) were confident of their ability to make a potent contribution to the defence of France and her allies within the context of the Cold War.

The turnaround was dramatic as the Second World War left France a devastated country. Though sitting at the side of the victors as the leader of the Provisional Government of the French Republic, Charles de Gaulle faced a bewildering array of conflicting tasks and competing priorities in 1945: rebuilding civilian and military infrastructure and ending political divisions at home, keeping Germany down in Europe, and regaining control of the colonial empire overseas.¹¹ These challenges required immediate action in order to restore national *grandeur* and resume the country's position as a leading power on the continent and as a nation of influence abroad.¹² Such concerns were only compounded for his Fourth Republic (1946-1958) successors by the dawn of the Cold War as they sought greater security through the Atlantic Alliance but could not avoid dependency on the Anglo-American powers in the face of the Communist threat in Europe, as well as native insurgencies in Asia and Africa.¹³

In this context, the French army and air force took on seemingly challenging but clear-cut missions in the aftermath of the nominal peace: maintain occupation forces in Germany, prepare to wage conventional warfare to stop a Soviet thrust into Europe, and conduct counter-insurgency operations in rebellious colonies. At the time, the issue for French soldiers and aviators did not seem to be the how but whether France could afford to provide the means to discharge these

¹⁰ Nuclear attack submarines were considered an integral component of the sea-going leg of France's deterrence triad, meant to ensure the survivability of the missile-carrying submarines by "sanitizing" waters ahead of the SSBNs, a capability that diesel submarines could not provide as effectively. As budget constraints prevented the simultaneous development of two types of submarines, French leaders assumed the risk of producing SSBNs before SSNs in order to obtain a sea-based nuclear deterrent more quickly, unlike the Americans and the Soviets which first built nuclear attack submarines. Jean-Marie Mathey and Alexandre Sheldon-Duplaix, *Histoire des sous-marins des origines à nos jours* [History of Submarines from the Origins to Today] (Paris, FR: Éditions E-T-A-I, 2002), 109; and David Miller, *The Illustrated Directory of Submarines of the World* (St. Paul, MN: MBI Publishing, 2002), 344-345.

¹¹ The *Gouvernement provisoire de la République française* (GPRF – Provisional Government of the French Republic) was the political authority instituted on 3 June 1944 to assume the reins of government in preparation for the liberation of France. Jacques Chapsal, *La vie politique en France de 1940 à 1958* (Paris, FR: Presses universitaires de France, 1984), 81-87 and 101-106; and Assemblée nationale, "Histoire," last accessed 4 January 2015, <http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/decouvrir-l-assemblee/histoire>.

¹² For de Gaulle's own perspective, see his *Mémoires de guerre – Volume 3 – Le salut, 1944-1946* (Paris, FR: Plon, 1959), 179-180; and its English translation, *War Memoirs – Volume 3 – Salvation, 1944-1946*, trans. Richard Howard (London, UK: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1960), 178-179.

¹³ Alfred Grosser, *Affaires extérieures: La politique de la France, 1944-1989* [Foreign Affairs: France's Policy, 1944-1989] (Paris: Flammarion, 1989), 71-97; and Guy de Carmoy, *The Foreign Policies of France, 1944-1968*, trans. Elaine Halperin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 25-33 and 48-56.

tasks.¹⁴ Future prospects for the French navy appeared much more uncertain. Of the three services, the *Marine nationale* had fared worst through the years of German occupation and fratricidal infighting between forces loyal to the collaborationist regime in Vichy and those wishing to resist at the side of the Allies. A lonely figure of defiance isolated in the British Isles in the wake of the June 1940 armistices with Germany and Italy, Charles de Gaulle immediately set about building up the Free French movement – the *FFL*, the *Forces françaises libres* – which included a small navy, the *Forces navales françaises libres* (*FNFL* – Free French Naval Forces). The General and his naval commanders effectively mixed soothing diplomacy and aggressive brinkmanship in order to rally French crews dispersed around the world as well as extirpate a commitment from the British to refurbish existing vessels and transfer new units to the *FNFL*. This initial effort quickly expanded after Anglo-American forces landed in North Africa in November 1942. The Roosevelt administration then committed to rearm those French forces that rallied to the allied cause, including the former Vichy navy. The *Marine nationale* formally reunited in August 1943 and France could boast the fourth largest fleet in the world in the immediate aftermath of the war.¹⁵ But those numbers also implied grave drawbacks as became obvious in the following years.

By then, the French navy included a bewildering array of ships, submarines and aircraft of various origins, ranging from outdated French pre-war designs to emergency US and British wartime production and, after 1945, disparate German and Italian transfers.¹⁶ The challenge of supplying the right munitions and spare parts, and maintaining vessels using different engineering plants and technologies, was compounded by the devastation inflicted on naval bases and commercial shipyards in metropolitan France and the colonies.¹⁷ Planning deployments and fleet manoeuvring also proved a challenge for senior officers trained during the inter-war period in the spirit of the *bataille d'escadre* – fleet action – when the battle line was divided in squadrons of ships of common speed and armament, following tactics of a bygone era. Few admirals of the postwar navy had been exposed to the operations of task forces combining the eclectic strengths of aircraft carriers, battleships, cruisers and destroyers into one whole capable of discharging a

¹⁴ Philippe Masson, *Histoire de l'armée française de 1914 à nos jours* [History of the French Army from 1914 to Today] (Paris: Perrin, 1999), 313-332; and Paul-Marie de la Gorce, *The French Army – A Military-Political History*, trans. Kenneth Douglas (New York: George Braziller, 1963), 338-368.

¹⁵ After those of the United States, the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union. Rob Stuart, "Was the RCN ever the Third Largest Navy?" *Canadian Naval Review* 5, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 8-9.

¹⁶ Philippe Masson, "La marine française en 1946 [The French Navy in 1946]," *Revue d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale* (April 1978): 79-86; and Philippe Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française sous la Quatrième République (1945-1956) – La Quatrième République a-t-elle eu une ambition navale pour la France?* [Renewal of the French Navy during the Fourth Republic (1945-1956) – Did the Fourth Republic Have a Naval Ambition?] (Unpublished PhD thesis) (Paris: Université Paris I, 2006), 6-10.

¹⁷ Benoît Rossignol and Roland Le Borgne, "Reconstruction, restructuration et modernisation des bases navales (1944-1949) [Reconstruction, Restructuration and Modernisation of Naval Bases (1944-1949)]," *Revue historique des Armées* 220 (September 2000): 98-111; and Philippe Vial, "Un impossible renouveau: bases et arsenaux d'outre-mer, 1945-1975 [An Impossible Renewal: Overseas Bases and Dockyards]," in *Les bases et les arsenaux français d'outre-mer, du Second Empire à nos jours* [Overseas Bases and Dockyards, from the Second Empire to Today] (Panazol, FR: Charles-Lavauzelle, 2002), 228-231.

range of missions, as developed by the Americans in the Pacific and carried over to shape naval doctrine during the Cold War.¹⁸

The battleship *Richelieu* was the first Vichy unit to go through repair and modernization in a US shipyard as a result of the commitment of the Allies to a reconciled France in 1943. She remained the emblematic pride of the French postwar navy for several years, symbolic in many ways of the dilemmas facing the *Marine nationale* at the time.¹⁹ Evolving technology quickly made *Richelieu* obsolete as a ship of war and the evolution of naval warfare superseded her original mission of fighting other battleships. Large gun carriers were mostly limited to shore bombardment during the conflict and the aircraft carrier was the new capital ship.²⁰ Even then, many would soon question the relevance of seapower altogether, especially for a continental state facing the renewed threat of land invasion – this time by Soviet troops massed across the Iron Curtain – a recurring theme in France’s long history of attempts at building a navy of the first rank.²¹ One could easily apply to the French context of the early Cold War this dispirited quote uttered in 1871 by the minister for the Navy, retired Admiral Louis Pothuau, appointed soon after the catastrophic defeat at the hands of Prussia: "I am going to be obliged to reduce our unfortunate budget. All our efforts must be concentrated on land. Indeed, what good will a navy be to us now?"²² The dawn of the atomic age only compounded doubts as air power enthusiasts, on both sides of the Atlantic, grew confident that nuclear weapons would finally allow the strategic bomber to deliver victory from the air. The offensive would be short and decisive, eliminating the need for a long campaign of attrition warfare by mass armies on land as well as the clash of fleets at sea to secure sea lines of communication and blockade the enemy coast.²³

¹⁸ Milan N. Vego, *Naval Strategy and Operations in Narrow Seas*, 2nd ed. (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2003), 147-150; and Trent Hone, "U.S. Navy Surface Battle Doctrine and Victory in the Pacific," *Naval War College Review* 62, no. 1 (Winter 2009): 67-68.

¹⁹ *Richelieu*'s wartime service is discussed in Julien Lombard, "Le Richelieu dans la tourmente (1939-1945) [Richelieu into the Storm (1939-1945)]," *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 188 (December 1997): 65-83; and David Brown, "Le H.M.S. Richelieu," *Revue historique des Armées* 199 (June 1995): 117-130. For larger treatments, see René Sarnet and Éric Le Vaillant, *Richelieu* (Rennes, FR: Marines Éditions, 1997), *passim*; and Robert Dumas, *Le cuirassé « Richelieu » 1935-1968* [Battleship "Richelieu" 1935-1968] (Rennes, FR: Marine Éditions, 2001), *passim*.

²⁰ Admittedly, disagreements over which vessel would reign as queen of the battle at sea predated the Second World War. For contemporary views, see chapter 7 (The Aerial Factor) of Raoul Castex' first volume of his *Théories stratégiques* (Paris, FR: Société d'éditions géographiques, 1929); and Russell Grenfell, *The Art of the Admiral* (London: Faber & Faber, 1937), 239-244.

²¹ Philippe Masson and Ernest Jenkins both lay out their studies of the history of the French navy as one long cycle of momentary bursts of interest in maritime affairs followed by the collapse of government funding when confronted with a rising military threat to France's land border. See Philippe Masson, *Histoire de la marine – Volume 1 – L'ère de la voile* [History of the French Navy – Volume 1 – The Era of the Sail] (Paris: Lavauzelle, 1992), 1-6; and Ernest H. Jenkins, *A History of the French Navy – From Its Beginning to the Present Day*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1973), 275-277.

²² Quoted in Theodore Ropp, *The Development of a Modern Navy – French Naval Policy, 1871-1904*, ed. Stephen S. Roberts (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1987), 31. The original citation in French appears in Étienne Taillemite, *Histoire ignorée de la Marine française* [Unknown History of the French Navy], 3rd ed. (Paris: Perrin, 2010), 478.

²³ For an early contemporary analysis, see Bernard Brodie, *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (New York, NY: Harcourt, 1946). John Buckley provides a survey of the more extreme views that arose after the war in *Air Power in the Age of Total War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 204-205.

Such discourses could have been expected to attract the attention of French politicians confronted with the quandary of maintaining an adequate range of military forces in Europe and overseas without undermining the process of reconstruction in the *métropole*. And yet few political and military leaders actively challenged the requirement to develop and maintain naval forces in the wake of the Second World War. The pace, scope and priority of French naval rearmament may have been controversial but no authority figure of note dared asking "what good will a navy be to us now?", be it under the wartime provisional government, during the controversial years of the Fourth Republic's chronic instability, or following de Gaulle's return to power and the inauguration of the Fifth Republic. Subject to one exception – the short-lived 1948 strategy of "Defence on the Rhine" seeking to focus investments on a powerful *corps aéro-terrestre* (a joint army-air force corps) to defend the Rhine River, leaving the security of France's sea lines of communications to the Anglo-Americans – one can actually distinguish a remarkable continuity in the naval policy pursued from one regime to the other.

This study of the rejuvenation of French sea power, from the 1940 Armistice to the decision to go nuclear in 1963, will reflect this singularity of purpose through the dramatic period that shaped France and her allies, in times of war and peace. Some authors, especially those mesmerized by the Gaullist narrative, have argued that the *Marine nationale* of that period amounted to little more than another French attempt at creating a "prestige fleet" reminiscent of previous episodes of vainglorious ambitions such as during the Second Empire under Napoleon III (1852-1870).²⁴ France's allies, more particularly the United States and Great Britain, grew concerned that such plans were misplaced and prevented Paris from fully meeting its alliance commitments.²⁵ A fundamental dissonance permeated relations between French and Anglo-American naval planners throughout the period in question. The former refused to confine themselves to the same subordinate duties of coastal defence and convoy escort the latter sought to assign to the continental navies while retaining blue-water missions for themselves.

Washington and London claimed to pursue efficiency through specialization among nations, with the USN and the RN handling maritime strike missions and maintaining the security of transoceanic lines of communications while the continental powers should take care of their coasts and local sea lanes. But where the Anglo-Americans talked of specialization in support of the greater good, French admirals only saw collusion to deny France's rightful status as a naval power with worldwide interests. The defence of these interests necessitated the acquisition of the instruments befitting a blue-water navy, including carrier aviation in the immediate postwar years and, eventually, nuclear-powered submarines and ballistic missileery. Such ambitions would quickly be perceived in other capitals as detrimental to alliance effectiveness, if not outright

²⁴ On the concept of the Second Empire's navy developed as a prestige fleet, see Ropp, *The Development of a Modern Navy*, 6-8; and Philippe Masson, *Histoire de la marine – Volume 2 – De la vapeur à l'atome* [History of the French Navy – Volume 2 – From Steam to the Atom] (Paris: Lavauzelle, 1992), 80-90. For the same view applied to de Gaulle's ambitions, see Jean Meyer and Martin Acerra, *Histoire de la Marine française des origines à nos jours* [History of the French Navy from the Origins to Today] (Rennes, FR: Éditions Ouest-France, 1994), 398-399; and Jenkins, *A History of the French Navy*, 343.

²⁵ Philippe Quérel, "La Marine entre l'O.T.A.N. et l'Union française au début des années 1950 [The Navy between NATO and French Union at the Beginning of the 1950s]," *Revue historique des Armées* 201 (December 1995): 43-52; and Mattea-Paola Battaglia, "Français, Italiens et Anglo-Américains en Méditerranée occidentale (1949-1954) [French, Italians and the Anglo-Americans in the Western Mediterranean (1949-1954)]," *Revue historique des Armées* 215 (June 1999): 37-50.

destabilizing in the atomic age, particularly as development, production and control of such strategic assets occurred outside of the allied framework. Thus, once the western powers set upon restoring the wartime North Atlantic compact to face down the Soviet juggernaut at the dawn of the Cold War, France faced the renewed challenge of formulating an independent naval policy within a strategy of alliance. This study, structured chronologically from June 1940 to February 1963, will demonstrate that French politicians and admirals by and large succeeded in that endeavour.

Following the necessary review of the historiography of the period, Chapter Two focuses on the contribution made by Free French sailors in providing a forlorn de Gaulle with the initial means to rally political support from within the French colonial empire and make a small but early military contribution to the allied cause in 1940-1942. Given the General's haughty manner and stubborn character, it should come as no surprise that the strained relations he maintained with allies and compatriots alike often undermined his efforts during this bleakest moment in the history of France. Of utmost interest is the undoing of his primary naval advisor, Vice-Admiral Émile Muselier, who bore as much responsibility for the rise of the *FNFL* as for his firing by de Gaulle in March 1942. No less relevant was the initial embrace of Prime Minister Churchill, who proclaimed on 28 June 1940 "... the leader of all the Free Frenchmen, wherever they may be, who will rally to him in defense of the allied cause."²⁶ This early recognition often turned into bitter grudges when their views differed over matters of policy, strategy and material assistance. Still, Churchill's continued commitment to the *FFL* and provision of assistance by the Royal Navy, though reluctant in the beginning, laid the groundwork and implemented precedents that would shape similar processes and mechanisms for the remainder of the hostilities and again during the Cold War.

The support of Great Britain proved invaluable, especially as President Franklin D. Roosevelt initially favoured the seemingly neutral Marshall Philippe Pétain at the expense of the rebellious acting brigadier in London. Chapter Three discusses the laborious manoeuvring by the Americans in 1942-1943, before and after the North African landings, as Washington abandoned the regime established in the small spa-city of Vichy but continued to ignore de Gaulle, seeking a more suitable conduit for Franco-American relations. Switching sides at the right moment, collaborationist Admiral François Darlan briefly arose as the unexpected "third man" but his sudden assassination allowed Roosevelt to install his candidate of choice in Algiers, General Henri Giraud. The latter immediately set about securing the assistance promised before the landings by a US Army representative who declared that the United States "... will furnish equipment for French Forces which will operate against the Axis."²⁷

Negotiations led to conclusion of the *accord d'Anfa*, named after the hotel where Roosevelt and Giraud met in January 1943, on the sidelines of the Casablanca Conference. They agreed on a large-scale rearmament plan for the French forces based in North Africa. USN and former Vichy admirals outlined the framework and processes necessary to undertake the

²⁶ "Leader of Free Frenchmen – Recognition by British Govt. of Gen. de Gaulle," *The Barrier Miner*, 29 June 1940, 1.

²⁷ Cable from General George C. Marshall to Lieutenant-General Dwight D. Eisenhower dated 17 October 1942, cited by Marcel Vigneras in *Rearming the French*, United States Army in World War II (Washington, DC: Center of Military History United States Army, 1989), 1 (note 1).

modernization of existing vessels in America as well as the transfer of new ships and aircraft, Chapter Four recounts. The new spirit of cooperation and Giraud's high standing were evident when battleship *Richelieu* left Dakar for an extensive refit in the Brooklyn Navy Yard in February 1943. De Gaulle appeared sidelined as *la France libre* and Giraud's forces were engaged against the Axis but fighting separate campaigns under different command and support arrangements. The former remained aligned with the British while the latter dealt almost exclusively with the Americans. And yet, by the end of the year, through relentless manoeuvring, de Gaulle had eliminated the politically inept Giraud and installed himself in Algiers at the head of the unified French Committee of National Liberation.

Le Général also reunified all French military forces fighting on the side of the Allies at that point, in fact if not necessarily in spirit as great tensions remained between *FFL* veterans and former Vichy elements, none the more so than in navy ranks. Nevertheless, as discussed in Chapter Five, provision of allied assistance to the reunified *Marine nationale* proceeded apace in 1944-1945 under the terms of CCS Directive 358 (Revised).²⁸ The document left an enduring legacy, for better and for worse. Many of its provisions would be resurrected at the dawn of the Cold War when the Americans decided to resume military assistance to NATO allies. But the same bitter tensions that had arisen in wartime reappeared in peacetime in negotiating priorities in assignment of resources and the level of ambition expressed by French admirals seeking to restore a blue-water navy.

This prospect did not appear that far off on V-E day but peacetime led to dramatic reductions in defence expenditures in 1946-1948, an ongoing concern in Chapter Six. Politicians first turned their attention to reconstruction and mending the divisions left in the wake of the Occupation. France seemingly stood alone in this new era but French concerns with the potential for Germany to rise from the ashes soon merged with that of the former Anglo-American allies regarding a belligerent Soviet Union. The military alliance had come to an end, although some economic and material aid from the United States and Great Britain resumed in different forms. Naval authorities welcomed assistance from London and Washington but actively resisted their influence in shaping the future *Marine nationale* while working warily with a political class divided over national priorities. The moment of greatest danger would come in Fall 1948 when the minister of national defence proclaimed the primacy of the "defence of the Rhine," sacrificing naval growth to build up an army and air force focused on France's apparent vulnerability as a continental power, her land border.

The minister could boast this new vision as France returned to a strategy of alliance, the implementation of which through 1948-1951 is explored in Chapter Seven. Ironically, this development superseded the concept of focusing all French resources on the Rhine and leaving the responsibility for maritime affairs to the Anglo-Americans. NATO actually needed all navies to contribute to the collective defence of the North Atlantic region and aid soon poured from North America to rejuvenate the armed forces and the defence industries of the European allies, including France. French admirals enthusiastically embraced this renewed assistance in building up the fleet while recognizing the conundrum involved as the potential cost of foreign

²⁸ The National Archives (Kew, UK: hereafter TNA), CAB 121/401, CCS Directive 358 (Revised) – Policies Regarding French Naval Vessels, 4 October 1943.

aid was a return to the bitter subservience of the war years. In the words of French historian Philippe Vial: "Here lied the paradox: the desire to avoid another episode of subordination led the men of the [French navy] to plan on assistance that would necessarily generate dependency!"²⁹

Chapter Eight, however, shows that *Marine nationale* leaders and successive ministers negotiated these treacherous waters with some success through the years 1952-1957, although they continued facing that same paradox. On the one hand, allied material and financial aid combined with renewed prosperity at home to generate the means to build ships, submarines and aircraft at a greatly accelerated pace. France soon suffered defeat in Indochina and the Algerian struggle quickly turned desperate but the French navy performed well in both conflicts. Politically, French admirals stayed clear of the controversy surrounding the European Defence Community project and focused on assembling the coastal defence and convoy escort means required to meet Alliance commitments. On the other hand, they felt their voice remained ignored in higher NATO circles, whether in terms of shaping naval strategy or obtaining influential command appointments. The Suez embarrassment in 1956 showed the limits of France's influence on events overseas. By then, they had realized that allied assistance, undermined by continued disagreements with the Americans over the roles and missions of the *Marine nationale*, would no longer be enough. Admiral Henri Nomy, commander of the navy from 1951 to 1960, succeeded in getting political support for two successive documents that came to shape the regeneration of the fleet for decades to come: the *Statut naval de 1952*, an intermediate plan to set the foundations of a credible blue-water fleet – including aircraft carriers, cruisers and submarines built in France for employment beyond Alliance commitments – and the 1955 *Plan bleu*, which elaborates a longer-term vision of a mature navy capable of upholding French interests through the complex circumstances of the nuclear era.

This ambition fitted well in the Gaullian agenda when *le Général* returned to power in 1958 but he quickly set about reshaping its form in the succeeding years, the subject of Chapter Nine. Both the *Statut naval* and the *Plan bleu* proposed a fleet capable of deploying independent *forces d'intervention* (intervention task forces) centered on aircraft carriers, air defence cruisers, large fleet destroyers and amphibious ships for national missions, as well as smaller vessels for coastal defence and convoy escort tasks in support of Alliance commitments. But, as frictions with NATO which first appeared during the later years of the Fourth Republic gained strength at the close of the 1950s, De Gaulle's renewed interest for the *Marine nationale* presented French admirals with a new paradox in the early 1960s. His decision to go nuclear meant huge investments in the navy but dedicating so many resources to ballistic submarines alone gravely affected the execution of Nomy's vision of a balanced fleet capable of discharging independently the full range of missions expected of a true blue-water navy.

Chapter Nine discusses two other elements complicating that conundrum: the gradual cessation of American assistance to France (and the other European powers) and the rejuvenation of the navy's worldwide network of bases which had challenged French naval planning and budgeting ever since the end of the Second World War. First and foremost concerned with

²⁹ Philippe Vial, "De la nécessité de l'aide, des inconvénients de la dépendance: le réarmement de la Marine sous la IV^e République [Of the Need for Assistance and the Drawbacks of Dependency: The Navy's Rearmament Under the Fourth Republic]," *Revue historique des Armées* 215 (June 1999): 22.

rebuilding the fleet while the country wrestled with civilian reconstruction and slashed defence budgets despite the onset of the Cold War, postwar admirals never fully resolved a fundamental dilemma. The blue-water navy they aspired to necessitated a widespread network of bases to achieve and maintain worldwide reach. And yet, restoring such an extensive web of shore installations – creating a *berceau pour la flotte* (a cradle for the fleet), made even more expensive by the inclusion of elaborate survivability requirements in the nuclear age – competed directly with the effort to regain strength at sea. In 1953, Admiral Nomy still lamented: "We are without means and the new fleet will be without a cradle as long as France only dedicates 13.8% of its military investments to the navy."³⁰ *Marine nationale* leaders – even with the influx of allied funds through the NATO Infrastructure Programme commencing that same year – could not bring themselves to cut the Gordian knot decisively. Instead, decolonisation and the end of allied assistance forced their hand as they eventually consolidated investments in fewer locations in the *métropole* and overseas.

The main body wraps up with a conclusion to this focused examination of a crucial period in the evolution of the French navy. Before launching into the narrative, however, a few clarifications are warranted. All citations from original sources in French but quoted herein in English are my own translation unless stated otherwise. Geographical locations (bases, cities, etc.) are referred to by their name in use at the time for easier correlation with original sources, including those establishments located in France's former colonial empire. The more recent designation in English is usually provided in parenthesis the first time a location is mentioned, as in Saïgon (today's Ho Chi Minh City). Regardless of specific national usage, classes of ships are referred to by the name of the lead-ship of the class with a vessel's name spelled out in italics and the class name in normal characters – i.e. battleship *Richelieu* and battleships of the *Richelieu*-class. I must apologize in advance to my *Marine nationale* colleagues in disregarding the French tradition of referring to ships and submarines in the masculine form (*Le Redoutable*), instead reverting to the English practice of using she and her when discussing vessels of all nationalities. Lastly, I have elected to use Canadian English spelling in writing this dissertation except when referring to specific American documents, quotes, titles and ranks when U.S. English spelling is used.

³⁰ *Service historique de la Défense* [Defence Historical Service] (Vincennes, FR; hereafter *SHD*), 3 BB 8 CSM 5 – Various Records of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* [Superior Council of the Navy] 1951-1953, "Exposé de l'amiral Nomy, chef d'état-major général de la Marine: la politique navale française [Report by Admiral Nomy, Chief of the General Staff of the Navy: French Naval Policy]," November 1953 (exact day not indicated).

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The thesis at the heart of this dissertation is straightforward: rather than a reckless and misguided quest for vain *grandeur* at sea, the renaissance of French seapower was in fact framed within a naval policy and a military strategy closely adapted to the needs of a continental state with worldwide interests, from the desperate days of the Armistice to the early Cold War era. During the hostilities, unlike their counterparts in the forlorn Vichy navy, French admirals in London and then in Algiers successfully leveraged the assistance of allies to rebuild while negotiating a tightrope that allowed their naval forces to make a marked contribution to the allied cause and, simultaneously, preserve the national interest as envisioned by their political leaders. Following a short period of uncertain isolation in 1946-1947, France resumed a policy of alliance to face down the Soviet threat in Europe while confronting fervent nationalist forces overseas. *Marine nationale* planners built upon the lessons learned in wartime to develop a unique approach to once again leverage allied support in acquiring the means to defend French home waters – smaller escorts, minesweepers, coastal patrol craft – while dedicating national resources to build the instruments required to act overseas – aircraft carriers, fast escorts, submarines – without threatening the national reconstruction effort in peacetime. This perspective contradicts the standard narrative of the irrelevance of French seapower during the war years, compounded after 1945 by floundering Fourth Republic officials whose ineptitude was only salvaged by the return to power of the decisive and inspiring de Gaulle in 1958.³¹

This study aims to fill a distinct void by challenging this narrative in three distinct ways. First, it seeks to overcome the limitations imposed by the traditional chronicle built around overly simplistic periods. These markers often impede discerning important elements of continuity in France that shaped naval and military affairs as well as domestic politics and foreign relations. French historiography of the mid-twentieth century revolves around three seemingly monolithic blocks: the war years of 1939-1945, the short-lived Fourth Republic of 1946-1958 and the era of de Gaulle thereafter.³² While one may seize upon such divisions when initially grappling with the complexities of France's history through these troubled decades, one must also beware of the limitations that result from framing the scope of research along such arbitrary milestones. This

³¹ Typical of studies placing a prominent emphasis on the disparities between the Fourth and the Fifth Republics are Serge Berstein and Michel Winock, *La République recommencée: de 1914 à nos jours* [The Republic Anew: From 1914 to Today] (Paris, FR: Seuil, 2004); and Stanley Hoffmann, *Decline or Renewal? France Since the 1930s* (New York: Viking, 1974).

³² This is especially genuine in French naval historiography when consulting studies such as Philippe Masson, *La Marine française et la guerre, 1939-1945* [The French Navy and the War, 1939-1945], 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: Tallandier, 2000); Henri Le Masson, *Navies of the Second World War – The French Navy*, Vols. 1 & 2 (London, UK: Macdonald & Co., 1969); Philippe Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique: la marine française (1945-1958)* [Toward a Nuclear Navy: The French Navy (1945-1958)] (Paris: LGDJ, 1997); and Philippe Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française sous la Quatrième République (1945-1956) – La Quatrième République a-t-elle eu une ambition navale pour la France?* [Renewal of the French Navy during the Fourth Republic (1945-1956) – Did the Fourth Republic Have a Naval Ambition?] (Unpublished PhD thesis) (Paris: Université Paris I, 2006). The more recent Alain Boulaire, *La marine française: de la Royale de Richelieu aux missions d'aujourd'hui* [The French Navy: From Richelieu's Royale to the Missions of Today] (Quimper, FR: Éditions Palantines, 2011) and Taillemite, *Histoire ignorée de la Marine française* also separate the later part of their respective studies into similar blocks.

concern is of particular relevance when studying the fall and rise of French seapower from World War II to the Cold War. As the Vichy navy was declining in its forced isolation after June 1940, the UK-based Free French naval forces had already embarked upon a path of renewal. The postwar naval rearmament was really initiated during the war years, namely after the 1942 North African landings when American financial and material support kicked in. The mechanisms to distribute allied assistance under NATO in the 1950s largely reflected processes and practices elaborated by the wartime Combined Chiefs-of-Staff (CCS). De Gaulle's decision to "go nuclear" in 1963 would not have been possible without the earlier research efforts and financial investments by the reputedly feckless leaders of the Fourth Republic.

In addition to breaking down such epochal markers, this inquiry seeks to bestride the divide of policy and strategy that affects historical studies of French seapower. Most writings related to the evolution of the *Marine nationale* from the 1940s to the 1960s tend to focus on specific and largely tactical or technical elements – carrier aviation, cruisers and destroyers, nuclear deterrence, etc. – or narrate operational histories during conflicts such as Indochina and Algeria.³³ Although the postwar years are also covered in several larger chronological narratives of the history of the French Navy, most writers have paid less attention to the forging of naval strategy during these years, looking instead at the evolution of naval policy and the budgetary debates that affected the growth of the fleet and shore infrastructures during the Cold War.³⁴ While the importance of such discussions cannot be neglected and will indeed feature extensively here, the attention of the reader will be drawn back to the issues of strategy throughout the text. One must not only be concerned with the types and numbers of sea-going platforms and maritime aircraft French planners sought to acquire. Fleet mix requirements were, first and foremost, generated as a result of extensive reflection on the fundamentals of strategy as it evolved at the dawn of the atomic age from a French perspective.

The lack of such emphasis in the existing literature may be explained, in part, by the absence of easily accessible sources on the evolution of naval strategic thought in the early Cold War. Historians of strategy have lamented the dearth of contemporary writers on the subject since 1945 when contrasted with the giants of the battleship era in the Mahan-Corbett-Castex

³³ Some examples: Jean Moulin, *Les porte-avions français* [French Aircraft Carriers] (Rennes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2008); John Jordan and Robert Dumas, *French Battleships: 1922-1956* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009); Bernard Estival, *La marine française dans la guerre d'Indochine* [The French Navy in the Indochina War] (Rennes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2007) and *La Marine française dans la guerre d'Algérie* [The French Navy in the Algerian War] (Rennes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2012); and Jean-Jacques Hucherot, *La marine française en Afrique subsaharienne de 1946 à 1960* [The French Navy in Sub-Saharan Africa from 1946 to 1960] (Paris: Institut catholique de Paris, 2001).

³⁴ Philippe Masson, *Histoire de la marine – Volume 2 – De la vapeur à l'atome* [History of the French Navy – Volume 2 – From Steam to the Atom] (Paris: Lavauzelle, 1992) and Ernest H. Jenkins, *A History of the French Navy – From Its Beginnings to the Present Day* (London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1973) both provide typical – and valuable – accounts shaped along the chronological approach. Two rare studies dedicated to naval policy under the Fourth Republic remain the works of French doctoral candidates, each more concerned with the budgetary process than the shaping of the strategy at the origins of such financial demands: Philippe Quérel, *La politique navale de la France sous la Quatrième République*, unpublished PhD thesis (Reims: Université de Reims, 1992) and the previously cited Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française*.

tradition.³⁵ American scholar Bernard Brodie and retired Royal Navy Captain Stephen Roskill can be counted as exceptions whose works became widely known in the postwar years. But even Brodie shifted his gaze from maritime affairs to nuclear strategy in the 1950s and Roskill remained more noteworthy as a historian rather than an analyst of contemporary issues.³⁶ Whether in Washington, London, Paris or Moscow, various approaches to naval strategy evolved in great secrecy within government and military circles. Budgetary arguments and public announcements regarding the launching of new platforms, as well as occasional flare-ups such as the 1949 “Admirals’ Revolt” in the United States, provided but brief insights into ongoing deliberations as to the future of seapower and the evolution of naval strategy.³⁷ The dearth of debates even led one historian and military analyst, American author Edward Luttwak, to dismiss such matters in the waning years of the Cold War as “naval non strategy.”³⁸

A widely acknowledged giant of strategic studies in France, professor Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, seemed to concur in a 1990 essay when he declared: “After 1945, French naval thought entered a period of lethargy. This was not a phenomenon unique to France. From the end of the 1940s, one cannot readily identify any new naval theoreticians.”³⁹ Nevertheless, he did qualify this harsh assessment as based on the rare works that appeared in the public domain in France through the late 1940s and the 1950s. Three serving officers – Captain Adolphe Lepotier, Rear-Admiral Raymond de Belot and Vice-Admiral Pierre Barjot – penned notable ones but their writings were subject to the vagaries of state and military secrecy, service loyalties and the histrionics of the Cold War era.⁴⁰ One must also note that Coutau-Bégarie, although the author of

³⁵ Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, “Réflexions sur l’école française de stratégie navale [Thoughts on the French School of Naval Strategy],” *Institute d’histoire des conflits contemporains* (last accessed 25 February 2012) http://www.institut-strategie.fr/PN1_HCBREFLFR.html; and Geoffrey Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004), 81-82.

³⁶ Bernard Brodie’s evolving interest can be traced through his publishings from the 1940s to the 1950s: *Sea Power in the Machine Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1941); *A Layman’s Guide to Naval Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1942); *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order* (New York, NY: Harcourt, 1946); and *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959). Stephen Roskill’s writing did not evolve in such a linear fashion but he exercised much more of an impact through his three-volume official naval history of the Second World War – *The War at Sea* (London, UK: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1954, 1956, 1961) – and the two book series *Naval Policy between the Wars* (London, UK: Collins, 1968, 1976), rather than works such as *The Strategy of Sea Power: Its Development and Application – Based on the Lees-Knowles Lectures Delivered in the University of Cambridge, 1961* (London, UK: Collins, 1962).

³⁷ This episode refers to the acrimonious debate that took place in the United States over several months in 1949. US Navy senior officers then publicly denounced those political authorities promoting the reduction of naval budgets in order to place greater emphasis on the US Air Force strategic bombers. This choice derailed plans for the construction of eight United States-class supercarriers capable of embarking large naval bombers to deliver heavy nuclear weapons deep into the Soviet heartland. For an introduction, see Paul R. Schratz, “The Admirals’ Revolt,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 112 (February 1986): 64-71; and George W. Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power – The U.S. Navy, 1890-1990* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 309-313.

³⁸ Edward Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2001), 169-174. The original edition appeared in 1987.

³⁹ Coutau-Bégarie, “Réflexions sur l’école française de stratégie navale.”

⁴⁰ Captain Adolphe Lepotier, *La guerre moderne dans les trois dimensions* [Modern Warfare in the Three Dimensions] (Paris, FR: Les grandes éditions françaises, 1948); Vice-Admiral Pierre Barjot, *Vers la Marine de l’âge atomique* [Towards the Navy of the Atomic Age] (Paris, FR : Amiot Dupont, 1955); and

the only biography of Vice-Admiral Raoul Castex to this day and the publisher of a new edition of the latter's masterpiece – *Théories stratégiques*, published in five volumes during the interwar period – did not include him in his reflection on postwar strategists.⁴¹ This snub is regrettable as Castex continued writing well into the 1960s, providing contemporary readers with early thoughts on the impact of the atomic bomb on naval strategy while more extensive reflections appeared in a sixth volume to his *Theories*, written after 1945 but only published posthumously in 1976.⁴²

In a more in-depth study of naval thought during the years of the Fourth Republic, reputed French historian and strategic analyst François Géré simultaneously agreed with and undermined Coutau-Bégarie's position.⁴³ In addition to Lepotier, de Belot and Barjot, Géré brought several others into the limelight, such as Admirals Nomy, Monaque and Lemonnier but, again, those individuals wrote in their capacity as serving officers and were mainly published in government journals, rarely dissenting from the official views promoted by the French navy.⁴⁴ Géré succeeded in identifying one prolific author quite different from that mold, Camille Rougeron who published much more widely from the early 1930s to the end of the 1960s, including regular columns appearing in the left-of-center and broadly circulated newspaper *Le Monde*.⁴⁵ A former naval engineer who had also worked for the French air force before leaving military service in 1938, Rougeron held a respectable record of original thoughts on strategy, whether naval or of a more general nature. He possessed one of those rare minds which could at once grapple with the intricacies of geopolitics and seize upon the technical complexities of modern warfare. Rougeron actually held a number of scientific and industrial patents related to weapon systems, some developed on his own and others as a result of his employment with French defence firms after his retirement from the military. Nevertheless, his impact on the shaping of naval strategy at the dawn of the nuclear age remained quite limited as he had left both the navy and the air force estranged from senior officers who did not accept his views, neither then nor later; his writings are virtually unknown today.⁴⁶

Rear-Admiral Raymond de Belot, *La Mer dans un conflit futur: évolution de la stratégie navale* [The Sea in a Future Conflict: Evolution of Naval Strategy] (Paris, FR: Payot, 1958).

⁴¹ Raoul Castex, *Théories stratégiques* [Strategic Theories], 5 volumes (Paris, FR: Société d'éditions géographiques, 1929-1935); and *Théories stratégiques* [Strategic Theories], 7 volumes, ed. Hervé Coutau-Bégarie (Paris, FR: Economica, 1997). A translated one-book abridgement also appeared in the United States in the early 1990s: *Strategic Theories*, ed. and trans. Eugenia C. Kiesling (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1994). See also Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, *Castex: Le stratège inconnu* [Castex: The Unknown Strategist] (Paris, FR: Économica, 1985). Born in 1878, Castex joined the French Navy in 1896. He rose steadily through the ranks and wrote on naval history and general strategy throughout his career, achieving the rank of Vice-Admiral in 1934 and retiring in 1939 over a dispute with the commander of the French navy, Admiral François Darlan. Castex continued to write in the postwar years and passed away in 1968.

⁴² Raoul Castex, *Mélanges stratégiques* [Strategic Blends], ed. Adolphe Lepotier (Paris, FR: Académie de Marine, 1976).

⁴³ François Géré, "La pensée navale française sous la IV^e république [French Naval Thought Under the Fourth Republic]," *Institut d'histoire des conflits contemporains*, last accessed 2 February 2015.

http://www.institut-strategie.fr/PN2_GERE2_1.html.

⁴⁴ One can observe that, out of the 49 endnotes supporting Géré's essay, no less than 35 are based on articles appearing in the *Revue de défense nationale*, the *Revue militaire d'information*, the *Revue maritime*, and *Forces aériennes françaises*, all magazines sponsored by France's Ministry of Defence at the time.

⁴⁵ Géré, "La pensée navale française sous la IV^e république."

⁴⁶ For a more extensive treatment of this little-known but thought-provoking author, see Claude d'Abzac-Epezy, "La pensée militaire de Camille Rougeron: innovations et marginalité [The Military Thought of

The paucity of contemporary sources on French naval strategy in the decades following the Second World War also helps explain the greater focus placed by researchers on naval policy, which was debated much more openly in parliament and the media. Even then, however, access to the official minutes and records of decisions of relevant military bodies concerned with matters of strategy and the endorsement of doctrine – be they naval such as the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* (CSM – Superior Council of the Navy) or joint as the *Comité des Chefs d'état-major* (CEM – Chiefs of Staff Committee) – is circumscribed at both ends of the period studied herein. Holdings at the national archives and contemporary records suffered greatly as a result of the fall of France in 1940 when documents were destroyed in place or evacuated haphazardly as German forces swept through the country. The files maintained by Vichy authorities were decimated twice, first when the *Wehrmacht* invaded the Free Zone in late 1942 and again when France was liberated by the Allies in 1944. Meanwhile, the *ad hoc* nature of command structures within the Free French movement and successive relocations of its governing bodies throughout the war years made the collection of official records most challenging at the time and their interpretation today often represents an exercise in “filling the blanks.” Not until the early years of the Fourth Republic would a more stable regime of committees and record keeping be restored, leaving the study of the evolution of French strategy into the early Cold War a lingering challenge.⁴⁷

At the other end of the period in question is the issue of public access to the archives. Under the French system, defence-related documents are not made available to the public for a period of 50 years as a general rule, regardless of their level of classification.⁴⁸ Until recently, this restriction prevented researchers from exploring official records concerned with another pivotal moment, that of the transition from the Fourth to the Fifth Republic and the tumultuous developments of the early 1960s. These constraints, combined with the derelict state of the wartime archives, may have contributed to the emphasis placed on the years of the Fourth Republic, at the cost of ignoring longer-term trends and deeper-level commonalities between these successive periods. France's *Service historique de la Défense* (SHD – Defence Historical Service) has more recently dedicated an extensive effort to restoring order to its Second World War holdings and granted access to official records documenting those government and military deliberations having taken place in the early 1960s. Although this newfound access still leaves many archives dealing with nuclear matters closed due to their sensitivity and higher security classification, this study seeks to develop a fuller understanding of a period of time encompassing developments still largely ignored today.

A third element reappears throughout these pages, the actual command arrangements and mechanisms established between France and successive allies to coordinate operations and provision of allied assistance in times of war and peace. As put succinctly by Canadian author

Camille Rougeron: Innovation and Marginality],” *Revue française de science politique* 54 (2004/5): 761-779.

⁴⁷ Service historique de la Défense, *État général des Fonds Modernes* [General State of the Modern Archives] (Vincennes, FR: Archives centrales de la Marine, 2009), 3-5; and Jean Martinant de Preneuf, “Neptune et Clio: Le Service historique de la Marine, 1919-1974 [Neptune and Clio: Archival Service of the Navy, 1919-1974],” *Revue historique des Armées* 216 (September 1999): 13-15.

⁴⁸ *Service historique de la Défense* [Defence Historical Service] (Vincennes, FR; hereafter *SHD*), “La communicabilité des archives conservées par le SHD [Public Access to the Archives Held at the Defence Historical Service],” last modified 6 June 2013, <http://www.servicehistorique.sga.defense.gouv.fr/La-communicabilite-des-archives.html>.

Sean Maloney, the "... problems of coordinating one nation's naval, air, and land forces with those of other nations had never been addressed satisfactorily before World War II."⁴⁹ Most works concerned with these issues and their evolution from the war years to that of the Cold War remain primarily concerned with the dominating factor of the Anglo-American relations that shaped such issues, from the establishment of the CCS in 1942 to the command architecture implemented in support of NATO in the early 1950s.⁵⁰ Given the smaller forces France contributed to these large coalitions, the relative neglect of the French factor in shaping alliance arrangements is largely understandable but regrettable. Several Franco-British and Franco-American initiatives during the war years and in the early NATO era constituted important precedents that eventually shaped alliance relationships and processes through the following decades, if not to this day.

For example, the initial agreement between de Gaulle and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill on 7 August 1940 laid out fundamental principles of coordination and support between the Free French movement and Great Britain. It delineated those responsibilities that would remain "national" while French forces operated under British control, introducing practices eventually employed worldwide by the Allies and adopted later by NATO.⁵¹ The Combined Chiefs of Staff Directive of 4 October 1943, though specifically concerned with the refit and employment of French naval vessels by the Allies, built upon the previous agreement. It refined command practices and coordination mechanisms that were expanded to include other coalition partners during the hostilities and embraced again upon the founding of the postwar alliance.⁵² A little-known exchange of diplomatic notes between Washington and Paris on 18 December 1950 provided greater insight into the management principles and procedures to administer military transfers under the Mutual Defence Assistance Program, another instance of a bilateral agreement with France eventually applied to other beneficiaries of the larger bill enacted by the Truman administration a year earlier.⁵³

Such an approach to the historiography of the period also underscores what this study is not. It is not a general, all-encompassing history of the *Forces navales françaises libres*, the Vichy navy and the reunited *Marine nationale* through the years 1940-1963. It does not include a detailed narrative of the operations conducted during the Second World War and postwar

⁴⁹ Sean M. Maloney, *Securing Command of the Sea – NATO Naval Planning, 1948-1954* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 2.

⁵⁰ For another representative work, see Joel J. Sokolsky, *Seapower in the Nuclear Age: The United States Navy and NATO, 1949-1980* (London, UK: Routledge, 1991).

⁵¹ The full text of the agreement in French is available online at Digithèque MJP, "Accord du 7 août 1940 entre la France libre et le Royaume-Uni [Agreement of 7 August 1940 between Free France and the United Kingdom]," last accessed 7 February 2015, <http://mjp.univ-perp.fr/france/co1940f12.htm#3>. The English version appears in print in Foreign Office, *Command Paper 6220: Exchange of Letters Between the Prime Minister and General de Gaulle Concerning the Organisation, Employment and Conditions of Service of the French Volunteer Force, London 7 August 1940* (London, UK: H.M. Stationery Office, 1940).

⁵² A copy of CCS 338 (Revised) "Combined Chiefs of Staff Policies Regarding French Naval Vessels", dated 4 October 1943, can be found in The National Archives (hereafter TNA), CAB 121/401 – *Re-equipment and Employment of French Forces – Volume I: October 1942-December 1943*.

⁵³ *French Aide-Memoire and Reply*, 18 December 1950; France, Paris Embassy; Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP) Subject Files 1949-1953; Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State; Box 13, Record Group 84; National Archives at College Park, MD (NACP). The *Mutual Defence Assistance Act* had been signed into law by President Truman on 6 October 1949.

insurgencies. Those can be found elsewhere.⁵⁴ Brief discussions of ongoing deployments, technological innovations and the evolutions of tactics reoccur throughout the text in order to provide context and demonstrate the evolving strengths and flaws of the *Marine nationale* as the instrument shaped by a naval policy formulated within a strategy of alliance. References to valuable previous works discussing tactical and technological matters more extensively appear where appropriate.

Regrettably, space constraints did not allow considering other elements that may have proved of relevance, especially as they remain largely unexplored in academic literature today. The troubled history of the French army during the war, its controversial approach to civil-military relations through the Indochinese and Algerian ordeals, and its difficult transition to the nuclear era led several authors to publish excellent works on these topics.⁵⁵ Similar studies specifically dedicated to the *Marine nationale* do not exist.⁵⁶ Briefer treatments dealing with specific aspects – the continued tensions between Vichy and Gaullist officers during and after the war, their approach to civil-military relations in general, their performance during the quasi-coup of 1958 and the attempted military putsch of 1961 – appear dispersed in larger works and shorter journal articles but do not detail how these considerations may have affected the contribution of naval officers in the formulation of postwar policies.⁵⁷ Other important elements remain ignored

⁵⁴ Some of the best such operational histories can be found here: the previously cited Masson, *La Marine française et la guerre, 1939-1945*; Paul Auphan and Jacques Mordal, *La Marine française dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale* [The French Navy and the Second World War], 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: France-Empire, 1967); Émile Chaline and Pierre Santarelli, *Historique des Forces Navales Françaises Libres*. Tome 1. *Du 18 juin 1940 au 3 août 1943* [History of the Free French Naval Forces. Volume 1. From 18 June 1940 to 3 August 1943] (Paris, FR: Service historique de la marine, 1990) and *Historique des Forces Navales Françaises Libres*. Tome 2. *Du 4 août 1943 au 7 mai 1945* [History of the Free French Naval Forces. Volume 2. From 4 August 1943 to 7 May 1945] (Paris, FR: Service historique de la marine, 1992); as well as Bernard Estival, *La marine française dans la guerre d'Indochine* [The French Navy in the Indochina War] (Rennes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2007) and *La Marine française dans la guerre d'Algérie* [The French Navy in the Algerian War] (Rennes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2012).

⁵⁵ The following works, though dated, provide relevant insights in the evolving social makeup, political leanings, and views of the French army officer corps on civil-military relations in the twentieth century: Paul-Marie de la Gorce, *The French Army – A Military-Political History*, trans. Kenneth Douglas (New York, NY: George Braziller, 1963); John Steward Ambler, *The French Army in Politics, 1945-1962* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1966); Jean Planchais, *Une histoire politique de l'armée*. Tome 1. *De Pétain à Pétain (1919 – 1942)* [A Political History of the Army. Volume 1. From Pétain to Pétain (1940-1967)] (Paris, FR: Seuil, 1967) and *Une histoire politique de l'armée*. Tome 2. *De de Gaulle à de Gaulle (1940 – 1967)* [A Political History of the Army. Volume 2. From de Gaulle to de Gaulle (1940-1967)] (Paris, FR: Seuil, 1967); and Alistair Horne, *The French Army in Politics, 1870-1970* (New York, NY: Peter Berdrick Books, 1984). Anthony Clayton also provided a more recent perspective in *Three Marshals of France: Leadership after Trauma* (London, UK: Brassey's, 1992).

⁵⁶ A few authors attempted more all-encompassing efforts by including references to the experiences of naval and air force officers but the bulk of these studies remained primarily concerned with the army. See Robert O. Paxton, *Parades and Politics at Vichy: The French Officer Corps under Marshall Pétain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966); Michel L. Martin, *Warriors to Managers: The French Military Establishment since 1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1981); and Hugues Canuel, "From Concordance to Discordance in Post-War France: Validation of a Theory of Civil-Military Relations." *Defence Studies* 13, no 4 (Winter 2013): 437-457.

⁵⁷ For a variety of examples, see Jean Noli, *Choix, souffrances et gloire de la marine française pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* [Choices, Sufferings and Glory of the French Navy during the Second World War] (Paris, FR: Fayard, 1972); Charles W. Koburger, *The Cyrano Fleet, France and Its Navy, 1940-1942* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1989); Philippe Vial and Arnaud Balvay, "Les administrations militaires et la

today, including the contrasting operational experience in wartime of *FNFL* veterans vice that of their counterparts who swore allegiance to Pétain.

By and large, the former manned a “small-ship navy” of destroyers, corvettes, motor torpedo boats and coastal defence vessels that saw service in the hard-fought convoy battles of the North Atlantic and along the contested shores of Hitler’s Fortress Europe. The latter continued crewing the large gun carriers that found refuge in Toulon and the African bases in 1940, only expanding their field of operations once they joined the Allies in a dramatically different naval context after the pivotal winter battles of 1942-1943 in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Pacific. Such different experiences of combat affected their respective viewpoints about the future of fighting at sea as both camps set about defining a new strategy in the postwar era. This study gives such matters some consideration but they warrant more extensive treatment in the future.

The reader may also question the sparse discussions about the merchant navy in these pages. It is recognised that this component forms one of the essential foundations of seapower and France dedicated much importance to its fleet of passenger liners, cargo carriers, oil tankers, and fishing vessels of all types in the modern era.⁵⁸ These ships and their crews of civilian mariners came into special focus in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries as France engaged in another round of colonial expansion. Leaders of both the Third and Fourth Republics understood that they needed a merchant fleet to fully exploit the economic potential of overseas possessions while facilitating access to world markets for industries based in the *métropole*.⁵⁹ The Franco-Prussian conflict and the two world wars also showed the importance of building and controlling the fleet that conveyed troops and supplies from the colonies and allied countries whenever *la mère-patrie* (the motherland) faced the threat of invasion across its land borders in Europe. The need to rebuild a large merchant navy in the postwar era constituted an important concern for French political and naval leaders but resource demands for that particular effort came into direct competition with the reconstruction effort at home as well rejuvenation of the

reconstruction civile: l’exemple de la marine nationale [The Military Administrations and Civilian Reconstruction: The Example of the French Navy],” in *Les reconstructions en Europe, 1945-1949* [Rebuildings in Europe, 1945-1949] (Brussels, BE: Complexe, 1997); Patrick Boueille, “La Marine et le putsch d’Algérie [The Navy and the Algerian Putsch].” *Revue d’histoire maritime* 14 (2011): 183-198. One exception is a study giving much room to naval officers as they played a large role in supporting the Vichy regime but again it is not specifically concerned with the French navy. Philippe Valode, *Les hommes de Pétain* [Pétain’s Men] (Paris, FR: Nouveau Monde, 2011); and *Le destin des hommes de Pétain de 1945 à nos jours* [The Destiny of Pétain’s Men from 1945 to Today] (Paris, FR: Nouveau Monde, 2014).

⁵⁸ For typical views at various times on the relationship between merchant shipping and seapower, see Alfred T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660 – 1783* (1890) (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1987), 25-28; René Daveluy, *The Genius of Naval Warfare*, trans. by Philip R. Alger (Annapolis, MD: The United States Naval Institute, 1910), 191-218; Raoul Castex, *Théories stratégiques* [Strategic Theories], Volume 1 (Paris, FR: Société d’éditions géographiques, 1929), 65-85; Russell Grenfell, *Sea Power in the Next War* (London, UK: Geoffrey Bles, 1938), 153-160; Barjot, *Vers la Marine de l’âge atomique*, 24-32; and John D. Hayes, “*Sine Qua Non* of U.S. Sea Power: The Merchant Ship,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 91, no. 3 (March 1965): 26-33.

⁵⁹ For portraits of France’s merchant fleet during these years, one can consult the special edition “La marine marchande française de 1850 à 2000 [The French Merchant Navy from 1850 to 2000],” *Revue d’histoire maritime* 5 (June 2006); and Marie-Françoise Berneron-Couvenhes, “La naufrage de la Marine marchande française au XXe siècle [The Wreck of the French Merchant Marine in the 20th Century],” *Entreprises et Histoire* 27 (June 2001): 23-43.

fighting fleet.⁶⁰ This study cannot address renewal of the merchant navy in a more fulsome manner but the element of competition in priorities and over resources will be addressed in the main body when warranted.

Such shortcomings are regrettable but unavoidable in seeking to determine the essential elements of the renaissance of French seapower from the desperate days of the Armistice to the early Cold War era, especially for a continental nation determined to uphold worldwide interests at the dawn of the nuclear age. A recent study of the challenges facing the naval historian in presenting an all-inclusive portrait of any given period, within the constraints of a limited page count, illustrated the task well:

As a historian of the late-seventeenth-century English navy put it in 1953, ‘If national history may be compared to a cake, then naval history is not a layer but a slice of that cake.’ In other words, naval history cannot be understood unless the multiple contexts (social, economic, technological, cultural, political and diplomatic) in which navies are constructed and put to sea are also understood. To this must be added that if naval conflict and sea power are to be understood, then multiple national contexts and navies have also to be understood.⁶¹

The two decades covered in this dissertation seem to provide but the speck of a glimpse in the long and tortuous history of the proud French nation. And yet every single element mentioned above appears at some point or the other in this work seemingly focused on the narrow topic of the tribulations of the *Marine nationale* through these years. All of them needed consideration and discussion in order to provide the reader with the background necessary to assess the competing interpretations which confronted the author seeking to assemble a coherent narrative of France’s quest for an independent naval policy within a strategy of alliance at this critical juncture of her history. A quest which began under the darkest of clouds as the French navy suffered an ostensibly treasonous blow at the hands of its closest ally within weeks of the humiliating armistices of June 1940, the start point for this study.

⁶⁰ The best academic treatment of the French commercial fleet in the postwar era remains Bernard Cassagnou, *Les grandes mutations de la Marine marchande française (1945-1995)* [The Great Changes in the French Merchant Navy (1945-1995)], Volumes I and 2 (Vincennes, FR: Comité pour l’histoire économique et financière de la France, 2003). Volume I deals with the period 1945-1978.

⁶¹ Richard Harding, *Modern Naval History: Debates and Prospects* (London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2016), 1. The citation is from John Ehrman, *The Navy in the War of William III, 1689-1697: Its State and Direction* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1953), xxii.

CHAPTER TWO

SETTING THE PRECEDENT: BUILDING A FREE FRENCH NAVY

A grim-faced figure dressed in the uniform of a French naval officer, but sporting a small *croix de Lorraine* on his right breast, arrived in the early morning hours of Thursday, 4 July 1940 at St Stephen's House, a nondescript building located on the Victorian embankment of the Thames, the river crossing the heart of Great Britain's capital. Vice-Admiral Émile Muselier entered the austere headquarters of the *Forces françaises libres* (FFL – Free French Forces) and went up the stairs to meet his leader, Charles de Gaulle. Both men felt dejected in the aftermath of Operation *Catapult*, launched by the British the previous day.⁶² One ally turned on another without warning at the moment of France's greatest distress following the armistices signed with Germany and Italy less than two weeks earlier. The grizzled seaman sat down in the office of the younger acting army brigadier, lamenting the faith of the fleet – including his beloved *Bretagne*, the battleship he commanded ten years earlier, sunk by the guns of the Royal Navy (RN) at Mers el-Kébir with the loss of nearly one thousand sailors.⁶³ They commiserated, contemplating an abrupt departure from London to a colony beyond Vichy's reach, such as Saint-Pierre-and-Miquelon in North America or Pondicherry in India. They even broached the possibility of retiring to Canada as private citizens.⁶⁴ Their despondence did not last, however, and the discussion concluded with a renewed commitment to the Free French movement and a continued alliance with Great Britain. *Realpolitik* prevailed over emotions. In the words of a de Gaulle biographer:

To have denounced the British would have brought him no dividend. On the other hand, to express understanding at what had been done could bring only gratitude from the government on which he depended. It was the first of a number of wartime decisions in which, while never abandoning his vision, the General would draw tactical advantage from adversity.⁶⁵

⁶² For their recollections of that fateful episode, see Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre* – Volume 1 – *L'Appel, 1940-1942* [War Memoirs – Volume 1 – The Call to Honour, 1940-1942] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1954), 77-78; and *War Memoirs* – Volume 1 – *The Call to Honour, 1940-1942*, trans. Jonathan Griffin (London, UK: Collins, 1955), 96-97; as well as Émile Muselier, *Marine et Résistance* [Navy and Resistance] (Paris, FR: Flammarion, 1945), 71-72 and *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme* [De Gaulle against Gaullism] (Paris, FR: Éditions du Chêne, 1946), 20-21.

⁶³ The battleship *Bretagne* suffered direct hits in the first few minutes of the engagement. Fires spread below decks, quickly leading to a magazine explosion which caused the vessel to capsize, entombing hundreds of sailors without access to the surface. This catastrophic loss of life alone accounted for the majority of those suffered at Mers el-Kébir. Hervé Coutau-Bégarie and Claude Huan, *Mers el-Kébir (1940), la rupture franco-britannique* [Mers el-Kébir (1940), the Franco-British Rupture] (Paris: Economica, 1994), 146; and Ernest H. Jenkins, *A History of the French Navy – From Its Beginnings to the Present Day* (London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1973), 324.

⁶⁴ Éric Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle* (Paris, FR: Gallimard, 2002), 152-153; Renaud Muselier, *L'amiral Muselier, 1882-1965: Le créateur de la croix de Lorraine* [Admiral Muselier, 1882-1965: Creator of the Cross of Lorraine] (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2000), 114; and Edward Spears, *Two Men Who Saved France: Petain and de Gaulle* (London, UK: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1966), 164-165. Major-General Spears had been appointed as Churchill's personal representative to the French Prime Minister in May 1940 and retained such duties to de Gaulle after the Armistice.

⁶⁵ Jonathan Fenby, *The General – Charles de Gaulle and the France He Saved* (London, UK: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 141.

De Gaulle urged Vice-Admiral Muselier to continue building up the movement's fledgling navy, the *Forces navales françaises libres* (FNFL – Free French Naval Forces). The challenge of that single task was considerable. On that day, most French sailors outside of France's metropolitan and colonial ports found themselves corralled in British detention camps and their vessels impounded by the RN. The captors soon offered to facilitate the return to France of those who wished to follow famed Marshall Philippe Pétain into seeming neutrality rather than the unknown de Gaulle. As for those who wished to fight the Axis, senior British commanders instructed that they be provided with the option of joining the King's armed forces rather the *FFL*, although Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill also committed his country to supporting de Gaulle's movement. This awkward stance on the part of their "hosts" in the critical months which followed Operation *Catapult* drove de Gaulle and Muselier to maintain a guarded attitude in their dealings with British authorities. They had to balance implied dependency on a reluctant ally and proclaimed autonomy for the *Forces françaises libres*. Such *modus operandi* came to define Anglo-Free French military relations at first, and those with the United States later in the war.

The *FFL* are remembered today through the feats of soldiers who gallantly resisted Rommel's tanks at Bir Hakeim in 1942 and followed General Leclerc in his race to Paris in 1944.⁶⁶ Less well understood is the earlier contribution made by sailors sporting the *croix de Lorraine*.⁶⁷ They provided a forlorn de Gaulle with the initial means to rally political support within the French colonial empire and make a small but early military contribution to the allied cause. This chapter focusses on this endeavour. De Gaulle and Muselier focused their first efforts through Summer 1940 on securing recognition and increasing support from the British authorities in the wake of Operation *Catapult*. The fledgling fleet slowly grew in size and effectiveness, achieving notable successes in the two years that led to the Anglo-American landings in French North Africa and the scuttling of the Vichy navy in Toulon. Thereafter, the United States assumed an overriding role in the rebuilding of a newly reconciled French fleet. This new relationship, though, grew out of the precedents set in this earlier period. De Gaulle's concerns with the recognition and autonomy of his movement informed his approach to naval matters during this darkest time in the history of modern France, a necessary start point for this study.

THE QUEST FOR RECOGNITION AND AUTONOMY

De Gaulle quickly bounced back after the British actions at Mers el-Kébir. As he recalled later: "In spite of the pain and anger..., I considered that the saving of France ranked above everything, even above the fate of her ships, and that our duty was to go on with the fight."⁶⁸ On Bastille Day, he led a contingent of two hundred *FFL* troops and sailors parading through the streets of London, having addressed a rousing message to French people the previous evening through the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC):

⁶⁶ For succinct overviews of these actions, see Philippe Masson, *Histoire de l'armée française de 1914 à nos jours* [History of the French Army from 1914 to Today] (Paris, FR: Perrin, 1999), 325-326 and 340-342; and John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York, NY: Viking, 1989), 331 and 414.

⁶⁷ The symbol was adopted in early July 1940 by the Free French movement. Muselier, *Marine et Résistance*, 30 and *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 15-16; De Gaulle, *L'Appel*, 79 and *The Call to Honour*, 98; and D'Argenlieu, "Les origines des FNFL," 17.

⁶⁸ De Gaulle, *The Call to Honour*, 97. Original statement in French in *L'Appel*, 78.

We must do our utmost to beat the enemy... Our English allies, already masters of the seas and who will soon dominate the skies, are getting stronger everyday... France, although divided and pillaged, has not lost.⁶⁹

His legitimacy remained an issue, however. No prominent figure from the political class, nor from the ranks of the diplomatic and civil services, joined the French National Committee de Gaulle proposed to assemble in London.⁷⁰ The British cabinet formally acknowledged him on 28 June as "... leader of all Free Frenchmen, wherever they may be, who rally to him in support of the allied cause."⁷¹ And yet Great Britain did not grant the movement diplomatic recognition as a government-in-exile, unlike national leaders who had sought refuge in the British Isles, such as those from Belgium and the Netherlands.⁷² London in fact continued to recognize the Vichy regime until Pétain broke off diplomatic relations on 8 July 1940 as a result of Operation *Catapult*.⁷³ Thereafter, Whitehall pursued a rather ambiguous approach by keeping ties with the collaborationist regime until 1942 through a Canadian representative.⁷⁴ Neutral powers – most critically the United States⁷⁵ – also maintained diplomatic representation in Vichy, thus recognizing Pétain and the seemingly lawful transfer of power that had occurred in France on 10 July 1940.

On that fateful day, a quorum of French senators and deputies sat for an extraordinary parliamentary session in the small southern town of Vichy, in the *zone libre*, that part of France left unoccupied by the German and Italian invaders. The assembled politicians ratified the terms of the Armistice and agreed to make the unelected Marshall Philippe Pétain head of state,

⁶⁹ Fondation Charles de Gaulle, "Discours du général de Gaulle, 13 juillet 1940 [Speech by General de Gaulle, 13 July 1940]," last accessed 21 April 2014, http://www.de-gaulle-du.net/sentrainer/term_commt/13juillet40.htm.

⁷⁰ De Gaulle, *L'Appel*, 71-74 and 82-84, and *The Call to Honour*, 89-92 and 102-104; Spears, *Two Men Who Saved France*, 136-139; and Christine Levisse-Touzé, "Le Général de Gaulle et les débuts de la France libre [General de Gaulle and the Beginnings of Free France]," *Revue historique des Armées* 219, no. 2 (June 2000): 66.

⁷¹ "Leader of Free Frenchmen, Recognition by British Govt of Gen. de Gaulle," *The Barrier Miner* (29 June 1940), 1.

⁷² Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle*, 150; and Yossi Shain, *The Frontier of Loyalty: Political Exiles in the Age of the Nation-State*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 116-117.

⁷³ Peter Jackson and Simon Kitson, "The Paradoxes of Foreign Policy in Vichy France," in *Hitler and His Allies in World War II* (London, UK: Routledge, 2007), 82-83; and François Charles-Roux, *Cinq mois tragiques aux Affaires étrangères* [Five Tragic Months at Foreign Affairs] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1949), 158. A career diplomat, Charles-Roux was appointed as Secretary-General to France's Foreign Affairs Ministry in May 1940 but resigned five months later to protest Pétain policies.

⁷⁴ Although based in London after the Armistice, Canadian diplomat Pierre Dupuy remained accredited as *chargé d'affaires* to France and conducted three official visits to Vichy over the course of the following year. His reports to the British Foreign Office can be found at TNA FO 371/28234 and 28235, *Mr. Dupuy*. Olivier Courteaux provides an extensive analysis of Dupuy's role in *Canada between Vichy and Free France, 1940-1945* (Toronto, ON: Toronto University Press, 2013), 53-84.

⁷⁵ The United States maintained diplomatic representation in Vichy until 8 November 1942 when the Pétain regime severed all relations as a result of the allied landings in North Africa. Jackson and Kitson, "The Paradoxes of Foreign Policy in Vichy France," 111; and United States, Department of State – Office of the Historian, *A Guide to the United States' History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, since 1776: France*, last accessed 16 February 2015, <http://history.state.gov/countries/france>.

cumulating both executive and legislative powers, thus "... voting the Third Republic out of existence."⁷⁶

For de Gaulle that regime had accepted defeat before the war was lost and sacrificed the French people while they were still fighting, therefore relinquishing the authority to represent the citizenry and rule the country.⁷⁷ In order to restore the nation and reestablish France as a great power after the hostilities, he considered it essential that the French people continue fighting and that organized French military forces make a significant contribution to the liberation of the homeland. It was clear to de Gaulle that this campaign could not be left to the Allies alone, however benevolent they appeared, if France wished to stand alongside the victors at the war's end. The path ahead was clear, requiring, in the general's words:

... the re-appearance of our armies on the battlefields, the return of our territories to belligerence, participation by the country itself in the efforts of its fighting men, and recognition by the foreign Powers of the fact that France, as such, had gone on with the struggle, – in short, to bring our sovereignty from disaster and the policy of wait-and-see, over to the side of war and, one day, victory.⁷⁸

De Gaulle wanted his movement to make a contribution to the eventual defeat of the Axis and much more. He sought to achieve a "transfer of sovereignty" from the vanquished regime in Vichy, and this momentous ambition necessitated legitimacy, internally among his people and externally on the international scene. His idea of sovereignty very much reflected Westphalian concepts expressed in terms of a centralized government exercising supreme and independent authority over a given area, and holding a monopoly on the legitimate use of force.⁷⁹ Within that framework, de Gaulle seized on the urgency of establishing three pillars (government, territory, armed forces) under the Free French movement. He announced the formation of the *Conseil de défense de l'Empire* (Empire Defence Council) on 27 October 1940, an executive body of sort to manage governmental affairs.⁸⁰ Sovereign territory was sought by gaining the allegiance of France's colonies, a contest of such importance that fratricidal fighting often ensued between military forces wearing the same uniform as in Senegal, Gabon and Syria. The most pressing effort in the summer of 1940, however, was assembling credible armed forces, including a navy capable of carrying de Gaulle's ambitions in the European theatre of operations and reaching out to the farthest corners of the empire. This task would require political support and military assistance on the part of the British, neither of which was necessarily forthcoming at that time.

⁷⁶ Assemblée nationale, "La République dans la tourmente (1939-1945): La période de la guerre, le régime de Vichy et le Gouvernement provisoire de la République française," last accessed 16 February 2015, <http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/decouvrir-l-assemblee/histoire/histoire-de-l-assemblee-nationale/la-republique-dans-la-tourmente-1939-1945>. The quote is from Richard Griffiths, *Pétain* (London, 1970), 248.

⁷⁷ Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle*, 160; and Daniel J. Mahoney, *De Gaulle: Statesmanship, Grandeur, and Modern Democracy*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 87-90.

⁷⁸ De Gaulle, *The Call to Honour*, 87-88. Original quote in French can be found in *L'Appel*, 69.

⁷⁹ For an introduction to these principles, see James A. Caporaso, "Changes in the Westphalian Order: Territory, Public Authority, and Sovereignty," *International Studies Review* 2, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 1; and Daniel Warner, *An Ethic of Responsibility in International Nations* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1991), 9.

⁸⁰ De Gaulle, *L'Appel*, 119 and *The Call to Honour*, 145; and Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle*, 196.

Whether Prime Minister Winston Churchill truly perceived de Gaulle as the savior of France or merely as a choice of last resort following the Armistice is controversial amongst historians and need not be resolved here.⁸¹ Practically, he certainly needed a French ally to keep that country's fleet and its colonies out of Axis hands. This position stood in contrast to that of several members of his government as well as key figures in diplomatic and military circles. The unprecedented situation resulting from the presence of a militant de Gaulle in Great Britain and an ostensibly legitimate regime in Vichy left British leaders facing a conundrum many were reluctant to resolve.⁸² Active and forceful interventions on the part of Churchill would often be required that summer, whenever Free French leaders went knocking on closed doors around London, seeking support in standing up their fledgling forces. The Prime Minister sent a blunt message to the services' chiefs of staff on 12 July 1940:

It is the settled policy of His Majesty's Government to make good strong French contingents for land, sea and air Service [sic]... and to have them as representatives of a France which is continuing the war. It is the duty of the Chiefs of Staff to carry this policy out cordially and effectively... Mere questions of administrative inconvenience must not be allowed to stand in the way of this policy of the State... I hope I may receive assurances that this policy is being whole-heartedly pursued.⁸³

Tensions between the Free French and London, as well as within the British establishment itself, became particularly apparent when de Gaulle sought to assemble effective military forces in the aftermath of Operation *Catapult* and the bloody legacy of Mers el-Kébir. This complex environment greatly complicated the task he assigned to his naval commander that summer, a seasoned sailor but largely devoid of experience in the formulation of higher naval policy and negotiations with foreign powers.

MUSELIER IN JULY

Acting Brigadier-General Charles de Gaulle appointed retired Vice-Admiral Émile Muselier as commander of the *FNFL* and the *Forces aériennes françaises libres* (*FAFL* – Free French Air Force) on 1 July 1940.⁸⁴ Muselier proved both an asset a liability for de Gaulle in the following years. The first officer of the general rank from any of the three services to respond to de Gaulle's call and the only naval flag officer, out of the 50 or so then serving in the *Marine*

⁸¹ For such views, see Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War – Volume 2 – Their Finest Hour* (Cambridge, UK: Riverside Press, 1949), 509; François Kersaudy, *De Gaulle et Churchill: La mésentente cordiale* [De Gaulle and Churchill: Cordial Disagreement] (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2001), 83-85; and Simon Berthon, *Allies at War: The Bitter Rivalry among Churchill, Roosevelt, and de Gaulle* (New York, NY: Carroll & Graph, 2001), 29-31.

⁸² Claude Huan, "Les négociations franco-britanniques de l'automne 1940 [The Franco-British Negotiations of the Fall of 1940]," *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 176 (1994): 140-141; and Berthon, *Allies at War*, 31-32.

⁸³ CAB 121/541 *France: French Fleet*, "Memorandum from Prime Minister Churchill to General Ismay," 12 July 1940. For more statements on Churchill's role in these early months, see de Gaulle, *L'Appel*, 85 and *The Call to Honour*, 105; Muselier, *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 38; and Spears, *Two Men Who Saved France*, 157-159.

⁸⁴ Muselier commanded the *FAFL* in an acting capacity, waiting for a flying officer of suitable seniority to rally the movement. He remained in that role until June 1941. On Muselier's appointment, see de Gaulle, *L'Appel*, 76 and *The Call to Honour*, 95; Muselier, *Marine et Résistance*, 27-28 and *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 14.

nationale, to ever join the Free French, Muselier was a catch of sorts.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, tensions in the command relationship between the senior sailor and the much more junior army officer, younger by eight years, arose immediately and were never quite resolved. De Gaulle was but a colonel at the start of the war and had been made acting brigadier in late May 1940, a fact that clearly grated on Muselier.⁸⁶ Though a competent sailor and effective organiser, Muselier's reputation in naval circles was controversial. Graduating from the *École navale* in 1901 as a classmate of Admiral François Darlan, head of the *Marine nationale* since 1937 already, Muselier had made rear-admiral in 1931, a fairly good pace in those years but he was not promoted again until October 1939.⁸⁷ Even then, promotion only occurred as a result of the wartime requirement to elevate the rank for the position he had held since the previous year – Commander of the Marseille Defence Sector, a rather low-profile appointment. And this only to be “retired” within weeks by *ministre de la Marine* (navy minister) César Campinchi, under pressure from the local business community after Muselier publicly mouthed accusations of war profiteering against prominent citizens.

Muselier never forgave Darlan and the navy's senior leadership for sacrificing him in the face of political pressure.⁸⁸ However, he had been under a cloud throughout the preceding decade, openly stating left-leaning views – a lonely voice among the conservative officer corps – while lasting rumours about his personal character undermined his professional credibility. They ranged from noises about mistresses being kept openly to allegations of opium use (though this practice was reputedly frequent among sailors who had served in Indochina) and involvement with freemasonry.⁸⁹ De Gaulle did not know the retired vice-admiral personally. When advised that Muselier wished to meet with him, he resorted to seeking counsel from Admiral Arandal, the French naval attaché in London, even though the latter had already declined to rally the Free French movement and would soon choose repatriation to Vichy France. De Gaulle recollected the telephone conversation in a 1946 confidence to his aide Claude Guy:

"I [de Gaulle] must know if he [Muselier] is a man of honour." Before answering me, Admiral Arandal paused to reflect. I must actually say that he paused for a very long time (said the General, smiling). Eventually he answered: "Admiral Muselier, you see, is a swashbuckler. But he is a swashbuckler who would never violate his honour. If you take him, you will in turn admire and abhor in him all the qualities and all the faults of a swashbuckler." The General then concluded: "I had to consider myself forewarned. Nevertheless, he was a vice-admiral and a vice-admiral, at that point when the number of those joining me had been negligible, had to be considered. This is why I took him."⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Edmond Pognon, *De Gaulle et l'Armée* [De Gaulle and the Army] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1976), 141.

⁸⁶ For an objective study of this tense relationship, see Chapter XVIII "De Gaulle et Muselier" in Pognon, *De Gaulle et l'Armée*, 141-160. See also Thierry d'Argenlieu, "Les origines des FNFL [Origins of the FNFL]," in *Revue de la France libre* 29 (June 1950): 17-20.

⁸⁷ Hervé Coutau-Bégarie and Claude Huan, *Darlan* (Paris, FR: Fayard, 1989), 32.

⁸⁸ Muselier, *Marine et Résistance*, 15; Coutau-Bégarie and Huan, *Darlan*, 190; and Philippe Masson, *Histoire de la marine – Volume 2 – De la vapeur à l'atome* [History of the French Navy – Volume 2 – From Steam to the Atom] (Paris: Lavauzelle, 1992), 424.

⁸⁹ Philippe Masson, *La Marine française et la guerre, 1939-1945* [The French Navy and the War, 1939-1945], 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: Tallandier, 2000), 193-194; and Jean-Luc Barré, *Devenir de Gaulle, 1939-1943* [Becoming de Gaulle, 1939-1943] (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2003), 118-122.

⁹⁰ In the original quote in French, Admiral Arandal used the term *aventurier* in reference to Muselier. Claude Guy, *En écoutant de Gaulle: Journal 1946-1949* [Listening to de Gaulle: A Journal 1946-1949]

One must note the irony of de Gaulle pausing on the significance of taking on a “swashbuckler” as many of *le Général*’s contemporaries would have used that same term in reference to de Gaulle. Be that as it may, Muselier immediately proved dedicated to the Free French movement. Following a harrowing escape from Marseille on board a decrepit British collier after the Armistice, he had arrived in Gibraltar hoping to find forces from France willing to continue the fight. Even though on the retired list and still unaware of de Gaulle’s call to arms, the 58-year old took charge of the few French units there: armed trawler *Président Houduce* and freighter *Rhin* (the latter adapted to transport naval commandos), unarmed cargo ships *Anadyr* and *Lieutenant de la Tour*, and captured Italian merchantman *Capo Olmo*, as well as several aircraft.⁹¹ He inaugurated “French Naval Station Gibraltar” on 28 June 1940 but Muselier’s initial experience in rallying troops would be representative of the trials ahead.

A brawl erupted on board the vessel *Rhin* when a naval officer sought to convince the civilian crew of continuing the fight despite the Armistice. The officer was badly injured and only six men from that ship joined Muselier while fifty others asked to be repatriated home. The freighter *Lieutenant de la Tour* eventually had to be relinquished to evacuate dozens of sailors, aviators and French civilians from Gibraltar as they elected for the Vichy camp. Undeterred by this first bruising, Muselier secured a seat on a Royal Air Force (RAF) flight to England in the hope of recruiting additional personnel under his own name. Upon landing, he heard of de Gaulle and reported to St Stephen’s House on 30 June.⁹² Both men were still in the fight, regardless of the Armistice and Pétain’s loud entreaties to all French people to rally to him and not take up arms against the Axis powers in order to preserve the sanctity of France’s free zone and its colonies.

Recruitment for the embryo Free French navy was a pressing challenge. Rallying sailors to the *croix de Lorraine* from the existing surrendered fleet was difficult, even before Mers el-Kébir, because of uncertainty over pay, unclear command lines, divided loyalties, and being cut-off from loved ones in France. On the eve of Operation *Catapult*, personnel in the Free French naval headquarters numbered only five officers and one civilian typist. Nearly two hundred *Marine nationale* vessels, ranging from battleships to small motor launches and tugs, and 135 merchant ships had found refuge in Great Britain and other ports throughout the Empire. Strikingly, Muselier could only claim control over two submarines (*Rubis*, operating out of Dundee, Scotland since Fall 1939, and *Narval*, which had escaped from Tunisia to Malta after the Armistice), and three armed trawlers (*Président Houduce* in Gibraltar as well as *Le Vaillant* and *Viking* in Chatham, England), in addition to a few civilian freighters.⁹³ Such numbers were underwhelming, especially when contrasted with the size of the French Navy at the outset of the war as laid out in Table 1 below:

(Paris, FR: Grasset, 1996), 182-183. Another version of the conversation appears in Muselier, *L’amiral Muselier*, 107.

⁹¹ Muselier, *Marine et Résistance*, 24-26 and *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 8-11.

⁹² Muselier, *L’amiral Muselier*, 104-105; and Anthony Heckstall-Smith, *The Fleet That Faced Both Ways* (London, UK: Blond, 1963), 74.

⁹³ Muselier, *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 38; Levisse-Touzé, "Le Général de Gaulle et les débuts de la France Libre," 64; and Émile Chaline, "Les Forces navales françaises libre," in *Espoir* no. 100 (January 1995), last accessed 21 July 2015, <http://www.charles-de-gaulle.org/pages/l-homme/dossiers-thematiques/1940-1944-la-seconde-guerre-mondiale/forces-navales-francaises-libres/analyses/les-forces-navales-francaise-libre-fnfl.php>.

Table 1 – French Naval Strength 1 September 1939

Category	Vessel Name or Number of Hulls per Category	Combined Tonnage	Remarks
Dreadnought Battleships	<i>Courbet, Paris, Bretagne, Provence, Lorraine</i>	112,750	Entered service: <i>Courbet</i> – 1913, <i>Paris</i> – 1914, <i>Bretagne</i> – 1915, <i>Provence</i> – 1915, <i>Lorraine</i> – 1916
Fast Battleships	<i>Richelieu, Jean Bart</i>	70,000	Not yet in service but completing fitting out in Brest (<i>Richelieu</i>) and Saint-Nazaire (<i>Jean Bart</i>).
Light Battleships	<i>Dunkerque, Strasbourg</i>	60,000	Also referred to as battle cruisers or pocket battleships, entered service: <i>Dunkerque</i> 1938, <i>Strasbourg</i> 1939.
Aircraft Carrier	<i>Béarn</i>	22,500	Entered service 1928.
Seaplane Carrier	<i>Commandant Teste</i>	10,160	Entered service 1932.
Heavy Cruisers	19	157,000	Mostly “treaty cruisers” built under the Washington Treaty regime.
Light Cruisers	8	21,500	Most classified as <i>contre-torpilleurs</i> (destroyers) but reclassified as light cruisers in later years.
Destroyers	24	57,600	Modern, mostly built during interwar period.
Torpedo Boats	39	45,000	Wide range of capabilities, some going as far back as WWI.
Submarines	80	73,000	Wide range of capabilities, some going as far back as WWI.
Corvettes / Patrol Boats	53	42,900	Wide range of capabilities, some going as far back as WWI.
Gunboats	7	1,800	All based in China and Indochina
Misc. Auxiliaries	47	70,920	
Totals	288	745,130	

Sources:

SHD, 3 BB 2 SEC 114, Folder *État numérique à la date du 1er septembre 1939 des bâtiments de la Marine classés par catégories*.

Philippe Masson, *La Marine française et la guerre, 1939-1945*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 2000).

Notes:

- Civilian ships armed for the hostilities but which continued to be manned by merchant seamen (from ocean liners to trawlers and large pleasure craft) are not included.
- Figures for submarines under Combined Tonnage indicate submerged displacement.
- Miscellaneous Auxiliaries refer to minesweepers, repair ships, tenders, tankers, etc. Tugs and other small craft dedicated to harbour duties are not included.

French vessels evacuating the Atlantic ports ahead of the fast-moving columns of German tanks in June 1940 arrived in Great Britain with 11,500 crew members on board. They had also embarked 10,000 shore-based sailors and army personnel, and 2,500 civilians as the ships and submarines slipped their moorings. Another 2,500 merchant sailors and a few hundred fishermen came with their boats while 200 aviators flew their machines directly to England and Gibraltar. Some 4,500 injured Dunkirk survivors were still in British hospitals and the bulk of the 6,000-

strong alpine division that had participated in the Norway campaign was back in England after an ill-starred attempt at setting up a redoubt in Brittany in the closing days of the German invasion of France. In total, nearly 35,000 French military personnel and civilians could be found on British territory in the aftermath of the Armistice. And yet, barely four hundred ratings and a dozen officers had pledged allegiance to the Free French Navy as of 3 July while 20,000 of their countrymen had chosen evacuation in a convoy of twelve ocean liners and cargo ships bound for Morocco. Another 10,000 would follow, until the departure of the last repatriation ship on 26 November 1940.⁹⁴ Why such a small uptake?

De Gaulle was partly to blame. His haughty manners, perceived self-aggrandizement and cruel attacks on the personal character of Marshall Pétain – as much a revered figure in French military ranks as among the civilian populace – badly undermined the few visits he made to camps accommodating his fellow French in England.⁹⁵ The reputation of Vice-Admiral Muselier within the *Marine nationale* did not help but British authorities also played a part in these inauspicious beginnings. As early as 17 May 1940, Churchill had commissioned a study on the potential ramifications of a defeated France. The report submitted ten days later included an emphatic concern that the French fleet might fall under Axis control. Participants at an Admiralty meeting on 7 June considered the eventuality that the Royal Navy itself would have to seize or sink these ships if such an eventuality appeared likely.⁹⁶ By the time of the Armistice, disquieted by the presence in their rear of thousands of French military personnel and civilians of doubtful allegiance as the country was preparing to repulse a German invasion, most British authorities came to favour repatriation unless they formally rallied to the Union Jack.

Senior officers also grew concerned that visits to French camps by *FFL* recruiters could result in large-scale unrest and require the reallocation of significant police and military resources away from defence duties to restore order.⁹⁷ Memoirs by early adherents of *la France libre* abound with examples of British representatives undermining Free French recruitment through offers to join Great Britain's armed forces, with higher rates of pay and promises of British citizenship after the hostilities. More immediate measures, such as relocating *FFL* recruits to camps where the living conditions were clearly worse, also harmed this effort.⁹⁸ Facing their own

⁹⁴ Muselier, *Marine et Résistance*, 32 and 51 and *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 14; Émile Chaline, "Les Forces navales françaises libres;" De Gaulle, *L'Appel*, 75 and *The Call to Honour*, 93; Pognon, *De Gaulle et l'Armée*, 123; and Robert O. Paxton, *Parades and Politics at Vichy: The French Officer Corps under Marshall Pétain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 33-34.

⁹⁵ Spears, *Two Men Who Saved France*, 158-159; and Heckstall-Smith, *The Fleet That Faced Both Ways*, 72. Both Roussel (*Charles de Gaulle*, 156-157) and Masson (*La Marine française*, 194, note 160) cite extracts from the testimonies of French citizens and military personnel having met de Gaulle at the time, leaving them with a poor impression of the Free French movement as a result.

⁹⁶ Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, 87; TNA, FO 371/24383, "Action by His Majesty's Government in the Event of a French Military Collapse," 25 May 1940; and TNA, ADM 205/4, "Minutes of a Meeting Held in the First Sea Lord's Room at the Admiralty," 7 June 1940.

⁹⁷ TNA, FO 371/24383, "Extract from the War Cabinet Conclusions on French Armed Forces in the United Kingdom," 28 June 1940; Spears, *Two Men Who Saved France*, 156; and Émile Chaline, "Les Forces navales françaises libres."

⁹⁸ De Gaulle, *L'Appel*, 74-76 and *The Call to Honour*, 93-94; Muselier, *Marine et Résistance*, 32 and 51, and *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 14; Spears, *Two Men Who Saved France*, 157-158; as well as Étienne and Alain Schlumberger, *Les combats et l'honneur des Forces naval françaises libres, 1940-1944* [The

personnel shortages, British officers willingly scraped together men anywhere they could find them and they would rather have them rally to the Union Flag instead of the *croix de Lorraine*.

In addition to the difficulties faced in attracting sailors to the movement was that of wresting control over French vessels detained in British ports in the wake of Operation *Catapult*. The Royal Navy wished to make up for its losses by sailing many of these ships under the White Ensign, either with British crews or those of other navies which had found refuge in Great Britain.⁹⁹ Even a supporter of de Gaulle such as Churchill could at once sound generous toward the leader of *la France libre* and appear ruthless in the requirement to use ships of the *Marine nationale* for British purposes. He stated in a note to the Admiralty:

I think it important that de Gaulle should have one or two or even three ships, even perhaps a battleship, where the Frenchmen predominate and which fly the French flag... These ships may be of use in parleying with French Colonies and in getting into French harbours on one pretext or the other... [As for the others], by all means take at once and commission under the White Ensign all French vessels that are of immediate practical use to us.¹⁰⁰

Churchill released this instruction on 5 July, immediately after Mers el-Kébir and the very day that Vice-Admiral Muselier met the British First Sea Lord, Admiral Dudley Pound, to propose a comprehensive "navy-to-navy" agreement to delineate relations between the RN and the *FNFL*.¹⁰¹ The meeting did not start well. When Muselier expressed his intent to take command of all French warships and merchantmen in the British Isles, Pound replied that Cabinet had already endorsed a decision for British crews to take over an initial allotment of twelve vessels. The requirement to arm as many French escorts as possible and sail them under the British flag to make up for growing losses in the ongoing Battle of the Atlantic would continue for the foreseeable future. For the RN, this arrangement was necessary to ensure that the crews not be treated as "rebels" in opposition to the Vichy regime.

Muselier retorted that the Pétain government was not legitimate but the Second Sea Lord, Admiral Charles Little, stated rather dismissively that world opinion would likely disagree with the leader of the *FNFL*. Pound actually reiterated the promise that any French sailors wishing to join the Royal Navy would be taken in because the British sea service was itself experiencing serious manning problems. Testy exchanges ensued on matters of logistical support, French uniforms for French sailors, the provision of accommodations ashore, Muselier's intention to raise a battalion of *fusiliers-marins* (naval infantry), and the conditions for ships manned by French crews to fire their air defence batteries when under attack while in British ports.

Fighting and the Honour of the Free French Naval Forces, 1940-1944] (Paris, FR: Le cherche midi, 2007), 34-38.

⁹⁹ TNA, CAB 120/285, "Armament Supplies for French Ships," 20 July 1940; Coutau-Bégarie, *Mers el-Kébir*, 110; and Masson, *La Marine française*, 195.

¹⁰⁰ TNA, CAB 120/541, "Note from the Prime Minister to the First Lord and the First Sea Lord," 5 July 1940. In a later missive, Churchill more specifically referred to the importance of retaining French escorts and merchantmen under British colours for use in the on-going Battle of the Atlantic. TNA, PREM 3/179/4, "Note from the Prime Minister to the First Lord and the First Sea Lord," dated 7 July 1940.

¹⁰¹ A French translation of the British minutes of the 5 July meeting can be found in full in Muselier, *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 27-32 and 32-36. Masson also mentions the meeting in *La Marine française*, 195.

Notwithstanding these differences, an initial – and fundamental – *quid pro quo* was reached. *FNFL* crews would be allowed to take back those French ships they could crew as long as they accepted to operate under the orders of British fleet commanders. To Muselier's chagrin, Pound's superiors never ratified this bilateral military agreement in writing. That may have been for the best. The Free French naval commander had not consulted with de Gaulle on this matter, nor Pound with Churchill. The admirals concluded a deal in the absence of higher political direction and the terms obtained by Muselier presented the potential to make the *FNFL* a foreign naval legion rather than a fleet serving Free French interests. Meanwhile, de Gaulle accepted in a 12 July meeting with Vice-Admiral Gerald Dickens, RN Liaison Officer – Allied Navies, that French units could be "lent" to other navies, another important precedent.¹⁰² Remarkably, the General agreed to this commitment without even consulting his naval commander beforehand, showing a glaring lack of coordination between the two and an ill omen for their already fraught relations. Regardless of such drawbacks, these discussions appeared to provide the basis necessary to build up a viable Free French fleet pending the conclusion of a larger political entente.

On the very day de Gaulle met with Dickens, *FNFL* sailors boarded the battleship *Courbet* in Portsmouth. Muselier formed the first contingent of *fusiliers-marins* the next day. In the following weeks, Free French crews resumed control of the submarines *Rubis* and *Narval*, armed trawlers *President Houduce*, *Le Vaillant* and *Viking*, as well as smaller utility vessels and some cargo ships. A majority of the crew of *aviso colonial* (colonial sloop) *Savorgnan de Brazza* elected to join the Free French and they were allowed to return to the ship as a group later that same month.¹⁰³ Conscious that the hostilities would endure and concerned that half of the *FNFL* recruits had no naval experience, an embarked *École navale* was stood up in *Courbet*. Arrangements were soon made for officer candidates to attend the wartime three-month midshipman course at the Royal Naval College in Dartmouth. *FNFL* detachments were also assigned to Royal Navy trade schools for French ratings to train in the rapidly evolving techniques of anti-submarine and anti-air warfare, as well as study communications, engineering and other disciplines.¹⁰⁴

This seeming goodwill could not mask the Admiralty's continued ambition to leverage French ships for its own purposes. *Courbet*'s sister-ship, the battleship *Paris*, remained alongside in Plymouth to be used as a floating depot under the White Ensign, providing quarters to Polish sailors for the remainder of the war.¹⁰⁵ Though scuttled by her crew in Plymouth's shallow anchorage during Operation *Catapult*, the *torpilleur* (light destroyer) *Mistral* was raised in August 1940. She served with a British crew first as a coastal escort and then a gunnery training

¹⁰² The French translation of the British minutes for the 12 July meeting are reproduced in full in Muselier, *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 42-43.

¹⁰³ Muselier, *Marine et Résistance*, 74-76 and Jacques Cornic, "Sous la Croix de Lorraine (under the Cross of Lorraine): The *FNFL* (*Forces Navales Françaises Libres*) 1940-1943 (Free French Naval Forces)," in *Warship International* XXIV, no. 1 (1987): 36 and 39. This last article provides a complete listing of all ships and submarines, of French origin and those lent by the Allies, which saw service with the *FNFL*.

¹⁰⁴ Muselier, *Marine et Résistance*, 77-78 and *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 60-62 ; and Émile Chaline, "Les Forces navales françaises libres".

¹⁰⁵ Towed back to Brest in August 1945, *Paris* continued her role as a depot ship until sold for scrap in December 1955. Masson, *La Marine française*, 487; and Robert Dumas, "The French Dreadnoughts: The 23,500 ton *Courbet* Class (Part 2)," in *Warship* IX, no 36 (1985): 231.

tender until 1944.¹⁰⁶ Her sister-ship *Ouragan* sailed under the colours of Poland before being turned over to the *FNFL* in April 1941.¹⁰⁷ Another light destroyer, *Bouclier*, also embarked Poles but was quickly transferred to the Dutch Navy in late August 1940 and then reassigned to the *FNFL* that December.¹⁰⁸ The light destroyer *La Flore* supported training at HMS *Osprey*, the Royal Navy's anti-submarine warfare school, before joining sister-ships *La Cordelière* and *L'Incomprise* in reserve under British colours for the remainder of the war.¹⁰⁹ The RN also operated three motor torpedo boats (*V.T.B. 8, 11, 12*) as HMS *B. 063, B. 064* and *B. 065* before returning them to the *FNFL* in 1941-42.¹¹⁰ Polish crews manned four small submarine chasers – *Chasseurs 6, 7, 11* and *15*, two of which were lost in combat and two others transferred to the Free French in February 1941 – while six more were taken into British service, only to be kept in reserve or reassigned to the *FNFL* later in the war.¹¹¹ Most tragically, the light destroyer *Branlebas*, operated by a British crew, foundered in a Channel storm on 13 December 1940 with only three survivors out of a complement of 90 sailors.¹¹²

Despite earlier ambitions, the Admiralty in fact could do little with the French ships present in the British Isles. Royal Navy authorities quickly realized that the issues caused by different technical specifications, equipment standards, ammunition calibers and technical manuals only available in French created debilitating delays in those yards assigned to maintain or upgrade these foreign vessels.¹¹³ It also became clear that the best units of the *Marine nationale* had been evacuated to North Africa, leaving but second-class material in English ports.¹¹⁴ Battleships *Courbet* and *Paris* had first seen service before the Great War while escorts such as *Mistral* and *Ouragan* were authorized under the 1922 naval budget. The light destroyers

¹⁰⁶ HMS *Mistral* would be returned to the French Navy in August 1944 but remained in reserve in the English port of Hartlepool for the remainder of the war. Towed back to Cherbourg in 1945, she saw no further service until condemned in 1950. Masson, *La Marine française*, 495; and M.J. Whitley, *Destroyers of World War Two – An International Encyclopedia* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 47-48.

¹⁰⁷ *Ouragan* spent the rest of the war as a French depot ship in Portsmouth. Towed back to France after the hostilities, she saw no further service until her dismantlement in 1949. Masson, *La Marine française*, 494; Cornic, "Sous la Croix de Lorraine," 36; and Whitley, *Destroyers of World War Two*, 47-48.

¹⁰⁸ *Bouclier* saw no further service until sold for scrap in 1950. Masson, *La Marine française*, 498; and Whitley, *Destroyers of World War Two*, 52-54.

¹⁰⁹ All three ships would be returned to the French Navy in 1945 but saw no further service until condemned in 1950. Masson, *La Marine française*, 497-498; and Whitley, *Destroyers of World War Two*, 52-54.

¹¹⁰ *V.T.B. 8* was reassigned to the *FNFL* in 1941 and paid off in 1944. *V.T.B. 11* bore two names while in RN service, HMS *B. 064* and then *MGB 98* before being turned over to the French in June 1942; she was lost in Gosport the following March during a bombing by the *Luftwaffe*. *V.T.B. 12* also bore two names under the White Ensign, HMS *M. 065* and *MGB 99*. The *FNFL* regained her service in June 1942. One can also note that *V.T.B. 23 to 40* had been ordered in 1939 by French authorities from the British Power Boat commercial yard in Hythe, England but these had not been delivered by the time of the Armistice. The RN took the entire lot into service as HMS *MGB 50 to 67*. Cornic, "Sous la Croix de Lorraine," 39; and Angus Konstam, *British Motor Gun Boat 1939-45* (Oxford, UK: Osprey, 2003), 38.

¹¹¹ *Chasseurs 98* and *106* spent the war in reserve and the *FNFL* acquired *Chasseur 8* in July 1942. Masson, *La Marine française*, 515-517; and Richard Worth, *Fleets of World War II* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001), 38.

¹¹² Whitley, *Destroyers of World War Two*, 54; and Paul Auphan and Jacques Mordal, *La Marine française dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale* [The French Navy and the Second World War], 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: France-Empire, 1967), 351.

¹¹³ TNA, CAB 120/285, "Armament Supplies for French Ships," 9 August 1940.

¹¹⁴ Stephen Roskill, *The Navy at War, 1939-1945*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: Wordsworth Editions, 1998), 80.

and sloops possessed neither the autonomy nor seakeeping capabilities necessary for long transatlantic escort missions, as demonstrated by the loss of the *Branlebas*, even though a modern vessel built in 1938.¹¹⁵ Also telling, all French submarines were deemed unsuitable for service under the White Ensign. By the end of 1940, the Royal Navy had largely given up on the concept of arming French ships itself. The Sea Lords accepted instead that *FNFL* sailors were the best source of manpower to return to service those few units that could make an effective contribution to the war on the allied side. This turnaround was but one more small victory for de Gaulle as he set about formalizing the Anglo-Free French relationship in a framework that would have lasting impact for the remainder of the war and beyond.

DE GAULLE IN AUGUST

While Muselier failed to secure a formal navy-to-navy agreement on 5 July 1940, de Gaulle tried to obtain a higher-level accord with Prime Minister Churchill. French law professor Pierre Cassin had followed the French government to Bordeaux in the weeks leading up to the Armistice but he later escaped France on board a British freighter.¹¹⁶ Reporting to de Gaulle's headquarters on 29 June, he was immediately tasked to draft a proposal that would give concrete shape to the declaration of the previous day when the British Cabinet had acknowledged "the leader of all Free Frenchmen."¹¹⁷ De Gaulle endorsed a first version on 1 July, which was communicated to Whitehall the next day. Negotiations then unfolded over the course of the month, often acrimoniously.

Operation *Catapult* played a role in this situation but repeated demands by the French negotiator for Great Britain to commit to controversial issues, such as the full restoration of France's colonies after the war or the exercise by de Gaulle of some form of control over those French citizens recruited into the British armed forces, also delayed the negotiations.¹¹⁸ The bitterness would reach such a level that even Major-General Edward Spears, by then heading the British liaison mission to Free France and a supporter of de Gaulle, would later comment on negotiations conducted "... with exasperating acerbity until even the best disposed of Foreign Office officials grew weary of trying to meet what appeared to be this manifestation of the overwrought nerves of our guests."¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, compromises on both sides led to an accord through an exchange of letters between de Gaulle and Churchill on 7 August 1940.

Though an important step, the very form of the agreement revealed the continued uneasiness of the Anglo-Free French relationship. The main text carefully avoided any terms couching it as a formal treaty or a form of diplomatic recognition between the two parties. The

¹¹⁵ John Jordan and Jean Moulin, *French Destroyers: Torpilleurs d'Escadre & Contre-Torpilleurs, 1922–1956* (Barnsley, UK: Seaford Publishing, 2015), 205.

¹¹⁶ Jean-Louis Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France Libre – Tome 1 – De l'appel du 18 juin à la Libération* [Free France – Volume 1 – From the Call of 18 June to Liberation] (Paris, FR: Gallimard, 1996), 100.

¹¹⁷ See the recollections of René Cassin, "Comment furent signés les accords Churchill-de Gaulle du 7 août 1940," in *Revue de la France Libre* 154 (January-February 1965), <http://www.france-libre.net/accords-churchill-de-gaulle/>; and his memoirs, *Les hommes partis de rien* [The Men Who Started from Nothing] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1974).

¹¹⁸ TNA, CAB 120/539, "Minute from the Prime Minister to General Ismay," 26 July 1940; Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle*, 161; and Barré, *Devenir de Gaulle*, 87-88.

¹¹⁹ Spears, *Two Men Who Saved France*, 145.

cover letters merely referred to "... a memorandum which... will constitute an accord between us concerning the organisation, employment and conditions of service of the [Free French] forces."¹²⁰ Churchill wrote that "... His Majesty's Government is resolved, once allied armies have won victory, to ensure the integral restoration of the independence and greatness of France."¹²¹ By doing so, he avoided specific reference to the future status of France's colonies, a prime concern for de Gaulle. Strikingly, Churchill only referred to the episode in one curt and noncommittal sentence in his 1949 memoirs: "On August 7, I signed a military agreement with [de Gaulle] which dealt with practical needs."¹²² This description was in sharp contrast to negotiator Cassin celebrating the text as the "fundamental charter of the Free French movement."¹²³ De Gaulle also commemorated the event in later years in rousing terms:

The August 7th agreement had a considerable importance for Free France, not only because it got us out of immediate material difficulties, but also because the British authorities, having now an official basis for their relations with us, no longer hesitated to make things easier for us. Above all, the whole world knew that a new beginning of Franco-British solidarity had been made in spite of everything. The consequences soon made themselves felt in certain territories of the Empire and among French residents abroad. But in addition, other States, when they saw Great Britain proceeding to a beginning of recognition, took some steps in the same direction.¹²⁴

Beyond its political ramifications, the accord laid in practical terms fundamental principles of military support and coordination between Great Britain and the Free French movement. The parties mutually agreed that the *FFL* would preserve a French character in terms of flags, discipline, and the administration of personnel, thus avoiding the perception of an amalgamation in the armed forces of another country. Great Britain accepted that de Gaulle's forces exercised priority of assignment for all French equipment found in territories under British control – from capital ships and aircraft to ammunition, stores and supplies – as long as these forces could crew and effectively use such equipment. Churchill also committed to furnishing additional items when necessary to bring French units up to par with their UK equivalent.

As a *quid pro quo*, de Gaulle accepted that Great Britain and other allied powers could avail themselves of unused French equipment – including ships, submarines and aircraft – on a temporary basis as such items would remain French property and be returned to France after the war. De Gaulle further agreed that, while he retained national command over all Free French forces, these would be placed under British control when taking part in a given campaign – which would be the case for most operations involving the *Forces françaises libres* for the foreseeable future. Lastly, Great Britain consented to fund all *FFL* expenses subject to having those sums reimbursed after the war. The agreement represented major concessions from both sides that

¹²⁰ The text of the accord, as well as that of the covering letters by Churchill and de Gaulle, are available in full at Digithèque MJP, "Accord du 7 août 1940 entre la France libre et le Royaume-Uni [Agreement of 7 August 1940 between Free France and the United Kingdom]," last accessed 6 March 2015, <http://mjp.univ-perp.fr/france/co1940fl2.htm>.

¹²¹ *Idem*.

¹²² Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, 508.

¹²³ Cassin, "Comment furent signés les accords Churchill-de Gaulle."

¹²⁴ De Gaulle, *The Call to Honour*, 100-101. Original quote in French can be found in *L'Appel*, 81.

underpinned a practical and effective wartime working arrangement. They would fight together against a common enemy instead of each other.

Though the text of the accord did not provide a detailed plan to implement its wide-ranging clauses, the framework was unprecedented. It managed the support and employment of the seemingly autonomous military forces of a smaller ally within the bounds of the strategy and control of a larger one, long a matter best avoided in the conduct of war at sea. Up to that point, coordinating the movements and support of ships from different countries involved in a single coalition, be it at the tactical level within one combined fleet or strategically over wider theatres of operations, had proven most difficult. Franco-British naval staff talks in the months preceding the conflict sought to lay the foundations for closer cooperation between the two fleets. But again, these had defaulted to geographical separation as the best means to coordinate the movements of forces at sea, or rather to avoid interference between them. Allied commanders were invited to “cooperate” when operating in the same vicinity rather than having one placed formally under the other.¹²⁵ The problem was particularly genuine in the narrow waters of the Mediterranean.

France’s dispatch of *Force X* to the Eastern Mediterranean in Spring 1940 conformed to this fleet operating concept of “command and collaboration” rather than command and control. Operations in Norway and the North Atlantic had left the allied position in the Middle Sea exposed as Italy commenced mobilization on 12 April. Members of the Anglo-French Allied Supreme War Council agreed on 23 April that France would simultaneously reinforce its presence in its assigned area of responsibility – the Western Mediterranean – and dispatch heavy units further east. They would supplement Admiral Andrew Cunningham’s depleted forces, which had already evacuated Malta to regroup in Alexandria, Egypt.¹²⁶ The *Force de Raid* – the Raiding Force, composed of the battleships *Dunkerque* and *Strasbourg* as well as a retinue of three cruisers and several destroyers under the command of Vice-Admiral Marcel Gensoul – left Brest on the Atlantic coast and sailed into Mers el-Kébir on 27 April, where it would meet a fiery end under the guns of the Royal Navy during Operation *Catapult*. Rear-Admiral René-Émile Godfroy was tasked to assemble *Force X*, an *ad hoc* but powerful flotilla of three battleships (*Provence*, *Lorraine* and *Bretagne* coming from Dakar, Senegal), one heavy cruiser (*Suffren* inbound from Indochina), two light cruisers (*Duquesne* and *Tourville* from Toulon) and another (*Duguay-Trouin*) from Lorient, on the Atlantic coast.

Supplemented by five destroyers (*Tigre*, *Lynx*, *Fortuné*, *Forbin* and *Basque*) and one utility vessel (the torpedo net layer *Gladiateur*), the force was established on 29 April and the last

¹²⁵ For example, see records of 1939 Franco-British naval staff talks establishing these procedures in the Mediterranean such as TNA, ADM 1/9962, “Anglo-French Conversations – Minutes of a Meeting Held at Alexandria,” 2 June 1939; and “Minutes of Anglo-French Conversations Held at Alexandria,” 12 June 1939.

¹²⁶ Auphan and Mordal, *La Marine française*, 156-157; and David Brown, *The Royal Navy and the Mediterranean – Volume I – September 1939-October 1940* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2002), xiii. France also retained a small zone of responsibility along the coast of Syria and southern Turkey. The assignment of geographic areas of operation to French and British forces in the Mediterranean is best illustrated with a detailed map in Auphan and Mordal, *La Marine française*, 160-161.

of its units arrived in Alexandria on 24 May 1940.¹²⁷ Promoted to Vice-Admiral on 19 June, in part to match Cunningham's rank, Godfroy's instructions had been to operate as an independent commander but in "cooperation" with his British host.¹²⁸ Godfroy rapidly came to believe that effective operations in these waters could only be conducted under a single naval commander and accepted to informally subordinate his command to that of Cunningham and the Royal Navy:

(Success) required mutual understanding and close collaboration between British and French naval forces. Such cooperation, to deliver best effects, could only result from unity of command... Thus, when we first met, I did not hesitate to tell Cunningham that I would follow his orders in the execution of operations as long as he included me in their planning beforehand, subject to *Force X* remaining first and foremost dedicated to whatever tasks may be received in the future from the French naval command.¹²⁹

Though couched in rather guarded terms, this gentlemen's agreement proved effective in the weeks prior to the Armistice and played a role in the peaceful resolution of the standoff between *Force X* and the Royal Navy on 4 July. The result stood in stark contrast to the brutal blow inflicted at Mers el-Kébir the previous day.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, the arrangement remained a local initiative, unsanctioned by higher authorities, and it did not address the range of issues facing any naval force hosted in a foreign station while isolated from its homeport – from provisioning to maintenance, taking on fuel and ammunition, to disciplining sailors ashore on leave. Although these matters are rarely addressed in narratives dealing with fighting fleets in wartime, they exercise a tremendous impact on the operational status of ships as well as the effectiveness and morale of their crews. The Churchill-de Gaulle agreement of 7 August 1940 was mostly silent on specifics as well. Nevertheless, this unique framework eventually shaped successive precedents in resolving many outstanding issues as Muselier set about expanding the small naval force flying the *croix de Lorraine* flag.

A FLEDGLING FREE FRENCH FLEET

While de Gaulle avoided on 7 August 1940 the prospect of the Free French movement becoming a foreign legion fighting under the British flag, the constant struggle for personnel and resources continued. Barely one thousand French volunteers joined the *FNFL* ranks while seven hundred enlisted in the Royal Navy that summer. Only three sloops (*Savorgnan de Brazza*,

¹²⁷ Auphan and Mordal, *La Marine française*, 157; and René-Émile Godfroy, *L'aventure de la Force X (Escadre française de la Méditerranée orientale) à Alexandrie (1940-1943)* [The Adventure of *Force X* (French Eastern Mediterranean Fleet) in Alexandria (1940-1943)] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1953), 3-5. As the Royal Navy built up its forces in that region, French battleships *Bretagne* and *Provence*, escorted by destroyers *Lynx* and *Tigre*, were eventually detached from *Force X* and proceeded to Mers el-Kébir in early June where they would also endure bombardment by the Royal Navy on 3 July 1940. Godfroy, *L'aventure de la Force X*, 9.

¹²⁸ Though commissioned Admiral due to his appointment as Commander of the Mediterranean Fleet, Cunningham still only held the effective rank of Vice-Admiral in 1940. Andrew B. Cunningham, *A Sailor's Odyssey: The Autobiography of Admiral of the Fleet Viscount Cunningham of Hyndhope* (London, UK: Hutchinson, 1951), 202 and 301.

¹²⁹ Godfroy, *L'aventure de la Force X*, 7-8. Cunningham confirmed this convivial spirit in his own memoirs, *A Sailor's Odyssey*, 225.

¹³⁰ For the conduct of Operation *Catapult* in Alexandria, see Godfroy, *L'aventure de la Force X*, 57-78; Cunningham, *A Sailor's Odyssey*, 243-255; Brown, *The Royal Navy and the Mediterranean*, 33-34; and Masson, *De la vapeur à l'atome*, 417-418.

Commandant Duboc and *Commandant Dominé*), three armed trawlers (*President Houduce*, *Le Vaillant* and *Viking*), and four submarines (*Rubis*, *Minerve*, *Junon* and *Narval*) had been made available for immediate service at sea in August. The force grew slowly through the fall months as more qualified personnel became available to crew French vessels, including two modern destroyers (*Le Triomphant* and *Léopard*), the world's largest submarine (*Surcouf*), and one torpedo boat (*La Melpomène*).¹³¹ By the end of the year, 3,300 sailors sported the *croix de Lorraine* on their breast, though less than half of those were veterans of the *Marine nationale*.¹³² One thousand or so had transferred from the merchant navy while the rest were civilians or former army personnel who had joined without any experience of life at sea. They would require months of training ashore and at sea before joining formed ship companies ready to deploy into combat.

To alleviate inherent difficulties of maintenance and training with foreign equipment and standards, Muselier and Pound agreed in April 1941 that *FNFL* crews could take over new warships under construction in British shipyards instead of recommissioning existing French vessels. This important step started with six Fairmile wooden motor launches and six Flower-class corvettes (*Mimosa*, *Alysse*, *Lobélia*, *Aconit*, *Renoncule*, and *Commandant Detroyat*) acquired through the course of that year.¹³³ Such newfound largesse on the part of the Royal Navy was facilitated by the enactment in the United States of the Lend-Lease Act on 11 March 1941, authorizing the Roosevelt administration to "... sell, transfer title to, exchange, lease, lend, or otherwise dispose of... any defense article... (to) any country whose defense the President deems vital to the defense of the United States."¹³⁴ Roosevelt did not extend Lend-Lease to *la France libre* as he still considered Vichy the more viable and legitimate French regime at that point.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, the Royal Navy now had access to a bounty of new construction in North America that required manning by experienced personnel from Great Britain, leaving more British ships available for employment by allied crews.

This development allowed Admiral Pound to re-direct more resources to Muselier while efforts to bring other *Marine nationale* units into service were virtually abandoned. Three more corvettes were added in 1942 (*Commandant Drogou*, *Commandant d'Estienne d'Orves* and *Roselys*), as well as six Fairmile motor launches.¹³⁶ Later that year, all remaining Fairmiles were replaced with eight Vosper motor torpedo boats. That initiative carried much significance as a mark of increased respect by the RN leadership for the professional competency of the Free French. By then, *FNFL* motor launches and other coastal defence vessels were actively engaged in local convoying operations as well as cross-Channel incursions, including the daring raids

¹³¹ Cornic, "Sous la Croix de Lorraine," 36; Auphan and Mordal, *La Marine française*, 250-252; and Masson, *De la vapeur à l'atome*, 425.

¹³² Chaline, "Les Forces navales françaises libres"; and Masson, *La Marine française*, 193.

¹³³ Émile Chaline and P. Santarelli, "L'activité des F.N.F.L. du 18 juin 1940 au 3 août 1943 [Activity of the *FNFL* from 18 June 1940 to 3 August 1943]," *Revue historique de la Défense* CLXXVI, no. 3 (September 1989), 72; and Jacques Cornic, "Ships for Crews," *Warship International* XXII, no. 3 (1985), 252-253 and 257.

¹³⁴ The bill, formally titled "An Act to Promote the Defense of the United States", is available in full at Our Documents Initiative, *Transcript of Lend-Lease Act (1941)*, last accessed 5 July 2015, <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=71&page=transcript>.

¹³⁵ A topic discussed more extensively in the next chapter.

¹³⁶ Cornic, "Ships for Crews," 252-253 and 257.

against Saint-Nazaire and Dieppe. Moving crews from the slower wooden-hull Fairmiles – designed originally for inshore minesweeping and general purpose coastal work – to the torpedo-carrying fast attack craft of the Vosper class showed a marked confidence in their ability to handle more complex offensive operations conducted at high speed, often at night.

A similar sign of professional trust followed with the handover of the much larger Type III Hunt-class destroyer HMS *Haldon* on 15 December 1942, re-christened *La Combattante*.¹³⁷ The Hunts were some of the most modern destroyers in the British inventory and the Type IIIs benefitted from an amended design based on lessons from the early months of the war (*Haldon* was laid down in January 1941). *La Combattante* would go on to serve as the informal flag ship of the Free French fleet – battleship *Courbet* had been disarmed in March 1941 – and distinguished herself repeatedly during the following two years of arduous patrolling and raiding in the Channel.¹³⁸

The sum total of these transfers, combined with those French units already refurbished, made for a small but effective force as illustrated in Table 2 and Table 3 below. Also shown are some grievous losses endured as a result of the high tempo of operations undertaken during the most challenging years of the war at sea for the Allies. U-boats were poised to cut off Great Britain’s Atlantic lifeline to North America while German surface forces and aircraft actively challenged the RN and the RAF in the Channel and the littoral waters of the British Isles. *FNFL* forces needed to make an immediate contribution to the fight even as its sailors, aviators and *fusiliers-marins* were still familiarizing themselves with their new equipment and updated tactics to defeat a formidable opponent as discussed in the next section.

Table 2 – Free French Units of French Origin 12 July 1940 – 30 December 1942

Category	Vessel Name	Tonnage	Remarks
Dreadnought	<i>Courbet</i>	22,550	- Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 12 July 1940 - Floating barrack/AA battery (five kills) in Portsmouth, disarmed 31 March 1941
Destroyers	<i>Le Triomphant</i>	2,570	- Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 28 August 1940
	<i>Léopard</i>	2,160	- Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 31 August 1940
Torpedo Boats	<i>La Melpomène</i>	610	- Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 31 August 1940 - Transferred back to the RN 15 October 1942 and placed into reserve
Submarines	<i>Sureouf</i>	4,000	- Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 15 September 1940

¹³⁷ Eddy Florentin, *Les Rebelles de La Combattante, 1939-1945* [The Rebels of *La Combattante*, 1939-1945] (Paris, FR: Flammarion, 1998); 359-366.

¹³⁸ *La Combattante* also took part in the Normandy landings and carried de Gaulle across the Channel when he first return to France in June 1944. She was lost in February 1945 after striking a mine in the Humber River estuary. Jordan and Moulin, *French Destroyers*, 265-265.

			– Lost in collision with U.S. cargo ship in the Caribbean 18-19 April 1942
	<i>Narval</i>	1,440	– Rallied Malta 26 June 1940 – Sunk by Italian mine off Tunisia 19 December 1940
	<i>Minerve</i>	800	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 15 August 1940
	<i>Junon</i>	800	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 21 July 1940
	<i>Rubis</i>	925	– Seized Op Catapult but returned to her French crew on the same day as they had already rallied to de Gaulle
Sloops / Avisos	<i>Savorgnan de Brazza</i>	1,960	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 17 July 1940
	<i>Chevreuil</i>	630	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 3 September 1940
	<i>Commandant Duboc</i>	630	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> August 1940
	<i>La Moqueuse</i>	630	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 10 August 1940
	<i>Commandant Dominé</i>	630	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 26 July 1940
Misc. Auxiliaries	<i>Président Houduce</i> (Armed Trawler)	1,179	– Rallied Gibraltar 17 June 1940, never seized
	<i>Reine des Flots</i> (Armed Trawler)	608	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> June 1941
	<i>Viking</i> (Armed Trawler)	1,159	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 31 July 1940 – Torpedoed by German submarine off Lebanon 16 April 1942
	<i>Cap des Palmes</i> (Armed Merchant)	3,082	– Seized by the <i>FNFL</i> in Gabon 9 November 1940
	<i>Chasseur 8</i> (Submarine Chaser)	114	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 21 April 1941 – Sunk off Plymouth by German aircraft 13 July 1942
	<i>Chasseur 10</i>	114	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 22 October 1940
	<i>Chasseur 11</i>	114	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 5 February 1941
	<i>Chasseur 12</i>	114	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 1 May 1941
	<i>Chasseur 13</i>	114	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 16 December 1942
	<i>Chasseur 14</i>	114	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 19 December 1942
	<i>Chasseur 15</i>	114	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 6 February 1941

	<i>Chasseur 41</i>	114	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 9 September 1940
	<i>Chasseur 42</i>	114	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 16 September 1940
	<i>Chasseur 43</i>	114	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 9 September 1940
	<i>V.T.B. 11</i>	28	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> June 1942
	<i>V.T.B. 12</i>	28	– Seized Op Catapult, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> June 1942
Total in Service on 30 December 1942	24 ships and submarines	17,686	– 2.4% of the total tonnage of the 1939 French fleet

Table 3 – Free French Units of British Origin 12 July 1940 – 30 December 1942

Category	Vessel Name	Tonnage	Remarks
Destroyer	<i>La Combattante</i>	1,500	- RN Hunt-class destroyer, transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 15 December 1942
Corvettes (Flower-class)	<i>Mimosa</i>	950	- Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 5 May 1941, torpedoed 9 June 1942
	<i>Alysse</i>	950	- Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 10 June 1941, torpedoed 10 February 1942
	<i>Lobélia</i>	950	- Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 16 July 1941
	<i>Aconit</i>	950	- Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 23 July 1941
	<i>Renoncule</i>	950	- Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 28 July 1941
	<i>Commandant Detroyat</i>	950	- Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 16 September 1941
	<i>Commandant Drogou</i>	950	- Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 26 January 1942
	<i>Commandant d'Estienne d'Orves</i>	950	- Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 23 May 1942
	<i>Roselys</i>	950	- Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 12 Sept. 1942
Fairmile B Motor Launches	<i>Saint Roman (ML 123)</i>	85	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 31 April 1942, returned to RN 30 July 1942
	<i>Saint Guenole (ML 245)</i>	85	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 12 July 1941, returned to RN 31 July 1942
	<i>Saint Yves (ML 246)</i>	85	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 12 July 1941, returned to RN 29 July 1942
	<i>Saint Alain (ML 247)</i>	85	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 20 July 1941, returned to RN 18 August 1942
	<i>Ouessant (ML 205)</i>	85	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 11 May 1942, returned to RN 12 August 1942
	<i>Île de Seine (ML 182)</i>	85	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 30 May 1942, returned to RN 12 August 1942
	<i>Beniguet (ML 269)</i>	85	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 30 May 1942, returned to RN 12 August 1942
	<i>Molene (ML 303)</i>	85	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 20 July 1942, returned to RN 12 August 1942
	<i>ML 262</i>	85	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 1941, lost at St. Nazaire 28 March 1942

	<i>ML 267</i>	85	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 25 July 1941, lost at St. Nazaire 28 March 1942
	<i>ML 268</i>	85	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 1941, lost at St. Nazaire 28 March 1942
	<i>ML 192</i>	85	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 1942, lost at St. Nazaire 28 March 1942
Vosper 70-foot Motor Torpedo Boats (Provided in replacement of the Fairmile MLs)	<i>M.T.B. 94</i>	47	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 24 Oct. 1942
	<i>M.T.B. 98</i>	47	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 24 Oct. 1942
	<i>M.T.B. 90</i>	47	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 11 Nov. 1942
	<i>M.T.B. 91</i>	47	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 17 Nov. 1942
	<i>M.T.B. 96</i>	47	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 24 Nov. 1942
	<i>M.T.B. 227</i>	47	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 2 Dec. 1942
	<i>M.T.B. 239</i>	47	– Transferred to <i>FNFL</i> 7 Dec. 1942
Total in Service on 30 December 1942	16 ships	8,526	– 32% of the total <i>FNFL</i> tonnage

Sources:

Émile Chaline and P. Santarelli, "L'activité des F.N.F.L. du 18 juin 1940 au 3 août 1943 [Activities of the F.N.F.L. from 18 June 1940 to 3 August 1943]," *Revue historique de la Défense* 176, no. 3 (September 1989), 67-80.

Jacques Cornic, "Ships for Crews," *Warship International* 22, no. 3 (1985), 251-266.

Jacques Cornic, "Sous la Croix de Lorraine (Under the Cross of Lorraine): The FNFL (Forces Naval Françaises Libres) 1940-1943 (Free French Naval Forces)," *Warship International* 24, no. 1 (1987), 34-43.

Philippe Masson, *La Marine française et la guerre, 1939-1945*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 2000).

Notes:

- a. Categories do not include naval units used purely as barrack ships or dedicated to alongside training.
- b. Figures stricken through indicate vessels no longer part of the fleet on 30 December 1942 due to losses, disarmament, etc.
- c. Tonnage figures for submarines indicate submerged displacement.
- d. The Miscellaneous Auxiliaries category does not include tugs and other small craft dedicated to harbour duties.

THE FREE FRENCH FLEET IN ACTION

Muselier set about sending units to sea as soon as they were ready in Summer 1940, either under British control for allied purposes or national command in pursuit of Free French interests as allowed by the clauses of the 7 August 1940 agreement.¹³⁹ The three largest ships then available in England – the sloops *Savorgnan de Brazza*, *Commandant Duboc*, and *Commandant Dominé* – set sail on 26 August, soon joined by the Gibraltar-based armed trawler *Président Houduce*. The French flotilla headed south as part of a larger Royal Navy force composed of the aircraft carrier *Ark Royal*, the battleships *Barham* and *Resolution*, five cruisers

¹³⁹ This short overview of *FNFL* operations during the years 1940-1942, unless indicated otherwise, is largely based on Chaline and Santarelli, "L'activité des F.N.F.L.", 70-80; Auphan and Mordal, *La Marine française*, 252-259; Masson, *De la vapeur à l'atome*, 424-425 and 428-432; Louis-Christian Michelet, "La contribution militaire française à l'effort de guerre allié (1941-1945) [French Military Contribution to the Allied War Effort (1941-1945)]," *Guerre mondiale et conflits contemporains* 177 (1995): 8-13; and Jean-Jacques Antier, *L'aventure héroïque des sous-marins français, 1939-1945* [The Heroic Adventure of the French Submarines, 1939-1945] (Nantes, FR: Éditions maritimes, 1984), 110-115.

and ten destroyers, as well as several troop transports with a battalion of French naval infantry and a brigade of Royal Marines. The fleet proceeded to Senegal to rally that colony and, it was hoped, the whole of French Western Africa, whose leaders had pledged allegiance to the Vichy regime.¹⁴⁰ The race was on between Pétain and de Gaulle to secure the loyalty of the French empire.

The armistices with both Germany and Italy stipulated that their troops would not occupy France's dependencies overseas, although representatives from the German and Italian armistice commissions were granted freedom of access in order to verify the implementation of those clauses related to the demobilisation of French military forces. The text implied that these territories would remain loyal to the French signatory and assume the same stance of "friendly neutrality" in the hostilities between the Axis and Great Britain as that of the Vichy government. Article 10 of the Franco-German text stated:

The French Government is obligated to forbid any portion of its remaining armed forces to undertake hostilities against Germany in any manner. French Government also will prevent members of its armed forces from leaving the country and prevent armaments of any sort, including ships, planes, etc., being taken to England or any other place abroad. The French Government will forbid French citizens to fight against Germany in the service of States with which the German Reich is still at war. French citizens who violate this provision are to be treated by German troops as insurgents.¹⁴¹

Both Pétain and de Gaulle needed to acquire and maintain the allegiance of the colonies during the confusing days of Summer 1940. For Vichy, losing the support of colonial authorities and risking that military forces based overseas resume the fight against the Axis would violate the terms of the Armistice, potentially causing Berlin and Rome to order the invasion of the Free Zone. As for de Gaulle, he needed territories, resources and additional troops to buttress his legitimacy as an alternative to Pétain to lead the French nation. French North Africa, in particular, would provide an ideal platform where to rebuild the country's armed forces and launch an offensive from French soil to liberate the *métropole*.¹⁴² Churchill himself had seized on the importance of the Magreb following the fall of France. Even standing alone against the Axis in late June 1940, he proposed dispatching to Morocco a British-Free French force of 25,000 troops to seize the warships berthed in Casablanca – including the battleship *Jean Bart* – and establish an enclave on North African soil under de Gaulle.¹⁴³ Although the chiefs of staff

¹⁴⁰ French Western Africa (*Afrique occidentale française* – AOF), was a federation of eight colonial territories: Mauritania, Senegal, French Sudan (now Mali), French Guinea, Ivory Coast, Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), Dahomey (now Benin) and Niger. The capital of the federation was Dakar.

¹⁴¹ Yale University – The Avalon Project, "Armistice Agreement between the German High Command of the Armed Forces and French Plenipotentiaries, Compiègne, June 22, 1940," last accessed 3 May 2018, <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/frgearm.asp>. The French text appears at Digitèque MJP, "Texte de l'armistice signé à Rethondes le 22 juin 1940," last accessed 3 May 2018, <http://mjp.univ-perp.fr/france/1940armistice.htm>.

¹⁴² Unlike French Western Africa, French North Africa was not a formal federation of territories. The term referred colloquially to the French Magreb region of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Different administrative regimes governed the three areas, however. Morocco and Tunisia were colonial protectorates while Algeria was part of metropolitan France, its three civil territories – Algiers, Oran and Constantine – organized as domestic departments.

¹⁴³ Martin L. Mickelson, "Operation SUSAN: The Origins of the Free French Movement," *Military Affairs* 52, no. 4 (October 1988): 192-196.

undertook some contingency planning to that effect (Operation *Susan*), they quickly dissuaded Churchill from carrying out the risky scheme while Germany appeared poised to invade the British Isles.

The reaction of French authorities in Morocco had *Susan* gone ahead was difficult to determine at the time. Where the loyalty of each colony lied that summer varied greatly from one locale to the other. Native populations were not involved in the decision. Local French elites may have had a say in some territories but, by and large, powerful governors dictated which course to follow.¹⁴⁴ Pétain, upon the advice of Darlan, quickly appointed new authorities in North Africa to ensure a firm grip in that region. Army General Charles Noguès remained in Morocco as *résident général* (equivalent of governor) and military commander-in-chief of the North African theatre of operations but Admiral Jean-Pierre Esteva took over in Tunisia in July and Admiral Jean-Marie Charles Abrial was made *gouverneur général* in Algeria that same month, both replacing civilian public servants. Emphasising the importance of these territories to Vichy, former army commander and current minister of national defence General Maxime Weygand assumed the new post of *Délégué général du Gouvernement français en Afrique française* (General Delegate of the French Government in French Africa) on 5 September 1940 to exercise ultimate civil and military responsibility over “Vichy Africa.”

Meanwhile, Admiral Jean Decoux arrived in Indochina that same month to take over as governor general and military commander-in-chief, having already sworn allegiance to Pétain.¹⁴⁵ Eventually, the French Antilles, Guyana, Saint-Pierre-and-Miquelon, Djibouti, Madagascar, Syria and Lebanon, and the two territories in China (Kouang-Tchéou-Wan – a leased enclave in the Guangzhou province – and the French concession in Shanghai) all acknowledged the authority of Vichy as the rightful government of France. However, defections to the Free French movement also started that summer: New Hebrides (22 July), French Polynesia (9 September) and New Caledonia (24 September) in the Pacific; the five French enclaves in India (7 September); and the majority of the colonies making up French Equatorial Africa with the exception of Gabon, which remained aligned with Vichy.¹⁴⁶ This first wave of volunteer rallying was coming to an end, nevertheless. Churchill and de Gaulle quickly agreed that the time had come for a more forceful prodding and they set their sight on French Western Africa to begin that effort.

They both believed that a demonstration of overwhelming firepower off the coast of Senegal by a force of Free French ships backed up by the Royal Navy would suffice to bring the isolated Pétain loyalists and their leader - *Haut-Commissaire* Pierre Boisson – over to the allied

¹⁴⁴ On the political and legal ramification then facing these decision-makers, see Olivier Beaud, "La France libre, Vichy, l'empire colonial [The Free France, Vichy and the Colonial Empire]," *Jus Politicum*, n° 14, last accessed 3 May 2018, <http://juspoliticum.com/article/La-France-libre-Vichy-l-empire-colonial-978.html>.

¹⁴⁵ John E. Dreifort, "Japan's Advance into Indochina, 1940: The French Response", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, XIII, no. 2 (September 1982): 279–295.

¹⁴⁶ The capital of the *l'Afrique équatoriale française* (AEF) was in Brazzaville, Congo. Chad, Cameroon, Congo and Oubangui-Chari (today's Central African Republic) joined the Free French movement in quick succession on 26, 27, 28 and 29 August 1940. G.E. Maguire, *Anglo-American Policy towards the Free French* (London, UK: Macmillan Press, 1995), 8; and Sylvain Cornil, "La France libre et l'Empire: le ralliement de l'Afrique [Free France and the Rallying of the Empire]," *Fondation de la France libre*, last modified 28 February 2009, <http://www.france-libre.net/fl-empire-afrique/>.

camp. The scheme backfired dramatically. Dismissive of the rebellious de Gaulle, Boisson and his military advisors perceived Operation *Menace* as “perfidious Albion” threatening to invade, the *FNFL* flotilla acting as nothing more than a fig leaf. A violent confrontation ensued during the three-day Battle of Dakar (23-25 September 1940) when several Vichy surface craft and three submarines sortied to confront their opponents, with support provided by shore batteries and the battleship *Richelieu* firing from her alongside berth. They succeeded in inflicting significant damage on the British force. The submarine *Bévésiers* torpedoed the battleship *Resolution*, which withdrew from the scene and remained out of action for nearly a year to undergo repairs in an American shipyard. Shore batteries also inflicted lighter damages on *Barham* and two cruisers. The Vichy camp suffered heavily too with submarines *Persée* and *Ajax* sunk, destroyer *L’Audacieux* set ablaze and beached, and battleship *Richelieu* hit by two volleys from *Barham* while faulty rounds damaged three of the four barrels in her own turret no. 2.¹⁴⁷ On balance, though, the outcome was an unmitigated success for the Pétain camp. The Anglo-Free French force withdrew sullenly while the Vichy government boasted that its forces could and would defend the colonies against any invaders, be they British, Germans or Gaullists.

This resistance demonstrated unexpected resolution on the Vichy side and constituted a grievous political defeat for de Gaulle, badly undermining his ability to rally other colonies and affecting the little credibility he held in neutral countries like the United States.¹⁴⁸ However, the *FFL* could also claim the moral high ground as Vichy forces had been the first to open fire and shed French blood in what became a two year-long fratricidal rivalry. Several Free French sailors, including Commander Thierry d’Argenlieu (Muselier’s chief of staff at the time), were wounded on the first morning of the battle when local troops fired upon their launch as it left Dakar following their failure to sway the representatives of commissioner Boisson. Later that same day, the sloop *Commandant Duboc* came under withering fire while supporting the landing of *fusiliers-marins* near the village of Rufisque. A shore battery round struck the ship and killed three sailors – the first to die under the *croix de Lorraine*. Nevertheless, the vessel remained in action to cover the withdrawal of the landing force, earning praise from the British commander of the combined force, Vice-Admiral John Cunningham.¹⁴⁹

Operation *Menace* failed but the ships and naval troops of the fledgling *FNFL* performed well, integrating smoothly with the larger British fleet, a good omen for future operations. Two months later, the sloops *Savorgnan de Brazza*, *Commandant Dominé* and *Commandant Duboc* participated in the taking of Gabon, the only French Equatorial Africa colony that refused to rally *la France libre*.¹⁵⁰ This campaign, the first rallying obtained through the force of arms, was

¹⁴⁷ Masson, *De la vapeur à l’atome*, 428-432; Jacques Bauche, “Opération « Menace »,” *Revue de la France Libre* 212 (August-September, 1975), last accessed 2 November 2015, <http://www.france-libre.net/operation-menace/>; David H. Lippman, “Debauch at Dakar”, *WWII History* (July 2011): 48–55; as well as John Jordan and Robert Dumas, *French Battleships: 1922-1956* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 141-147.

¹⁴⁸ For personal recollections and analytical views of Operation *Menace*, see de Gaulle, *L’Appel*, 108-110 and *The Call to Honour*, 133-135; Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, 492-494; Godfroy, *L’aventure de la Force X*, 153-156; Coutau-Bégarie and Huan, *Darlan*, 325 ; and Fenby, *The General*, 152-153.

¹⁴⁹ For eyewitness accounts of those engagements, see Florentin, *Les Rebelles de La Combattante*, 175-180; and Schlumberger, *Les combats et l’honneur des Forces naval françaises libre*, 47-48.

¹⁵⁰ Masson, *De la vapeur à l’atome*, 432; Edward L. Bimberg, *Tricolor Over the Sahara: The Desert Battles of the Free French, 1940-1942* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 24-25; Barthélémy Ntoma

largely an army affair with the *FNFL* in a supporting role. Fearing armed opposition as in Dakar, the British-Free French flotilla landed a column led by Colonel Philippe Leclerc on a remote beach of the Gabon coast, which then marched on Libreville to take the capital from its less protected inland side. Nevertheless, the presence outside the harbour of Free French ships and, further offshore, of a small group of RN cruisers and destroyers caused the Vichy submarine *Poncelet* and the sloop *Bougainville* to sortie against overwhelming odds. The *Poncelet* closed in on the British force but was forced to the surface by the sloop *Milford* on 7 November 1940. The submarine captain, Lieutenant Bertrand de Saussine, evacuated the crew to lifeboats but then re-entered his submersible and scuttled her at the cost of his own life. Two days later, *Savorgnan de Brazza* disabled her sister-ship *Bougainville* with withering gun and small arms fire, the first clash that saw a *FNFL* ship kill French sailors while engaging another vessel flying the tricolour.¹⁵¹ By then, both sides had shed French blood and more fratricidal actions would follow while the Free French navy went about taking the fight to the Axis as well.

Free French submarines went back into action in Fall 1940. The Malta-based *Narval* patrolled the central Mediterranean while *Rubis* deployed out of Scotland to roam the North Sea and lay minefields off the coast of Norway. The latter was joined by the *Minerve* in January 1941 and the *Junon* in December, praised for their performance by the Admiralty and contributing to the increased coverage of the *FFL* in the British media.¹⁵² Small surface ships, based closer to the Channel, undertook the escort of coastal convoys and *Chasseur 41* recorded the first *FNFL* victory against an Axis target at sea by shooting down a German aircraft in April 1941.¹⁵³ Other submarine chasers and torpedo boats participated in cross-Channel incursions, such as the raid on the radar installation at Bruneval in February 1942, the attack against the Saint-Nazaire dry dock the following month and the ill-fated landing at Dieppe in August of that same year. While committed to these operations in the European littoral, Muselier also understood the importance of taking on the main threat to the allied effort at the time, the U-boats.

The destroyer *Léopard* commenced convoy escort work in Great Britain's Western Approaches in November 1940 and claimed a first U-boat kill for the Free French on 29 June 1942, having joined the RN ships *Sprey* and *Pelican* in the destruction of *U-136* west of Madeira.¹⁵⁴ Several of the British-built corvettes acquired by the *FNFL* in 1941 saw service with

Mengome, *La bataille de Libreville – De Gaulle contre Pétain: 50 morts* [The Battle of Libreville – De Gaulle against Pétain: 50 Killed] (Paris, FR: L'Harmattan, 2013), *passim*.

¹⁵¹ Embarked in *Savorgnan de Brazza* at the time, Schlumberger recollects this confrontation in *Les combats et l'honneur des Forces navales françaises libres*, 53-58. Indicative of the deepening gulf between the Vichy and Free French camps, the majority of the Gabon garrison refused to join the *FFL* after the battle and they remained interned in Libreville until the end of 1942.

¹⁵² For an example of typically rousing wartime reporting, see a short clip at YouTube, "Free French Submarine," last accessed 5 May 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbxovyWywto>; and British Pathé, "General de Gaulle Honours Free French Navy 1941," last accessed 5 May 2018, <https://www.britishpathe.com/video/general-de-gaulle-honours-free-french-navy>.

¹⁵³ Battleship *Courbet* had been credited with downing two German aircraft on 12 August 1940 but this had been conducted from her alongside berth in Portsmouth. Pascal Hervez-Baudin, *Le cuirassé Courbet dans l'Opération Corncomb ou l'histoire d'un voyage sans retour* [Battleship *Courbet* in Operation *Corncomb* or the Story of a One-way Voyage] (Paris, FR: Nouvelles Éditions latines, 2011), 8.

¹⁵⁴ Though the Captain of *Léopard* had placed an earlier claim for destroying an enemy submarine on 24 February 1941, not enough evidence was obtained to confirm a "kill" during the post-war adjudication process. Chaline and Santarelli, "L'activité des F.N.F.L.", 70.

the Newfoundland-based Mid-Ocean Escort Force starting that summer. Three others were dispatched to operate out of South African ports and some saw service on the Arctic run to Murmansk starting in 1942. Despite their dedicated service through the most challenging years of the Battle of the Atlantic, these units would not be able to claim a first U-boat kill until 7 February 1943 when *Lobelia* sank *U-609*. Though a seemingly poor performance, one must note a parallel with other corvette fleets – such as the Royal Canadian Navy – which struggled in the early years of the war to acquire the level of operational effectiveness required to succeed against the German wolf pack tactics.¹⁵⁵ Convoy escort was grinding and frustrating work, offering little rewards in the face of ongoing danger in a hostile environment. Nevertheless, the presence of these gritty ships and their hardened crews deployed from Murmansk to South Africa and patrolling relentlessly across the breath of the North Atlantic earned them growing respect from the RN and the other allied navies. As importantly, de Gaulle could only rejoice at the fawning media coverage they often received during liberty calls, especially when stopping in North American ports.

Political missions in support of de Gaulle's effort to rally French colonies also continued. After the dramatic affairs of Dakar and Libreville, the colonial sloop *Savorgan the Brazza* sailed to the Indian Ocean and contributed to the blockade of Djibouti, still loyal to Vichy, for most of 1941. Destroyer *Le Triomphant*, torpedo boat *Chevreuil* and the armed merchant cruiser *Cap des Palmes* arrived separately in the Pacific through the fall of 1941 to patrol France's possessions in Micronesia and escort convoys out of Australia and New Zealand.¹⁵⁶ Meanwhile, Vice-Admiral Muselier personally led a naval force to rally Saint-Pierre-and-Miquelon, two small islands off the Newfoundland coast, which took place without a fight on Christmas Eve but raised considerable tensions with the United States.¹⁵⁷ A year later, in November 1942, destroyer *Léopard* moved into the Indian Ocean to take the island of La Réunion. As the ship approached the main harbour, two Vichy soldiers and one Free French officer lost their lives during a gun duel between the vessel and a shore battery.¹⁵⁸ Cut off from the *métropole* and facing dire shortages, the local governor accepted to turn his office over to a representative of de Gaulle without further resistance. This action turned out to be the last deadly confrontation between the two French camps as the *FFL* were excluded from participation in the Anglo-American landings in North Africa that same month.

¹⁵⁵ For the difficulties faced by the RCN in 1939-1941, see Marc Milner, *Canada's Navy: The First Century* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 82-97.

¹⁵⁶ D. Ignatieff, "Présence dans le Pacifique des navires de la France libre [Presence in the Pacific of Free French Ships]," *Bulletin de la Société d'Études historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* LXXVII (2001): 33-43. This deployment also showed the flexibility of Free French units to discharge missions that could simultaneously serve de Gaulle's political goals and allied military objectives.

¹⁵⁷ Berthon, *Allies at War*, 149-159; Muselier, *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 299-316.

¹⁵⁸ Yvan Combeau, "Le ralliement de La Réunion et de Madagascar à la France libre [The Rallying of La Réunion and Madagascar to Free France]," *Les chemins de la mémoire* 231 (November 2012): 2-4. The rallying of La Réunion by the *FNFL* came in the wake of the assault on Madagascar, an operation initiated by the British without the knowledge of de Gaulle nor the participation of any *FFL* forces. Operation *Ironclad* saw the storming of the naval base of Diego Suarez (today's Antsiranana, at the northern tip of the island) on 5-7 May 1942, leading to the loss of armed merchant cruiser *Bougainville* (ex-*Victor Schoelcher*), the sloop *d'Entrecasteaux*, as well as submarines *Bévésiers*, *Héros* and *Monge*. Masson, *Histoire de l'armée française*, 309; and Roskill, *The Navy at War*, 190-191.

De Gaulle's small navy was quite stretched by then. Through 1940 and 1941, Muselier's fleet took on increasing national commitments while continuing to discharge its allied tasks in European waters and in the North Atlantic. Rallying colonies not only entailed responsibility for their political affairs and public administration but responsibility for their defence as well. The legitimacy and credibility of *la France libre* necessitated that the *FFL* allocate sufficient forces to show their capacity to exercise sovereignty locally while the British (and later the Americans) had little appetite to deploy their own assets in locations too remote to be of significance in the war against the Axis powers. *Commandant Duboc*, *Président Houduce*, *Viking* and other craft remained after 1940 to patrol the shores of French Equatorial Africa as well as escort small convoys transiting through these waters. Others rotated through Free French possessions in the Indian and Pacific Oceans for the remainder of the war. More (such as *Commandant Dominé* and another armed merchant cruiser, the *Reine des Flots*) commenced sailing out of Beirut in the Eastern Mediterranean after the seizure of Lebanon and Syria by a British-led force, augmented by Gaullist troops but without the involvement of *FNFL* ships, in the summer of 1941.¹⁵⁹

But a navy is more than its ships and submarines, as Muselier and his staff knew well. That fall also witnessed the birth of Free French naval aviation with the stand-up in October 1941 of a combined navy/air force fighter formation, the *Groupe de chasse Île de France*, designated 340 (Free French) Squadron and assigned to the Royal Air Force Fighter Command.¹⁶⁰ Veterans from French naval aviation (formally the *Aéronautique navale*, most often shortened to the *Aéronavale*) had rallied to Free France since the Armistice but they were initially employed with the RAF as individual augmentees. *Île de France* was the first squadron formed as an integral Free French unit to include pilots and ground crews from the *FNFL*. French Spitfires were first tasked to conduct defensive patrols over southern England before moving on to offensive sweeps over northern France and anti-shipping missions in the Channel and the Bay of Biscay in later years.¹⁶¹ After joining the hostilities, the United States accepted to train Free French naval aircrews on the Consolidated PB4Y Catalina amphibious patrol aircraft for anti-submarine missions, starting in July 1942. Several other pilots embarked in HMS *Indomitable* that

¹⁵⁹ Operation *Exporter* was launched on 8 June 1941 with separate infantry columns marching from Palestine to Beirut in Lebanon and Damascus in Syria to prevent Germany using these territories to support a pro-Axis military coup in Iraq or as a springboard for a potential advance against Egypt. Vichy forces put up a much stronger resistance than expected and ferocious fighting continued until a cease-fire took effect on 12 July. Through these weeks, the Vichy navy lost the submarine *Souffleur* and the destroyer *Chevalier Paul* while the destroyer *Guépard* was badly damaged but succeeded in escaping to Toulon. Masson, *Histoire de l'armée française*, 306-308 and *De la vapeur à l'atome*, 457-459; and Keegan, *The Second World War*, 325-326.

¹⁶⁰ G.H. Bennett provides a detailed genesis of 340 Squadron in *The RAF's French Foreign Legion: De Gaulle, the British and the Re-emergence of French Airpower, 1940-1945* (London, UK: Continuum International Publishing, 2011), 61-72. See also Musée de l'Ordre de la Libération, "Le Groupe de chasse 'Île de France' (1941-1945) [Fighter Group 'Île de France' (1941-1945)]," last accessed 4 November 2015, <http://www.ordredelaliberation.fr/fr/compagnons/les-unites-militaires/le-groupe-de-chasse-ile-de-france-1941-1945>.

¹⁶¹ *Île de France* had initially been placed under a senior British pilot but Lieutenant-Commander Philippe de Scitivaux of the *FNFL* took command on 1 February 1942. See Musée de l'Ordre de la Libération, "Philippe Scitivaux (de)," last accessed 4 November 2015, <http://www.ordredelaliberation.fr/fr/les-compagnons/894/philippe-scitivaux-de>.

December to gain expertise in carrier operations as *FNFL* leaders developed the ambition to create a more well-rounded naval air service.¹⁶²

Retaking colonies and mounting offensive operations against the Axis also necessitated land forces, an object of special attention on the part of Muselier ever since the time of his first meeting with Admiral Pound in July 1940. Though always short of personnel to man Free French ships, Muselier continued to press for larger numbers of naval troops to exercise some influence during operations on land. The 1st battalion of *fusiliers-marins* embarked in September 1940 for Operation *Menace* off Dakar and then landed in Libreville to garrison the Gabon capital in November. Transported to Palestine the following spring, the battalion took part in the drive to Damascus, Syria in June 1941. Converted to an air defence unit, its gunners fought in North Africa throughout the following year, from Bir Hakeim to El Alamein and Tripoli, and then took part in the liberation of Tunisia in 1943.¹⁶³ Additional formations quickly followed.

The 2nd battalion, raised in the fall of 1940, relieved its predecessor for garrison duty in Gabon and then again in Syria in late 1942 but did not see large-scale combat as a formed unit. It was dissolved in March 1943 and its troops reassigned as part of the general reorganisation of French military units which followed the amalgamation of *FFL* and former Vichy forces that year. Earlier, a third battalion was not yet fully constituted when Muselier ordered its conversion to the commando role based on the British model. After arduous training in the hills of Scotland, troops of the *1er Bataillon de Fusilier-Marins Commandos* (1st Battalion of Naval Commandos) took part in several raids on the French coasts from mid-1942 on, starting with Dieppe on 19 August.¹⁶⁴ Though short of personnel throughout his tenure in command of the *FNFL*, Muselier's ambition to develop this additional branch within his service conformed with a long-standing tradition of the *Marine nationale*. In the French model, the navy is responsible for the defence and security of its bases and other shore establishments as well as embarking detachments of "sea-going soldiers" to assist abroad with operations on land.¹⁶⁵ *Fusiliers-marins* troops and naval commandos remain in service in the French navy to this day.

¹⁶² Charles Edward La Haye, "L'aéronautique navale française libre [Free French Naval Air]," *Revue de la France libre* (18 June 1951), last accessed 6 November 2015, <http://www.france-libre.net/aeronautique-navale-fl/>. Joining the *FNFL* in 1941, La Haye commanded its first Catalina squadron after training in the United States.

¹⁶³ The battalion eventually grew to a full regiment after the unification of the *FFL* and former Vichy forces in 1943. The *1er Régiment de fusilier-marins* fought as an armoured reconnaissance unit with French army's 1st Division in Italy, southern France and Germany. Musée de l'Ordre de la Libération, "*Le 1er Régiment de fusilier-marins* [The 1st Regiment of Naval Troops]," last accessed 2 November 2015, <http://www.ordredelaliberation.fr/fr/compagnons/les-unites-militaires/le-1er-regiment-de-fusiliers-marins>.

¹⁶⁴ These commandos also conducted a raid against a V2 launching site in Holland in early 1944, took part in the Normandy invasion (the only French troops to land on D-Day) and pursued further littoral raids in support of the British and Canadian drive through Northwest Europe until the end of the war. Office national des anciens combattants, "*Le 1er Bataillon de Fusiliers Marins Commandos* [1st Battalion of Naval Commandos]," last accessed 13 November 2013, <http://www.onac-vg.fr/files/uploads/le-1er-bataillon-de-fusiliers-marins-commandos..pdf>.

¹⁶⁵ Though dated, extensive and valuable treatments are found in Adolphe-Auguste Lepotier, *Les Fusiliers marins* [Naval Troops] (Paris, FR: Éditions France, 1962); and Georges Fleury, *Les Fusiliers marins de la France libre – De Londres à Bir-Hacheim, de l'Italie au Rhin* [The Free French Naval Troops of the] (Paris, FR : Grasset, 1980).

In total, these operations at sea, in the air and on land brought credit to the *FNFL*, notwithstanding some significant costs. The small utility vessel *Poulmic* struck a mine outside Portsmouth in Fall 1940, taking eleven of her eighteen crew members to their watery grave, the first unit lost under Muselier's command.¹⁶⁶ The Malta-based submarine *Narval* also struck a mine, but off the coast of Tunisia in December 1940, with the death of all fifty sailors onboard.¹⁶⁷ Though 1941 provided reprieve with no ship or submarine sunk, the following year proved particularly grim with the loss in April 1942 of the submarine *Surcouf* and her complement of 130 in the Caribbean, in circumstances that remain controversial today.¹⁶⁸ *Alysse* and *Mimosa* were the first British-built corvettes to be lost, falling victims to German torpedoes in the North Atlantic, in February and June 1942 respectively, while a U-boat sank the armed trawler *Viking* off Lebanon in April. Four Fairmile motor launches did not come back from the raid on Saint-Nazaire in March and the Luftwaffe sank the small *Chasseur 8* in the Channel in July. To this must be added losses among the flying personnel operating out of English and Egyptian airfields as well as the *fusiliers-marins* fighting on the front lines of the Middle East.

The overall number of Free French naval personnel killed and missing rose to 567 by Summer 1943, when the *FNFL* were formally amalgamated with the former Vichy navy.¹⁶⁹ Few as these numbers may have seemed when gauged against the cataclysmic scale of the Second World War, they clearly showed the commitment of Muselier's fledgling navy to the allied cause, especially during the forlorn years of 1940 and 1941 when Great Britain and its dominions stood nearly alone against the Axis. They also suggest that despite its limited size – 5,700 sailors, *fusiliers-marins* and aviators by the end of December 1942; 40 ships, small craft and submarines for a total of 26,212 tons, or 3.5% of the September 1939 French tonnage – the *FNFL* had met the goals assigned by de Gaulle in the summer of 1940. Free French ships and submarines were making a direct contribution to the overall allied war effort, paying an important cost in blood and vessels while demonstrating a growing effectiveness under British operational control. Of particular importance, Muselier's units were the first Gaullist elements to actively join the fight against the Axis in the immediate aftermath of the 7 August 1940 agreement, when de Gaulle was most anxious to build up his legitimacy among the Allies.¹⁷⁰ Admittedly, de Gaulle also used his flotilla for narrower ends in national terms.

¹⁶⁶ Sources vary in stating the date of the sinking, alternating between 6 October and 7 November 1940. Either way, *Poulmic* was indeed the first ship lost to enemy action by the *FNFL*. Auphan et Mordal, *La Marine française*, 252; Musée de la Résistance en ligne, "Le patrouilleur *Poulmic* [Patrol Vessel *Poulmic*]," last accessed 2 November 2015, <http://museedelaresistanceenligne.org/media2880-Le-patrouilleur-iPoulmic-i>; and À la mer – Mémoires des Équipages des marines de guerre, commerce, pêche & plaisance de 1939 à 1945, "POULMIC – transport de troupes [*Poulmic* – Troop Transport]," last accessed 2 November 2015, <http://alamer.fr/index.php?NIUpage=35&Param1=207>.

¹⁶⁷ *Narval* was lost to a French mine off the Tunisian port of Sfax, midway up that country's eastern coast. Musée de la Résistance en ligne, "*Sous-marin Narval* [Submarine *Narval*]," last accessed 3 November 2015, <http://museedelaresistanceenligne.org/media2879-Sous-marin-iNarval-i>.

¹⁶⁸ *Surcouf* was a unique vessel, launched in 1929, not as a submarine but rather as a light cruiser that could submerge, fitted with two 8-inch guns and capable of embarking her own seaplane for reconnaissance and target spotting. She was bound for the Panama Canal and deployment to the Pacific at the time of her loss. Her complete story is narrated by Claude Huan in *Le croiseur sous-marin Surcouf (1926-1942)* [The Submarine Cruiser *Surcouf* (1926-1942)] (Nantes, FR: Éditions Marines, 1996).

¹⁶⁹ Auphan et Mordal, *La Marine française*, 251.

¹⁷⁰ In actuality, the very first Free French to strike the enemy were five *FAFL* aviators embarked in different RAF bombers that conducted a raid over Germany's Ruhr on 21 July 1940. Though this

These affairs did not always conform to British wishes, such as seizing smaller and remoter French colonies that would contribute to the expansion of *la France libre* but not necessarily in accordance to allied priorities. The Saint-Pierre-and-Miquelon episode showed this tendency. De Gaulle ordered Muselier in December 1941 to rally the islands' population as he happened to be visiting Free French units based in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia that winter. The timing of this *coup de main* proved problematic as Muselier sailed from Halifax on board the submarine *Surcouf* and a small group of *FNFL* ships just as USN Rear-Admiral Frederick Horne flew from Washington to Martinique. Soon to be promoted and appointed Vice-Chief of Naval Operations (VCNO), the high-profile visitor met on 17 December with Admiral Georges Robert, *commandant en chef de l'Atlantique Ouest et haut commissaire de France aux Antilles, à Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon et en Guyane*, Vichy's highest military and civilian authority in the western Atlantic and the Caribbeans. Horne saw Robert to discuss US-Vichy relations in the region in the wake of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.¹⁷¹ Their discussion confirmed that, even though the United States was now an active belligerent, relations with Vichy territories and military forces in the Americas remained based on a principle of "mutual non-intervention" as the US government still formally recognized the Pétain regime over that of de Gaulle.

Muselier's arrival in the small fishing village of Saint-Pierre on Christmas Eve triggered a serious crisis between the United States, Free France and Great Britain. Taking over from the local Vichy authorities proved the easiest part, executed without firing a shot as the *FFL* force was welcomed by a large majority of residents. Muselier even organised an island-wide plebiscite the following week so that the citizens could endorse the transfer of power, the only time when the rallying of a colony to Free France was put to a popular vote.¹⁷² In Washington, however, the Roosevelt administration perceived the *FNFL* operation as an unacceptable and destabilizing intervention in the Western Hemisphere, especially coming on the heels of the Horne-Robert agreement of the previous week. Secretary of State Cordell Hull proved particularly incensed, apportioning as much blame to the British prime minister and de Gaulle for failing to seek the endorsement of the United States before making such aggressive move in its sphere of interest.¹⁷³ Though Churchill later referred to the crisis as a mere "tempest in a tea pot,"

endeavour generated enthusiastic coverage in the British press at the time, it remained that the *FNFL* was the first of de Gaulle's services to generate formed units capable of making a viable and sustained contribution to the allied war effort. De Gaulle, *L'Appel*, 78-79 and *The Call to Honour*, 98; and Bennett, *The RAF's French Foreign Legion*, 20-21.

¹⁷¹ Admiral Robert recounted the meeting in *La France aux Antilles de 1939 à 1943* [France in the Caribbean from 1939 to 1943] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1950), 109-115. See also F. A. Baptiste, "Le régime de Vichy à la Martinique (juin 1940 à juin 1943) [The Vichy Regime in Martinique (June 1940 to June 1943)]," *Revue d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale* 28, no. 111 (July 1978): 12-13.

¹⁷² Muselier, *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 279 and 288-289; Pognon, *De Gaulle et l'Armée*, 153; and Maguire, *Anglo-American Policy towards the Free French*, 28.

¹⁷³ In fact, as far back as October 1940, the British government had indicated to the Roosevelt Administration that they would favour initiatives facilitating the rallying of the islands to the Free French cause regardless of Washington's position at the time. Admittedly, circumstances changed dramatically when the United States actively joined the hostilities and Cordell Hull was correct in accusing London of keeping Washington in the dark even though de Gaulle had informed White Hall in early December of his order to Muselier to proceed to Saint-Pierre. TNA, FO 371/24332, "Cypher from F.O. to Mr. Butler (Washington)," 18 October 1940.

this incident could not have come at a worst time for the British prime minister, then in Washington for the first of the wartime Anglo-American conferences.

Short of inter-allied politics, dissensions also appeared between Vice-Admiral Muselier and his British colleagues over purely naval matters. The former sometimes promoted the rearmament of what the latter would call “prestige units”, such as the battleships *Courbet* and the submarine *Surcouf*, both requiring large crews and material resources that the small fleet could ill-afford. Emotional and too often public outbursts by the *FNFL* commander over the allocation of new hulls, dockyard repair time, supplies, shore accommodations and other logistical issues often plagued relations between the two admiralties despite a growing consensus over operational matters. Nevertheless, Muselier did succeed in maintaining an effective – if tense – working relationship with the Sea Lords.¹⁷⁴

Muselier proved especially astute in assigning British transfers to allied tasks in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean (coastal defence and raiding enemy shores by the smaller units, convoy escort by the corvettes) while dispatching French units of lesser interest to the Royal Navy for those missions more narrowly focused on the national objectives demanded by de Gaulle. Thus, the provision of British-built units to the Free French constituted a valuable return on the investment for a Royal Navy that needed to deploy every operational warship that could put to sea during this period. Muselier and his officers appreciated the serviceability and range of such new vessels, which were much better than older French construction of doubtful operational readiness. This seeming *bonne entente* between naval leaders, however, could not alleviate the growing personal tensions that permeated relations between de Gaulle and Muselier through these years, leading to a dramatic divorce in the spring of 1942.

EXIT MUSELIER

Discord amongst the two Free French leaders was always more about politics than military matters, eventually reaching a breaking point between the older leftist radical and the imperious conservative. Muselier’s aggravation with de Gaulle took root in the very first days of his appointment as Commander of the Free French Navy and Air Force and never really went away. Muselier expressed great annoyance that de Gaulle did not support his attempt to obtain a navy-to-navy agreement with the First Sea Lord on 5 July 1940 while refusing him the opportunity to shape the higher-level accord of 7 August.¹⁷⁵ These negotiations remained the purview of a very narrow circle of de Gaulle advisors, to whom Muselier clearly did not belong despite his seniority in rank. Indeed, the grizzled admiral was never formally appointed as a deputy to de Gaulle. The latter created, instead, a *Délégation d’état-major* (Staff Group) within *FFL* headquarters.

This “staff within a staff” reported directly to the Free French leader, even when de Gaulle was away from London for extended periods of time. On such occasions, Muselier acted in the capacity of *Commandant supérieur des Forces militaires en Grande-Bretagne* (Superior

¹⁷⁴ De Gaulle, *Mémoires accessoires*, 380; Pognon, *De Gaulle et l’Armée*, 158; and Spears, *Two Men Who Saved France*, 168.

¹⁷⁵ Muselier, *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 26-27 and 64-71; and Muselier, *L’amiral Muselier*, 117 and 124-125.

Commander of Military Forces in Great Britain) but the *Délégation d'état-major* continued to issue political and military directives without consulting him, a source of great frustration for the vice-admiral. Contrary to Muselier, who dedicated a whole chapter of his memoirs to this matter, de Gaulle only mentioned it briefly in his selective reminiscences when discussing preparations for his departure for the Dakar expedition in late August 1940: "I left our forces in course of formation under the orders of Muselier, an embryo administration under the direction of Antoine, and, in the person of Dewavrin, an element of liaison and direct information."¹⁷⁶ The wording implied parity between Vice-Admiral Muselier, army Major Aristide Antoine and army Captain André Dewavrin, a situation that the much more senior flag officer could hardly appreciate.¹⁷⁷ This situation was but one symptom of the larger difference of views existing between the two men.

They never actually agreed on the fundamental nature of the Free French movement, a matter where the sailor manifested a grievous political naiveté when compared with the shrewd instincts of the soldier. Muselier envisioned a Free French movement that was purely apolitical, a military legion fighting alongside the Allies until a legitimate government could be restored in a liberated France.¹⁷⁸ De Gaulle, for his part, was convinced of the inherently political nature of the *FFL*, of the requirement to immediately institute the organs of an independent state within the framework of the larger military alliance, based on the three pillars of government, territory and armed forces discussed earlier. Hence, de Gaulle created the *Conseil de défense de l'Empire* in October 1940 in addition to the military headquarters structure proposed by Muselier on 10 July.¹⁷⁹ The situation partly explains the urgency shown by de Gaulle in rallying the colonies, even at the risk of shedding French blood as during the Battle of Dakar and in support of the British advance into Syria. The French leader also risked enduring American censure over Saint-Pierre-and-Miquelon.¹⁸⁰ The Free French navy commander was not on side. Muselier actively militated against all of these initiatives in their planning stage only to be manoeuvred into reluctant endorsement in each of these instances by the more politically agile de Gaulle.

Combined with this dissonance of views over the nature of the movement was that of the approach adopted in leading it. Once he had accepted a political role as commissioner on the *Conseil de défense de l'Empire*, Muselier argued for collegial decision-making. He sought to curb a domineering de Gaulle by constraining him as "first among equals", an endeavour that the general easily checked with the support of other commissioners.¹⁸¹ Muselier led another attempt to isolate de Gaulle in the weeks leading up to the replacement of the *Conseil de défense de l'Empire* with a more evolved *Comité national français* (CNF – National French Committee) in

¹⁷⁶ De Gaulle, *The Call to Honour*, 124 and *L'Appel*, 101.

¹⁷⁷ Muselier, *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 92-106; and Pognon, *De Gaulle et l'Armée*, 143.

¹⁷⁸ Muselier, *Marine et résistance*, 100-101; Muselier, *L'amiral Muselier*, 106; Pognon, *De Gaulle et l'Armée*, 141.

¹⁷⁹ On Muselier's proposal for the implementation of a *FFL* headquarters along military lines, see Muselier, *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 39-41.

¹⁸⁰ Muselier, *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 77-79 and 264-265.

¹⁸¹ For the contrasting views of the two men on the *Conseil*, see Muselier, *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 126-128; as well as De Gaulle, *L'Appel*, 119 and *The Call to Honour*, 145.

September 1941.¹⁸² This time, he proposed that de Gaulle be appointed to some new supreme but honorific post while the *FFL* would be guided by a small executive within the larger *Comité national*, an organ within which Muselier would likely exercise a determining influence.

The general once again easily neutralized the admiral's play by leveraging alliances within the Free French senior leadership. De Gaulle also enlisted the help of British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden and First Lord of the Admiralty Albert Alexander to convince Muselier to join the new committee as commissioner for the *FNFL* and the merchant navy without further remonstrance. He reluctantly agreed but, thereafter, dedicated himself to more or less openly contain what he referred to as de Gaulle's "... dream of absolute power."¹⁸³ The accusation shows the gulf between a republican of the Left inspired by the cabinet practices he was then observing in Great Britain – which allowed ministers to challenge Churchill on key decisions – and the conservative general who blamed the bickering of Third Republic politicians for the fall of France. French historian Edmond Pognon summed up de Gaulle's position:

Free France was hope, the seed of a state. And, as de Gaulle would declare it repeatedly, "the State needs a leader." He was, since 18 June, that leader. It was him who first – given the absence of a more notorious personality – decided and said that the real France had to continue fighting and take part in the eventual victory. He, focused on this simple idea, had a plan and an approach that seem the only viable ones and he could follow them inflexibly. Thus, many leaders or an alternate one, were for France the worst dangers.¹⁸⁴

The conflict erupted at a meeting of the French National Committee on 3 March 1942 as a result of the accumulated slights perceived by Muselier.¹⁸⁵ Having just returned from Saint-Pierre-and-Miquelon, where he had had some time to reflect upon his position within the Free French movement, he resigned from his political post as commissioner but proclaimed his intention to retain his military appointment as commander of the navy. Three months of confused discussions and veiled threats between the two men followed, with various intermediaries, including British naval and political authorities seeking to avoid a public rift between their Free French allies.¹⁸⁶ It was to no avail and de Gaulle won the confrontation.

First placing Muselier on extended leave, he appointed Philippe Auboyneau to the French National Committee as commissioner for the navy on 5 March 1941. De Gaulle then put

¹⁸² On that confrontation, see Muselier, *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 226-236; De Gaulle, *L'Appel*, 219-221 and *The Call to Honour*, 256-259; Pognon, *De Gaulle et l'Armée*, 147-152; Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle*, 237-249; and Fenby, *The General*, 175-177.

¹⁸³ "... son rêve de pouvoir absolu." Muselier, *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 38.

¹⁸⁴ Pognon, *De Gaulle et l'Armée*, 143. Muselier's growing esteem for the Westminster cabinet model is highlighted by his grandson, Renaud Muselier, in *L'amiral Muselier*, 123.

¹⁸⁵ Muselier's distrust of de Gaulle had increased significantly as a result of another dubious episode when Scotland Yard arrested him on 2 January 1941, accused of having leaked classified information to the enemy. The British let him go a week later when these allegations proved unfounded but Muselier did not believe that de Gaulle had deployed as much celerity as he could have in standing up for him and pressing for his release. Muselier, *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 138-157; De Gaulle, *L'Appel*, 124-126 and *The Call to Honour*, 150-153; Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle*, 208-210; and Fenby, *The General*, 166-169.

¹⁸⁶ For the protagonists' views of this controversial episode, see Muselier, *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 320-387; de Gaulle, *L'Appel*, 221-223 and *The Call to Honour*, 259-261; Pognon, *De Gaulle et l'Armée*, 154-159; Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle*, 271-280; and Fenby, *The General*, 180-182.

Muselier on a reserve status of sorts, “withdrawn from active service but available for operations.” The latter refused to accept this decision, even though it could have involved taking command of an operation overseas, the rallying of Madagascar perhaps. He also turned down an appointment to what would have been a new post, Inspector General of the Free French Forces, fearing (rightly) that it would be a purely honorific appointment without actual powers. Muselier then recklessly went so far as hinting of his ability to bring the *FNFL* into open dissidence, still fighting on the allied side but no longer taking orders from de Gaulle. This intrigue proved too much, even for Muselier’s remaining supporters within the Free French movement and in British circles. De Gaulle brought the confrontation to a close by fully retiring the vice-admiral on 30 June 1942. In his postwar memoirs, de Gaulle dismissively questioned Muselier’s judgement:

The Admiral had a kind of double personality. As a sailor he gave proof of capacities which deserved high consideration and to which the organisation of our small naval forces was largely due. But he was periodically possessed by a sort of fidgets, which impelled him to intrigue... A few days later this admiral, who had done much for our Navy, notified me that his collaboration with Free France was finished. I was sorry for his sake.¹⁸⁷

The leader of the Free French movement simultaneously denounced the clumsy politician and praised the accomplished sailor. Indeed, differences over military matters – as opposed to political issues – had appeared few and far between. For his part, Muselier mentioned in his memoirs occasional disagreements with de Gaulle over the manning and equipment of the naval infantry battalions, as well as conflicting views on the status of the Free French merchant navy.¹⁸⁸ Nagging dissimilarities over the administration of promotions, assignments and budding career paths for *FNFL* officers and sailors also arose but only one issue of note showed the potential for the general and the admiral to clash at a more fundamental level. In February 1942, Muselier challenged a directive from de Gaulle with the potential to shape the future development of the fleet, whereby the *FFL* leader proposed that several naval divisions be permanently based as independent task forces in the Channel, the Mediterranean and Free French territories in the Pacific. It also proposed to disperse *fusiliers-marins* units and shore-based naval aviation squadrons among the colonies which had rallied to the *croix de Lorraine*. The head of the Free French navy dismissed this vision as a wasteful dispersal of heterogeneous forces that could be neither self-sufficient nor combat effective.

Muselier instead favoured concentration on the core missions of convoy escort in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, and littoral operations in the Channel and the North Sea as the most effective military contributions the fleet could make to the allied war effort.¹⁸⁹ This difference was soon overtaken by Muselier’s resignation the following month, leaving one to wonder where the argument could have gone had the Admiral remained in his post. Regardless, de Gaulle’s vision had already prevailed by that point, with *FNFL* elements widely dispersed around the world, as much to reinforce his political objectives as to support the allied war effort, these two lines of operations not being as mutually exclusive as Muselier seemed to believe.

¹⁸⁷ De Gaulle, *The Call to Honour*, 258 and 261; and *L’Appel*, 220-221 and 223.

¹⁸⁸ Muselier, *De Gaulle contre le Gaullisme*, 58-60.

¹⁸⁹ Chaline and Santarelli, "L’activité des F.N.F.L.", 72.

Though a failed politician and bested by de Gaulle, the French admiral still played a critical role in the earliest years of the nascent Free French movement, largely implementing his vision in terms of the most effective means to put to sea in the most efficient way. The sheer will he showed in the dark days that followed the Armistice and Operation *Catapult* to assemble a "good, workable little fleet to start with" proved essential to de Gaulle's rise during the war years and the eventual rebuilding of France's sea power.¹⁹⁰ Muselier's chosen replacement as commander of the *Forces navales françaises libres* demonstrated that clearly by pursuing remarkably similar policies afterwards.

Philippe Auboyneau first saw service at sea during the last year of the Great War and continued to serve with distinction until June 1940, when he found himself stranded in Alexandria with *Force X*. Within a month, he organised his escape from battleship *Lorraine* and rallied de Gaulle in London.¹⁹¹ Though a mere *capitaine de frégate* (commander), Auboyneau was one of the most senior officers to join the *FNFL* that summer and he took command of *Le Triomphant*, the first French destroyer brought back into service that fall. Promoted to *capitaine de vaisseau* (captain) in 1941, he assumed responsibility for all *FNFL* forces then operating in the Pacific until his urgent recall to Great Britain in the wake of Muselier's resignation, which also entailed his promotion to the rank of *contre-amiral* (rear-admiral).¹⁹² Politically savvy and attuned to the requirement for compromise with allies – be they French or British – Auboyneau proved much more effective in dealing with the imperious de Gaulle and the reluctant sea lords but he also retained Muselier's single-minded focus on the development of the means of Free French seapower: the fleet, the budding naval aviation and the *fusiliers-marins*. He was someone the irascible de Gaulle could work with. Auboyneau oversaw through the remainder of the year the transfer of additional Flower-class corvettes, the transition from the Fairmile launches to the Vosper motor torpedo boats, and the acquisition of the first Hunt-class destroyer.

Though they came to despise each other, de Gaulle and Muselier proved equally capable in adopting an effective approach that balanced implied dependency on British assistance and proclaimed autonomy for their forces. This effort can hardly be called a fulsome naval policy but served the *FFL* well. Muselier found himself forced to take on older French and British vessels and, in due course, new constructions at a rate dictated as much by the vagaries of *FNFL* recruitment and RN dockyard availability as by that of a comprehensive rearmament plan. Indeed, when de Gaulle and Muselier managed to discuss a more enduring vision in February 1942, the matter turned into another source of contention between them. Instead, six *ad hoc* practices came to shape naval matters within the Anglo-Free French relationship: 1) refurbishing former French ships for use by Free French crews; 2) transferring existing and new British warships for manning by French sailors; 3) upgrading *FNFL* units as war fighting at sea evolved; 4) training French sailors in British establishments and sea-going units; 5) the provision of sustained logistical and financial support by the British to the French; and 6) employing French

¹⁹⁰ The citation is a remark made in Parliament by Minister of National Defence for Naval Services Douglas Abbott on 22 October 1945 with regards to the Canadian post-war navy. Parliament of Canada, *Official Report of Debates – House of Commons – 1st Session, 20th Parliament, 1945* Vol. 2, 1368.

¹⁹¹ On Auboyneau's defection, see the perspective of his commander, Vice-Admiral Godfroy (who remained loyal to Vichy until the spring of 1943) in *L'aventure de la Force X*, 135-137.

¹⁹² Musée de l'Ordre de la Libération, "Philippe Auboyneau," last accessed 16 November 2015, http://www.ordredelaliberation.fr/fr_compagnon/41.html.

assets under British operational control while they remained under French national command. As well, they both understood the value of committing their best vessels to alliance tasks and assign older French units to purely Free French objective such as rallying isolated colonies. All of these practices left a legacy of enduring precedents.

In that sense, as equivocal as it may have been, the assistance of Great Britain to de Gaulle's navy at the dawn of the Free French movement proved critical to the rise of *la France libre* first and foremost. But it also shaped relations between France and its allies for the remainder of the war and beyond as will be discussed repeatedly through the next chapters. More immediately, the Royal Navy continued dedicating appreciable resources to fostering the *FNFL* into a small but effective organisation while the Vichy navy carried on its path of atrophy. The November 1942 Anglo-American landings in French North Africa would inflict even more losses on that hollowed shell, culminating in the Toulon scuttling three weeks later that seemingly plunged the remnants of the *Marine nationale* into oblivion. It remained to be seen whether the precedents set under the Anglo-Free French framework could revert this faith as a new actor, the United States, burst onto the scene. France's admirals were left uncertain of their ability to pursue an independent naval policy within this new alliance, not the first or the last time they would face such a conundrum in their quest for rejuvenated seapower.

CHAPTER THREE

"THE AMERICANS HAVE LANDED!" LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR REARMAMENT

A trouser-less US Army Major General Mark W. Clark stood wet and shivering on an isolated Algerian beach late in the evening of Thursday 22 October 1942. He and a small team of American staff officers and British commandos had just returned to the beach located next to the small fishing village of Cherchell, 90 kilometres west of Algiers. They had battled heavy surf and waves when trying to leave in fragile two-man collapsible canoes, known as "folbots." Clark's uniform pants and a belt of heavy gold coins were missing as he had packed them at the bottom of his small craft, expecting a rough ride but underestimating the force of the waves crashing onto the beach in the middle of the night. Their precipitated attempt followed a hurried escape from the nearby house where the group was meeting in secrecy with Vichy officers and diplomat Robert D. Murphy, United States Minister to French North Africa.

The day-long discussions broke when an informer phoned in that the police were about to raid the house, suspicious of the activities taking place there. After hiding in the basement wine cellar while the French authorities searched upstairs, the Anglo-American team rushed down to the beach. They then waited for the weather to abate after their first failed attempt to leave. They eventually crossed the surf and re-embarked in the Royal Navy submarine *Seraph* which had surreptitiously landed them in the same location the previous night. Operation *Flagpole* ended with the usually sharp-dressed American general wearing the rough cloth of peasant's pants lent him by one of the French conspirators. The submarine left the Algerian coast undetected, setting course for Gibraltar as the Anglo-American party rejoiced, feeling their mission was a success.

Clark was deputy to Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Force (AEF), responsible for the planning and execution of Operation *Torch*, the Anglo-American landings in Morocco and Algeria. Clark's main interlocutor at Cherchell, Vichy army Brigadier Charles Mast, had assured him that Vichy forces in North Africa would first put up a token resistance then quickly defect to the allied cause. Famed General Henri Giraud, once clandestinely exfiltrated from southern France, would stand ready take command of the operation and rally the French military and the civilian population. Clark remained guarded in his replies, if not disingenuous. He prevaricated on the role of Giraud (whom the Allies did not envision taking command of Anglo-American troops), the timing of the assault (by then set to take place in just over a fortnight while Mast believed it would only occur months later) and the size of the invasion force (Clarke suggested half a million troops, a far cry from the 107,000 who landed on 8 November).¹⁹³ But he also relayed a clear and potentially massive commitment to France on behalf of the United States.

¹⁹³ For personal recollection of this episode, see Mark W. Clark, *Calculated Risk* (New York, NY: Harper & Brother, 1950), 67-89; Charles Mast, *Histoire d'une rébellion – Alger, 8 novembre 1942* [History of a Rebellion – Algiers, 8 November 1942] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1969), 97-114; and Robert Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 117-120. An unpublished witness account by Jacques Teissier, who lived in the house where the conference took place, appears in John H. Waller, *The Unseen War in Europe – Espionage and Conspiracy in the Second World War* (London, UK: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1996), 255-256.

General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the United States Army, communicated significant strategic guidance to Eisenhower and Clarke in the days leading up to Operation *Flagpole*. On behalf of his political master, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Marshall directed that the American emissary "... should state... the U.S. will furnish equipment for French Forces which will operate against the Axis."¹⁹⁴ This matter-of-fact but momentous pledge – given that nearly 300,000 European and indigenous Vichy troops were garrisoned in French North and West Africa – clenched the deal, allowing Eisenhower's deputy to transmit this succinct report once safely back in Gibraltar:

Discussion followed general lines previously anticipated. Giraud will be contacted by Mast with favorable decision expected by Tuesday. All questions settled satisfactorily except time of assumption of supreme command by French. Valuable intelligence data obtained which will be disseminated to commanders. Our plan of operations appears to be sound.¹⁹⁵

Another line in that same report would prove much more problematic, however: "Initial resistance by French navy and coastal defenses indicated by naval information [sic] which also indicates that this resistance will fall off rapidly as our forces land."¹⁹⁶ As Eisenhower's armada approached the shores of Morocco and Algeria at dawn on 8 November 1942, the Vichy navy did resist and such opposition did not cease until the Anglo-Americans had inflicted grievous losses on the naval forces based in North Africa, the last such violent confrontation between French and allied forces during the Second World War. In Algiers, two shore batteries manned by sailors continued firing throughout the first day, only knocked out of action by gun and aerial bombardment in the late afternoon. Two submarines, the *Caiman* and the *Marsouin*, immediately sailed out but were soon detected by British units and heavily depth-charged until they broke off to escape to Toulon, in metropolitan France. Meanwhile, fighting to the west took on an even more violent turn.

A large force of Vichy ships and submarines left Mers el-Kébir and Oran that morning, only to be quickly overwhelmed by a torrent of gunfire and aerial assault, leaving the sloop *La Surprise* as well as light destroyers *Tramontante* and *Tornado* sunk while *Typhon* was badly mauled but able to return to port later that day. Submarines *Argonaute* and *Actéon* were soon lost with all hands but another (*Fresnel*) eventually escaped the heavy barrage of depth charges, setting off to Toulon. On 9 November, the local naval commander, Rear-Admiral André Rioult, ordered another sortie, only to see the heavy destroyer *Épervier* set ablaze and beached while *Typhon* once again turned back to find refuge in port under heavy fire. Following the loss of 347 sailors in two days, Rioult admitted defeat that evening and ordered the scuttling of his remaining units in port, resulting in the sinking of *Typhon*, four submarines and seven small patrol boats.

¹⁹⁴ Cable from General George C. Marshall to Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower, 17 October 1942, cited by Marcel Vigneras in *Rearming the French*, United States Army in World War II (Washington, DC: Center of Military History United States Army, 1957), 1 (note 1).

¹⁹⁵ Retransmission of a report from Major General Mark W. Clark to Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower in a cable from European Theater of Operations, United States Army (ETOUSA) to Adjutant General, War Department (AGWAR), 25 October 1942. Official Cables, 31 July – 12 November 1942, Box 131, Principal File Series – Papers, Pre-Presidential, 1941-1952, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library (Abilene, KS; hereafter DDEPL).

¹⁹⁶ Mark's original cable to Eisenhower appears in full in Clark, *Calculated Risk*, 88-89.

The heaviest fighting took place off Morocco, where the Vichy fleet was second in size only to the one based in Toulon. Landings north and south of Casablanca were accompanied by a heavy bombardment of the naval base and the adjacent airfield by an American force composed of the battleship *Massachusetts*, the heavy cruisers *Augusta*, *Brooklyn* and *Tuscaloosa*, as well as the aircraft carrier *Ranger*, the smaller escort carrier *Suwannee* and several destroyers. Vichy coastal batteries fired first but ineffectively and the returning fire quickly disabled those guns as well as a French heavy destroyer, two smaller ones, three submarines and three merchant ships in the port of Casablanca. Vice-Admiral François-Félix Michelier, commander of all naval forces in Morocco, ordered Rear-Admiral Gervais de Lafond to take his 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron to sea for a gallant but doomed sortie that led to the loss of the cruiser *Primauguet* as well as the destroyers *Albatros*, *Fougueux*, *Milan* and *Boulonnais*. Heavily damaged, destroyers *Frondeur* and *Brestois* made it back into port but capsized later that night despite ongoing damage control efforts, leaving *Alcyon* as the only ship from the group still in fighting trim.

The next day, renewed resistance ashore by mixed units of soldiers, sailors and air personnel thrown together overnight blocked the advance onto Casablanca led by Major General George S. Patton, who called for a final gun and aerial assault on the port on 10 November. The Americans focused the attack on the battleship *Jean Bart*, immobilized at her berth but with one turret of four 15-inch guns still capable of engaging ships at sea. She soon settled on the shallow bottom, upright but with her upper decks ripped open by two 1,000-pound bombs dropped by aircraft from the *Ranger*. Seven other warships and five submarines were also quickly disabled during this last demonstration of overwhelming force. By the time the guns fell silent across French North Africa, on 11 November 1942, the Vichy navy accounted for the bulk of the nearly 1,500 French who lost their lives standing up for Pétain against the Anglo-American assault. Another 2,000 were wounded while the allied losses stood at 500 dead and 700 injured.¹⁹⁷ At least, this episode did not result in another occurrence of fratricidal infighting between French forces.

The *Forces françaises libres* did not participate in *Torch* and Charles de Gaulle did not know of the assault in advance. By Fall 1942, the likelihood of a landing in North Africa before the next summer was obvious to friends and foes alike. Nevertheless, secrecy about the exact timing of the operation worried the Allies and *FFL* headquarters suffered from a bad reputation regarding its ability to guard sensitive information. Planners in Washington and London were also concerned with the prospect of a serious disturbances – if not outright civil war – breaking

¹⁹⁷ Despite his focus on the U.S. Army, Rick Atkinson offers an excellent overall perspective on the planning and conduct of Operation *Torch* in *An Army at Dawn – The War in North Africa, 1942-1943* (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 2002), 21-160 while the British effort can be traced through a most complete file at The National Archives (Kew, UK; hereafter TNA), ADM 234/359 No. 38: *Invasion of North Africa (Operation TORCH) Nov. 1942 - Feb. 1943*. Specific narrations of the Vichy navy preparations and fighting during the landings appear in Paul Auphan and Jacques Mordal, *La Marine française dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale* [The French Navy and the Second World War], 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: France-Empire, 1967), 263-293; Anthony Heckstall-Smith, *The Fleet That Faced Both Ways* (London, UK: Blond, 1963), 197-203; and Philippe Masson, *La Marine française et la guerre, 1939-1945* [The French Navy and the War, 1939-1945], 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: Tallandier, 2000), 356-378. Christine Levisse-Touzé provides a larger perspective of the overall reaction of Vichy forces across French North Africa during Operation *Torch* in *L'Afrique du Nord dans la guerre, 1939-1945* [North Africa during the War, 1939-1945] (Paris, FR: Albin Michel, 1998), 233-261.

out if troops sporting the *croix de Lorraine* paraded as victors in the streets of Algiers and Casablanca in the aftermath of the landings.¹⁹⁸ British Prime Minister Winston Churchill had the disagreeable duty to meet with the shocked Free French leader to explain why he was kept in the dark.¹⁹⁹ Churchill had indicated to Roosevelt earlier that he wished to inform de Gaulle the day before the landings as a gesture of courtesy and he proposed to offer him the trusteeship of Madagascar as a compensation for the exclusion of *la France libre* from North Africa. On 5 November, Roosevelt curtly refused that de Gaulle be informed in advance and disagreed with the Madagascar proposition. He only accepted that Churchill tell him the Americans were behind the decision to exclude his movement from the operation.

Such exclusion demonstrated the complexities that continued to bedevil the Anglo-Free French relationship in 1942 and foreshadowed the difficulties ahead as the United States joined the fight. The Roosevelt administration abandoned its recognition of the Pétain regime but continued to ignore de Gaulle. The Americans espoused a “third way” to facilitate the mobilization of French forces in support of the allied war effort. General Henri Giraud was eventually promoted to take on that role. This domineering vision would fail over the long term but the herculean effort to rearm France’s combatants who joined the allied camp eventually succeeded despite continued personal mistrust, conflicting strategic priorities and clashing ambitions among Americans, British and French political and military leaders. These factors all came to the fore during the dramatic weeks that followed the landings. To understand this intricate outcome, however, one must first recall the complexities that evolved from the diffident approach adopted by a neutral America confronted with a divided France in the wake of the Armistice.

EARLY FRANCO-US RELATIONS

The fall of France in June 1940 left the Americans facing a geopolitical conundrum similar to that of Great Britain but different in its circumstances. Both liberal democracies relied on the use of the seas to access worldwide markets for their prosperity and link their overseas territories. Both Churchill and Roosevelt viewed the dominance of continental Europe by a domineering Germany and the expansion of Imperial Japan in the Pacific as fundamental threats to their national interest.²⁰⁰ Both perceived each other as mutually supportive. Churchill

¹⁹⁸ *Minutes of the Combined Chiefs of Staff Meetings, 1942-1945* (Microfilms Holdings), Minutes of the 22nd CCS Meeting, dated 4 August 1942; and Mario Rossi, *Roosevelt and the French* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1993), 93-94.

¹⁹⁹ On this awkward episode, see Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre – Volume 2 – L’unité, 1942-1944* [War Memoirs. Volume 2. Unity, 1942-1944] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1956), 41-43 and *War Memoirs – Volume 2 – Unity, 1942-1944*, trans. Richard Howard (London, UK: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1959), 46-48. Churchill himself did not refer to the meeting in his memoirs but did go over the exchange of cables he had on this subject with President Roosevelt in *The Second World War – Volume 4 – The Hinge of Faith* (Cambridge, UK: Riverside Press, 1950), 604-606. These cables can be found in full in Warren F. Kimball (ed.), *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence – Volume 1 – Alliance Emerging, October 1933-November 1942* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Legacy Library, 1984), 660-661.

²⁰⁰ For a magisterial but concise analysis of Roosevelt’s geopolitical thought through the interwar period to the fall of France, see Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 369-387. See also Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, 9th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 683-742; and Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), 23-315 for fuller treatments. For

recognized that "... the US held the key to Britain's survival"²⁰¹ and Roosevelt believed that "... America was obliged to make every effort to prevent Great Britain's defeat."²⁰² But the United States was not at war that summer and did not face the threat of immediate invasion that Great Britain did. On the one hand, Prime Minister Churchill wanted France to continue fighting because he needed an ally to rally the French colonies and keep those forces outside of occupied France actively engaged in the hostilities at his side. Churchill's support to Charles de Gaulle and *la France libre* was calculated. Roosevelt, on the other hand, merely needed to keep those colonies and the French fleet out of Germany's grasp for the time being. The American president could not tolerate an assembly of forces that could overwhelm the British Isles before he had time to convince the American people to abandon its isolationism. His endorsement of a neutral France sought to prevent active collaboration with the Axis and dissuading France from joining hostilities on Germany's side against Great Britain.

If anything, Roosevelt believed the United States needed to support the Pétain regime in order to reinforce the old *maréchal's* will to face down future demands on the part of the Axis.²⁰³ Vichy's brittle control over France's colonial empire came to the fore in the very first months of the new government as Japan sought to make inroads in northern Indochina to support immediate operations in China and, potentially, a future advance into Southeast Asia.²⁰⁴ Throughout Summer 1940, Japanese authorities increased pressure on the French colony, by then cut off from metropolitan France with negligible forces of its own: 12,000 European troops and another 30,000 ill-trained indigenous forces, sixty airplanes, the light cruiser *Lamotte-Picquet*, two smaller sloops and a few more antiquated riverine gunboats. In August, the local governor, Vice-Admiral Jean Decoux, made a first concession by formally acknowledging Japan's "preeminent position in the Far East" and accorded to Japanese forces the use of military facilities in the Tonkin (the northernmost of the Indochina provinces, abutting the border with China).²⁰⁵ A few

Churchill's perspective, although he was out of power for much of that time, see B.J.C. McKercher, "The Limitations of the Politician-Strategist: Winston Churchill and the German Threat, 1933-1939," in *Churchill and the Strategic Dilemmas before the World Wars: Essays in Honor of Michael I. Handel* (London, UK: Frank Cass, 2003): 88-120.

²⁰¹ Steve Weiss, *Allies in Conflict: Anglo-American Strategic Negotiations, 1938-1944* (London, UK: MacMillan Press, 1996), 15.

²⁰² Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 387.

²⁰³ Simon Berthon, *Allies at War: The Bitter Rivalry among Churchill, Roosevelt, and de Gaulle* (New York, NY: Carroll & Graph, 2001), 87-88.

²⁰⁴ Yves Gras, "L'intrusion japonaise en Indochine (juin 1940 – mars 1945) [The Japanese Intrusion into Indochina (June 1940 – March 1945)," *Revue historique des Armées*, 153, no. 4 (1983): 88-90; Hesse d'Alzon, "La présence militaire française en Indochine de 1940 à la capitulation japonaise [French Military Presence in Indochina from 1940 to the Japanese Surrender]," in *Les armées françaises pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, 1939-1945* [The French Armed Forces during the Second World War, 1939-1945] (Paris: F.E.D.N.-I.H.C.C., 1986), 282-284; Meirion and Susie Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun – The Rise and Fall of the Imperial Japanese Army* (New York, NY: Random House, 1991), 276-278; and Ikuhiko Hata, "The Army's Move into French Indochina," in *The Fateful Choice: Japan's Advance into Southeast Asia, 1939-1941* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1980): 155-208.

²⁰⁵ Decoux provides in his memoirs a personal insight into his dire situation at the time, as well as his larger experience as governor general of Indochina from the summer of 1940 to March 1945, when he was imprisoned as Japan forcefully took control of the whole of Indochina. Jean Decoux, *À la barre de l'Indochine : Histoire de mon Gouvernement Général (1940-1945)* [At Indochina's Helm : History of my General Governance (1940-1945)] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1950). See pages 91-122 for the events which took place in August and September 1940.

weeks later, additional demands led to a lightening four-day assault by Japanese troops based in China, quickly overwhelming the French garrisons dispersed along the border. A desperate Decoux agreed on 26 September 1940 to stationing of Japanese troops in the colonial capital of Hanoi and the nearby port of Haiphong (at the mouth of the Red River Delta) while other contingents took control of three military airfields and the railway between Haiphong and the southern Chinese province of Guangxi.

In exchange for these concessions, Decoux – who had pledged allegiance to Pétain and replaced General Georges Catroux in July 1940 – obtained the recognition by Japan of Vichy’s nominal sovereignty over Indochina. These events greatly alarmed American military planners and President Roosevelt himself. Whether in the Pacific or closer to Europe, the potential for Axis powers to take control of French overseas possessions could tip the overall strategic balance, offsetting the United States’ ability to support Great Britain, if not threatening the security of continental America itself. Much was made during Fall 1940 of the potential for Dakar as a launch point for German long-range bombers capable of reaching the Eastern Seaboard via airfields in South American countries friendly to the Axis. The West African colony, as well as French territories in the Caribbean, could serve as bases for *Kriegsmarine* surface raiders and submarines.²⁰⁶ As disturbing were indications that the Vichy regime could turn away from neutrality to active collaboration with Germany.

A photograph of Pétain shaking hands with Hitler in the Montoire-sur-le-Loire train station (two hundred kilometres south-west of Paris) on 24 October 1940 was seen around the world and largely interpreted as symbolic of the rising influence of Vichy foreign affairs minister Pierre Laval. The interview took place during the German *Furher*’s return from his visit to the *Caudillo* of Spain, Francisco Franco. Laval, who openly promoted the integration of an independent France into a German-dominated European order, had actively lobbied both Pétain and German authorities to arrange the brief meeting in Montoire.²⁰⁷ Roosevelt outlined his thoughts on the matter in a missive addressed to retired Admiral William D. Leahy on 17 November 1940, calling on him to take up the appointment of United States ambassador to Vichy:

We are confronting an increasingly serious situation in France because of the possibility that one element of the present French government may persuade Marshal Pétain to enter into agreements with Germany which will facilitate the efforts of the Axis powers against Great Britain. There is even the possibility that France may actually engage in a war against Great Britain and in particular, that the French Fleet may be utilized under the

²⁰⁶ US War Plan *Rainbow Four*, completed in 1940, envisioned just such a scenario where the fall of France and Great Britain would require the extension of the “active defence” of the Western Hemisphere by the occupation of British and French possessions in the Caribbean as well as seizing airfields and ports in Western Africa, among them Dakar. Steven T. Ross (ed.), *U.S. War Plans: 1938-1945* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 33-54.

²⁰⁷ Cable from Chargé d’affaires in France H. Freeman Matthews to the Secretary of State dated 26 October 1940 in United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1940 – Volume II – General and Europe* (hereafter *FRUS 1940*) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), 395-397; Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War – Volume 2 – Their Finest Hour* (Cambridge, UK: Riverside Press, 1949), 524-527; and Charles Williams, *Pétain: How the Hero of France Became a Convicted Traitor and Changed the Course of History* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 177-180.

control of Germany. We need in France at this time an Ambassador who can gain the confidence of Marshal Pétain, who at the present moment is the one powerful element of the French Government who is standing firm against selling out to Germany.²⁰⁸

In addition to the issue of the colonies, Roosevelt's reference to the French fleet underlined the continuing centrality of the battleship to naval thinking at that early stage of the conflict. Despite the lessons of the First World War, both submarines and aircraft remained underestimated as a threat to surface ships. A widely-held but misplaced belief suggested that recent advances in the means of underwater detection and anti-air gunnery would allow battle fleets and convoys to get through relatively unscathed. The British air raid against Italian warships in the port of Taranto had taken place just a week earlier (11-12 November 1940) but Pearl Harbor and the major aircraft carrier engagements of the Pacific War had yet to occur, seemingly leaving the large "gun carrier" as queen of the battle at sea.²⁰⁹ Thus, even after the attack against Mers el-Kebir by the Royal Navy, the Vichy fleet could still be perceived as a potent opponent of its own, or at least capable of tipping the scales against Great Britain's naval supremacy in European waters were its largest ships to join forces with the *Kriegsmarine* and Italy's *Regia Marina*. Admittedly, its units were dispersed and their readiness difficult to assess.

The British knew they had inflicted some damage on the battleship *Richelieu* in Dakar during Operation *Catapult* and the fact that her sister-ship *Jean Bart* had found refuge in Casablanca before completing her fitting out and sea trials was well-known. Nevertheless, neither British nor American authorities could clearly gauge the ability of the French to progress repairs on these ships in 1940 from such remote locations. They were also aware that Toulon still hosted the *Forces de Haute Mer* – the High Sea Forces — which included the battleships *Provence* and *Dunkerque* (both damaged at Mers el-Kebir but transferred to Toulon for repairs) and *Strasbourg* (which had escaped Mers el-Kebir unscathed). Even as late as in the days leading up to Operation *Torch*, Churchill still stated dramatically:

If I could meet Darlan, much as I hate him, I would cheerfully crawl on my hands and knees for a mile if by doing so I could get him to bring that fleet of his into the circle of Allied forces.²¹⁰

British and American naval planners could not simply dismiss the possibility of these capital ships – and their powerful escorts of heavy cruisers and destroyers – eventually resuming

²⁰⁸ William D. Leahy, *I Was There: The Personal Story of the Chief of Staff to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman Based on His Notes and Diaries Made at the Time* (New York, NY: Whittlesey House, 1950), 6.

²⁰⁹ For detailed studies of the hesitant approach adopted by major navies of the 1930s towards these new weapons, see Geoffrey Till, "Adopting the Aircraft Carrier – The British, American, and Japanese Case Studies," and Holger H. Herwig, "Innovation Ignored: The Submarine Problem – Germany, Britain, and the United States, 1919-1939," in *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 191-226 and 227-264. For similar musings specific to the French navy, see Jean Meyer and Martin Acerra, *Histoire de la Marine française des origines à nos jours* [History of the French Navy from the Origins to Today], (Rennes, FR: Éditions Ouest-France, 1994), 349-351; and Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, "Réflexions sur l'école française de stratégie navale [Reflections on the French School of Naval Strategy]," in *L'évolution de la pensée navale* [The Evolution of Naval Thought] (Paris, FR: Fondation pour les Études de Défense nationale, 1990): 52-55.

²¹⁰ Quoted by Dwight D. Eisenhower in his wartime memoirs, *Crusade in Europe* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1948), 105.

wartime readiness and breaking out of their respective ports to meet in the Atlantic or the Mediterranean. Reflective of this apprehension was the “Dudley North Affair” in Fall 1940, when the British Admiralty relieved Flag Officer Commanding North Atlantic Station, Admiral Dudley North, for failing to intercept a Vichy squadron that transited from Toulon to the Atlantic through the Strait of Gibraltar in September.²¹¹ That month, Darlan dispatched *Force Y* under Rear-Admiral Jean Bourragué (cruisers *Montcalm*, *Georges Leygues* and *Gloire*; destroyers *Le Malin*, *Le Fantasque* and *L’Audacieux*) to reinforce Gabon in response to the rallying to *la France libre* of the remainder of the French Equatorial Africa colonies in August 1940. This deployment was perceived by the British as a threat to the Anglo-Free French force then approaching Dakar in French Western Africa for Operation *Menace*, although Vichy was not yet aware of that presence and the transit of *Force Y* was coincidental. Although the two forces did not meet, North’s swift firing after this dramatic episode of utter confusion reflected the importance the Allies placed on closely monitoring the movements of the Vichy fleet, on both sides of the Atlantic.

Successive RN Commanders-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet – Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham to March 1942 and Admiral Sir Henry Harwood thereafter – considered the need to keep some units within a few hours’ steaming of Alexandria when planning operations. This additional burden on forces that were already overstretched resulted, in part, from the requirement to deter Vichy’s *Force X*, though immobilized in that port since Operation *Catapult*, from attempting an unexpected breakout.²¹² On the other side of the Atlantic, the United States concluded an agreement with Vichy representatives in the Caribbean to immobilize those ships of the *Marine nationale* that had sought refuge in French Martinique. As a result, the USN found itself responsible to assign air and naval assets on a nearly permanent basis for the next three years to patrol the area and prevent these forces from attempting to leave the region.²¹³ The Roosevelt administration, in November 1940, went as far as offering to purchase the battleships *Richelieu* and *Jean Bart* from Pétain.²¹⁴ The old *maréchal* demurred, replying that such an initiative would violate the terms of the Armistice but he reiterated his guarantee to the American president that French ships would never be used offensively against the British.

²¹¹ Both London and Vichy issued a succession of confusing orders and counter-orders as the two forces approached each other unknowingly so that they never met. The Anglo-Free French force made it to Dakar but *Force Y* eventually turned back and found refuge in Casablanca. Correlli Barnett, *Engage the Enemy More Closely – The Royal Navy in the Second World War* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1991), 237-238; and Heckstall-Smith, *The Fleet That Faced Both Ways*, 132-144 and 156-174.

²¹² Cable from Admiralty to Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean Fleet dated 19 March 1942 in TNA, CAB 120/541 *French Fleet*.

²¹³ Stetson Conn and Byron Fairchild, *United States Army In World War II – The Western Hemisphere – The Framework of Hemisphere Defense* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1960), 84; Lawrence Douglas, "The Martinique Affair: The United States Navy and the French West Indies, 1940-1943," in *New Interpretations in Naval History: Selected Papers from the Ninth Naval History Symposium Held at the United States Naval Academy, 18-20 October 1989* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 124-139; and Léo Elisabeth, "Vichy aux Antilles et en Guyane: 1940-1943 [Vichy in the Caribbean and Guyana]," *Outre-mers* 91, no. 342 (1st Quarter 2004): 148-150.

²¹⁴ Two cables from Roosevelt to Churchill dated 13 and 18 November 1940, Kimball (ed.), *Alliance Emerging*, 82-84.

Arriving in Vichy in early 1941, Leahy soon reported a growing rift within Pétain's circle of advisors.²¹⁵ His former deputy, Foreign Minister Laval, headed those promoting a closer collaboration with the Axis. General Maxime Weygand led another camp from his post in Algiers as *Délégué général du Gouvernement français en Afrique française* (General Delegate of the French Government in French Africa). His partisans believed that Vichy ought to preempt additional German demands by adhering to the terms accepted in June 1940 but refusing more in-depth collaboration with Germany. Observing strict neutrality in the on-going struggle would best preserve France's future in any post-war order, regardless of who would win. Weygand publicly committed to defending his realm against encroachments by the Allies and the Axis alike, and actively resisted advances by Gaullist agents seeking to rally colonial authorities. Still, he led a secret effort to reinforce the Vichy army in violation of the limitations imposed by the armistice commissions through initiatives such as concealing heavy-caliber weapons and armoured vehicles from roving teams of German and Italian inspectors in North Africa. Senior officers in the *métropole* also maintained a basic general staff capacity and military intelligence apparatus by designating such offices under other titles and functions. In the words of one American historian:

(The) main effort was directed at building up a cadre force and a reserve of weapons, and maintaining organizations and services then unauthorized in anticipation of the eventual mobilization of former combatants.²¹⁶

Following the arrival of Leahy as a permanent ambassador in Vichy, the then-US chargé d'affaires, Robert Murphy, was dispatched on an extensive tour of French North and West Africa. He held talks with the highest-ranking authorities in those colonies that had pledged allegiance to Pétain.²¹⁷ Discussions were mostly focused on economic matters as Great Britain extended the maritime blockade to metropolitan France and African possessions not yet rallied to de Gaulle's Free French movement. The British blockade did not target Vichy France and its dependencies but rather sought to prevent goods from reaching the Axis powers through France as stated in a Foreign Office aide-mémoire addressed to the US State Department on 17 July 1940:

Great Britain must treat Germany and the territories under her occupation on the same footing, since supplies admitted to the occupied territories must inevitably either fall into German hands or release other supplies for the enemy... Painful as the decision is, [British government], therefore, decided that no exemption from contraband control can be accorded for relief goods... His Majesty's Government feels obliged to treat unoccupied France for all contraband control purposes in the same way as occupied France.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Rossi, *Roosevelt and the French*, 74; and Leahy, *I Was There*, 16-17.

²¹⁶ Vignerat, *Rearming the French*, 8. See also Levisse-Touzé, *L'Afrique du Nord dans la guerre*, 69-73 and 196-202 for more details on the effort to regenerate the Vichy army during the years 1940-1942. Weygand's own views can be found in his *Mémoires – Rappelé au service* [Memoires – Recalled to Service] (Paris, FR: Flammarion, 1950), 371-405; and *Recalled to Service: The Memoirs of General Maxime Weygand of the Académie française*, trans. E.W. Dickes (Melbourne, Australia: William Heinemann, 1952), 284-308.

²¹⁷ Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 67-81; Leahy, *I Was There*, 21; Coutau-Bégarie and Huan, *Darlan*, 387-388.

²¹⁸ *FRUS 1940*, 537.

These exchanges led to signing of the Murphy-Weygand Economic Accord on 26 February 1941, which provided for delivery of American foodstuff and non-military goods for use by the civilian population in Vichy's African territories.²¹⁹ To ensure that such deliveries did not violate the British military embargo, twelve vice consuls were posted to French ports in Africa to supervise their distribution under the overall guidance of Murphy, who established himself in Algiers. Though much was made of the agreement in Washington and Vichy, little actual support followed. Deliveries had to be transported in French merchant ships and could not result in changes to the shipping balance between Vichy territories. Any cargo vessel that departed the Western Hemisphere with American goods on board had to be offset by one ship leaving Africa for North America.

These movements required complex coordination between Washington, London, Vichy and Berlin to ensure that the French ships safely made it through the British surface blockaders and the German U-boats roving the Atlantic. By November 1941, Weygand's successor as Governor General of Algeria, civil servant Yves Châtel, complained to Murphy:

It is a great pity that during the nine months of its operation actual deliveries have been restricted to a handful of products, that is to say four small cargos and three tankers of petroleum products.²²⁰

As ineffective as it turned out to be in practice, the accord did result in more subtle gains for both sides. The American consuls obtained some intelligence in advance of Operation *Torch*.²²¹ It also provided further recognition of Vichy's legitimacy by the Roosevelt administration and its willingness to deal openly with Pétain and his representatives, even in defiance of a desperate Great Britain which was still struggling alone against the Axis.²²² And this commitment underlined Roosevelt's continued indifference to the Free French movement.

De Gaulle's failure at Dakar in September 1940, the imperial ambitions he seemed to hold through the relentless pursuit of the allegiance of French colonies, and his ostentatious behaviour as the seemingly self-selected savior of France contributed to undermining the leader of *la France libre* in the eyes of the American president and his advisors.²²³ Inept Free French representation in the United States only compounded the issue when compared to the experienced and professional Vichy officials established in France's embassy in Washington. On the one

²¹⁹ Text of the agreement can be found in United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1941 – Volume II – Europe* (hereafter *FRUS 1941*) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1959), 229-230.

²²⁰ As reported by Murphy in a cable to the Secretary of State on 20 November 1941. *FRUS 1941*, 471.

²²¹ For contemporary statements on the usefulness of the American vice consuls, see United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1942 – Volume II – Europe* (hereafter *FRUS 1942*) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962), 294-297 and 302-304. Hal Vaughan offers a more general treatment in *FDR's 12 Apostles: The Spies Who Paved the Way for the Invasion of North Africa* (Guilford, CT: The Lyons Press, 2006).

²²² On British opposition to the accord, see Dougherty, *The Politics of Wartime Aid*, 25-27.

²²³ Secretary of State Cordell Hull was particularly opposed to recognizing the Free French movement. For Roosevelt's views of de Gaulle in these early months, see Rossi, *Roosevelt and the French*, 67-68; and François Kersaudy, *De Gaulle et Roosevelt: Le duel au sommet* [De Gaulle and Roosevelt: Duel at the Top] (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2006), 81-83. Cordell Hull discusses his own views in Volume II of *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull – In Two Volumes* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1948), 961-962.

hand, a disparate league of autonomous groups – loosely joined under the banner of “France Forever” – dedicated tremendous energy to a vigorous propaganda campaign which eventually turned American public opinion in favour of the seemingly valiant and tenacious Free French movement.²²⁴ On the other hand, a similarly loose approach allowed a wide range of figures to lobby administration officials from Summer 1940 into 1941, badly undermining the *FFL*’s claim of forming a credible and legitimate movement representing the united will of the French people in confronting the Axis. American historian James Dougherty noted the inexperience and lack of sophistication in the Free French representatives:

The basic problem was that the political affiliations of the numerous French politicians, who arrived as “representatives of the Free French,” ranged from the extreme left to former servants of Vichy. These men possessed no coherent programs, no unity, or even trust for one another. The politicians lacked any stature or prominence... The United States had no desire to endanger its Vichy contact by embracing this motley French representation.²²⁵

De Gaulle resolved to remedy the situation in June 1941 by appointing one of his most trusted civilian advisors to head the Free French legation.²²⁶ René Pleven proved a wise choice and rapidly made inroads within Roosevelt’s inner circle but he had arrived too late to secure access for *la France libre* to the generous clauses of the Lend-Lease Act, passed in March. Tasked to explain to Free French representatives the difference in American support accorded to the Belgian Congo vice that of French Equatorial Africa, the United States consul in Leopoldville received the following clarification from the State Department on 28 June 1941:

The question of military supplies for both the Free French Colonies and the Belgian Congo is treated by our Government as part of the problem of aid to Great Britain to be delivered under the terms of the Lend-Lease Act. The technical status of these two areas is, however, somewhat different as it concerns procedures. Aid to the Free French Colonies is handled from the inception as an integral part of aid to the British and is therefore wholly indirect. On the other hand, aid to Belgian Congo is handled through direct requests initiated by the authorized representatives of the Belgian Government... In view of these facts, you should, in the case of Free French Africa, suggest to the appropriate authorities that in the future they should refer such requests to the British.²²⁷

The author of this missive, Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles, was even clearer the following month in a meeting with the British ambassador in Washington when the latter sought to encourage greater support from the United States to de Gaulle:

²²⁴ For a typical contemporary piece by an American journalist promoting *la France libre*, see Varian Fry, “Justice for the Free French,” *New Republic* 106, no. 23 (8 June 1942): 785-787. On “France Forever,” consult Rossi, *Roosevelt and the French*, 63-66; and Dorothy Shipley White, *Seeds of Discord: De Gaulle, Free France, & the Allies* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1964), 227-236.

²²⁵ Dougherty, *The Politics of Wartime Aid*, 54.

²²⁶ Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle*, 254-256; and Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre – Volume 1 – L’Appel, 1940-1942* [War Memoirs – Volume 1 – The Call to Honour, 1940-1942] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1954), 182-183; and *War Memoirs – Volume 1 – The Call to Honour, 1940-1942*, trans. Jonathan Griffin (London, UK: Collins, 1955), 214-215.

²²⁷ Cable from Acting Secretary of State Sumner Welles to US Consul Patrick Mallon dated 28 June 1941 in *FRUS 1941*, 573.

I told the ambassador that I would be glad to consider the views advanced by Monsieur Plevén but that at first glance it seemed to me that it would be difficult for the United States to maintain diplomatic relations with Vichy *and, what was far more important, cooperative relations with the authorities in North Africa* if anything in the nature of official recognition were to be given by this government to the Free French Committee.²²⁸ [Emphasis added]

Nevertheless, Plevén's credibility slowly rose as the faith of American officials in the Pétain regime eroded through the course of 1941. The "Paris Protocols" agreed to in May by Vichy and German representatives opened the door to active military cooperation such as the use of the French airfields in the Levant (leading to the British advance into Syria and Lebanon discussed previously).²²⁹ As well, Germany obtained transit rights along the Rhône River for *Kriegsmarine* shallow-draft patrol boats and minesweepers to move into the Mediterranean. Tunisian ports and railways were used to transport German supplies to Rommel's *Afrikakorps*, while the latter also gained from the direct transfer of French guns, ammunition and trucks from Algeria to be used against the British Eighth Army in Egypt.²³⁰ General Weygand was relieved of his duties in November 1941 due to his opposition to these concessions to the Axis. Pierre Laval returned to head the Vichy government the following April, a clear sign of the renewed influence of the collaborationist elements of the regime at the expense of the minimalists.²³¹

Military necessity also contributed to slow rapprochement between the United States and Free France. As Axis forces nearly closed the Mediterranean route to allied traffic through 1941, the most expedient path to deliver Lend-Lease material from America to the beleaguered British in Egypt was through French Equatorial Africa, controlled by de Gaulle forces. A military commission from the United States was established in Libreville in August and airfields set up with American aid from Gabon to Chad to allow ferrying aircraft disembarked in Free French ports. Hostilities in the Pacific then brought France's sleepy Micronesian possessions to the forefront in early 1942. New Caledonia and Polynesia, already rallied to de Gaulle, assumed a prominent role, placed as they were at the outer edge of the Japanese advance and along the vital lines of communications between North America and Australia. American consuls established themselves in the islands to oversee distribution of economic assistance in the form of loans, food and supplies for civilian use.

Military strategists included the use of such Free French territories as part of plans to roll back the Axis, both in the Pacific and in Africa.²³² Even before Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt announced a dramatic policy shift when he stated on 11 November 1941: "I hereby

²²⁸ Memorandum of conversation by Acting Secretary of State Sumner Wells dated 8 July 1941. *FRUS 1941*, 574.

²²⁹ For some contemporary American views on the Paris Protocols, see Hull, *Memoirs*, Vol. II, 958-960; Leahy, *I Was There*, 31-32; and Kersaudy, *De Gaulle et Roosevelt*, 92.

²³⁰ Levisse-Touzé, *L'Afrique du Nord dans la guerre*, 113-121. The author states that the following military equipment was delivered from French sources to Axis forces in Libya between May 1941 and March 1942: 1,725 vehicles; twenty 155mm guns with 20,000 rounds; 3,600 tons of fuel; 4,000 tons of aviation gasoline; and several tons of provisions.

²³¹ Levisse-Touzé, *L'Afrique du Nord dans la guerre*, 173-176; Coutau-Bégarie and Huan, *Darlan*, 456-462 and 529-544; and Williams, *Pétain*, 199-200 and 202-203.

²³² De Gaulle, *L'Appel*, 183 and 192-193; and *The Call to Honour*, 215 and 220; Kersaudy, *De Gaulle et Roosevelt*, 95-96 and 116-117; and Rossi, *Roosevelt and the French*, 82-86.

find the defense of any French territory under the control of the French Volunteer Force (Free French) is vital to the defense of the United States."²³³ He went further in July 1942 by appointing former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Harold Stark, by then Commander US Naval Forces in Europe, as "... this Government's representative to consult with the French National Committee in London on all matters relating to the conduct of the war."²³⁴ And yet, such recognition remained purely military in its nature, whereas the politics of legitimacy continued to shape American diplomacy.

In a November 1941 statement, Roosevelt also indicated that assistance to the Free French would continue to be disbursed "... by way of re-transfer from His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom or their Allies."²³⁵ This concept explains the length to which Secretary of State Cordell Hull went to disavow Admiral Muselier's seizure of Saint-Pierre-and-Miquelon on behalf of *la France libre* in December 1941. As he re-iterated in his post-war memoirs:

We would give them material assistance wherever necessary in their effort to combat the Axis. We would keep in touch with them through our consular representatives. But we would not recognize them as a Government.²³⁶

In other words, neither economic assistance nor military cooperation meant political recognition. President Roosevelt rejected on 10 April 1942 another request to negotiate a formal Lend-Lease agreement with Free France.²³⁷ Meanwhile, the Roosevelt administration continued to lose faith in Pétain. Even William Leahy, a forceful supporter of *le Maréchal* at the beginning of his ambassadorship in Vichy, became skeptical of Pétain's ability to contain, let alone refuse, German demands over the long run. His faith was particularly shaken by the recall of Weygand from North Africa, as he reported to Roosevelt in November 1941:

While the great inarticulate and leaderless mass of the French people remain hopeful of a British victory and continue to hope that America will rescue them from their present predicament without their doing anything for themselves, the Government of France today, headed by a feeble, frightened old man surrounded by self-seeking conspirators is altogether controlled by a group which, probably for its own safety, is devoted to the Axis philosophy... (I)t seems necessary to reluctantly relinquish what was perhaps always a faint hope that it might be possible for me through personal relations and pertinent advice to give some semblance of backbone to a jellyfish.²³⁸

Caught between Pétain in Vichy and de Gaulle in London, the Roosevelt administration set about looking for a "Third Man" in 1942, one who could rally North Africa against the Axis and oversee the considerable military buildup that would ensue. The benefactor of such Allied largesse would likely find himself in a position to take a leading role in the liberation of metropolitan France and dominate the country's politics after the war, at least until conditions

²³³ Cited in Dougherty, *The Politics of Wartime Aid*, 57.

²³⁴ *FRUS 1942*, 534. De Gaulle obviously welcomed the appointment, see *L'unité*, 6 and *Unity*, 12.

²³⁵ Cited in Dougherty, *The Politics of Wartime Aid*, 57.

²³⁶ Hull, *Memoirs*, Vol. 2, 1042.

²³⁷ Dougherty, *The Politics of Wartime Aid*, 59.

²³⁸ Letter from Ambassador Leahy to President Roosevelt, 22 November 1941, reproduced in Leahy, *I Was There*, 59-60.

were right for the French people "to express their desires unswayed by any form of coercion" as wished by Roosevelt.²³⁹ Suitable candidates were few at the time of the landings in Algeria and Morocco. The race for undisputed recognition that ensued greatly complicated American efforts to rearm the French in the months following that first clandestine meeting in Cherchell on 22 October 1942.

THE UNEXPECTED "THIRD MAN"

Though Major General Clark proved less than forthright in Cherchell about the time and strength of the upcoming landings, Brigadier Mast later reported his own misgivings about conveying General Henri Giraud's ambition to claim the title of allied commander-in-chief:

I felt some angst in supporting the demands made by General Giraud to, firstly, decide on the timing of the landings and, secondly, assume command of all French and Allied troops in the North African theatre of operations. This was a presumptuous demand... I realized the utopian nature of the request I was asked to present but I put forward my best effort to have this questionable point of view accepted.²⁴⁰

The whole matter, left in suspense at the time, led nowhere because the Anglo-Americans had already launched Operation *Torch* under the overall command of General Eisenhower. Convoys of ships loaded with troops destined to land in Algeria commenced streaming out of British ports on 22 October, while Rear-Admiral Henry Hewitt's Task Force 34 – bound for Morocco – sailed from Hampton Roads, Virginia two days later.²⁴¹ As for Giraud himself, he missed the landings altogether. Extracted clandestinely from southern France on 6 November by the same British submarine used in Cherchell, Giraud joined Eisenhower in Gibraltar the next day.²⁴² He remained stranded in the British fortress during the landings while continuing to argue over his role in the larger allied scheme.²⁴³ Reluctantly agreeing to limit his command authority to those French troops who would rally to him, Giraud flew to Algiers on 9 November, accompanied by General Clark. His presence, however, made no difference as recalled later by Eisenhower:

General Giraud's cold reception by the French in Africa was a terrible blow to our expectations. He was completely ignored. He made a broadcast, announcing assumption

²³⁹ Aide-Mémoire from the United States Department to the British Embassy, 11 June 1942 in *FRUS 1942*, 523-524.

²⁴⁰ Mast, *Histoire d'une rébellion*, 108.

²⁴¹ Barnett, *Engage the Enemy More Closely*, 555; and Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn*, 40-41.

²⁴² HMS *Seraph*, conducted Operation *Minerva* to evacuate Giraud (code name *Kingpin*) from metropolitan France. Giraud recounted the episode in both of his memoirs, *Mes évasions* [My Escapes] (Paris, FR: Julliard, 1946), 159-171; and *Un seul but: la victoire, Alger 1942-1944* [Only One Goal: Victory, Algiers 1942-1944] (Paris, FR: Julliard, 1949), 18-22. See also Eisenhower, *Crusade In Europe*, 99 and the reminiscence of General André Beaufre in his *Mémoires, 1920-1940-1945* (Paris, FR: Presses de la Cité, 1965), 317-344.

²⁴³ Giraud, *Mes évasions*, 171-179 and *Un seul but: la victoire*, 23-28; Beaufre, *Mémoires*, 345-350; Eisenhower, *Crusade In Europe*, 99-103; and Clark, *Calculated Risk*, 95-103. For a contemporary (if one-sided) narrative of the talks between Giraud and Eisenhower that day, see cable from Eisenhower to the CCS, 8 November 1942, in DDEPL, Principal File Series – Papers, Pre-Presidential, 1941-1952 – Box 130: Official Cables, 31 July – 12 November 1942.

of leadership of French North Africa and directing French forces to cease fighting against the Allies, but his speech had no effect whatsoever.²⁴⁴

Though clearly misplaced in retrospect, the Americans' confidence in the ability of Giraud to rally French North Africa was not unreasonable at the time. Born in modest circumstances in Paris in 1879, graduating from Saint-Cyr in 1900, Henri Giraud had served on repeated occasions in a variety of North African posts and made a name for himself during the Great War. Though badly wounded and captured in late August 1914, he had escaped two months later from the German hospital where he was still recovering from his wounds. He made his way to France via the Low Countries and Great Britain before resuming combat duties on the Western Front, serving with distinction for the remainder of the war. Promoted to full general in 1936, he was placed in command of the 7th Army in 1939 but transferred to rally the shattered 9th Army in May 1940, by then in full retreat under the relentless blows of the German *blitzkrieg*.

Captured later that same month, Giraud was imprisoned in the medieval fortress of Kœnigstein (near Dresden, next to the border with Czechoslovakia), along with another hundred French generals. After long months of preparations, he escaped in April 1942, making his way to Vichy through Switzerland. Swearing allegiance to Marshall Pétain but refusing to take a post in the collaborationist government of Premier Laval, simultaneously denouncing the Gaullist dissidents, the war hero ostensibly retired in Lyon. Thus, he presented a unique blend of independence vis-à-vis Vichy and London, seemingly capable of persuading French troops and inhabitants in Africa to join hands across France's political divide under his leadership.²⁴⁵ However, the ability of Giraud as Roosevelt's chosen "Third Man" turned out to be moot in the immediate aftermath of the Allied landings with the presence in Algiers of an unexpected challenger: *amiral de la flotte* François Darlan, commander-in-chief of Vichy's armed forces and official dauphin to Pétain.

Fleet Admiral Darlan remains to this day one of the most enigmatic and controversial French figures of the Second World War.²⁴⁶ Born to a low-level republican politician in 1881, he graduated from the *École navale* in 1902, a classmate of his Free French opponent, Admiral Émile Muselier. He saw active sea service until the Great War, spending the bulk of that conflict on land, commanding heavy naval gun batteries deployed on the Western Front. The interwar period witnessed his meteoric rise as he regularly returned to Paris between deployments at sea, serving in a series of high-profile positions at naval headquarters and in the offices of successive navy ministers. Darlan actively shaped the modernization of the fleet through these years and made useful connections with politicians of both the Left and the Right through the short-lived cabinets of the Third Republic. He eventually rose to the post of Chief of the General Naval Staff, effectively Commander-in-Chief of the *Marine nationale*, on 1 January 1937.

²⁴⁴ Eisenhower, *Crusade In Europe*, 104.

²⁴⁵ For a narration of his escape during the Great War and that from Kœnigstein, see Giraud, *Mes évasions*, 13-72 and 73-130. William B. Breuer briefly narrates Giraud's two famous outbreaks from German detention in *Daring Missions of World War II* (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 2001), 17-20.

²⁴⁶ The best and most balanced writing on this contentious figure remains the classic work by Hervé Coutau-Bégarie and Claude Huan, *Darlan*. They discuss his life and career up to the outset of the Second World War at pages 23-169. A valuable treatment in English is provided by George E. Melton in *Darlan: Admiral and Statesman of France 1881-1942* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), though one must be cognizant of the author's revisionist intent.

Darlan was still in that post when Pétain brought him into his first cabinet as minister for the navy and the merchant fleet on 16 June 1940 while retaining his role as the operational naval commander-in-chief. Initially opposed to a cease-fire and negotiations with the Germans, Darlan quickly rallied to support the Armistice and assumed a growing influence in Vichy circles until Pétain appointed him head of government in February 1941. From thereon, the admiral clearly espoused the marshal's reactionary programme of *révolution nationale* and actively promoted collaborationist policies as when he led the delegation that negotiated the dubious Paris Protocols of May 1941.²⁴⁷ Darlan used his authority to place sailors in key positions throughout the military structure and the civil administration, leveraging the loyalty of serving naval officers, vast numbers of whom had been made redundant in the wake of Operation *Catapult* and the immobilization of the Vichy fleet. They, in turn, actively promoted and implemented the policies of the Vichy regime.²⁴⁸

Darlan's faith in a lasting German order in Europe seemed to recede over time, leading some American observers such as Admiral Leahy and the diplomat Robert Murphy to envisage him as a potential interlocutor instead of the weakening Pétain.²⁴⁹ Indeed, under the pressure of even more openly collaborationist circles, the Marshal let him go as premier in favour of Pierre Laval in April 1942. Nevertheless, Pétain retained Darlan as his designated successor as head of state and even made the sailor commander-in-chief of all Vichy armed forces – navy, army and air force – on that same occasion.²⁵⁰ This continued and very public affiliation with the discredited Vichy regime seemingly disqualified Darlan as a credible alternative in the weeks leading up to Operation *Torch*. US diplomats and French conspirators, including Giraud himself, approached General Weygand to lead French North Africa to the allied side but he repeatedly demurred, citing old age and his oath to Pétain as insurmountable obstacles to dissidence against Vichy.²⁵¹ That put Darlan back in contention on the very morning of the landings.

Admiral Darlan had been in and out of Algeria for the preceding three weeks. He performed an inspection tour of French North and West Africa and then attended to his son Alain, hospitalized in Algiers for a sudden attack of life-threatening poliomyelitis in mid-October.²⁵²

²⁴⁷ On Darlan's endorsement of the principles of the National Revolution and his role in the Paris Protocols negotiations, see Coutau-Bégarie and Huan, *Darlan*, 479-508 and 395-421; as well as Melton, *Darlan*, 104-105, 110-114 and 152-155.

²⁴⁸ The unprecedented influence of naval officers in the politics and administration of France during that period led some to remark "... that while two-thirds of their country was in the hands of the enemy, the rest was occupied by the Navy." Heckstall-Smith, *The Fleet That Faced Both Ways*, 178.

²⁴⁹ See dispatch from Consul General in Algiers to the War Department (from Murphy for Leahy), dated 15 October 1942, *FRUS 1942*, 394. For their later recollection, Leahy, *I Was There*, 33 and 74; and Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 112-113 and 128-129. For a more recent analysis, one may consult Rossi, *Roosevelt and the French*, 91-92.

²⁵⁰ Melton, *Darlan*, 163-165.

²⁵¹ Mast, *Histoire d'une rébellion*, 103; Clark, *Calculated Risk*, 70-71; Weygand, *Rappelé au service*, 537-540 and 545, and *Recalled to Service*, 390-393 and 397; and Giraud, *Un seul but: la victoire*, 37-39.

²⁵² The innocuous circumstances of the admiral's presence in Algiers at the time of Operation *Torch* contributed to the various conspiracies that make up the "Darlan File" today but archival evidence and Darlan's own actions in the early hours of the landing do not support such theories. For the circumstances of Darlan's movements during these weeks, see Coutau-Bégarie and Huan, *Darlan*, 575-578; Melton,

Although the Allies were aware of his movements, the presence of Darlan in Africa did not raise undue alarm because French conspirators were meant to arrest the highest-ranking military and civilian authorities in Algeria and Morocco. The Vichy commander-in-chief would just be rounded up with the others. The first wrinkle in this plan arose when the Anglo-Americans launched the landings several hours late. Their French allies had encircled the residences of several Vichy dignitaries marked for arrest in the middle of the night – including Darlan who had made his way to the villa of General Alphonse Juin, commander of the French army in North Africa. However, the delay allowed Vichy forces to mount a counter-coup to arrest the conspirators and free their leaders. Regaining his freedom of movement just as allied troops started landing onto their assigned beaches, Darlan also maintained his ability to communicate by telephone with subordinates across North Africa (including General Charles Noguès in Morocco) and with Vichy via a submarine cable.

Forty-eight hours of frantic negotiations ensued between French leaders in North Africa, U.S. diplomats in Algiers and Casablanca, Anglo-American generals and admirals on and off the beaches of Morocco and Algeria, Eisenhower and his staff in Gibraltar, as well as Pétain himself and his closest advisors in Vichy. The highest authorities in Washington and London also followed these efforts. Shocked by the allied invasion, Darlan exclaimed to Robert Murphy:

I have known for a long time that the British are stupid, but I always believed the Americans were more intelligent. Apparently [Americans] have the same genius as the British for making massive blunders!²⁵³

Following this outburst, Darlan prevaricated and refused to issue instructions for French forces to either resist or lay down their arms. Local authorities reacted on their own while he alerted Vichy to the invasion and sought guidance from Pétain. He then relented and ordered a cease-fire limited to the Algiers region in the evening of 8 November but stout resistance continued the next day off Oran and Casablanca, even as Giraud and Clark were setting foot in Algeria. Meanwhile, German troops started pouring into Tunisia. They quickly took the French protectorate when the local commander, Admiral Jean-Pierre Esteva, surrendered with his forces without a fight as instructed by Pétain in an attempt to mitigate Hitler's reaction to Operation *Torch*.²⁵⁴ Darlan eventually agreed to the terms of a cease-fire put forward by Clark for the whole of French North Africa late on 10 November. Fighting ceased in Morocco the next day.²⁵⁵ To everyone's surprise, Roosevelt's Third Man turned out to be Darlan himself.

Darlan, 165-167; and Peter Tompkins, *The Murder of Admiral Darlan: A Study in Conspiracy* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1965), 61-66.

²⁵³ Admiral Darlan to Consul General Murphy, 8 November 1940, as quoted by Murphy in *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 128. Colonel Jean Chrétien, head of Vichy's counter-espionage and yet one of the dissidents, quoted Darlan as stating: "It is another one of those filthy tricks you Anglo-Saxons have abused us with for two years. I have orders from the Marshall! I will execute them! Since you want to pick a fight, we will fight." Cited in Melon, *Darlan*, 171; as well as Coutau-Bégarie and Huan, *Darlan*, 579.

²⁵⁴ Levisse-Touzé, *L'Afrique du Nord dans la guerre*, 248-249; Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn*, 163-166;

²⁵⁵ For a variety of views on these complex developments, see Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 103-119; Clark, *Calculated Risk*, 100-125; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warrior*, 124-141; Leahy, *I was There*, 132-135; Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*, 607-637; Giraud, *Un seul but: la victoire*, 32-44; Mast, *Histoire d'une rébellion*, 171-380; Beaufre, *Mémoires*, 357-385; Coutau-Bégarie, *Darlan*, 578-640; Melton, *Darlan*, 171-192; Berthon, *Allies at War*, 203-223; and François Kersaudy, *De Gaulle et Churchill: La mésentente cordiale* [De Gaulle and Churchill: Cordial Disagreement] (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2001), 223-233.

Protracted negotiations facilitated by General Clark led on 13 November to an agreement between the French factions.²⁵⁶ Darlan took the title of *Haut-commissaire de France en Afrique* (French High Commissioner in Africa), responsible for coordinating all political, civil and military affairs while Giraud assumed the role of military commander-in-chief under Darlan. Controversially, most Vichy figures – civilian administrators and military leaders – remained in place while those French conspirators who had sought to facilitate the Allied landings found themselves isolated from power.²⁵⁷ Darlan continued to grasp for the narrowest of legalist approach in seeking to shore up his legitimacy. He denied having rebelled against Vichy, instead presenting himself as continuing in his role of heir apparent while Pétain was “temporarily” incapacitated now that the Germans had invaded France’s Free Zone.²⁵⁸ As for de Gaulle, he remained isolated in London, unable to exercise any influence in Algiers.²⁵⁹ He could only join the firestorm of protests in Great Britain and the United States.

The wider public was shocked that their leaders had accepted an agreement with Darlan, a figure previously denounced in Allied propaganda as an unscrupulous collaborator of the Axis. Early in the morning hours of 14 November 1942, Eisenhower sent a long dispatch to the Combined Chiefs of Staff justifying the legitimacy of the Darlan deal in the most dramatic terms:

Can well understand some bewilderment in London and Washington with the turn negotiations with French North Africans have taken. The exact state of sentiment here does not repeat not agree even remotely with some of prior calculations... It is extremely important that no repeat no precipitate action at home upset such equilibrium as we have been able to establish... The civil governors, military leaders and naval commanders will agree on only one man as having an obvious right to assume the Marshal’s mantle in North Africa, that man is Darlan. Even [Giraud] ... clearly recognizes this overpowering consideration and has drastically modified his own ambitions and intentions accordingly... Without a strong French government of some kind here we would be forced to undertake complete military occupation. The cost in time and resources would be tremendous.²⁶⁰

Roosevelt bore the brunt of public criticism. Seeking to underline the short-term nature of a deal born out of military necessity during a press conference on 17 November, he labeled the accord "... only a temporary expedient, justified solely by the stress of battle."²⁶¹ And then the

²⁵⁶ Eisenhower flew to Algiers to finalize the agreement but returned to Gibraltar that same day. DDEPL, Box 131, cable to CCS dated 13 November 1942.

²⁵⁷ Mast, *Histoire d’une rébellion*, 379; and Anthoine Béthouart, *Cinq années d’espérance – Mémoires de guerre 1939-1945* [Five Years of Hope – War Memories 1939-1945] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1968), 174-176.

²⁵⁸ Although Pétain publicly denounced Darlan’s agreement with the Allies in a radio broadcast on 14 November 1942: "For Admiral Darlan... You must defend French North Africa against American aggression. The decision you have taken violates my orders and goes against the mission assigned to you. I hereby order our military forces in North Africa to undertake no action under any circumstances against Axis forces so as to not inflict anymore misfortune on our Homeland." Cited by Coutau-Bégarie and Huan in *Darlan*, 625. On 16 November, Pétain disavowed Darlan further by formally appointing Premier Laval as his new dauphin. Williams, *Pétain*, 218.

²⁵⁹ De Gaulle, *L’unité*, 45-50 and *Unity*, 50-55.

²⁶⁰ DDEPL, Box 131, cable to CCS 14 November 1942.

²⁶¹ Roosevelt Press Conference, 17 November 1942. Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum, "Press Conference #861, Executive Office of the President, November 17, 1942" last accessed 17 March 2016, <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/resources/images/pc/pc0140.pdf>. One notes that these

bullets of a French assassin removed the admiral a mere six weeks later, ensuring that the name Darlan remains shrouded in controversy to this day. In the words of French historian François Kersaudy: "Few assassinations have been denounced with so much indignation in public and yet welcomed with so much relief in private."²⁶²

In the afternoon of 24 December 1942, a young civilian, Fernand Bonnier de la Chapelle, simply walked into Darlan's headquarters and waited for the admiral to return from lunch. Upon his arrival, de la Chappelle drew out a pistol and shot him at point blank range. Sentinels immediately seized the shooter; a military court condemned the accused to death the next day and a firing squad executed the sentence on 26 December. The assassin never divulged his motives or sponsors, beyond a hatred of Darlan and what the Vichy admiral stood for.²⁶³ The balance of evidence available today supports the theory that the plot was initiated by yet another faction which had arrived surreptitiously in Algiers in the wake of the Anglo-American landings: monarchists hoping to restore the claimant to the French throne, Henri d'Orléans, Count of Paris, then in exile in Spanish Morocco. But no such consensus existed at the time, as put succinctly by Kersaudy:

Roosevelt suspects de Gaulle, Churchill accuses the Germans, Giraud thinks the Gaullists are behind it, the OSS [Office of Strategic Services, the wartime predecessor of the CIA] believes the monarchists did it, and de Gaulle sways between the Giraud camp and the Americans as the likely organisers seeking to "terminate the temporary expedient after being finished with him."²⁶⁴

Regardless of these mutual suspicions, all were seized with the pressing requirement to agree on a successor to unite the former Vichy territories in Africa while working closely with the Allies to rebuild a new *armée d'Afrique*. The Imperial Council, a committee formed by Darlan on 2 December to assist him in managing French North African affairs, assembled immediately after the admiral's funeral on 26 December.²⁶⁵ Following a lengthy debate, conscious that the Allies would not accept another "temporary expedient" too closely affiliated with Pétain, the participants agreed to make Giraud "High Commissioner in French Africa and Command-in-

words may have been inspired by Churchill who included that exact sentence in a cable to President Roosevelt earlier that same day. *FRUS 1942*, 445.

²⁶² Kersaudy, *De Gaulle et Churchill*, 239.

²⁶³ Darlan was buried with full military honours just a few hours later. Coutau-Bégarie et Huan, *Darlan*, 683; and Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn*, 256-258.

²⁶⁴ Kersaudy, *De Gaulle et Roosevelt*, 191. For a range of views from contemporary observers, see Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 129-130; Clark, *Calculated Risk*, 128-132; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 140-143; Churchill, *The Hinge of Faith*, 643-644; Giraud, *Un seul but: la victoire*, 70-81; Mast, *Histoire d'une rébellion*, 415-419; Beaufre, *Mémoires*, 396-403; and Béthouart, *Cinq années d'espérance*, 178-180; as well as de Gaulle, *L'unité*, 67-69; and *Unity*, 71-74. For later analyses and some of the more eccentric theories, one may consult Tompkins, *The Murder of Admiral Darlan*, 191-262; Coutau-Bégarie, *Darlan*, 682-733; Melton, *Darlan*, 207-228; and Jean-Luc Barré, *Devenir de Gaulle, 1939-1943* [Becoming de Gaulle, 1939-1943] (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2003), 263-271.

²⁶⁵ On the formation of the Imperial Council, see a cable from Eisenhower to CCS dated 4 December 1942 in TNA CAB 121/398 *Relations with the French Committee of National Liberation, Algiers Vol. I*; and Coutau-Bégarie and Huan, *Darlan*, 653-655.

Chief of the French Army, Navy and Air Force.”²⁶⁶ Thus, Roosevelt’s quest for a Third Man had come full circle with his pick finally in charge. The solution left many issues unresolved: what of the former Vichy officials that remained in position of authority across North Africa, what of those colonies that had yet to rally to Giraud, what of de Gaulle and the Free French movement? Nevertheless, Giraud appeared poised to lead French Africa into the fight on the allied side. As importantly, he would be the man to oversee implementation of the rearmament blueprint proposed at Cherchell by the French conspirators and endorsed by Clark on behalf of the Allies, the *plan Mast*.

THE MAST PLAN

Grandiose visions of American arms and military equipment flowing across the Atlantic to assist France in her struggle against Germany had long predated the discussions at Cherchell. In the immediate wake of the Munich crisis of September 1938, French negotiators convinced the Roosevelt administration to facilitate the purchase of 200 Curtiss P-36 fighters and Glenn Martin bombers from American manufacturers. This order was increased to 1,000 units just months later to augment the paltry production of warplanes in a France hobbled by a shortened work week and recurring labour strife in the closing years of the Third Republic.²⁶⁷ The scheme quickly evolved to circumvent the Neutrality Acts. French pilots secretly tested American planes in the United States and aircraft components were exported for assembly in Canadian plants and transportation to France in early 1939.²⁶⁸ Passing the “Cash and Carry” legislation after the hostilities broke out in Europe, Roosevelt maintained US neutrality while allowing even greater access for France (and Great Britain) to America’s industrial production.²⁶⁹ Though this effort was largely focused on warplanes, spare parts and the machine tools required to update France’s domestic manufacturers, Prime Minister Paul Reynaud also made a bid in the spring of 1940 to acquire six old American destroyers to build up France’s anti-submarine forces. This effort ended as the German *blitzkrieg* swept across the border.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ Cable from Eisenhower to the CCS dated 26 December 1942 in TNA CAB 121/398. For a variety of views on the negotiations that took place that day, see Giraud, *Un seul but: la victoire*, 79-80; Beaufre, *Mémoires*, 403-404; Mast, *Histoire d’une rébellion*, 418-419; Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 130; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 159; Cointet, *De Gaulle et Giraud*, 213-214; and Kersaudy, *De Gaulle et Roosevelt*, 192-193.

²⁶⁷ Martin S. Alexander, *The Republic in Danger: General Maurice Gamelin and the Politics of French Defence, 1933-1940* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 169-170. A French mission had actually placed an earlier order for 100 P-36s in May 1938 but it is after Munich that French leaders truly seized on the urgency of building up their air force using American deliveries. John McVickar Haight, “Les négociations françaises pour le fourniture d’avions américains, 1ère partie – Avant Munich [French Negotiations to Acquire American Planes, Part 1 – Before Munich],” *Forces aériennes françaises* 198 (December 1963): 807-839; and *American Aid to France, 1938-1940* (New York, NY: Atheneum, 1970), 23-47.

²⁶⁸ Haight, *American Aid to France*, 69-131; and Gavin J. Bailey, *The Arsenal of Democracy: Aircraft Supply and the Anglo-American Alliance, 1938-1942* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 46-48.

²⁶⁹ Warren F. Kimball, *The Most Unsordid Act: Lend-Lease, 1939-1941* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), 17-29; and Haight, *American Aid to France*, 149-155.

²⁷⁰ The ships sought by Reynaud were among the same First World War vessels that would become part of the Destroyers-for-Bases Agreement between Great Britain and the United States in September 1940. Bailey, *The Arsenal of Democracy*, 72-73; and Charles W. Koburger, *Franco-American Naval Relations, 1940-1945* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 40.

Symbolically, the French aircraft carrier *Béarn*, ferrying one hundred American planes destined for France, found herself mid-Atlantic in the days leading up to the Armistice, in company with the training cruiser *Jeanne d'Arc*. Darlan instructed both ships to rally Martinique and wait for further instructions.²⁷¹ They remained there for the next three years, under the watchful eye of the US Navy. The disembarked aircraft slowly rotted away in the Caribbean sun without ever flying.

Meanwhile, just as quickly as de Gaulle disabused himself through the summer of 1940 that the Americans would arm his fledgling Free French movement, some Vichy officers set about formulating rearmament plans based on support by the United States.²⁷² They sincerely believed that the Roosevelt administration would come to France's succor at some future point. At the time a mere captain about to join General Weygand's staff in North Africa, André Beaufre reported in his memoirs holding a conversation to that effect in October 1940 with Harrison Freeman Matthews, First Secretary at the American Embassy in Vichy.²⁷³ The Murphy-Weygand Economic Accord of February 1941 encouraged many to envision follow-on discussions on the provision of military aid. Disparate groups of officers acting in isolation approached various American authorities (Leahy in Vichy and Murphy in Algiers, among others) through the course of the year but the US administration was not yet prepared to commit.²⁷⁴ Nevertheless, planning continued on the French side and eventually coalesced around the North African dissidents.

Successive iterations resulted in the "Mast Plan" presented to General Clarke at Cherchell. The document stated that, within a month of the Allied landings, French authorities could muster enough trained personnel to form a battle force (*corps de bataille*) of eight mechanized infantry divisions and two armoured divisions. All these units would require urgent rearmament with modern American equipment to augment their firepower and mobility.²⁷⁵ In a letter to General Giraud dated 2 November 1942, Murphy confirmed that the Roosevelt administration would extend "... the Lend-Lease Act to the requisitions for material from the United States intended to give the French Army the means to participate in the common struggle."²⁷⁶ General Mast and his staff then refined the plan to include additional logistics, artillery and air assets (fighter-bombers and transport) to make the *corps de bataille* a more flexible and autonomous formation, although entirely focused on land operations.

Such "army-centricity" in the days leading up to the Allied landings was to be expected given the composition of the dissident group behind the Mast Plan. Commander Pierre Barjot was the only French sailor at Cherchell, the likely source of the "naval information" referred to by General Clarke in his initial report to Eisenhower. However, his influence among Mast's staff

²⁷¹ So dire was the need for warplanes in France that components for another ten disassembled fighters had been crammed into the cruiser *Jeanne d'Arc*. Koburger, *Franco-American Naval Relations*, 34; Haight, *American Aid to France*, 253; and Georges Robert, *La France aux Antilles de 1939 à 1943* [France in the Caribbean from 1939 to 1943] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1950), 48, 82-84.

²⁷² De Gaulle, *L'Appel*, 1223; and *The Call to Honour*, 148.

²⁷³ Beaufre, *Mémoires*, 273-274.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 287-298; Weygand, *Rappelé au service*, 492-493; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 85; Hull, *Memoirs*, Vol. 2, 1039-40; and Mast, *Histoire d'une rébellion*, 103-105 and 469-478.

²⁷⁵ Mast, *Histoire d'une rébellion*, 477.

²⁷⁶ Cited in Vignerat, *Rearming the French*, 14. The letter is also reproduced in full in Giraud, *Un seul but: la victoire*, 350-351 and Mast, *Histoire d'une rébellion*, 496-498.

and the North African fleet was likely negligible. He had found himself in Algiers at that time because his superiors had grown suspicious of his loyalty to Vichy and he was being repatriated to the *métropole* for discharge from the service. As well, the Vichy navy was still viewed as a potent force at that time, alleviating the perceived need for an extensive rebuilding effort thereafter. Few expected the fleet's destruction through the course of the following month, by the Allies off the shores of North Africa and at the hands of French sailors in the final suicidal act of 27 November 1942 in Toulon.

Even the one seemingly undeniable advantage for the Allies in dealing with Admiral Darlan as a "temporary expedient" did not materialize during these weeks as he failed to rally not only the Toulon fleet but other French flotillas isolated overseas. The few torpedo craft and gun boats left in Indochina would have made little difference, admittedly, neutralized as they were under the close surveillance of Japanese forces that had moved south in Summer 1941.²⁷⁷ However, the refusal by Admiral Georges Robert and forces based in the Martinique to abandon Vichy, combined with a similar reaction by Vice-Admiral René-Émile Godfroy's *Force X* in Alexandria, came as unexpected rebuffs to Darlan.²⁷⁸ He was convinced ever since the Armistice that the fleet, *his* fleet, would follow him wherever his allegiance took him. Their sworn oath to Pétain prevailed in the minds of Vichy admirals, however.

Also indicative of Darlan's limited influence, French West Africa only rallied as a result of the vigorous action of its civilian administrator, Governor General Pierre Boisson. He confronted the local army, navy and air force commanders who wished to remain loyal to Vichy. Boisson eventually prevailed and accepted on 22 November an accord negotiated directly with the Allies, after having extracted some important concessions from them.²⁷⁹ The colonies were recognized as French possessions where foreign troops could not be stationed permanently, bases used by the Allies would remain under French command (unlike several establishments in French North Africa), only French authorities could requisition civilian goods on behalf of the Allies, and the latter were required to pay custom taxes on purchases made in those colonies.

Regardless of these circumstances, French West Africa did provide Darlan with a strong naval force and extended his control to the naval base at Dakar, strategically positioned at the narrowest part of the Atlantic between Africa and South America. Although the battleship *Richelieu* could not be considered operational in view of the damages sustained at the hands of the British in 1940, ships of the former *Force Y* (cruisers *Montcalm*, *Georges Leygues* and *Gloire*, and destroyer *Le Fantasque*) were available for immediate employment, despite their rudimentary radar and sonar equipment, and their outdated anti-air armament.²⁸⁰ Such support would play an

²⁷⁷ Gras, "L'intrusion japonaise en Indochine," 93; and Decoux, *À la barre de l'Indochine*, 150-156.

²⁷⁸ Coutau-Bégarie and Huan, *Darlan*, 639-650; Masson, *La Marine française et la guerre*, 405-409; Melton, *Darlan*, 186-187 and 203; and Heckstall-Smith, *The Fleet That Faced Both Ways*, 208-211. On their reasoning to refuse switching their allegiance from Vichy to Algiers, see for Robert, *La France aux Antilles*, 223-228; and René-Émile Godfroy, *L'aventure de la Force X (Escadre française de la Méditerranée orientale) à Alexandrie (1940-1943)* [The Adventure of *Force X* (French Eastern Mediterranean Fleet) in Alexandria (1940-1943)] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1953), 336-367.

²⁷⁹ Coutau-Bégarie and Huan, *Darlan*, 636-639; and Levisse-Touzé, *L'Afrique du Nord dans la guerre*, 274.

²⁸⁰ John Jordan and Robert Dumas, *French Battleships: 1922-1956* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 150.

important role at this critical juncture of the Battle of the Atlantic as 1942 proved an abysmal year for the Allies at sea.

The US Navy had divided its forces between the Eastern seaboard and the Pacific after Pearl Harbor. The Royal Navy remained overstretched with ships dispersed for the home defence of the British Isles, escort duties around the empire, and facing down the Italians in the Mediterranean. Axis submarines, aircraft, mines, surface raiders and coastal craft sank 1,665 allied ships totaling some 7.8 million tons in 1942, nearly severing the trans-Atlantic lifeline before American shipyards could reach their full potential for wartime production.²⁸¹ Churchill and the Admiralty had pressed for the urgent return to sea of those *Marine nationale* vessels which had found refuge in Great Britain in Summer 1940, be it under the *croix de Lorraine* or the White Ensign. Rapidly bringing Darlan's navy into the fight at the side of the Allies would prove as pressing in 1943, a goal that French and Anglo-American officials set about achieving immediately after Operation *Torch*.

FROM DARLAN TO GIRAUD

The accord of 13 November signified Allied recognition of Darlan as the French North African leader but provided precious few details on the practicalities of the "deal," including the process to integrate his forces in the fight against the Axis and execution of the Mast rearmament plan. Clarke and Darlan immediately set about negotiating a more formal understanding. A tentative draft on 19 November, once amended by officials in Washington, was signed three days later.²⁸² The Americans insisted again that the text did not provide an official recognition of Darlan's administration as a legitimate French government. Roosevelt himself asked that that the diplomatic term "Protocol" be changed to that of "Agreement."²⁸³ Eisenhower further commented on the draft submitted to the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS):

(T)he mention of Darlan's name therein does not repeat not imply any obligation on the part of the allied C-in-C to perpetuate Darlan in an any position or to support him therein... Attention is invited to the fact that this agreement is merely one between a commander in the field and a commission which is exercising ordinary civil and military functions in the theater in which he is operating. Its terms are intended only to facilitate the operations of the allied forces brought here, although, naturally, accomplishment of this purpose involves certain economic and transportation features.²⁸⁴

Despite such subtleties, the agreement's preamble implied a much more ambitious commitment on the part of the signatories: "French forces will aid and support the forces of the United States and their allies to expel from the soil of Africa the common enemy, to liberate

²⁸¹ For excellent compendia of the RN and USN experience in the Atlantic through the year 1942, see Barnett, *Engage the Enemy More Closely*, 573-593; and George W. Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power – The U.S. Navy, 1890-1990* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 189-201.

²⁸² The initial draft appears in full in DDEPL, Box 130, Cable to CCS, 19 November 1942. The signed agreement is reproduced in *FRUS 1942*, 453-457. The French version appears in Chamine (Geneviève Dunais), *Suite française – Tome 2 – La Querelle des généraux* [French Suite – Volume 2 – The Generals' Quarrel] (Paris, FR: Albin Michel, 1952), 556-561.

²⁸³ *FRUS 1942*, 453.

²⁸⁴ DDEPL, Box 130, Cable to CCS, 20 November 1942.

France and to restore integrally the French Empire."²⁸⁵ This pledge appeared more generous than that between Churchill and de Gaulle on 7 August 1940. The British prime minister had avoided any specific reference to France's colonies, using vaguer terms in defining his commitment to "... ensure the integral restoration of the independence and greatness of France."²⁸⁶ But the clauses of the agreement also constrained French autonomy in North Africa substantively, leading Darlan's biographers to label the entente "... an armistice defining the rights of an army of occupation."²⁸⁷ The contrast with the accord concluded with French West Africa, where the Allies did not have armed forces present, was obvious. It included much more binding provisions such as the requirement to notify Eisenhower's staff in advance of the movement of ground and air French forces, the duty for civil authorities to maintain public order in consultation with local allied commanders, the ability for the latter to take over French military installations and to requisition "... billets, supplies, lands, buildings, transportation and services for the military needs of the forces under command of the Commanding General, United States Army."²⁸⁸ French authorities were not authorized to levy taxes on the property of the Allies or their financial transactions, while allied personnel would "... enjoy extraterritorial privileges."²⁸⁹

Admittedly, Eisenhower and his successors never applied the clauses that most directly challenged French sovereignty, such as Article XVI which decreed that whole areas of French North Africa could come under direct Allied control were it deemed necessary for "... the maintenance of order and administrative and public services."²⁹⁰ The agreement in fact gave rise to increased cooperation on the frontlines. Some Tunisia-based troops had already abandoned Vichy and engaged German forces independently on 19 November. Then a unit of *tirailleurs sénégalais* (native troops from West Africa) formally joined American forces advancing east from Algeria five days later, the precursor to a growing flow of French reinforcements that would join the fight against the Axis under Allied command in the following weeks, without waiting for rearmament.²⁹¹ With regards to naval forces, Darlan had adroitly managed to maintain control of "his" fleet. Article IX may have stated that "... all port facilities, harbor and naval installations... [were to] be placed intact at the disposal of the Commanding General, United States Army,"²⁹² but Article VII proposed a much more accommodating approach in the employment and support of French ships by the Allies:

French warships shall operate in close *cooperation* with the Commanding General, United States Army... for the accomplishment of the purpose set forth in the preamble hereof. Such warships will continue to fly the French flag and be placed under French

²⁸⁵ *FRUS 1942*, 453.

²⁸⁶ "Agreement with General de Gaulle," 7 August 1940 in TNA, CAB 121/411 *Provision of Military Equipment for Free French Forces*.

²⁸⁷ Coutau-Bégarie and Huan, *Darlan*, 669-670.

²⁸⁸ *FRUS 1942*, 455.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 456.

²⁹⁰ *Idem*.

²⁹¹ Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn*, 187; and Levisse-Touzé, *L'Afrique du Nord dans la guerre*, 272-273. By Christmas 1942, the new *armée d'Afrique* had 60,000 troops engaged on the Tunisian front. Louis-Christian Michelet, "La contribution militaire française à l'effort de guerre allié (1941-1945) [French Military Contribution to the Allied War Effort (1941-1945)]," *Guerre mondiales et conflits contemporains* 177 (1995): 15.

²⁹² *FRUS 1942*, 455.

command... and *will be provided with fuel and all necessary supplies* to enable them to become effective fighting units.²⁹³ [Emphasis added]

In that sense, the agreement went further in committing the Allies to supporting Darlan's navy than Giraud's army (or British assistance to the Free French for that matter, especially as there was no discussion of post-war reimbursements for the costs of supplying the French fleet). The Mast Plan did not appear in the text nor did any of the clauses allude to supply or rearmament of land and air forces found in French North Africa. The matter of repairing or modernizing ships and submarines was also missing from the agreement but it provided a solid enough base for former Vichy units to commence making a contribution to the fight. As commented approvingly by the British Admiralty, "... there would be advantage both from a practical and a morale point of view in giving the French such operational employment as is possible in the circumstances."²⁹⁴

Within weeks, cruisers *Georges Leygues*, *Gloire* and *Montcalm* rotated out of Dakar and Casablanca to replace British and USN units conducting anti-raider patrols in the Atlantic narrows between Africa and South America.²⁹⁵ Sloops *Gazelle* and *Commandant Bory* joined the destroyer *Tempête* to form an escort group dedicated to fast American transatlantic convoys while smaller vessels undertook the escort of French merchantmen too slow to transit at those speeds.²⁹⁶ Other ships discharged the myriad of coastal defence duties along the shores of West and North Africa that the overstretched Anglo-American navies did not wish to take on.²⁹⁷ Meanwhile, Darlan appointed Vice-Admiral François-Félix Michelier – until then the head of the Vichy navy in Morocco who had so fiercely resisted the allied landings just ten days earlier – as commander of all naval forces in North and West Africa.²⁹⁸ French officers also joined Allied naval headquarters in Algeria, Morocco and Gibraltar. In a manner similar to that of the Free French in England, they assisted in coordinating the integration into the Anglo-American scheme of operations of ships, submarines, and shore-based naval aviation assets that had survived the onslaught of Operation *Torch*.²⁹⁹

Darlan's fleet was slightly ahead of the Free French navy in terms of hulls, with forty-five ships and submarines against de Gaulle's forty. It cut a more impressive figure in terms of tonnage, with 135,000 tons compared to a mere 26,000 for the *Forces navales françaises libres*. As showed in Table 4 below, the difference lay in the makeup of these forces as Darlan's command

²⁹³ *Idem*.

²⁹⁴ Cable from British Admiralty to Flag Officer Commanding West Africa Station, 27 December 1942, TNA, CAB 121/401 *Re-equipment and Employment of French Forces – Volume I*.

²⁹⁵ Although these monotonous patrols proved rather fruitless as the first intercept did not occur until 12 April 1943 when *Georges Leygues* sank the German raider *Portland* near the Equator. Auphan and Mordal, *La Marine française*, 433; and Martin Brice, *Axis Blockade Runners of World War II* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1981), 124-125.

²⁹⁶ Koberger, *Franco-American Naval Relations*, 50.

²⁹⁷ Claude Huan, "La Marine française dans la guerre (1943) [The French Navy During the War (1943)]," *Revue historique des Armées* 188, no. 3 (September 1992): 116.

²⁹⁸ Michelier's greeted USN Rear-Admiral Henry Hewitt when they first met in Morocco on 11 November 1942 with a neutral accolade: "You had your orders and you carried them out. I had mine and I carried them out. Now I am ready to cooperate in every way possible." Cited in Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn*, 150.

²⁹⁹ Huan, "La Marine française dans la guerre," 116; and cable from Admiralty to RN Admiral Andrew Cunningham, Eisenhower's naval commander, 11 December 1942 in TNA, CAB 121/398.

included battleships and cruisers while de Gaulle's largest vessels were mere destroyers. But the poor technical readiness of units isolated in Africa for three years, as well as the want of modern sensors and armament, undermined their fighting value. As concerning was the impracticality of rehabilitating the fleet using those national means found within the French Imperial Federation, as reported later by a French historian:

There were no technical services as the administration had always been centralized in the metropole... There was a near total absence of technicians and, above all, no industrial infrastructure in North Africa. This meant no spare parts, no dry dock, very few munitions and torpedoes... While the navy wished to assume its place in the liberation of France and play its part in regaining control of the Empire, it did not even have enough munitions to fight for more than a few months, nor the means to fabricate more. In other words, the French could not rearm by themselves. American aid was the only solution.³⁰⁰

Table 4 – French Naval Strength in West and North Africa 31 December 1942

Category	Vessel(s) Name	Combined Tonnage	Remarks
Fast Battleships	<i>Richelieu, Jean Bart</i>	70,000	– <i>Richelieu</i> damaged in Dakar but main armament still operational – <i>Jean Bart</i> out of action in Casablanca
Cruisers	<i>Gloire, Georges Leygues, Montcalm</i>	23,070	– <i>Gloire</i> operational in Casablanca – <i>Georges Leygues</i> and <i>Montcalm</i> operational in Dakar
Light Cruisers Large destroyers reclassified as light cruisers by the Allies	<i>Le Fantasque, Le Malin,</i>	4,900	– <i>Le Fantasque</i> operational in Dakar – <i>Le Malin</i> damaged in Casablanca
Destroyers	<i>Simoun, Tempête, L'Alcyon</i>	4,500	– <i>Simoun</i> damaged in Casablanca – <i>Tempête</i> and <i>L'Alcyon</i> operational in Casablanca
Colonial Sloops (<i>Avisos coloniaux</i>)	<i>Dumont d'Urville</i>	2,000	– Operational in Conakri (Guinea, French West Africa)
Minesweeping Sloops (<i>Avisos-dragueurs de mines</i>)	<i>Gazelle, Commandant Bory, Commandant Delage, La Boudeuse, La Gracieuse</i>	3,150	– <i>La Boudeuse</i> operational in Algiers – <i>Commandant Delage, La Gracieuse</i> operational in Casablanca – <i>Gazelle, Commandant Bory</i> operational in Dakar
Sloops (1 st Class) (<i>Avisos de 1^{ère} classe</i>)	<i>Calais</i>	600	– Operational in Dakar
Sloops (2 nd Class) (<i>Avisos de 2^e classe</i>)	<i>Tapageuse, Engageante</i>	600	– Both operational in Casablanca
Armed Trawlers	<i>L'Algéroise, La Sablaise, La Servanaise</i>	1,800	– <i>La Servanaise</i> operational in Casablanca – <i>L'Algéroise</i> and <i>La Sablaise</i> in reserve in Casablanca

³⁰⁰ Frédérique Chapelay, "Le réarmement de la Marine par les Américains [The Rearmament of the Navy by the Americans]," in *Les armées françaises pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, 1939-1945* [The French Armed Forces during the Second World War, 1939-1945] (Paris: F.E.D.N.-I.H.C.C, 1986), 348.

Submarine Chasers	<i>Chasseur 2, Chasseur 3</i>	260	– Both operational in Oran
Submarines	<i>Marsouin, Archimède, Argo, Le Glorieux, Le Centaure, Casabianca</i>	9,000 (Submerged)	– <i>Marsouin, Le Glorieux, Casabianca</i> operational in Oran – <i>Archimède, Argo, Le Centaure</i> operational in Dakar
Coastal Submarines	<i>Aréthuse, Antiope, Amazone, Atalante, Orphée, La Vestale, La Sultane, Perle</i>	6,400 (Submerged)	– <i>Aréthuse, Amazone</i> operational in Oran – <i>Antiope, Atlante, Orphée</i> operational in Casablanca – <i>La Vestale, La Sultane</i> operational in Dakar – <i>Perle</i> available but in reserve in Dakar
Submarine Tender	<i>Jules Verne</i>	4,350	– Operational in Dakar
Misc. Auxiliaries	Various	5,000	– Various locations
Totals	45	135,630	18.2% of the total tonnage of the 1939 French fleet

Sources:

Paul Auphan and Jacques Mordal, *La Marine française dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale* [The French Navy and the Second World War], 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: France-Empire, 1967), 605-633.

Philippe Masson, *La Marine française et la guerre, 1939-1945* [The French Navy and the War, 1939-1945], 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: Tallandier, 2000), 485-519.

Notes:

- a. Tonnage figures for submarines indicate submerged displacement.
- b. Miscellaneous Auxiliaries do not include tugs and other small craft dedicated to harbour duties.

By late December, the situation appeared clear to those officers going briskly about their business in the French Africa admiralty newly established in Casablanca.³⁰¹ After a few days of fierce fighting and weeks of complex political manoeuvring, their navy had rejoined the side of the Allies. The latter would willingly dedicate tremendous resources to rejuvenating the fleet, in line with the spirit of Cherchell and the agreement of 22 November 1942. Their services would be necessary to redress the balance against the Axis at sea and eventually make an important contribution to the liberation of France. The death of Darlan had been regrettable but Michelier headed a unified *marine d'Afrique*, willing to serve under Giraud whose star within allied circles continued to rise. All that was needed to complete this shining vision was amalgamation of the Free French fleet into a truly reunited *Marine nationale*, which was bound to follow as the Americans devoted resources to Michelier's forces. They were wrong.

Bitter infighting continued to divide supporters of Giraud and de Gaulle into the next year. Neither man accepted to serve under the other nor were their partisans willing to rally the opposite camp. Free French troops were fighting at the side of the British in Libya while former Vichy General Alphonse Juin led Giraud's army supporting the American advance into Tunisia. The *FNFL*, largely based in Great Britain, remained focused on the convoy battle in the North Atlantic and raiding across the Channel while Michelier's ships and submarines conducted

³⁰¹ Cable, Cunningham to Admiralty, 19 November 1942, TNA CAB 121/398.

coastal defence duties in the Mediterranean and off the shores of Western Africa. De Gaulle continued to vilify Giraud as heading an administration of “Vichysts” while the latter was hard-pressed to find alternate figures of suitable experience to replace them. Supporters of *la France libre* were particularly incensed in January 1943 when Giraud appointed Marcel Peyrouton as Governor General of Algeria. He was the former Vichy minister of the Interior who had signed de Gaulle’s death warrant for treason in Summer 1940. This very public spat between the two French camps greatly complicated the planning of operations in North Africa as well as the viability of future operations on European soil. Roosevelt and Churchill set about resolving that issue once and for all at the upcoming Casablanca Conference, codenamed *Symbol*.

LE MÉMORANDUM D’ANFA

Anglo-American political and military leaders met in Morocco to determine the course of strategy following the final defeat of the Axis in North Africa, expected within months. They sought to resolve the ostensibly incompatible differences between British strategists "... who advocated a war of opportunity ending with a landing in France as the *coup de grâce* and the Americans who advocated a war of concentration beginning with a collision of forces."³⁰² Compromise ensued through a hectic round of formal meetings, alcohol-fueled dinners, and late-night arguments from 14 to 24 January 1943 in Anfa, an affluent suburb of Casablanca.³⁰³ Roosevelt ensured that the final communiqué express the ultimate goal of the Allies as no less than the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers but Churchill prevailed in imposing the invasion of Sicily for that summer rather than the direct assault on France sought by American military planners.³⁰⁴ As for dissensions among the French, Roosevelt envisioned a straight forward solution as he cabled to the British Prime Minister: "We'll call Giraud the bridegroom, and I'll produce him from Algiers, and you get the bride, de Gaulle, down from London, and we'll have a shotgun wedding."³⁰⁵

Despite this bonhomie, Roosevelt was implacable in his hostility towards de Gaulle, whom he envisioned as rallying under Giraud. He had agreed with Churchill that the two would co-chair a new French coordinating body. However, Roosevelt insisted that Giraud would hold supreme military command, an important nuance as this regime would be recognized as a military ally but not as a legitimate national government. Gaullists and former Vichy figures, such as French West Africa Governor General Pierre Boisson and the infamous Peyrouton, would be included in equal numbers as part of the committee’s membership. Churchill doubted that de Gaulle would settle for such terms but he believed that an agreement could be hammered out as long as the two opponents were brought together. He wrote to the Free French leader on 16 January:

³⁰² Weiss, *Allies in Conflict*, 69.

³⁰³ The main venue for the talks was the *Hôtel Anfa*, which had previously hosted the officers of the German Armistice Commission. Berthon, *Allies at War*, 232.

³⁰⁴ For a précis of the conference’s proceedings, see David Stone, *War Summits: The Meetings That Shaped World War II and the Postwar World* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005), 70-77. Complete US records regarding the political and diplomatic aspects of the conference can be found in United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States – The Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, and Casablanca, 1943* (hereafter *FRUS Casablanca 1943*) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 485-849.

³⁰⁵ Cited in Berthon, *Allies at War*, 234; and Kersaudy, *De Gaulle et Churchill*, 247.

I should be glad if you would come to join me here by first available plane which we shall provide, as it is in my power to bring about a meeting between you and General Giraud under conditions of complete secrecy and with the best prospects.³⁰⁶

It was in complete secrecy as, like the rest of the world, neither French leaders knew that *Symbol* was underway. Though surprised, Giraud responded immediately to Roosevelt's invitation to Casablanca. He realized that attending these proceedings would likely reinforce his position and speed up execution of the Mast Plan.³⁰⁷ De Gaulle, for his part, firmly declined Churchill's summons, denouncing a secret summit taking place on French territory under allied pressure for an arrangement he disagreed with.³⁰⁸ This stance forced a sharp rebuke from Churchill. He immediately cabled back that continued refusal on the part of de Gaulle would negate the Prime Minister's commitment to mend relations between the United States and the Free French as such effort "... will definitely have failed. I should certainly not be able to renew my exertions in this direction while you remain the Leader of the movement."³⁰⁹ Eventually relenting under increasing pressure from the Foreign Office and members of his own Free French committee in London, de Gaulle arrived in Casablanca on 22 January as the conference concluded.³¹⁰ An initially convivial lunch between the two French generals and their staff turned frosty after Giraud recounted his escape from Kœnigstein at length, to which de Gaulle simply replied: "Now explain to me how you managed to get captured."³¹¹ This exchange was ominous.

Interviews with Churchill and Roosevelt followed, alleviating some of the tension between the leaders but with little effect in terms of obtaining a formal accord. On the morning of 24 January, Giraud agreed to sign a statement proclaiming the formation of a representative French committee under dual control but de Gaulle refused, vetoing the inclusion of former Vichysts. The only symbolic display of union between the two generals occurred when they exchanged an awkward handshake for cameramen assembled outside the *Hôtel Anfa* as Roosevelt and Churchill set out to reveal to the world the larger discussions which had just taken place in Casablanca.³¹² Giraud and de Gaulle also issued a common, if blunt, public statement:

We have met. We have talked. We have registered our entire agreement on the end to be achieved, which is the liberation of France and the triumph of human liberties by the total

³⁰⁶ Cable from British Prime Minister to Admiralty for relay to de Gaulle through the Foreign Secretary dated 16 January 1943 in TNA, CAB 121/409 *Relations with General de Gaulle and the Free French Movement*.

³⁰⁷ Giraud, *Un seul but: la victoire*, 84-85; and Beaufre, *Mémoires*, 408-410.

³⁰⁸ Cable from British Foreign Secretary to Prime Minister dated 17 January 1943 in TNA, CAB 121/398.

³⁰⁹ Cable from British Prime Minister to Foreign Secretary for communication to General de Gaulle, dated 18 January 1943, reproduced in full in Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*, 680-681.

³¹⁰ For de Gaulle's views on the circumstances of the invitation to Casablanca, and his reluctant acceptance, see De Gaulle, *L'unité*, 74-76 and *Unity*, 78-80.

³¹¹ Cited in Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle*, 344; and Berthon, *Allies at War*, 240. For various views on this first discussion between the two French leaders, see de Gaulle, *L'unité*, 77 and *Unity*, 81; Giraud, *Un seul but: la victoire*, 101-103; Beaufre, *Mémoires*, 415; Barré, *Devenir de Gaulle*, 285-286; and Fenby, *The General*, 197.

³¹² De Gaulle, *L'unité*, 85-86 and *Unity*, 90; Giraud, *Un seul but: la victoire*, 109-110; Beaufre, *Mémoires*, 415; Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*, 693; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warrior*, 175-176; Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle*, 347; and Fenby, *The General*, 200-201.

defeat of the enemy. This end will be attained by the union in the war of all Frenchmen fighting side by side with all their Allies.³¹³

Giraud and de Gaulle had stated their agreement on the ultimate end and the need for union but failed to settle on a mechanism to achieve this goal. One small step was taken with the appointment of General Georges Catroux as de Gaulle's representative to Giraud's headquarters in Algiers.³¹⁴ Nevertheless, this gesture fell quite short of justifying the optimism manifested by Roosevelt when he cabled Churchill on 5 February: "I take it that your bride and my bridegroom have not yet started throwing the crockery. I trust the marriage will be consummated."³¹⁵ As he had feared when first summoned to meet with the allied leaders, de Gaulle did not fare well in Casablanca. He failed to impress Roosevelt and he badly strained his relationship with Churchill, returning to London even more isolated, at least in the short term. Giraud had not inspired tremendous confidence on the part of the Anglo-Americans – Roosevelt quipped to his son Elliott after first meeting Giraud "I'm afraid we're leaning on a very slender reed."³¹⁶ But he remained firmly in charge in North Africa. As importantly, he made much headway in securing American support for rearmament of his forces.

While de Gaulle delayed his travel to Casablanca until the very end, Giraud had arrived on 17 January, giving him the opportunity to meet informally with many of the most senior figures making up the American and British delegations. He then attended a formal session of the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 19 January, using this opportunity to lay out his plan for rejuvenation of his forces. He outlined a more ambitious vision than that conveyed so far in the Mast Plan, increasing the size of the proposed *corps de bataille* from ten to 13 divisions (three armoured and ten motorized infantry divisions) and an air force of no less than 50 fighter squadrons, 30 light bomber squadron, and additional transport elements for a total of 1,000 planes. On the naval side, the request was limited but Giraud introduced two lines of effort that would shape the rearmament of the *Marine nationale* in the years to come:

Concerning the navy, we have some good vessels but those are lacking anti-air weaponry and sensors. As well, we need escorts for our convoys. Thus, I ask, on the one hand, for the modernization of the ships we have and, on the other hand, the delivery of a small number of new ships of limited tonnage.³¹⁷

The CCS did not endorse the specifics of the proposal right away, although they agreed with the vision therein. As remarked by General Marshall: "(It is) not a question of whether to equip the French Army, but rather how to do it."³¹⁸ Both sides accepted that limitations in allied shipping would likely impede the timely provision of modern American equipment to French forces in Africa and the CCS stopped short of issuing a formal recommendation to their political masters for the execution of Giraud's vision. This left the next step unclear, a situation the

³¹³ Cited in French in Beaufre, *Mémoires*, 416; and in English in a cable from British Resident Minister in Algiers (and future Prime Minister) Harold MacMillan to Foreign Secretary, 25 January 1943, TNA CAB 121/398.

³¹⁴ De Gaulle, *L'unité*, 83 and *Unity*, 86; and Giraud, *Un seul but: la victoire*, 109-110.

³¹⁵ Cited in Berthon, *Allies at War*, 247.

³¹⁶ Cited in Kersaudy, *De Gaulle et Roosevelt*, 219; and Berthon, *Allies at War*, 236.

³¹⁷ Giraud, *Un seul but: la victoire*, 96.

³¹⁸ Cited in Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, 35.

French general determined to remedy when he met the American president in person for the third and last time that week. Following the handshake with de Gaulle on 24 January, Giraud presented a memorandum to Roosevelt who, after reading it over once, promptly recorded his agreement on the margin of the document.³¹⁹ The *memorandum d'Anfa* or the Anfa Plan would thereafter guide the rearmament of France's *armée d'Afrique* and shape the future of the country's military forces for the next several years.

Though no military representatives were at Roosevelt's side when he agreed to the detailed clauses included therein, the CCS did not resist this unexpected *fait accompli* given that it largely reflected the nature of their own discussions with Giraud. The *corps de bataille* would be a compromise figure of 11 divisions (three armoured and eight motorized infantry) while the air force still required 1,000 planes (500 fighters, 300 bombers and 200 transports). Priority in the delivery of equipment in the forthcoming months would be 400 trucks and the materiel required to stand up three reconnaissance battalions, three battalions of tank destroyers and three motorized divisions. The United States committed to monthly deliveries of 65,000 tons of supplies to meet civilian needs (50,000 tons of wheat, 12,000 tons of sugar, and 3,000 tons of fabrics). France would transfer 165,000 tons of merchant shipping to the interallied pool to assist in the transport of both military and civilian materiel to French Africa, with the remainder carried in allied ships.

Until then, misgivings about the commitment of the United States to the wartime rearmament of France lingered in some minds. A quick succession of impromptu agreements between various authorities since Cherchell had thus far failed to define the details of such support but Roosevelt's hand-written ratification of this latest plan put such doubts firmly to rest:

Well might General Giraud rejoice. After weeks of anxious waiting, he had at last a definite promise of American assistance. The Chief Executive of the United States Government himself had sanctioned the principle of French rearmament and had agreed to a target of eleven divisions plus a substantial air force.³²⁰

However, nowhere in the Anfa Plan did the question of rearming the French navy appear. Not even Giraud's earlier statement to the CCS about modernizing existing ships and acquiring new ones was cited in the *mémorandum d'Anfa*; at most, the text did not constrict the clauses to *l'armée d'Afrique* specifically, using the more inclusive term "French forces". The absence of sailors among the few advisors Giraud took with him to Casablanca likely reflected his limited concern with naval issues.³²¹ This neglect could have worried Admiral Michelier once he learned of the agreement but it likely did not. He and his staff had already engaged in extensive navy-to-

³¹⁹ This correspondence, dated 24 January 1943, took the form of two memoranda addressed directly from Giraud to Roosevelt and labeled collectively a "Resumé of the Agreements in Principle Resulting from the Anfa Conversation". The original version in French can be found in Giraud, *Un seul but: la victoire*, 353-354. An English version, which includes notes penned by Roosevelt on the original copy, is reproduced in *FRUS Casablanca 1943*, 823-825. Therein also appears a cable dated 1 February 1943 from Robert Murphy to Ray Atherton, Head of the European Division at the US Department of State, reproducing the memoranda and providing some commentary on the circumstances of the meeting. Murphy was the only person present with Roosevelt and Giraud when the two met that morning. *Ibid.*, 825-828.

³²⁰ Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, 38.

³²¹ Masson, *La Marine française et la guerre*, 412.

navy discussions with their USN counterparts in the spirit of Cherchell and the Darlan Deal. French and American sailors had not waited for the agreement achieved at Anfa to lay out the framework and processes necessary to undertake a large-scale modernization of existing vessels as well as transfer of new ships and aircraft to a *Marine nationale* reborn. Nevertheless, the Anfa Plan provided necessary political legitimacy to the admiral for his American opposite to commence turning these ambitious plans into reality.

On the other hand, the Casablanca Conference left unresolved many issues that had plagued Franco-Allied relations leading up to *Torch* and those continued in the year ahead. Despite his domineering bravado in bringing de Gaulle and Giraud to shake hands on the front lawn of *Hôtel Anfa*, Roosevelt failed to impose his proposed “third way” to remedy the French divide and the two generals continued bickering acrimoniously from then on, a dynamic that greatly complicated Allied diplomacy and military planning. *La France libre* and Giraud’s forces were engaged against the Axis but fighting separate campaigns under different command and support arrangements. For the time being, the former remained aligned with the British while the latter dealt almost exclusively with the Americans. Even more ominous for the longer term, who sided with whom among *les Français* and which country sought to propel one leader at the expense of the other left deep scares on the psyche of French politicians and senior military figures, for the remainder of the hostilities and well into the uncertain circumstances of the postwar era.

CHAPTER FOUR

REARMING FOR WAR

New York City Mayor Fiorello Henry La Guardia smiled broadly from a stand erected outside City Hall in Lower Manhattan on Tuesday, 23 February 1943. A large group of senior figures from the United States and several Allied nations accompanied him. An early supporter of the France Forever movement, the ebullient politician had called for a day of celebration, inviting a contingent of seven hundred sailors from the French battleship *Richelieu* and the cruiser *Montcalm* to parade down Broadway Avenue. The ships were recently arrived from Dakar, Senegal to undertake extensive refits, the former in the Brooklyn Navy Yards and the latter in the located in Philadelphia. The arrival of *Richelieu* in New York Harbor on 11 February was particularly symbolic, sailing past the Statue of Liberty and then up the East River, passing under the Brooklyn Bridge in broad daylight in full view of cheering New Yorkers. This grand entrance and the day's reception in downtown Manhattan were meant to symbolize the dedicated support of the United States to a reawakened France.

Unexpectedly, though, the celebration failed to conceal continuing divisions that underscored the country's internal politics. Two contingents of French officials were at La Guardia's side, Giraud's delegation led by Major-General Antoine Béthouart (arrived from Algeria on 24 December 1942) and the Gaullists under the civilian representative Adrien Tixier, who replaced René Pleven in November 1941. At the podium, Tixier at first adopted a conciliatory tone by welcoming the sailors to the allied side but he soon followed with a vitriolic diatribe against those who rallied at the eleventh hour while *la France libre* had been fighting ever since Pétain cravenly agreed to the Armistice. Also present on the stand, *Richelieu*'s commanding officer, Captain Marcel Deramond, left his seat visibly irritated and marched off in full view of the public and the press as La Guardia pushed Tixier aside to return a semblance of conviviality to the event.³²²

This awkward moment represented only one several elements of a concerted effort by Free French authorities to denigrate the Giraud regime in the United States press. They openly disparaged any figures loyal to Vichy until November 1942. Admittedly, the officers of *Richelieu* and *Montcalm* played into their hand by continuing to denounce de Gaulle as leading a movement of renegades who had deserted France at her hour of greatest need. They also proudly displayed portraits of Pétain in the ships' messes, in full view of the many American officials and journalists who visited frequently. The old Marshal, although by then under German house arrest in occupied Vichy, remained for them the legitimate head of the French state, and they only reluctantly accepted General Henri Giraud as their new wartime leader.

Divided loyalties at the top sowed confusion in the minds of lower ranks, a trend that officers from the *Forces navales françaises libres* (FNFL – Free French Naval Forces) sought to

³²² Antoine Béthouart, *Cinq années d'espérance – Mémoires de guerre 1939-1945* [Five Years of Hope – War Memories 1939-1945] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1968), 192-193; Michèle Cointet, *De Gaulle et Giraud: L'affrontement, 1942-1944* [De Gaulle and Giraud: The Confrontation, 1942-1944] (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2005), 317; and Philippe Masson, *La Marine française et la guerre, 1939-1945* [The French Navy and the War, 1939-1945], 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: Tallandier, 2000), 415.

exploit. They set up recruiting stations outside the gates of the shipyards where ships of the *Forces maritimes d'Afrique* (FMA – Africa Maritime Forces) underwent refits. Within weeks, upwards of one hundred crew members from the *Richelieu* abandoned the battleship, most going on to serve in smaller destroyers and corvettes under the *croix de Lorraine*.³²³ Nevertheless, the American public mostly remained unaware of such internecine strife. Visitors could only be impressed by the scale of the work and the effective cooperation between French sailors and USN dockyard workers dedicated to bringing France's largest warship back into the fight.

Richelieu entered the No. 5 Dock at the Brooklyn Navy Yard on 24 February 1943. From that date, three shifts of 2,000 workers each took turns on board, twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week, for the next five months. They scraped, cleaned and painted the hull and the infrastructure to do away with the dirt, rust and underwater growth accumulated after more than two years of sitting idle in African waters. They removed quantities of obsolete equipment and replaced them with modern anti-aircraft batteries and radars, new communications gear and lifeboats, and improved accommodations. They refurbished the propulsion machinery as well as the main and secondary armament. They repaired the extensive damage that had resulted from a torpedo hit at the stern suffered at the hands of a British aircraft on 8 July 1940 during Operation *Catapult* and a 15-inch shell fired by the Royal Navy battleship *Barham* that had struck amidships during Operation *Menace* the following September. Back afloat by the end of August 1943, *Richelieu* left North American waters in October after a period of trials and training in Norfolk, Virginia to arrive on 24 November in Scapa Flow, Scotland (via Boston, the Azores and Algeria) to take up her first operational assignment with the British Home Fleet.³²⁴ This refit and prompt return to operations was symbolic in many ways.

Leaving Dakar only six days after United States President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had agreed to the terms proposed by General Giraud in the *mémorandum d'Anfa* on 24 January 1943, the battleship provided a potent display of the collaborative spirit required to initiate and sustain the wartime rearmament of the French forces willing to fight the Axis. But it also exposed the clashing ambitions that would greatly complicate the planning and execution of that effort in the following years. For the Americans, the *Richelieu* refit was as much a matter of French prestige as that of an effectual contribution to Allied sea power.³²⁵ The continued U-boat threat in the

³²³ René Sarnet and Éric Le Vaillant, *Richelieu* (Rennes, FR: Marines Éditions, 1997), 170; and Julien Lombard, "Le *Richelieu* dans la tourmente (1939-1945) [*Richelieu* into the Storm (1939-1945)]," *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 188 (December 1997): 71. De Gaulle boasted in his memoirs that more than 300 sailors left *Richelieu* but the evidence does not support such a large number. Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre – Volume 2 – L'unité, 1942-1944* [War Memoirs. Volume 2. Unity, 1942-1944] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1956), 87 and *War Memoirs – Volume 2 – Unity, 1942-1944*, trans. Richard Howard (London, UK: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1959), 91. And not all of them went on to join the *FNFL*. Several simply deserted, attracted by the bright lights, employment opportunities and big salaries to be found in American cities, a phenomenon not restricted to the French. Philippe Masson reported that a British cruiser under repair in Brooklyn that year also lost several sailors for similar reasons. *La Marine française et la guerre*, 415.

³²⁴ John Jordan and Robert Dumas, *French Battleships: 1922-1956* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 182-190; Robert Dumas, *Le cuirassé Richelieu 1935-1968* [Battleship *Richelieu* 1935-1968] (Bourg-en-Bresse, FR: Marines Éditions, 1992), 50-51; and David Brown, "Le H.M.S. *Richelieu*," *Revue historique des Armées* 199 (June 1995): 117-118.

³²⁵ Marcel Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, United States Army in World War II (Washington, DC: Center of Military History United States Army, 1989), 217.

Atlantic and the aircraft carrier battles that had dominated the Pacific War in 1942 simultaneously highlighted the dire requirement for more surface escorts and the decline of the battleship as the queen of the battle at sea. Regardless, Giraud's naval commander, Vice-Admiral François-Félix Michelier, insisted that the ship could be made ready for an Atlantic crossing within days.

Michelier eventually gained the support of United States Navy authorities for the project, especially as *Richelieu* would be accompanied by the cruiser *Montcalm*, that type of ship being of more interest to them. Four American destroyers also escorted the two vessels on their cross-Atlantic journey, the first time French and US vessels operated together as an integrated formation in the war.³²⁶ The prompt departure showed that French and American admirals had not wasted the long weeks of political haggling that had followed the North African landings. By late January 1943, they had already instituted most of the framework and many of the processes that would guide the wartime rearmament of the *Marine nationale*, regardless of the latter's internal divisions and the heavy demands already placed on Allied shipyards.

IMPLEMENTING THE FRAMEWORK FOR REARMAMENT

Mechanisms to coordinate the production and distribution of armaments among the Allies were already in place when the Anglo-Americans landed on the shores of North Africa. Though nominally neutral at the time, President Roosevelt had met with British Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland in August 1941 when the two issued the Atlantic Charter, promulgating lofty goals for a postwar world where democracies would have prevailed over the fascist powers.³²⁷ These ambitions were confirmed when the two leaders and their closest advisors met again after Pearl Harbor for the *Arcadia* Conference, which took place in Washington over the Christmas/New Year period in 1941-42.³²⁸ Reaffirming the principles of the Atlantic Charter, they were joined on 1 January 1942 by representatives from twenty-four other governments in adopting the Declaration of the United Nations, which "... pledged the signatory governments to the maximum war effort and bound them against making a separate peace."³²⁹ In addition to the formulation of such long-term political objectives and extensive discussions on

³²⁶ Paul Auphan and Jacques Mordal, *La Marine française dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale* [The French Navy and the Second World War], 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: France-Empire, 1967), 434; and Charles W. Koburger, *Franco-American Naval Relations, 1940-1945* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 51.

³²⁷ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 390-391; and David Stone, *War Summits: The Meetings That Shaped World War II and the Postwar World* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005), 36-39. The original text of the charter is found at North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *The Atlantic Charter: Declaration of Principles issued by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, 14 August 1941*, last modified 1 October 2009, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_16912.htm.

³²⁸ Stone, *War Summits*, 43-49; and Steve Weiss, *Allies in Conflict: Anglo-American Strategic Negotiations, 1938-1944* (London, UK: MacMillan Press, 1996), 43-51. The conference's proceedings and related correspondence are retained by The National Archives (Kew, UK; hereafter TNA) in the folder CAB 99/17 *Proceedings of the American-British Joint Chiefs of Staff Conference Held in Washington, D.C. on Twelve Occasion between December 24, 1941 and January 14, 1942*; and United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States – The Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, and Casablanca, 1943* (hereafter *FRUS 1941-1942*) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 1-415.

³²⁹ United Nations, *1942: Declaration of The United Nations*, last accessed 8 July 2016, <http://www.un.org/en/sections/history-united-nations-charter/1942-declaration-united-nations/index.html>.

more immediate strategic priorities, *Arcadia* led to creation of the Alliance's senior military body, the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS).

A British proposal, the CCS reflected the committee system then in use in Great Britain, seeking to bring the UK's Chiefs of Staff (the professional heads of the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force) together with their American counterparts, the latter becoming known as the Joint Chiefs of Staff.³³⁰ The CCS apparatus would be based in Washington for the duration of the war, with Great Britain's Chiefs of Staff themselves only present for periodic heads of state conferences (such as *Symbol* in Casablanca in January 1943) but represented at weekly meetings in the American capital by the British Joint Staff Mission. Standing membership remained limited to the United States and Great Britain, although consultation with the other Allies took place through meetings with "Military Representatives of Associated Powers" when warranted by the matters under consideration. It was agreed on the last day of *Arcadia* that, assisted by a planning staff and several subordinate committees, the CCS would constitute the supreme military body to coordinate British and American strategic priorities, war plans, and resource allocations subject to the guidance and directives issued by their political masters. One element of this wide-ranging mandate was particularly germane to the distribution of war materiel between the two powers and the provision of armaments to allied nations. The Combined Chiefs were to:

... (s)ubmit general directives as to the policy governing the distribution of available weapons of war. (It is agreed that finished war equipment shall be allocated in accordance with strategical needs; to effectuate this principle, we recommend the utilization of appropriate bodies in London and Washington, under the authority of the Combined Chiefs of Staff).³³¹ [Parenthesis in the original text]

The CCS first met in Washington on 23 January 1942.³³² The new body quickly grew in stature as the Chiefs immediately tackled the immense challenges ahead of them, deciding early on to exercise control of operations through a geographic division of responsibilities as summarized aptly by Canadian historian Sean Maloney: "Essentially, the United States handled China and the Pacific, while Britain was responsible for the rest of Asia, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East. Europe and the Atlantic were subject to shared control."³³³ This division of the world into British and American theatres of war also affected the distribution of material among the Allied nations. The Chiefs adopted CCS Directive 50/2 on 24 March 1942, agreeing to establish "... a system of adoption by which the members of the United Nations would look for all of their military supplies either to the United Kingdom or the United States."³³⁴ In other words, Britain and America would take care of those Allies found in their assigned theatres. As recommended in the original note of 14 January 1942, the CCS structure came to include two combined bodies to oversee distribution of war material by each country within its assigned

³³⁰ Ray S. Cline, *United States Army in World War II – Washington Command Post: The Operations Division* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1951), 98-101.

³³¹ TNA CAB 99/17, "United States – British Chiefs of Staff Memorandum, Post-Arcadia Collaboration," dated 14 January 1942.

³³² *Minutes of the Combined Chiefs of Staff Meetings, 1942-1945* (Microfilms Holdings), Minutes of the 1st CCS Meeting, 23 January 1942.

³³³ Maloney, *Securing Command of the Sea*, 10. See also Cline, *The Operations Division*, 101-102.

³³⁴ Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, 10; and CFC IRC, Minutes of the 13th CCS Meeting, 24 March 1942.

theatres. This responsibility became that of the Combined Munitions Assignments Board (CMAB) in Washington and its coequal, the London Munitions Assignments Board, working together to allocate their respective national resources through a common pool approach:

Assignments, the board decided, should be based on combined Anglo-American plans for combat forces in the various theatres and for forces in training, balanced against combined munitions resources and planned production.³³⁵

Each board oversaw subordinate committees looking after their respective areas of responsibility: the Munitions Assignments Committee (Navy), MAC(N); the Munitions Assignments Committee (Ground), MAC(G); and the Munitions Assignments Committee (Air), MAC(A).³³⁶ Demands from Allied governments for war material – this term meant to include any type of war productions, from uniforms and munitions to guns and tanks, fighters and bombers, ships and submarines – were relayed to the Combined Chiefs of Staff who passed those down to the appropriate Ammunitions Boards (in Washington or London) to be handled by the relevant Ammunitions Committee (Navy, Ground or Air). Membership on these committees on both sides of the Atlantic was a combination of American and British representatives, and "... unanimous agreement was required before action could be implemented."³³⁷ Disagreements within the committees or at the board level would be resolved by the CCS since "... the latter held the final authority in the matter of the granting or rejecting of munitions requests from individual members of the United Nations."³³⁸ This framework continued for the remainder of the war, although the assignment of either the United States or Great Britain as "sponsor" to nations divided among theatres of war sometimes required exceptions to allow for higher political considerations or prior Lend-Lease arrangements.

Specific instructions within CCS Directive 50/2 addressed Latin America, China, the Soviet Union and Turkey, even if that last country would not join the hostilities on the side of the Allies until 1945.³³⁹ The directive also considered support to the Free French. Roosevelt continued denying diplomatic recognition to the Gaullist movement and refused to negotiate a Lend-Lease agreement with *la France libre*. Instead, de Gaulle had to submit requests for war material to the British government for forwarding to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. Though awkward, this arrangement did not prevent the provision of direct American support for specific cases. CCS 50/2 acknowledged the tyranny of geography and instructed that munitions for the Free French forces in Africa and the Middle East be provided from British allocations while the United States would support those operating in the Pacific.³⁴⁰ Obviously absent from the directive at that time was the matter of rearming Vichy forces in French North Africa. Committed as a result of the secret meeting at Cherchell in October 1942, and the successive agreements struck with Darlan in the aftermath of Operation *Torch*, US Army Lieutenant General

³³⁵ Richard M. Leighton and Robert W. Coakley, *United States Army in World War II – Global Logistics and Strategy: 1940-1943* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1955), 271.

³³⁶ Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, 22.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 23. See also Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics and Strategy: 1940-1943*, 271-275.

³³⁹ Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics and Strategy: 1940-1943*, 273.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 512.

Dwight D. Eisenhower tackled this challenge within days of establishing Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ) in Algiers on 23 November 1942.³⁴¹

ADAPTING THE FRAMEWORK FOR NORTH AFRICA

Eisenhower faced an unprecedented combination of challenges upon setting foot on North African soil. AFHQ was the first truly joint and combined headquarters established in wartime, not relying on liaison officers from all of the services and the two nations at its heart to relay requests for support but having, instead, an integrated command structure. The American at the top did not merely consult and negotiate but directed the work of his binational staff and exercised control over subordinate units from the United States and Great Britain in combat. Nevertheless, Eisenhower repeatedly had to take into account clashing service cultures and competing national agendas in managing day-to-day operations. Worse, having neglected to seize Tunisia during Operation *Torch*, he now had to fight to take it from the Germans, a campaign which quickly bogged down through the winter months.

These early clashes showed glaring deficiencies in the performance of American combat troops, requiring them to train and fight simultaneously. Damaged port facilities and rudimentary transport systems inhibited his ability to transfer troops and equipment rapidly from west to east across North Africa and supporting those forces engaged on the Tunisian frontline. This situation also challenged his ability to distribute aid to the civilian populations which could not rely on their meagre local resources to support themselves. The possibilities of civilian disturbances in his rear or a Spanish drive into northern Morocco, though remote, remained in the background throughout these early months, while dealing with the intricacies of French politics in Algiers took up an inordinate amount of his time.³⁴² Common to many of these issues was the challenge of logistics.

Two principal bottlenecks compounded Eisenhower's supply problem. The lack of working port facilities in French North Africa and the want of Allied shipping imposed severe limitations on the preparation and implementation of operational plans. Though Algiers had come through Operation *Torch* largely unscathed, Oran and Casablanca had suffered extensive damage as a result of bombardments by the Anglo-Americans and sabotage by the Vichy forces. Other harbours were much smaller in capacity, either closer to Tunisia but within range of Axis bombers (Bône and Bougie in eastern Algeria) or safer to the west but much farther from the front lines (Rabat in Morocco and Dakar in faraway Senegal). US Navy and Army contingents quickly rehabilitated the ports and augmented their air defences but this added capacity did not alleviate the shortcomings of the North African road and rail infrastructure.³⁴³ Simultaneously, shipping shortages resulted from the competing buildup of Allied forces taking place around the world in late 1942 and early 1943.

³⁴¹ On AFHQ's move from Gibraltar to Algiers, see Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1948), 118.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 116-132. See also two cables from British Joint Mission to the Chiefs of Staff on 25 and 27 February 1943, TNA, CAB 121/401 *Re-equipment and Employment of French Forces – Volume I*.

³⁴³ Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics and Strategy: 1940-1943*, 468; and Rick Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn – The War in North Africa, 1942-1943* (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 2002), 171.

Mobilisation in the United States was proceeding at full steam with troops and material continually dispatched to Great Britain, the Pacific and Africa. Commonwealth forces kept flowing out of the dominions of Canada, South Africa, India, Australia and New Zealand, as well as other colonies. Lend-Lease material needed transportation to the Soviet Union and the growing number of Allies then competing for American largesse.³⁴⁴ Such pressures resulted in four conflicting requirements that Eisenhower came to prioritize as follows to sequence the flow of supply into his theatre of operations:

1. Materials for the Anglo-American build-up;
2. Essential food and goods for the civilian population;
3. Vehicles, weapons and ammunition to replenish those French forces already engaged in combat in Tunisia; and
4. War material for the longer-term rearmament of the *Armée d'Afrique* under the terms of the Mast Plan.³⁴⁵

In other words, Eisenhower considered the question of French rearmament, already discussed at Cherchell in October 1942 and endorsed in the November Clark-Darlan Agreement, a matter for future consideration in terms of its execution. He viewed support to ongoing operations in Tunisia the more pressing requirement, as noted in a postwar treatise on the subject of alliance logistics:

Rearmament materials... could not be brought to bear on the enemy in the immediate future since French troops to be rearmed would require a period of orientation and training in their use. In short, Eisenhower considered rearming the French to be a long-range problem related to future campaigns in the Mediterranean or Europe and not to the immediate fighting in North Africa. In his cables to Washington in December and January he continually insisted that he could not, in the immediate future, spare any additional shipping space for the purpose; when his build-up was sufficiently advanced, he said, it would be for the CCS to say whether they could, in the light of the world shipping situation, "cope with this new commitment."³⁴⁶

Not surprisingly, Giraud thought otherwise. Fighting in Tunisia was bound to end before Summer 1943. Shortly thereafter, the Allies were expected to undertake another campaign in the Mediterranean, perhaps even an amphibious landing directly on the shores of southern France after taking the islands of Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica.³⁴⁷ The supply of French units currently engaged in combat in Tunisia and build up of a powerful *corps de bataille* in the rear needed to take place simultaneously and it needed to start soon. The *Armée d'Afrique* had to make an immediate contribution to defeating the Axis in Africa while a new expeditionary force took possession of modern American equipment and trained with it in time to join the next campaign,

³⁴⁴ Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics and Strategy: 1940-1943*, 203-206; and their follow-on *Global Logistics and Strategy: 1943-1945* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1968), 4-6.

³⁴⁵ Cable from Eisenhower to CCS, 31 December 1942. Principal File Series – Papers, Pre-Presidential, 1941-1952 – Box 131: Official Cables to CCS August – December 1942, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library (Abilene, KS; hereafter DDEPL).

³⁴⁶ Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics and Strategy: 1940-1943*, 513. For Eisenhower's early views on this matter, see his cable to CCS, 18 November 1942, TNA, CAB 121/401.

³⁴⁷ The assault on Sicily had been agreed to in Casablanca but Giraud had little insight into the larger Anglo-American strategy in Europe, which remained vague in early 1943. Weiss, *Allies in Conflict*, 77-80.

wherever it may take place.³⁴⁸ Dissensions over such priorities would test relations between Eisenhower and Giraud as the latter submitted repeated requests for support to AFHQ, meeting with a cool reception on the American side. His assistant, French army Major André Beaufre recalled later:

I kept the notes I scribbled during meetings between Eisenhower and Giraud where I translated for the two. Giraud would make clear and solid proposals [for supply and rearmament]. Eisenhower would respond with reserve: he needed to consult. The answer would come the next day offering some support but turning down the more important items. We would thus succeed in scratching some assistance but nothing would alter the ponderous planning of his staff.³⁴⁹

Neither Darlan nor Giraud would let Eisenhower and his headquarters stand in their way. In early December, they announced their intention to send a military mission to Washington, headed by Major-General Béthouart, to discuss all matters related to rearmament of the *Armée d'Afrique*.³⁵⁰ Eisenhower reluctantly endorsed the idea as a conciliatory gesture when he relayed the request to Marshall:

I realize that missions of this kind are usually only a source of annoyance to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, that they actually accomplish little or nothing in their dealings with the Missions [sic] Assignments Committee and that recommendations from this Headquarters will be required in any case. There is also possibility of friction with the de Gaulle mission now in Washington. However Giraud apparently feels deeply that he is entitled to an opportunity to have his representatives present his views at the fountainhead of authority, and it is difficult for me to combat this idea when daily we ask him for more effective help... Moreover, it might be a good thing for these people to realize at first hand the complications involved in supplying a world conflict.³⁵¹

American authorities approved the Béthouart mission on 15 December 1942 and the contingent arrived in Washington on 24 December, eventually settling for a mere liaison function for the remainder of the hostilities while the actual requisition channel to the CCS on behalf of the French remained with AFHQ.³⁵² Indeed, as support of French forces in North Africa could only occur at the expense of the Anglo-American buildup in the region (in terms of shipping space and war material redirected to the French), the Combined Chiefs agreed that "... implementing the rearmament programs subsequently established by decision of the CCS rested with the Allied Commander in Chief in the theatre of operations."³⁵³ AFHQ sent requests with recommendations in order of priority to the CCS and these, in turn, were forwarded to the MAB and the relevant MAC for action.³⁵⁴ In order to handle this coordinating function, Eisenhower set

³⁴⁸ Henri Giraud, *Un seul but: la victoire, Alger 1942-1944* [Only One Goal: Victory, Algiers 1942-1944] (Paris, FR: Julliard, 1949), 95-96 ; and André Beaufre, *Mémoires, 1920-1940-1945* (Paris, FR: Presses de la Cité, 1965), 390-391.

³⁴⁹ Beaufre, *Mémoires*, 390.

³⁵⁰ Béthouart, *Cinq années d'espérance*, 176-177; and Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, 26.

³⁵¹ CAB 121/140, cable from Eisenhower to Marshall, 12 December 1942.

³⁵² Béthouart, *Cinq années d'espérance*, 182; and CAB 121/140, cable from the British Joint Staff Mission (Washington) to the War Cabinet Offices (London), 22 December 1942.

³⁵³ Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, 27.

³⁵⁴ *Minutes of the 49th CCS Meeting*, 20 November 1942.

up a dedicated agency within AFHQ, the Joint Rearmament Committee (JRC), which met for the first time in Algiers on 23 December 1942.³⁵⁵ This agency, reporting directly to Allied Forces Chief of Staff, Major General Walter Bedell Smith, included nine members (four American, one British and four French) working under the senior US officer, United States Army Air Forces Colonel William Tudor Gardiner.³⁵⁶ Historian Marcel Vigner as presented the Committee's responsibilities and functions as follows:

- a. To centralize all equipment requests from the French.
- b. To develop a program for the rehabilitation of the French armed forces.
- c. To ensure that the executive action necessary to implement the approved program was placed with the responsible section of AFHQ.
- d. To undertake all matters of co-ordination with the French authorities, the Lend-Lease administration, and others concerned with the rearmament of the French.³⁵⁷

In turn, the French set up the *Service central des approvisionnements et matériels américains* (SCAMA – Central Service for American Supplies and Materials) to coordinate the reception and distribution of Allied rearmament goods.³⁵⁸ Though a positive development from the French perspective, initial deliberations of the JRC also highlighted the divergence in priorities between Eisenhower and Giraud, the former continuing to focus on armament of those forces engaged on the Tunisian front at the expense of the latter's *corps expéditionnaire*. By and large, the Combined Chiefs agreed with their subordinate commander. Following General Béthouart's first briefing to them on 7 January 1943, the CCS received a report from the US Army staff which illustrated how the diversion of resources to meet the targets laid out in the Mast Plan would severely impact replenishment of American formations already abroad, worldwide shipments scheduled for the remainder of the year, and equipping of new divisions under training in the continental United States.³⁵⁹ Assistant Secretary of War John J. MacCloy met Béthouart on 10 January to convey this conclusion: "Every American is anxious that there should be a strong French army in North Africa but it is well not to lose sight of the enormous difficulties involved."³⁶⁰

On 12 January 1943, General Bedell Smith met with Giraud in Algiers to convey a similar message. The American faced a brusque rebuttal before being summarily dismissed by the French leader.³⁶¹ The matter remained unresolved until President Roosevelt endorsed the *mémoire d'Anfa* two weeks later, presenting the Combined Chiefs and Eisenhower with a *fait accompli*. Telling was a discussion between Marshall and representatives of the British Joint Staff Mission in Washington after he was made aware of what had transpired between Roosevelt and Giraud in Casablanca:

³⁵⁵ Vigner as, *Rearming the French*, 25; Béthouart, *Cinq années d'espérance*, 337; and CAB 121/401, cable from Naval Commander Expeditionary Force to Admiralty, 25 December 1942.

³⁵⁶ Vigner as, *Rearming the French*, 25.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 25; and Béthouart, *Cinq années d'espérance*, 337.

³⁵⁸ Frédérique Chapelay, "Le réarmement de la Marine par les Américains [The Rearmament of the Navy by the Americans]," in *Les armées françaises pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, 1939-1945* [The French Armed Forces during the Second World War, 1939-1945] (Paris: F.E.D.N.-I.H.C.C., 1986), 350.

³⁵⁹ Vigner as, *Rearming the French*, 31; and Béthouart, *Cinq années d'espérance*, 338-339.

³⁶⁰ Cited in both Vigner as, *Rearming the French*, 31; and Béthouart, *Cinq années d'espérance*, 339.

³⁶¹ DDEPL, Box 131, Eisenhower cable to CCS, 13 January 1943.

[Marshall] said that only mention at Combined Conference had been in very general terms... Later he was confronted with list of equipment, which he had never previously seen... which French alleged had been agreed to by President... Present list of equipment required is, he says, ridiculous... He is at present investigating what can be done by slowing up equipment of U.S. divisions in this country to meet reasonable French demands within the very limited shipping possibilities.³⁶²

In contrast to this bitter statement, parallel naval conversations between French and American authorities were launched in Algiers and Casablanca. These exchanges commenced in a much more collaborative atmosphere, at least in the early months.

FRAMEWORK FOR NAVAL REARMAMENT

Rebuilding Giraud's navy took place within the larger Allied framework discussed above, with requests handed from his staff to Eisenhower's JRC for initial review and furtherance to the CCS, MAB and MAC(N). Matters concerned with the rejuvenation of the *Aéronavale* would make their way to MAC(A) when appropriate. MAC(G) handled some demands as well, such as those concerned with coastal artillery and anti-aircraft batteries, the shore defence of naval bases being a responsibility of the navy under the French system. But a critical distinction differentiated the context of these discussions from those concerned with building up Giraud's army and air force. Both of the latter involved very large demands on shipping bound for North Africa, in direct competition with the buildup of Anglo-American forces. In contrast, given the lack of suitable facilities in Algeria, Morocco and French West Africa, planners could only assume that units of the *Marine nationale* would have to sail in the opposite direction for refitting and modernisation in North America. Construction of new ships and submarines for transfer to the French would also take place in Allied yards. Not competing so directly for Africa-bound shipping took much potential for alacrity out of the naval rearmament talks.

Of course, French admirals still made some demands on Allied shipping. A most pressing requirement in late 1942 and early 1943 was the reconstruction and expansion of facilities in the North African commercial ports and naval bases damaged during Operation *Torch*. Establishments within range of Axis aviation based in Sicily and Sardinia also required an extensive defence network. This effort called for importation of large amounts of building material, anti-aircraft guns, and ammunition at the expense of supplies badly needed on the Tunisian frontlines. Nevertheless, the demand was equally justifiable for French and American planners as it served their respective goals. Ships and submarines flying the tricolour out of North African ports also exacted pressures on shipping for transport of fuel, munitions and supplies, as well as transfer of weapon systems and sensors that could be installed locally on smaller vessels based in North Africa. Nevertheless, such investment directly contributed to current operations while alleviating the burden on the USN and the RN for taking on additional coastal defence and local convoy escort duties. In other words, these demands made the *Forces maritimes d'Afrique* an immediate contributor to the Allied cause and Eisenhower had no hesitation in meeting those, just as he favoured supporting General Alphonse Juin's troops then fighting in Tunisia. More challenging for the JRC staff, however, was assessing the ability of the

³⁶² Cable from Joint Staff Mission to War Cabinet Offices, 6 February 1943. TNA, CAB 121/401.

Allies to meet French demands to refit larger ships and submarines as well build new units for transfer to Michelier's fleet.

The rallying of French West Africa to the Allied cause on 22 November 1942 allowed – or forced, perhaps – the Combined Chiefs of Staff to approach the matter of naval rearmament from a wider point of view. As Eisenhower pointed out on 20 November, "... inasmuch as West Africa is outside the *Torch* theatre, I am without authority to participate in the [negotiations]," especially as initial contacts with Governor-General Boisson "... progressed to the point of discussing such details as to how the *Richelieu* might be taken to the United States for repairs."³⁶³ By the end of the month, the CCS directed Rear-Admiral William A. Glassford Jr. to lead a military mission to Dakar to evaluate opportunities and challenges found in that base. They were already aware of the limited means available in the theatre of operations as Glassford's instructions – CCS Directive 129/2 *US Military Mission to French West Africa* – included the need to initiate discussions on repair and modernization of French vessels in American shipyards as well as their escort requirements were they granted permission to cross the Atlantic. Within weeks, the CCS instructed Glassford to include French North Africa in his brief as they pointed out to Eisenhower on 23 December:

To coordinate the reconditioning and repair of all French naval units in Africa, it has been proposed that Admiral Glassford and his technical aides, upon completion of their work in Dakar, proceed to North Africa to consult with you and French naval authorities and to report and to recommend through you French naval repairs and reconditioning needs from the United States.³⁶⁴

In the meantime, Admiral Michelier did not remain idle. Nearly the same day that the CCS dispatched Glassford to Algiers, Giraud's naval commander submitted to the JRC his own proposal for "... desired repairs and alterations to French naval ships in North and West African ports except Alexandria."³⁶⁵ Michelier sought the refit of eight small escort vessels, six destroyers, three cruisers and the battleship *Richelieu*. These refits would provide all vessels with modern anti-aircraft armament, radars and sonars, and new degaussing systems against the prevailing mine threat. In addition, the cruisers and *Richelieu* would gain from extensive refurbishment of their wiring and aircraft catapults as well as repairs and upgrades to various auxiliary systems. Michelier also proposed that thirteen submarines be fitted with American sonars and he included a "... considerable list of stores and supplies for naval shore establishments, dockyards and naval aviation, details of which are not yet complete."³⁶⁶ The French proposal was well received by Eisenhower and his staff:

The French here are ready and willing to start immediately on this general program. I urgently recommend that action be started by taking some escort vessels in hand now and giving the rest active employment while the many technicalities in the refits of the large ships are being settled.³⁶⁷

³⁶³ DDEPL, Box 131, Eisenhower cable to CCS dated 20 November 1942.

³⁶⁴ CCS cable to Eisenhower, 23 December 1942, TNA, CAB 121/401.

³⁶⁵ Eisenhower cable to CCS dated 2 January 1943 in TNA, CAB 121/401. Alexandria referred to the British naval base in Egypt where Admiral Godfrey's *Force X* remained immobilized and loyal to Vichy.

³⁶⁶ *Idem*.

³⁶⁷ *Idem*.

This message to the CCS on 2 January 1943 clearly signaled that the matter of French naval rearmament had assumed a momentum of its own, moving from under the shadow of the Mast Plan and the reluctance of the American theatre commander to equip the *corps expéditionnaire* as a matter of priority. This trend became even clearer when Eisenhower sent to the CCS – by then assembled in Casablanca for the *Symbol* Conference – another assessment of the French proposal following more extensive discussions with Admiral Glassford and his own naval commander, RN Admiral Andrew Cunningham. In an extensive cable dated 18 January 1942, Eisenhower elaborated a list of initiatives dictated by the most immediate concerns of getting escort ships properly equipped, moving larger warships to US yards for overhaul, and giving "... active employment to the units which cannot be immediately taken in hand."³⁶⁸ His plea was exhaustive, seeking to maximize resources from naval establishments in North America and French Africa:

Priority 1-A. Fit modern asdic [sonar] and AA [anti-aircraft batteries] in 7 ocean convoy escorts... Recommend this be done in Dakar with equipment and technical assistance from USA or UK. Ships to be fully employed while waiting fitting.

Priority 1-B. Provide 21 sets asdic to be installed at Dakar or Casablanca in trawlers and inshore patrol vessels not capable of crossing Atlantic. Most of these ships can reach UK if necessary. British have commenced supplying Oerlikons to some of these ships in Mediterranean area.

Second Priority. Dispatch *Richelieu*, destroyers *Fantasque* and *Terrible* and 1 cruiser (to be desennated [sic] later) with additional Allied escort to U.S.A. for overhaul as soon as possible. Remainder of cruisers to be employed immediately on anti-raider work until U.S.A. yards can take them. All of these ships want considerable stripping, rearming and re-wiring before they can go to an active theater. The present close anti-aircraft batteries to be removed at Dakar before proceeding to U.S.A. and to be reinstalled in trawlers and escorts.

Third Priority. Submarines 14 available. Almost all will require extensive overhaul to fit for service in active theater, including such items as relining torpedo tubes to take U.S.A. torpedoes, new batteries, soundproofing and asdic. Propose *Archimede* and *Amazone* to be sent immediately to U.S.A. for overhaul, others to follow. Employment for remainder meanwhile on training and such Atlantic patrols (Flag Officer Commanding West Africa) may propose. If French wish, Admiral Cunningham is prepared to employ a proportion from Algiers.³⁶⁹

A fourth priority discussed four destroyers badly damaged during Operation *Torch* and requiring repairs in place before undertaking the transatlantic voyage for more extensive refits in the United States. As well, Eisenhower mentioned additional ships that "... can usefully be employed in their present condition with alterations to armament which can be done on the spot," while reiterating how "... essential that supplies already requested for rehabilitation of French naval bases at Dakar, Oran, Algiers and Casablanca be furnished as soon as practicable as they are essential to operations of above ships that are to be fitted out at these bases."³⁷⁰ The cable

³⁶⁸ Eisenhower cable to CCS, 18 January 1943, TNA, CAB 121/401.

³⁶⁹ *Idem.*

³⁷⁰ *Idem.*

also raised the difficult issue of the battleship *Jean Bart*, *Richelieu*'s sister ship, badly damaged in Casablanca. The prognosis was guarded, deferring a final recommendation for at least four months, until the French restored some semblance of a seagoing capability to the ship. Realistically, Eisenhower completed his missive by recognizing that executing such an aggressive programme did not rest entirely with him, especially the allocation of shipyard resources to execute this extensive work.

At first glance, the situation was dire. Compounding the limitations then afflicting the installations of the *Marine nationale* in Africa was the absence of dry docks and other facilities essential to undertaking more advanced refits requiring access to ships' hulls and systems below the waterline. Such capacity existed in Dakar but it was too small to accommodate the larger vessels and local industry could not produce the complex equipment necessary to support extensive modernization work.³⁷¹ Bizerte, at the northern tip of Tunisia, was better suited for that purpose but the base had fallen into Axis hands in the wake of Operation *Torch* and the dry docks remained unavailable even after the German surrendered on 7 May 1943, due to the extent of destruction inflicted by Allied bombings and Axis sabotage.³⁷² Great Britain, while supportive of French naval rearmament, could only offer minimal support since that country's own shipyards and dockyard facilities – in the British Isles and overseas – were already running at full capacity. The Admiralty phrased this conundrum in the bleakest terms in a note to Admiral Cunningham on 1 January 1943:

We should have wished on general grounds to give the French substantial assistance in reconstructing their naval forces. Practical considerations render this quite impossible however without serious consequences to ourselves. Shipyard facilities in the Empire are already unable to meet our own requirements plus those of the other United Nations' navies attached to us. The U.S. have indeed reduced the amount of work done for us in their yards owing to their own needs and anything they do for the French will almost certainly be at our expense. Nevertheless this is less prejudicial than a direct call on our own over-worked capacity... The importance of getting the French navy working again is, of course, fully realized and we do not mean to say that no help whatever is to be expected from us. If there is a particular small requirement such as refitting destroyers which can be made serviceable quickly and which we might be able to sandwich into our general programme, we shall give it sympathetic consideration.³⁷³

As pointed out in the latter part of the message, British shipyards eventually provided limited support, mainly with the conduct of refits for smaller units in Bermuda and lesser work in

³⁷¹ Philippe Lasterle, "Les bases et points d'appui coloniaux (1919-1939): une modernisation trop tardive [The Bases and Colonial Stations (1919-1939): An Overly Delayed Modernization]," in *Les bases et les arsenaux français d'outre-mer, du Second Empire à nos jours* [Overseas Bases and Dockyards, from the Second Empire to Today] (Panazol, FR: Charles-Lavauzelle, 2002), 117; and Jean-André Berthiau, "L'arsenal de Dakar de 1945 à 1980 [The Dakar Dockyard from 1945 to 1980]," in *Les bases et les arsenaux français d'outre-mer, du Second Empire à nos jours* [Overseas Bases and Dockyards, from the Second Empire to Today] (Panazol, FR: Charles-Lavauzelle, 2002), 336.

³⁷² Damien Cordier-Féron, "La base navale stratégique de Bizerte (1943-1963) [The Strategic Naval Base of Bizerte (1943-1963)]," *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 213 (2004): 41-43; and Isabelle Laporte, "Mers el-Kébir après Mers el-Kébir (1940-1945) [Mers el-Kebir after Mers el-Kebir (1940-1945)]," *Revue historique des Armées* 223, no 2 (June 2001) : 71-74.

³⁷³ Cable from Admiralty to Cunningham, 1 January 1943, TNA, CAB 121/401.

Gibraltar.³⁷⁴ As expected, however, this situation left the bulk of refit and modernization work to be carried out in American yards, a commitment United States authorities were willing to take on by adopting a narrowly phased process focused on USN dockyards while commercial shipyards continued building vessels that were already on order for them and other allied navies. On 22 January 1942, while still assembled in Casablanca, the CCS endorsed the Glassford proposal:

Upon arrival can take *Richelieu* at New York, *Fantasque* and *Terrible* at Boston, *Montcalm*, *Archimede*, *Amazon* at Philadelphia. Will arrange for Philadelphia to take additional cruisers, destroyers and submarines when foregoing are completed. It must be understood that heavy workloads, shortage of critical material and time for manufacture must be distributed through extended period. Submarine overhauls will probably be particularly slow.³⁷⁵

“Extended period” may not have been as expedient as some French naval officers might have liked but this cable officially launched rehabilitation of the *Forces maritimes d’Afrique*, showing that Michelier did not need Giraud to lobby President Roosevelt on his behalf while in Anfa. Campaigning in Washington was another matter. The *Amirauté* was already considering the next step, namely calling on additional Allied resources to not only refit and modernize existing units but to obtain outright transfer of new ships to augment the size of the fleet. Eisenhower announced this development to the CCS on 26 January 1943. The task, he said, would likely involve the French naval mission dispatched to Washington in the previous weeks, *la mission Fénard*:

Admiral Michelier has requested the provision from Allied new constructions of 30 corvettes and 6 modern destroyers similar to British J class fitted for minesweeping, also 8 tugs, in addition to proposals for rearmament for existing French ships... I will make clear to him that this is a long-term matter, and that the possibilities of providing any of this requirement must be taken up with the Combined Chiefs of Staffs by Admiral Fénard’s mission in Washington.³⁷⁶

In contrast to the bitter arguments over the fate of the Mast Plan, initial discussions about the modernization and supply of *marine d’Afrique* ships and submarines capable of making a more immediate contribution to the fight took place in a rather convivial atmosphere between French and USN authorities. Tackling the next step – increasing the size and strength of Giraud’s navy with new American constructions – would likely test this *bonne entente*.

LA MISSION FÉNARD AND NEW CONSTRUCTIONS

Michelier, through Giraud and Eisenhower, had proposed to the Combined Chiefs of Staff in early January 1943 that a naval mission should proceed from French North Africa to the United States. Its stated purposes was to "... cooperate with Allied officials on such matters as the eventual completion of the *Richelieu*, the repair and refitting of other units, and similar

³⁷⁴ The first two would be destroyer *Tempête* and minesweeper sloop *Gazelle* as announced in cable from RN Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean Fleet to Senior British Naval Officer West Atlantic, 3 April 1943, TNA, ADM 1/13027 *French Warships Re-arming in Bermuda: Priority and Provision of RDF Equipment and Stores*.

³⁷⁵ Cable from CCS to Eisenhower, 22 January 1943, TNA, CAB 121/401.

³⁷⁶ Cable from Eisenhower to CCS, 26 January 1943, TNA, CAB 121/401.

questions.³⁷⁷ Once endorsed by the CCS, the delegation, led by Vice-Admiral Raymond-Albert Fénard, left Algiers and arrived in Washington on 1 February. Fénard worked independently of but in close cooperation with General Béthouart, who continued looking after French army and aviation issues.³⁷⁸ The French admiral proved a wise choice. He was a jovial officer, fluent in English, and he quickly ingratiated himself with government officials and the Combined Chiefs, including United States Navy Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Admiral Ernest J. King, a severe character many foreign officers found difficult to befriend.³⁷⁹ That positive relationship would prove useful since King also held the title of Commander-in-Chief United States Fleet. In that role, the American admiral became the executive agent for the CCS in coordinating the shipborne delivery of material overseas, an important complement to the apportionment efforts of the Combined Munitions Assignments Board machinery.³⁸⁰ King found himself at the centre of the decision-making process regarding demands for material deliveries to French Africa, the refitting of ships and submarines in American yards, and the transfer of new units to the *Forces maritimes d'Afrique*.

On 1 March 1943, Eisenhower reminded the Combined Chiefs of Staff that decisions were required with regards to all three elements in response to the various demands placed by French naval authorities, growing more detailed by the day.³⁸¹ He listed the latest request for new surface ships as 12 destroyers, 30 corvettes and 12 tugs while the *Aéronavale* sought to acquire 33 Catalina flying boats, 18 two-seater Seagulls floatplanes, 105 B-25 bombers modified for anti-submarine patrolling, 110 Curtiss P-40 ground-attack fighters, as well as 38 miscellaneous aircraft. Confirming that the British had already acquiesced to providing 20 Supermarine Walrus amphibians for inshore patrols, Eisenhower then went on to discuss topics ranging from ordnance, sonar and radars to fuel, clothing, foodstuff, berthing and messing equipment (and even books for personal leisure), medical supplies, ship repair and electric equipment, construction materials, machine tools and miscellaneous vehicles – no less than 1,276 of them. The theatre commander appeared largely supportive of those demands other than disagreeing with the number of personnel provided by French authorities for planning purposes (30,000) while he put forward 18,000 as a more realistic number of officers and sailors making up the ranks of the *FMA*.

Eisenhower stated his concerns for confusion between the various French requests and Allied procedures in dealing with them. First, there was difficulty delineating the demands for a reinvigorated *Aéronavale* and that of Giraud's "1,000-plane air force" endorsed in Casablanca by President Roosevelt. Michelier approached those as two distinct, aggregate requests while the CMAB machinery considered all demands for air assets from allied nations as a single allocation to be divided up by the requestors as they wished upon receipt. As well, although the CCS had

³⁷⁷ Vignerat, *Rearming the French*, 217.

³⁷⁸ Béthouart, *Cinq années d'espérance*, 191.

³⁷⁹ Larrabee, *Commander in Chief*, 155 and George W. Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power – The U.S. Navy, 1890-1990* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 186-187. Admiral Cunningham had already commented very positively on Fénard's role in the immediate aftermath of Operation *Torch* in a cable to the Admiralty on 12 December 1942, TNA CAB 121/398 *Relations with the French Committee of National Liberation, Algiers Vol. I*. In a June 1944 telegram to Churchill, Roosevelt also referred to Fénard as "... a first class man in every way." Cable from US President to British Prime Minister, 1 June 1944, TNA CAB 121/399 *Relations with General de Gaulle and the Free French movement Vol. II*.

³⁸⁰ Koberger, *Franco-American Naval Relations*, 77.

³⁸¹ Cable from Eisenhower to the CCS, 1 March 1943, TNA CAB 121/401.

approved the Glassford proposal of 22 January as a unified plan addressing naval needs across French Africa, Eisenhower recommended once again that "... all Dakar naval commitments except fuel be handled separately [i.e. not by his own JRC] since Dakar is in British naval strategic zone controlled by FOCWAF [Flag Officer Commanding West Africa Forces] and is not part of TORCH Naval Area."³⁸² Of note, Eisenhower also remained neutral at that point on the question of transferring new ships from the United States and Great Britain to the *Forces maritimes d'Afrique*, reiterating that this "... is a long term matter which should be taken up by the Fénard Mission."³⁸³

Admiral King concurred with Eisenhower's concerns when he submitted a memorandum to the CCS. That part of the document stated: "(O)n supply and re-equipment of French African naval forces and bases,... though various decision (have) been taken by Combined Chiefs of Staff, Admiralty and Navy Department, no overall agreement had been reached in this matter."³⁸⁴ In order to provide clearer directions to the MABs and better confront growing French ambitions with regards to naval rearmament, King proposed to determine "... the extent of the rehabilitation program, the procedure to be followed for the issue of materials, and the respective participation of the United States and the United Kingdom in the commitment."³⁸⁵ The draft policy, CCS Directive 194/1, was thorough:

- (a) With the exception of a limited number of small craft for harbor use and minesweeping, no ships will be assigned at present to French by either the United States or United Kingdom.
- (b) Upon recommendation of the Commander-in-Chief Allied Forces [Eisenhower], approved by C.C.S., equipment now in French African ports, and operated by British or United States personnel, will be turned over to qualified French personnel so that French may eventually take over defence of their own territory.
- (c) The U.S. and U.K. will each, in its home yards, repair such French ships as directed by C.C.S. replacing where necessary minor caliber and A.A. guns with those of its own manufacture.
- (d) The U.S. and U.K. will each supply all dockyard repair and consumable supplies for the ports under its control.
- (e) The U.S. and U.K. will each supply aircraft to French naval forces operating in areas under control of U.S. and U.K. respectively.
- (f) The U.S. and U.K. will each provide such defences as necessary for the ports under its control.
- (g) The U.S. will supply the following to the French Navy. Ammunition, except for such guns as may be supplied by the British, uniforms as may be necessary.
- (h) The U.K. will supply following to French Navy. Asdics for all French ships regardless of where they overhaul, close range armament, depth charges, and radio equipment for convoy escorts rearming in Africa or the United Kingdom.
- (i) With specific reference to Dakar, United States will provide an initial supply, equivalent to that required for three months, of dockyard repair and consumable supplies, United Kingdom will provide remaining necessary dockyard repair and consumable supplies.

³⁸² *Idem.*

³⁸³ *Idem.*

³⁸⁴ Cable from British Joint Staff Mission to War Cabinet Offices, 3 April 1943, TNA, CAB 121/401.

³⁸⁵ Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, 219.

- (j) With reference to above policy, after French ships have been placed in operation, U.S. and U.K. will each supply necessary common items of armament, ammunition, fuel and supplies to French ships that have been assigned to operate in the sphere of responsibility of U.S. and U.K. respectively.³⁸⁶

Subject to minor amendments proposed by British authorities, CCS Directive 194/1 *Supply Policy for French African Naval Forces and Naval Bases* became official on 17 April 1943.³⁸⁷ The *Amirauté* and AFHQ should have welcomed such a strong commitment by the United States and Great Britain to supporting rehabilitation and supply of existing French forces in Africa, and procedural clarifications found therein. And yet, its very first clause – stating that no ships would be transferred to the *Forces maritimes d’Afrique*, at least for the time being – caused considerable irritation in Algiers. At some point that spring, even Eisenhower’s position evolved from a neutral stance on the matter to one promoting direct transfer of escorts to the French. On 3 May 1943, he dispatched a rather curt signal to the CCS:

The French submitted a request for 12 PC escort vessels on January 8th. On January 20th, with their list of naval rearmament requirements, this request was amplified to a total of 30 PC escort vessels... Under date of April 29th, General Giraud repeated their requests stating in substance that coastwise [sic] convoys are vitally necessary to the national economy and that existing French escort vessels are unable to meet escort requirements. There is a genuine need for French escort vessels of this type in this theatre to escort coastal shipping too slow for Allied convoys.³⁸⁸

The Combined Chiefs proved equally brusque in their reply based on a draft provided by King’s staff:

No escort vessels can be made available from U.S. sources at the present time. None appear in sight until after HUSKY [codename for the Allied invasion of Sicily scheduled for July 1943] and then only if those now assigned NAVNAW [US Naval Forces, Northwest African Waters] are not needed in Mediterranean. Request submitted 20th January are being handled by French Naval Delegation [Fénard Mission] with appropriate agencies here and it is recommended future requests be similarly referred.³⁸⁹

Though abrupt, these exchanges clearly defined the extent of any support the CCS would provide to Giraud’s navy in mid-1943. Ships would not be transferred to the French wholesale; instead, existing units were to be refitted and modernized in Allied yards as space became available. The United States and Great Britain would directly support and supply those ships and submarines operating within their respective areas of responsibility; and they would provide repair and consumables to French bases in Africa. As well, short of providing new ships, plans were emerging for transfer of aircraft to the *Aéronavale* while the Allies also dedicated

³⁸⁶ Reproduced in cable from British Joint Staff Mission to War Cabinet Offices, 3 April 1943, TNA, CAB 121/401.

³⁸⁷ Cable from British Joint Staff Mission to War Cabinet Offices, 9 April 1943, letter from Admiralty Secretariat to War Cabinet Offices, 15 April 1945, and cable from Air Ministry to British Joint Staff Mission, 15 April 1943, TNA, CAB 121/401; and *Minutes of the 80th CCS Meeting*, 17 April 1943.

³⁸⁸ Cable from Eisenhower to CCS, 3 May 1943, TNA, CAB 121/401.

³⁸⁹ Cable from British Admiralty Delegation Washington to Admiralty, 5 May 1943, TNA, CAB 121/401.

considerable resources to introduce personnel of the former Vichy navy to the most recent developments in naval warfare:

At all Allied ports in North Africa, French officers were being trained in British and American methods of harbor defense. A French antisubmarine warfare school was functioning at Casablanca. Gunnery schools were in operations at Algiers and Oran. Selected French personnel were being sent to sea in British destroyers escorting convoys to study the latest methods in antisubmarine warfare.³⁹⁰

But for the direct transfer of ships, CCS Directive 194/1 and the complimentary measures above reflected many of the features that had come to shape British support to the Free French navy in the years leading up to Operation *Torch*: 1) refurbishing ships for use by French crews; 2) installing modern equipment to make these units ready to face the rapidly evolving threats at sea; 3) providing training to French sailors in allied establishments, loaning instructors for employment in French schools, and taking officers to sea in Allied units; and 4) delivering sustained logistical support. Both Free French naval officers and the commanders of the *Forces maritimes d'Afrique* were grateful for such assistance but they could not fail to notice that these arrangements remained narrowly focused on wartime requirements, seeking to exploit existing French naval assets and personnel to augment the overall Allied fighting power at sea, not rebuilding a great power navy.

As concerning, Anglo-American support to French naval rearmament remained divided along the fault line that still fractured the *Marine nationale*, and the larger French war effort, in 1943. The Americans shepherded Giraud's navy while the overtaxed British continued looking after the *FNFL*. This division was an ominous prospect as de Gaulle continued aspiring to take control of France's wartime government and future military aspirations although his fleet remained much smaller in size than its rival in North Africa.

LA FRANCE LIBRE IN THE WAKE OF OPERATION TORCH

Having failed to rally the Toulon fleet, *Force X* in Alexandria, the ships isolated in Martinique, and the Indochina flotilla, Darlan entertained some hope of amalgamating units flying the *croix de Lorraine* into his *Forces maritimes d'Afrique*. Admiral Cunningham reported in December 1942: "Darlan is evidently anxious to come to an agreement with Free French naval elements. Admiral Battey, Chief of Cabinet to Darlan, and Fénard have both put forward feelers to that effect."³⁹¹ Cunningham was non-committal in his dispatch as he realized the sensitivities attached to this matter: "Realistic how delicate all this is and am making no move pending your views but it would greatly assist me to have guidance on policy."³⁹² The reply from the Admiralty was swift: "We strongly distrust the effect of a naval appointment in the U.K. on the Free French. We obviously cannot be a party to any manoeuvres calculated to separate the Free French navy from de Gaulle."³⁹³ The Sea Lords need not have worried since few *FNFL* officers

³⁹⁰ Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, 220. See also Chapelay, "Le réarmement de la Marine par les Américains," 352; and Claude Huan, "La Marine française dans la guerre (1943) [The French Navy During the War (1943)]," *Revue historique des Armées* 188, no. 3 (September 1992): 116-118.

³⁹¹ Personal message from Cunningham to the First Sea Lord, 2 December 1942, TNA CAB 121/398.

³⁹² *Idem*.

³⁹³ Cable from Admiralty to Cunningham, 11 December 1942, TNA, CAB 121/398.

and sailors leaned in that direction anyways. De Gaulle's "good, workable little fleet" had grown into a tightly-knit fighting navy dedicated to its wartime leader. Even Vice-Admiral Émile Muselier could not break that bond when de Gaulle fired him in 1942. Neither Darlan nor Michelier should realistically hope of doing so a year later. Instead, the Free French continued operating under the clauses of the Churchill-de Gaulle agreement of August 1940, adapted as they were to fit in the allied rearmament machinery.

The British government remained committed to providing pay, munitions, supplies and periodic refits to de Gaulle's navy – still subject to reimbursement after the end of the hostilities. The London Munitions Assignment Board took over handling requests for war material under the aegis of the Combined Chiefs of Staff in 1942. The direct transfer of units from Great Britain, however, slowed down considerably in 1943 after handing over the Hunt-class destroyer *La Combattante* (ex-HMS *Maldon*), nine Flower-class corvettes, as well as several Fairmile motor launches and Vosper motor torpedo boats. Only one more vessel of French origin seized during Operation *Catapult* was returned to fly the *croix de Lorraine* in 1943, the small submarine chaser *Carentan*.³⁹⁴ One British submarine, HMS *Vox*, was transferred to the French on the day of her commissioning in early May under the name *Curie*.³⁹⁵ The Canadians provided three motor launches in January – HMCS *ML 052*, *ML 062* and *ML 063*; rechristened *Galantry*, *Langlade* and *Colombier* – to operate out of Saint-Pierre-and-Miquelon for the remainder of the war.³⁹⁶ Lastly, two British harbour defence motor launches based in Port Said, Palestine made their way to Beirut, Lebanon in August 1943 for employment as part of a nascent Free French fleet in the Levant: *HDML 1143*, renamed VP 31 *Palmyre*, and *HDLM 1164*, as VP 32 *Baalbeck*.³⁹⁷

This slowed growth of de Gaulle's fleet occurred even as Operation *Torch* was followed by a modest increase in recruitment for the *FNFL*. The number of officers and sailors rose from 5,300 at the end of December 1942 to 7,000 the following August.³⁹⁸ Some of those men were "defectors" from Giraud's navy and others had escaped France as a result of the occupation of the Free Zone, many fleeing through Spain to Gibraltar where the Free French had established recruiting offices.³⁹⁹ As in the dark days of 1940 however, the majority of recruits remained civilians and former army personnel who joined without any naval experience. But lack of training also affected the few Vichy sailors enrolling in the Free French camp, mostly junior in rank with little sea-going experience. Senior enlisted personnel and officers opted instead to

³⁹⁴ *Carentan* joined the *FNFL* in March 1943 but floundered in a Channel storm, off the island of Wright on 21 December 1943. Only six sailors survived the sinking and eighteen were lost that day. Jacques Cornic, "Sous la Croix de Lorraine (Under the Cross of Lorraine): The *FNFL* (*Forces Naval Française Libres*) 1940-1943 (Free French Naval Forces)," *Warship International* 24, no. 1 (1987): 39; and À la mer, "Chasseur 5 *Carentan*," last accessed 28 July 2016, <http://alamer.fr/index.php?NIUpage=35&Param1=269>.

³⁹⁵ Cornic, "Sous la Croix de Lorraine," 41; and Uboat.net, "FFL *Curie* (P 67)," last accessed 28 July 2016, <http://uboot.net/allies/warships/ship/3571.html>.

³⁹⁶ Cornic, "Sous la Croix de Lorraine," 43; and Fraser McKee, "Where Did the RCN Motor Launches Get To?" *Nauticapedia.ca* (2015), last accessed 28 July 2016, http://nauticapedia.ca/Articles/Navy_MLs.php.

³⁹⁷ Cornic, "Sous la Croix de Lorraine," 43; and Le poste des Choufs, "Bâtiments britanniques transférés," last accessed 28 July 2016, http://www.postedeschoufs.com/pinpin/Les%20batiments/Pendant_apres_guerre/bat_brit_trans.htm.

³⁹⁸ Auphan and Mordal, *La Marine française dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, 250.

³⁹⁹ Personal cable from Admiral Cunningham to the First Sea Lord dated 28 December 1942 and cypher from Governor Gibraltar to Admiral Cunningham, 30 December 1942, TNA, CAB 121/409 *Relations with General de Gaulle and the Free French Movement*.

move on to North Africa and rally to Giraud. Given the growing complexity of fighting at sea, *FNFL* leaders could not ignore the need for new personnel to spend sufficient time in training establishments even as the Battle of the Atlantic reached its crest.

The *École navale* remained in Portsmouth, embarked in the hydrographic ship *Président Théodore Tissier* since 1940 but transferred to the *aviso* (sloop) *Amiens* in March 1943. It continued to run challenging 6-month sessions for prospective officers, upholding demanding standards and failing many candidates, regardless of the wartime pressures to graduate ever more *enseignes de vaisseau* (sub-lieutenants).⁴⁰⁰ No amount of schooling, however, could make up for the hands-on training gained through incessant and grueling time at sea to grow a more experienced cadre of officers and senior enlisted personnel. The need for continuous training was reiterated when the destroyer *Léopard* – one of the first ships rearmed by the Free French in 1940 and still one of its largest unit three years later – ran aground and broke up on the coast of Libya in May 1943 as a result of a navigational error.⁴⁰¹

By that time, *contre-amiral* (Rear Admiral) Philippe Auboyneau commanded a force divided between five theatres of operations. That force simultaneously made active contributions to the Allied war effort around the world and supported de Gaulle's political control of scattered Free French territories.⁴⁰² The bulk of ships, submarines and aircraft flying the *Croix de Lorraine* still operated out of Great Britain to fight in the North Atlantic, off Norway and Murmansk, and in the Channel. Others sailed out of French Equatorial Africa into the South Atlantic, reaching around the Cape of Good Hope for periodic deployments to the Indian Ocean and patrols off Madagascar, Reunion Island and all the way up to French Somaliland (Djibouti).⁴⁰³ The nascent Levant Fleet was based in Beirut with its ships deploying across the eastern Mediterranean. Motor boats and corvettes sailed out of Saint-Pierre-and-Miquelon in support of the Mid-Ocean Escort Force. And a small element remained based in France's far off Micronesian possessions, fawning across the Southwest Pacific on convoy escort missions with American, Australian and New-Zealand units. Doing so, the *FNFL* continued to earn high praises from Allied naval commanders, successfully preying on Axis coastal shipping, shooting down enemy aircraft and landing commandos on enemy shores, while the corvettes based in Greenock, Scotland claimed the destruction of three U-boats (*U-609*, *U-432*, and *U-444*) in Spring 1943.⁴⁰⁴

These successes made valuable contributions to the allied war effort at sea but Anglo-American authorities quickly grew convinced of the need for greater coordination between the

⁴⁰⁰ *École navale*, "L'École navale des Forces Navales Françaises Libres [The Free French Navy Naval Academy]," last accessed 4 August 2016, <https://www.ecole-navale.fr/L-Ecole-navale-des-Forces-Navales.html>.

⁴⁰¹ Émile Chaline and P. Santarelli, "L'activité des F.N.F.L. du 18 juin 1940 au 3 août 1943 [Activities of the F.N.F.L. from 18 June 1940 to 3 August 1943]." *Revue historique de la Défense* 176, no. 3 (September 1989): 78; John Jordan and Jean Moulin, *French Destroyers: Torpilleurs d'Escadre & Contre-Torpilleurs 1922–1956* (Barnsley, UK: Seaforth Publishing, 2015), 250.

⁴⁰² UK Chiefs of Staff Committee, "Aide Mémoire Fighting French Movement," 25 May 1943, TNA, CAB 121/409.

⁴⁰³ The last French territory in Africa to remain loyal to Vichy, Djibouti had been the object of a British blockade, supported by the Free French, from the summer of 1940 until local authorities rallied to Giraud on 31 December 1942. Auphan and Mordal, *La Marine française dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, 443.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 258; and Chaline and Santarelli, "L'activité des F.N.F.L.," 78-80.

two rival *Amirautés* in the wake of the North African landings. Despite earlier censure from the Sea Lords on the matter, Admiral Cunningham raised the issue again late in December 1942: "It is evidently a matter of great urgency to get the two naval factions together if we are to start working with French ships out here. Is there possibility of starting negotiation [...] with de Gaulle's approval? This might be first step to a more general agreement."⁴⁰⁵ Nevertheless, concerns over military effectiveness never supplanted political infighting among the French. Though de Gaulle and Giraud shook hands in Casablanca, renewed bickering in the following months eliminated any possibility of Auboyneau and Michelier initiating talks towards greater cooperation between their forces. A bitter rivalry continued to permeate the ranks of the divided *Marine nationale* in 1943, a reflection of the larger national fracture which endured that year.

A FAILED SHOTGUN WEDDING

The Machiavellian combinations that led to eventual removal of Giraud as Commander-in-Chief in April 1944 and de Gaulle's rise as the sole leader of the French camp dramatically impacted reunification of the French navy and its rearmament by the Allies. Though Giraud appeared to have gained most from the handshake sponsored by Roosevelt in Casablanca, de Gaulle proved ruthless in undermining the credibility of the *Commandant en chef civil et militaire* thereafter. Much more popular than Giraud in Allied public opinion, the resilient *FFL* leader could also boast of the allegiance of several resistance networks in metropolitan France, having already relabeled his movements from *la France libre* to *la France combattante* (Fighting France) in July 1942, claiming to direct the forces of both Free and Occupied France.⁴⁰⁶ His supporters incessantly denounced the retention of former *Pétainistes* in positions of authority under Giraud, generating much debate in the British and American press. The administration in Algiers also proved slow in repealing the most controversial of the Vichy policies and regulations still in effect across French North Africa, especially anti-Semitic measures and those promoting the tenets of the old Marshal's *Révolution nationale*.⁴⁰⁷ Of greatest assistance to de Gaulle, though, was his opponent's reluctance to tackle political matters in the midst of the military campaign then under way in Tunisia and his sole focus on the rearmament of the *Armée d'Afrique*. Giraud proffered his own disabused verdict in his post-war memoirs, writing about himself in the third person:

This military man who had failed to exploit the opportunity presented by the events of 8 November 1942, who was showing such naïveté and disconcerting candor since his return to Algeria, had none of the skills to lead men as shrewd, knowledgeable and skilled as the Algerian land holders, businessmen and journalists. This man had only

⁴⁰⁵ Cable from Cunningham to Admiralty, 29 December 1942, TNA, CAB 121/398.

⁴⁰⁶ The new label was recognized by both British and American governments that same month. Charles de Gaulle, "Appellations « France Libre » et « France Combattante » ("Free France" and "Fighting France" Designations)," *Journal Officiel de la France Combattante*, 28 August 1942, last accessed 6 August 2016, <http://archive.wikiwix.com/cache/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.france-libre.net%2Ftemoignages-documents%2Fdocuments%2Fappellations-fl-fc.phpb>; and Jean-Luc Barré, *Devenir de Gaulle, 1939-1943* [Becoming de Gaulle, 1939-1943] (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2003), 229-230.

⁴⁰⁷ Cointet, *De Gaulle et Giraud*, 301-308; and François Kersaudy, *De Gaulle et Roosevelt: Le duel au sommet* [De Gaulle and Roosevelt: Duel at the Top] (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2006), 256-258. For a typical denunciation of Giraud's conservative ways in the American media at the time, see "The Problem of French Unity," *New Republic* 108, no. 12 (22 March 1943): 365-366.

ever known how to wage war, in a fairly good way for his country, and to get his skin pierced by bullets, in a fairly bad way for himself. He had not learned this dangerous game, politics, nor developed business acumen, and he did not hide that fact.⁴⁰⁸

De Gaulle's opponent also admitted his own failure to understand the power of the media:

I was wrong in systemically ignoring propaganda, judging such means unworthy of me and my cause... I detest speaking on the radio, I detest publicity which twists the truth. I did not want to realize that times had changed and that a radical situation called for revolutionary means, I did not understand that our American and English allies were easy pawns to publicity and that I was hurting myself by neglecting the press even though journalists were pursuing me eagerly.⁴⁰⁹

Dismayed contemporaries recognized similar failings in Giraud. Major Beaufre, his faithful military aide opined: "He has little interest for governing tasks; despite his superb appearance, he clearly realizes his political incompetence."⁴¹⁰ US diplomat Robert Murphy referred to him as "... a fighting soldier, who was under the impression that he would retain control of French military forces in any event, an authority which he cherished much more than political strength."⁴¹¹ Harold Macmillan, Murphy's British equivalent who had just arrived in Algiers on 2 January 1943, remembered from his first meeting with the French general: "(His military attributes) could not conceal ... his unsuitability for the difficult and complex task which he had assumed."⁴¹² Prime Minister Churchill was forthright in an earlier cable to President Roosevelt: "Giraud is in my opinion quite unsuited to the discharge of civil responsibilities. He is a brave, capable, flamboyant soldier and it is his duty to animate and lead the French armies in this theatre under Eisenhower's orders (but little else)."⁴¹³ Eisenhower himself later recalled:

(Giraud) hated politics; not merely crookedness and chicanery in politics, but every part of the necessary task of developing an orderly, democratic system of government applicable to the North African kaleidoscope. He merely wanted supplies and equipment to develop fighting divisions and, provided he could get these, he had no interest in the governmental organization or its personnel. His purpose was pure but his capacity for larger administrative and organizational tasks was doubtful.⁴¹⁴

Regardless of these foibles, all parties, within French circles and among the Allies, put intense pressure on Giraud and de Gaulle to achieve some level of reconciliation during the spring of 1943.⁴¹⁵ Months of acrimonious negotiations led to a tentative agreement and the Free

⁴⁰⁸ Giraud, *Un seul but: la victoire*, 115.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁴¹⁰ Beaufre, *Mémoires*, 404.

⁴¹¹ Robert Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 181.

⁴¹² Harold Macmillan, *The Blast of War, 1939-1945* (London, UK: Macmillan, 1967), 223.

⁴¹³ Cable from Prime Minister Churchill to President Roosevelt, 31 December 1942, TNA, CAB 121/398.

⁴¹⁴ Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 129.

⁴¹⁵ For a range of contemporary views on these crucial months, see De Gaulle, *L'unité*, 92-125 and 96-128; Giraud, *Un seul but: la victoire*, 133-169; Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull – In Two Volumes*, vol. 2 (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1948), 1213-1223; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 179-185; Macmillan, *The Blast of War*, 290-303 and 306-340; William D. Leahy, *I Was There: The Personal Story of the Chief of Staff to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman Based on His Notes and Diaries Made at the Time* (New York, NY: Whittlesey House, 1950), 167-171; and Béthouart, *Cinq années d'espérance*, 196-201 and

French leader flew to the Algerian capital on 30 May to conclude these talks. On 3 June, de Gaulle's French National Committee and Giraud's African administration joined to become the *Comité français de Libération nationale* (CFLN – French Committee for National Liberation). Residing in Algiers, the two generals co-pressed the new body, chairing meetings alternatively, with decrees requiring both of their signatures to be valid. Membership was meant to be equal between Gaullists and Giraudists but a vaguely worded clause left open the possibility of future expansion in these numbers. Explicitly tasked to direct France's war effort on the allied side and to exercise control over French territories not under Axis occupation, the committee's charter also affirmed the commitment to "... re-establish all French liberties, the laws of the Republic and the Republican regime."⁴¹⁶ The Allies did not recognize the CFLN as a representative government and Churchill, who had nearly broken with de Gaulle in the aftermath of the Casablanca Conference, confidently declared to Roosevelt:

If de Gaulle should prove violent or unreasonable, he will be in a minority ... and possibly completely isolated. The Committee is therefore a body with collective authority with which in my opinion we can safely work. I consider that the formation of this Committee brings to an end my official connection with de Gaulle as leader of the Fighting French.⁴¹⁷

American officials agreed with this view as recalled later by Secretary of State Cordell Hull:

Regardless of the tactics of pressure used by de Gaulle to achieve this end, the President and I ... decided to accept this development in the hope that it would end the bitter fighting between French factions and bring them unity of action.⁴¹⁸

Taking this stance, Anglo-American leaders considerably underestimated de Gaulle's ability to out-manoeuvre Giraud. Within weeks, the Free French leader had expanded the Committee's membership from seven to fourteen, filling the balance with his supporters and taking control of the proceedings. By late summer, many high-ranking officials with past affiliations to the Vichy regime resigned or were forced out of key posts, such as governor-generals Boisson in West Africa and Peyrouton in Algeria, and *résident général* Noguès in Morocco. De Gaulle's old ally and nemesis, Vice-Admiral Muselier, who joined Giraud in May

204-214. United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1943 – Volume II – Europe* (hereafter *FRUS 1943*) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), 23-182 provides an extensive record of diplomatic traffic between Washington, London and Algiers narrating the development of Anglo-American positions with regards to the evolving de Gaulle-Giraud relationship to July 1943, including repeated exchanges between Roosevelt and Churchill. For more recent analysis, see Kersaudy, *De Gaulle et Roosevelt*, 249-336 and *De Gaulle et Churchill: La mésentente cordiale* [De Gaulle and Churchill: Cordial Disagreement] (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2001), 267-305; Cointet, *De Gaulle et Giraud*, 285-438; Christine Levisse-Touzé, *L'Afrique du Nord dans la guerre, 1939-1945* [North Africa during the War, 1939-1945] (Paris, FR: Albin Michel, 1998), 278-320; Mario Rossi, *Roosevelt and the French* (New York, NY: Praeger, 1993), 108-118; G.E. Maguire, *Anglo-American Policy towards the Free French* (London, UK: Macmillan Press, 1995), 75-93; and Simon Berthon, *Allies at War: The Bitter Rivalry among Churchill, Roosevelt, and de Gaulle* (New York, NY: Carroll & Graph, 2001), 252-288.

⁴¹⁶ The decree of 3 June 1943 is reproduced in full in de Gaulle, *L'unité*, 488-490.

⁴¹⁷ Cable from Prime Minister Churchill to President Roosevelt, 6 June 1943, TNA, CAB 121/398.

⁴¹⁸ Hull, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 1220.

1943 to assume the awkward title of “Deputy to the Commander-in-Chief for maintaining order in the Algiers region”, lost that post on 2 July and was “retired” yet again in August as a result of a new decree lowering the retirement age for general and flag officers.⁴¹⁹ This last measure obviously served de Gaulle’s purpose in forcing the departure of several senior individuals who had refused to join his movement after the Armistice. De Gaulle was completely ruthless in achieving his ends.

Appointed commander of the *Forces maritimes d’Afrique* by Darlan after the Anglo-American landings, Vice-Admiral Michelier was also eased out in July. The decree of 12 August 1943 forced the retirement of Vice-Admirals Jacques Moreau and André Rioult who were still in command in Algiers and Oran, as well as the former commander of *Force X*, Vice-Admiral Émile Godfroy, and Rear-Admiral Leloup, in command of naval forces in the Caribbean. In all, thirty percent of France’s generals and admirals left France’s nominally reunited armed forces that month or shortly thereafter, some freely but most against their will, given that France was still at war and the momentous opportunity to participate in the liberation of the metropole lay in the near future.⁴²⁰ As for Giraud, he proved impotent in preventing the forced retirement of many of his closest allies, a clear sign of his political isolation and an ominous message to those officers who still wondered where their loyalty should lay.

Though remaining co-president of the French Committee for National Liberation, Giraud could not challenge decisions agreed to by the majority of the membership, so he most often ended up rubber stamping edicts conveying de Gaulle’s will, as in the case of the decree of 12 August. Nevertheless, he remained commander-in-chief of the armed forces, actively overseeing the vigorous effort in rearming the *Armée d’Afrique* and preparing the deployment of an expeditionary force to Europe. Frustrated at the exclusion of his troops from the invasion of Sicily (July-August 1943) and the initial landings in Italy on 3 September 1943, Giraud seized the opportunity to launch a hastily planned *coup de main* two weeks later, landing a small force in Corsica to join the local resistance in expulsing the Axis garrison which had seized the island in November 1942.⁴²¹ The campaign, conducted autonomously by French forces from North Africa without allied support, came to a victorious end on 4 October, an important accomplishment for a rejuvenated *Armée d’Afrique*, a military feat which, ironically, accelerated the political downfall of its leader.

Giraud had not formally informed nor sought authorization from the *CFLN* to liberate Corsica. Seizing this opportunity, de Gaulle mounted a campaign to denounce the seeming incompatibility between the post of military commander-in-chief and the political co-presidency

⁴¹⁹ For the Muselier episode in Algiers, see Renaud Muselier, *L’amiral Muselier, 1882-1965: Le créateur de la croix de Lorraine* [Admiral Muselier, 1882-1965: Creator of the Cross of Lorraine] (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2000), 223-234; and Louis de Villefosse, *Souvenirs d’un marin de la France libre* [Memories of a Free France Sailor] (Paris, FR: Éditeurs français réunis, 1951), 253-277.

⁴²⁰ Auphan and Mordal, *La Marine française dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, 445.

⁴²¹ For an introduction to this campaign, see Ministère de la Défense – Chemins de la Mémoire, "La libération de la Corse, 9 septembre – 4 octobre 1943 [Liberation of Corsica, 9 September – 4 October 1943]," last accessed 8 August 2016, <http://www.cheminsdememoire.gouv.fr/fr/la-liberation-de-la-corse-9-septembre-4-octobre-1943-0>.

held by Giraud.⁴²² Within weeks, de Gaulle managed to prevail over his politically inept adversary, obtaining his accord to dissolve the committee and reconstitute it under the same name but as a reformed organization that looked closer to a country's government, including ministries. On 9 November, Giraud learnt to his great surprise of a new decree confirming his duties as military commander-in-chief but excluding him from membership in the Committee. De Gaulle had won; Roosevelt's shotgun wedding had proved a delusion. With the co-presidency abolished, even the forceful British prime minister, Churchill, had to admit his inability, and that of the American president, to shape the course of French internal politics by that stage:

I am not at all content with the changes in the French National Committee which leave de Gaulle sole President. The body we recognized was of a totally different character, the essence being the co-presidency of Giraud and de Gaulle. I suggest we maintain an attitude of complete reserve until we can discuss the position together.⁴²³

As for Giraud's military responsibilities, he was completely impotent and his influence over operations was marginal at best. French field commanders reported directly to their Allied theatre commanders while forces not yet deployed belonged to the Committee's *Commissariat à la Défense nationale* (Commissariat for National Defence, an embryonic ministry of defence). The charade continued into 1944 until de Gaulle abolished the position of commander-in-chief on 4 April, offering Giraud the post of Inspector General of the Armed Forces instead, an honorary assignment which the older General declined in angry frustration. On 15 April 1944, Giraud accepted the inevitable and retired to a private residence in Mazagran, a small coastal town near Oran, Algeria.⁴²⁴ This departure left de Gaulle largely in control of the political apparatus outside the *métropole* and in command of all French armed forces rallied to the Allied cause. This concluding act should have marked the final reconciliation of a divided people and its competing military factions. In the latter case, that process had been initiated more than a year earlier but the fusion would prove a challenge, none the more so than in the case of the *Marine nationale*.

A RELUCTANT FUSION

The unification of the *FNFL* and the *Forces maritimes d'Afrique* had proven premature after Operation *Torch* but Giraud and Anglo-American authorities dedicated considerable efforts to rally those forces still immobilized in the Caribbean and in Alexandria. In the latter case, Vice-Admiral René-Émile Godfroy and the senior officers of *Force X* (battleship *Lorraine*, cruisers *Suffren*, *Duquesne*, *Tourville* and *Duguay-Trouin*, destroyers *Fortuné*, *Forbin* and *Basque*, and submarine *Protée*) refused all entreaties from French and British representatives to

⁴²² The final stage of the struggle between the two generals is most appropriately narrated by Cointet in *De Gaulle et Giraud*, 440-460 and 495-498. Shorter treatments can also be found in Éric Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle* (Paris, FR: Gallimard, 2002), 387-394; and Jonathan Fenby, *The General – Charles de Gaulle and the France He Saved* (London, UK: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 224-227. For the protagonists' views, see de Gaulle, *L'unité*, 141-150 and 167-169; and *Unity*, 145-154 and 171-173; and Giraud, *Un seul but: la victoire*, 260-264 and 281-312.

⁴²³ Cable from Churchill to Roosevelt, 10 November 1943, in Warren F. Kimball (ed.), *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence – Vol. 2 – Alliance Emerging, October 1933-November 1942* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Legacy Library, 1984), 593.

⁴²⁴ Though he received plenty of visitors in the following months, Giraud did not exercise any more influence on the course of political and military affairs. Giraud, *Un seul but: la victoire*, 315-332; and Cointet, *De Gaulle et Giraud*, 499-508.

proceed to North African ports, as well as an offer from President Roosevelt to sail directly to the United States for immediate refitting.⁴²⁵ They remained loyal to Pétain and declared their intention to continue respecting the clauses of the Cunningham-Godfroy accord of 1940 until instructed otherwise by Vichy.

Impatient to finish this affair, the British suspended the payment of salaries to the sailors of *Force X* – disbursed on behalf of France for reimbursement after the war, as agreed in 1940 – and considerably reduced their logistical support to the squadron in March 1943. By April, Godfroy had come under pressure from his own officers to rally in view of Allied successes in North Africa and Russia, as well as the guarantee from Giraud that the ships and their crews would not be called upon to serve under de Gaulle. On 17 May, the commander of *Force X* adopted a middle course to resolve his moral dilemma, as he explained in a proclamation to his sailors that day.⁴²⁶ He recognized that, as Pétain remained “incapacitated” in metropolitan France, his vessels would not rally to any one man (i.e. Giraud) but to an organization, the *Forces maritimes d’Afrique*, and sail to a territory free of foreign powers (i.e. Senegal, not Morocco or Algeria) to serve purely French interests.

Though not quite the public relations coup hoped for by Giraud and the Allies, Godfroy’s solution resolved the impasse. The British resumed their support to *Force X* in order to facilitate its departure from Alexandria for the long voyage through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, around the Cape of Good Hope, and up the South Atlantic to Senegal.⁴²⁷ The long detour was unavoidable given the Axis air threat still prevailing in the Mediterranean and the paucity of anti-aircraft batteries in the French ships. However, the submarine *Protée* and destroyers *Fortuné*, *Forbin* and *Basque* transited through the Mediterranean as part of Allied convoys in view of their shorter endurance, insufficient for a trip around South Africa. Preparations for departure and the actual voyage for the larger vessels proved as laborious as the protracted negotiations of the previous six months.

The ships needed urgent repairs and overhaul after nearly three years spent at anchor in Alexandria. The *Forces maritimes d’Afrique*s had to provide contingents of new sailors to augment crews depleted through these years. Dramatically, the first such group left Tunisia in

⁴²⁵ The most extensive narrative of the rallying of *Force X* to the Allied cause is that penned by its commander in *L’aventure de la Force X (Escadre française de la Méditerranée orientale) à Alexandrie (1940-1943)* [The Adventure of *Force X* (French Eastern Mediterranean Fleet) in Alexandria (1940-1943)] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1953), 333-465. For a British perspective, see Macmillan, *The Blast of War*, 265-283. Tasked by Giraud to negotiate an accord with Godfroy in late February 1943, General Charles Mast provides an excellent portrait of the gulf existing between the two camps in *Histoire d’une rébellion – Alger, 8 novembre 1942* [History of a Rebellion – Algiers, 8 November 1942] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1969), 437-440. For more recent and objective analyses, see Calvin W. Hines, “The Fleet Between: Anglo-American Diplomacy and Force X, 1940-43,” in *Naval History: The Sixth Symposium of the U.S. Naval Academy* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1987): 237-255; Auphan and Mordal, *La Marine française dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, 439-441; and Masson, *La Marine française et la guerre*, 405-407.

⁴²⁶ The proclamation is reproduced in full in Godfroy, *L’aventure de la Force X*, 460-461; and Masson, *La Marine française et la guerre*, 516-517.

⁴²⁷ Godfroy narrates the preparations for and the execution of the transit from Alexandria to Dakar in *L’aventure de la Force X*, 466-487.

late May but the ship carrying them sank off the city of Derna, Libya with great loss of life.⁴²⁸ The squadron finally left Egypt on 22 June, with cruisers *Dusquesne* and *Tourville* arriving in Dakar on 18 August, followed by *Suffren* and *Duguay-Trouin* on 2 September. *Lorraine* arrived a few weeks later, delayed as a result of more extensive repairs required by the old battleship during a stop in Durban, South Africa. On 10 September 1943, the Algiers *Amirauté* formally dissolved *Force X* and Admiral Godfroy found himself retired from the active list five days later.⁴²⁹ Disabused, he eventually made his way to a friend's villa in the Algiers suburb of Bouzareah to begin his unexpected retirement.

Godfroy's flight from Dakar to Algiers included a layover in Casablanca, where the former commander of *Force X* ran into another group of Vichy veterans, freshly arrived from the Martinique.⁴³⁰ The process of rallying the forces isolated on that island and other French possessions in the West Indies had proven even more difficult.⁴³¹ Though he had "lost" Saint-Pierre-and-Miquelon to de Gaulle in December 1941, the French High Commissioner for the Western Atlantic, Admiral Georges Robert, maintained a firm grip on the remainder of his domain, still loyal to Pétain after Operation *Torch*. Established in Fort-de-France, Martinique, Robert exercised control over neighbouring Guadeloupe and the more distant Guyana, on the South American mainland. He also controlled military forces of interest to the Allies. These ranged from army troops dispersed among the three territories to more than one hundred American fighters and dive bombers stored in Martinique since June 1940 and, most importantly, the ships that had found refuge in the islands in the wake of the Armistice: the aircraft carrier *Béarn*, the modern cruiser *Émile Bertin* (which had arrived in Fort-de-France carrying over a quarter of a billion US dollars in gold bullion evacuated from the *métropole*), the older training cruiser *Jeanne d'Arc* (eventually stationed in Guadeloupe), as well as several armed merchant ships and patrol vessels.

The United States and the French High Commissariat had maintained an uneasy truce since the Armistice through a succession of "gentlemen's agreements" which guaranteed the islands' neutrality, including the commitment that the ships and port facilities would never be turned over to Germany, in return for access for the islanders to supplies from North America and French Africa. In the wake of *Torch*, Washington adopted a harsher tone, requiring that Robert sever all communications with Vichy and rally to Giraud or begin direct cooperation with the United States. Breaking off diplomatic relations, the Roosevelt administration imposed a military blockade, cutting off supplies to the French possessions.

⁴²⁸ It is suspected that the British troop transport carrying the French sailors sank as a result of a mine or torpedo strike but the cause was undetermined when Godfroy published his memoirs in 1953. *Ibid.*, 470.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, 505.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, 504.

⁴³¹ For first-hand accounts, see the memoirs of Admiral Georges Robert, *La France aux Antilles de 1939 à 1943* [France in the Caribbean from 1939 to 1943] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1950), 139-223; and Hull, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 1222-124. For more recent analyses, one may consult Léo Elisabeth, "Vichy aux Antilles et en Guyane: 1940-1943 [Vichy in the Caribbean and Guyana]," *Outre-mers* 91, no. 342 (1st Quarter 2004): 165-174; and Lawrence Douglas, "The Martinique Affair: The United States Navy and the French West Indies, 1940-1943," in *New Interpretations in Naval History: Selected Papers from the Ninth Naval History Symposium Held at the United States Naval Academy, 18-20 October 1989* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 132-136.

Guyana gave in first but rallied to de Gaulle's *France combattante* on 17 March 1943 rather than the Algiers regime. Meanwhile, Robert stayed the course in Martinique despite rapidly worsening conditions on the islands. Tensions soon grew between the local populace and the High Commissioner on the one hand, as well as between soldiers and sailors on the other, with army officers more open to joining a fellow soldier in Giraud. By the end of June, episodes of civil disturbances spread through Martinique and Guadeloupe, forcing Robert to return to the negotiation table. The crisis came to an end on 14 July 1943 in a deal brokered between Fort-de-France and Algiers through the good offices of USN Vice-Admiral John H. Hoover, Commander Caribbean Sea Frontier, based in Puerto Rico. On Bastille Day, Admiral Robert resigned as High Commissioner and turned over his responsibilities to a representative of the French Committee of National Liberation, the diplomat Henri Hoppenot, who had arrived in Martinique earlier that day on board the destroyer *Le Terrible*.⁴³²

This turn of events left Indochina as the sole overseas domain still loyal to Pétain. Isolated and surrounded by the Japanese, the French colony was virtually cut off from rest of the world.⁴³³ Governor-General Jean Decoux had succeeded in limiting Japanese advances to the northern province of Tonkin in September 1940 and his small fleet, commanded by Rear-Admiral Jules Terraux, inflicted a humiliating blow on the Thai navy at the battle of Koh Chang on 17 January 1941.⁴³⁴ However, renewed pressure from Tokyo forced Decoux to accept a new agreement on 29 July 1941, acknowledging a "common responsibility" for the defense of Indochina by Vichy forces and those of Japan. Within days, Japanese ships entered the naval bases of Saigon, Cam Ranh Bay and Tourane to disembark 50,000 troops that occupied positions throughout the southern province of Cochinchina. This occupation included several air bases that would eventually play a crucial role in the invasion of British Malaya as well as the sinking of the battleships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* in December 1941.⁴³⁵

⁴³² Rodolphe Lamy, "Il y a 70 ans, le basculement de la Martinique [70 Years Ago, the Rallying of Martinique]," *France-Antilles* (22 June 2013), last accessed 14 August 2016, <http://www.martinique.franceantilles.fr/actualite/culture/il-y-a-70-ans-le-basculement-de-la-martinique-209992.php>.

⁴³³ On the French experience in Indochina after 1940, see Jean Decoux, *À la barre de l'Indochine : Histoire de mon Gouvernement Général (1940-1945)* [At Indochina's Helm : History of my General Governorship (1940-1945)] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1950), 148-350; Claude Hesse d'Alzon, "La présence militaire française en Indochine de 1940 à la capitulation japonaise [French Military Presence in Indochina from 1940 to the Japanese Surrender]," in *Les armées françaises pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, 1939-1945* [The French Armed Forces during the Second World War, 1939-1945] (Paris: F.E.D.N.-I.H.C.C, 1986), 281-290; Yves Gras, "L'intrusion japonaise en Indochine (Juin 1940 – Mars 1945)" [The Japanese Intrusion in Indochina (June 1940 – March 1945)], *Revue historique des Armées*, 153, no. 4 (1983): 93-102; and Paul Romé, *Les oubliés du bout du monde: Journal d'un marin d'Indochine de 1939 à 1946* [The Forgotten at the Other End of the World: Diary of an Indochina Sailor from 1939 to 1946] (Paris, FR: Éditions maritimes & d'outre-mer, 1983).

⁴³⁴ The battle of Koh Chang took place within the larger Franco-Thai War of 1940-1941. For full treatments, consult Pierre Gosa, *Le conflit franco-thaïlandais de 1940-41: la victoire de Koh-Chang* [The Franco-Thai Conflict of 1940-1941: The Victory at Koh Chang] (Paris: Nouvelles éditions latines, 2008), *passim*; and George Horvath, "Thailand's War With Vichy France," *History Today* 45, no. 3 (March 1995), last accessed 14 August 2016, <http://www.historytoday.com/george-horvath/thailands-war-vichy-france#sthash.sVY8RL4q.dpuf>.

⁴³⁵ On the Japanese advance into southern Indochina as a critical milestone in the run up to the Pacific War, see Hull, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 1013-1015; and Eri Hotta, *Japan 1941: Countdown to Infamy* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 130-148.

Nevertheless, the Vichy administration remained in place and French naval units continued to operate semi-autonomously until 9 March 1945. That night, Japanese troops completed their takeover of Indochina, eliminating any remaining signs of the colonial regime by incarcerating all French civil servants, military personnel, and their families after a quick and deadly assault on the local garrisons still in existence at the time.⁴³⁶ By the end of the conflict, virtually all ships based in Indochina, including the cruiser *Lamotte-Picquet*, had been wiped out as a result of hostile action by the Japanese, scuttling by French crews, or destruction by the Allies as part of the larger strategic bombing campaign launched across Southeast Asia in the last stage of the war in the Pacific.⁴³⁷ But this tragic faith still lay in the future in Summer 1943 as French admirals remained concerned with the more immediate challenge of resolving the bitter rivalry that kept the *FNFL* and the *Forces maritimes d'Afrique* apart.

The practical advantages of integrating the two forces were obvious in terms of increased efficiencies in conduct of operations, coordination of mutual support and de-confliction of competing demands addressed simultaneously to the Allies. But the matter of which side would come to dominate an integrated navy was not satisfactorily settled until liberation of metropolitan France. The issue was not wholly limited to a divided *Marine nationale* since similar rivalries existed in the army and the air force. Partisans of Giraud boasted of their strength in vastly larger numbers of troops and equipment while the Gaullists claimed the moral high ground based on their continued opposition to the Axis and their sacrifices in the face of the enemy since the Armistice. Following weeks of acrimonious discussions, members of the French Committee of National Liberation agreed on 31 July 1943 to a compromise: each of the military services would be united under one chief of staff from the Giraud camp, assisted by a Gaullist deputy.⁴³⁸ Thus, General Leyer, already head of the *Armée d'Afrique* took command of the army, assisted by General Marie-Pierre Koenig (the hero of Bir-Hakheim). The air force went to General René Bouscat, former commander of Vichy aviation in French Western Africa, and his deputy would be General Martial Valin (who had taken the Free French Air Force over from Admiral Muselier in 1941). On the naval side, the transition presented challenges of its own.

⁴³⁶ "Viewed in totality, the available evidence – including the MAGIC intercepts – suggests strongly that Tokyo officials, increasingly resigned to the inevitability of defeat in the war, saw a takeover in Indochina as giving them a stronger position either for negotiation or for fanatic resistance." Fredrik Logevall, *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* (New York, NY: Random House, 2012), 69.

⁴³⁷ *Lamotte-Picquet* had been virtually immobilized since 1942 in view of her deteriorating condition and lack of fuel. The cruiser took the role of a naval school afloat, moored under camouflage nets along the banks of a river in Cochinchina. Targeted by aircraft from the US Navy's Task Force 38 on 12 January 1945, the ship capsized with extensive loss of life after being hit by more than a dozen bombs. John Jordan and Jean Moulin, *French Cruisers, 1922-1956* (Barnsley, UK: Seaforth Publishing, 2013), 189; and Netmarine.net, "L'histoire du croiseur Lamotte-Picquet [History of the Cruiser *Lamotte-Picquet*]," last accessed 14 August 2016, <http://www.netmarine.net/bat/croiseur/lamotte/histoire.htm>.

⁴³⁸ Not stated in official documents but obvious when looking at the eventual list of appointees was the requirement for candidates from the Giraud camp to have played no more than a supporting role in the armed opposition to the Anglo-American landings in November 1942. Gaullist deputies, for their part, had to possess the diplomatic skills necessary to conciliate former Vichysts. Masson, *Histoire de l'armée française*, 329. A full copy of the decree promulgating these appointments appeared in "Communiqué officiel [Press Release]," *L'Écho d'Alger* 32, no. 12, 1 August 1943, last accessed 16 August 2016, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k7587122x/f1.textePage.langES>.

Under pressure from de Gaulle, Giraud relieved Vice-Admiral Michelier as head of the *Forces maritimes d'Afrique* in early July, seeking to replace him with Vice-Admiral Louis Edmond Collinet. He was an astute choice, in many ways. As captain of the battleship *Strasbourg* at Mers el-Kebir, Collinet had manoeuvred brilliantly to escape the British unscathed and find refuge in Toulon. Promoted to Rear-Admiral in 1941, he took command of the naval forces in French West Africa, too late to have been involved against de Gaulle at Dakar in September 1940 but in time to avoid actively opposing the Anglo-American landings in North Africa in November 1942. However, Collinet turned down the offer from Giraud because he wanted to acquire political responsibility by an appointment to the French Committee of National Liberation in Algiers, not merely the *Amirauté* in Casablanca. This desire proved unrealistic in the face of Gaullist opposition. Giraud and de Gaulle eventually settled on Rear-Admiral André Lemonnier to take on the role of *Chef d'état-major de la Marine* (Chief of the Naval General Staff), despite his junior rank in relation to several other Vichy flag officers and his presence at Dakar in 1940, when he fired upon British and Free French units while in command of the cruiser *Georges Leygues*. Lemonnier would be assisted by the able Rear-Admiral Philippe Auboyneau, former commander of the *FNFL* who was already in North Africa as a sort of Free French liaison to Michelier.

A figure of compromise at that stage, Lemonnier came to exercise considerable influence on wartime rearmament and operations of the *Marine nationale* as well as its postwar struggles, remaining at the helm until August 1950. Born to Norman parents in 1897, he entered the *École navale* in 1913, ranking first among the applicants and graduating just in time to see service during the Great War, including the Dardanelles campaign and a tour with a naval gun battery on the Macedonian front. Lemonnier demonstrated outstanding skills at sea and rare political instincts ashore during the interwar period, commanding submarines and surface vessels of all types, passing first of his class at the *École de guerre* (staff college), serving with the French delegations at the 1930 London and 1932 Geneva naval conferences, and as naval advisor to France's Senate in 1937-1939. The navy's youngest *capitaine de vaisseau* (Captain) at the beginning of the Second World War, he led naval gun batteries that moved into Belgium when Hitler unleashed the *blitzkrieg* in the Ardennes. Once in contact with the enemy, his sailors conducted several orderly withdrawals under withering fire, in sharp contrast to many French army units fleeing the crumbling front in disarray. Making his way to Toulon that summer, he chose the Pétain side and took command of *Georges Leygues* just in time to fight the Anglo-Free French forces at Dakar in September 1940. Accompanying Darlan in Algiers at the time of Operation *Torch*, Lemonnier was promoted two weeks later to the rank of *contre-amiral* (Rear-Admiral) to take charge of the merchant navy, a position he would retain until his selection to head the *Marine nationale* in July 1943.⁴³⁹ Though records are scant regarding de Gaulle's

⁴³⁹ Philippe Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique: la marine française (1945-1958)* [Toward a Nuclear Navy: The French Navy (1945-1958)] (Paris: LGDJ, 1997), 19; Philippe Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française sous la Quatrième République (1945-1956) – La Quatrième République a-t-elle eu une ambition navale pour la France?* [Renewal of the French Navy under the Fourth Republic (1945-1956) – Did the Fourth Republic Have a Naval Ambition?] (Doctoral thesis, Université Paris I, 2006), 8; and *École navale – Espace Traditions*, "Parcours d'officiers dans la Royale: André Georges Lemonnier (1896 - 1963) [Officers Journeys in *La Royale*: André Georges Lemonnier (1896 - 1963)]," last accessed 20 August 2016, http://ecole.nav.traditions.free.fr/officiers_lemonnier.htm

opinion of the former Vichy admiral at the time, he provided a firm endorsement of Lemonnier in his postwar memoirs:

Absorbed by the technique which is its life and passion and which kept its recent ordeals from deterring it, [our Navy] reconstituted itself while taking an active share in operations. Admiral Lemonnier, appointed in July 1943 as chief of the Navy's general staff, brought to this feat of reorganization remarkable ability and a tenacious will, disguised beneath a misleadingly modest manner.⁴⁴⁰

A modest manner and tenacious will proved key qualities for a leader seeking to bring together two factions so far apart as the Free French sailors and the *Forces maritimes d'Afrique*. Adopting a conciliating attitude, Lemonnier initially accepted that the two entities would continue existing in an uncomfortable duality, in terms of both geography and missions. On 3 August 1943, the *Forces navales française libres* ceased to exist, with the bulk of them relabeled *Forces navales de Grande-Bretagne (FNGB – Naval Forces in Great Britain)*. Operating out of the British Isles, they remained focused on convoy duties in the Atlantic and in the Arctic up to Russia's Kola Peninsula, as well as coastal raiding in the Channel, the North Sea and Norway. The *FMA*, operating out of French West and North Africa, continued looking after coastal defence and local convoy escorts in those regions and in the mid-Atlantic while also seeking to regenerate and operate the heavier units (battleships, cruisers and an aircraft carrier) rallied to Giraud. Lemonnier established a single *Amirauté* in Algiers, meant to amalgamate the functions exercised previously by Michelet's staff in Casablanca and Auboyneau's headquarters in London. Nevertheless, the *FNGB* also continued to operate semi-autonomously under Rear-Admiral Georges Thierry d'Argenlieu, former Free French High Commissioner in the Pacific.⁴⁴¹

D'Argenlieu had been an ardent Gaullist of the first hour and he proclaimed that his forces would still fly the *croix de Lorraine*, a divisive measure which the conciliatory Lemonnier dared not oppose. Far more important to the latter was rearmament of a fighting fleet and renewed participation in operations at sea. In that effort, Lemonnier and Auboyneau proved an effective pair in Algiers, providing much needed continuity in the wake of Michelier's sudden dismissal. Regardless of the political divide between partisans of Giraud and de Gaulle, leaders of a slowly reuniting *Marine nationale* set about pursuing the rejuvenation of the wartime fleet and their vision for a powerful postwar navy. Such vision would quickly bring about a clash of ambitions since the Combined Chiefs of Staff simultaneously set about articulating a new approach to France's naval rearmament as the strategic environment dramatically evolved in Fall 1943.

FRAMING A NEW APPROACH: CCS DIRECTIVE 358 (REVISED)

Throughout the confrontation between Giraud and de Gaulle in Algiers, American authorities had maintained their commitment to regenerate the *Forces maritimes d'Afrique*. Vast numbers of engineering and support troops set about rehabilitating infrastructures in French West

⁴⁴⁰ De Gaulle, *Unity*, 251; and *L'unité*, 248.

⁴⁴¹ Auphan and Mordal, *La Marine française dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, 446; Masson, *La Marine française et la guerre*, 416; and Émile Chaline, "Les Forces navales françaises libre," in *Espoir* no. 100 (January 1995), last accessed 21 July 2015, <http://www.charles-de-gaulle.org/pages/l-homme/dossiers-thematiques/1940-1944-la-seconde-guerre-mondiale/forces-navales-francaises-libres/analyses/les-forces-navales-francaise-libre-fnfl.php>.

Africa's most important harbours as well as those across Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Smaller ships and older units were fitted with new weaponry and sensors by local workers in North Africa under supervision of Allied personnel who also provided training to the inexperienced French sailors. Deemed most critical by Michelier, Lemonnier and Auboyneau, however, were the more thorough refits of those modern and larger ships to be completed in North American yards in accordance with the Glassford Plan approved by the CCS on 22 January 1943.⁴⁴²

Following *Richelieu* and *Montcalm*, the cruisers *Gloire* and *Georges Leygues* were respectively refitted and modernized in Brooklyn (July to November) and Philadelphia (July to October).⁴⁴³ Destroyers *Le Fantasque* and *Le Terrible* arrived in Boston in February 1943, the same navy yard where a sister-ship *Le Malin* would start refit in March. Another ship of that same class, *Le Triomphant*, employed by the Free French in the Pacific since the fall of 1941, eventually arrived in Boston to commence modernization in April 1944.⁴⁴⁴ Submarines *Archimède* and *Amazone* proceeded to Philadelphia in the spring of 1943, followed by *Le Glorieux* in October, the first two spending nearly a year in that American yard. Submarine modernization proved more technically challenging than many expected, hence the lengthy periods spent in America.⁴⁴⁵ From Martinique, cruiser *Émile Bertin* set sail in August 1943 for refitting in Philadelphia while the aircraft carrier *Béarn* was directed to New Orleans for conversion to the aircraft transport role, her top speed (21 knots) making her too slow to conduct carrier operations in modern combat.⁴⁴⁶

Less ambitious refits took place in smaller allied yards. This work aimed to rehabilitate the basic cruising abilities and self-defence suites of older vessels rather than the more extensive modernizations conducted in North American dry docks. The training cruiser *Jeanne d'Arc* left Guadeloupe for a quick overhaul in Puerto Rico before joining the *Forces maritimes d'Afrique* just in time for the liberation of Corsica in September 1943.⁴⁴⁷ Gibraltar looked after some French units too small to cross the Atlantic while shipyards in Australia and South Africa handled several former Free French vessels that were already deployed in those waters. The Royal Naval Dockyard in Bermuda accommodated *FMA* ships in successive groups of two or three throughout 1943 to install British asdic equipment, Oerlikon 20-mm anti-aircraft guns, and RDF Type 271 sets ("Range and Direction Finder", a primitive radar for small vessels): destroyer *Tempête* as well as sloops *Commandant Bory* and *Gazelle* in the spring; sloops *La Gracieuse*, *Commandant*

⁴⁴² Cable from CCS to Eisenhower, 22 January 1943, TNA, CAB 121/401.

⁴⁴³ Jordan and Moulin, *French Cruisers*, 197; and Auphan and Mordal, *La Marine française*, 434.

⁴⁴⁴ Auphan and Mordal, *La Marine française dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, 434; and M.J. Whitley, *Destroyers of World War Two – An International Encyclopedia* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 43-44.

⁴⁴⁵ Uboat.net, "FR Archimède," last accessed 21 August 2016, <http://uboot.net/allies/warships/ship/6095.html>; Uboat.net, "FR Amazone," last accessed 21 August 2016, <http://uboot.net/allies/warships/ship/6124.html>; Uboat.net, "FR Le Glorieux," last accessed 21 August 2016, <http://uboot.net/allies/warships/ship/6132.html>; and Claude Huan, *Les Sous-marins français 1918-1945* [French Submarines 1918-1945] (Rennes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2004), 152, 163 and 166.

⁴⁴⁶ Jordan and Moulin, *French Cruisers*, 197-198; and Masson, *La Marine française et la guerre*, 418.

⁴⁴⁷ Jordan and Moulin, *French Cruisers*, 198; and Auphan and Mordal, *La Marine française dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, 443.

Delage and *Annamite* in the summer; followed by destroyer *Simoun*, sloop *La Boudeuse* and armed trawler *Victoria* in the fall.⁴⁴⁸

Though the Algiers *Amirauté* made the best of the assistance offered by the Allies in 1943, French admirals wanted more. In particular, the cruisers and destroyers of the former *Force X* should benefit from extensive modernization in North American and Bermuda yards and a greater number of submarines be considered for refits in 1944.⁴⁴⁹ The CCS refused such demands. It was assessed that these older vessels did not warrant so much dedicated Allied yard time, although they halfheartedly agreed that such work could be conducted locally:

Installation of anti-aircraft equipment on the four cruisers formerly at Alexandria is satisfactory if and when the material becomes available, provided the work can be done by the French in Africa and is processed in accordance with the prescribed supply policy.⁴⁵⁰

As for the submarines, refits continued slowly: *La Perle* arrived in Philadelphia in early 1944 for conversion to the mine-laying role, followed successively by *Centaure* and *Casabianca* in May and July.⁴⁵¹ *Antiope* would be the last vessel to undertake such a refit in the United States, abbreviated to three short months in the last year of the war, from January to March 1945, as reflected in Table 5 below.⁴⁵²

Table 5 – Major Refits of French Vessels in North American Yards 1943-1945
(Not including routine overhauls and unforecasted repairs)

Category	Vessel(s) French	Location	Remarks
Battleship	<i>Richelieu</i>	New York	February-August 1943.
Aircraft Carrier	<i>Béarn</i>	New Orleans	Conversion to aircraft transport September 1943- December 1944.
Cruisers	<i>Montcalm</i>	Philadelphia	February – August 1943.
	<i>Gloire</i>	New York	July – November 1943.
	<i>Georges Leygues</i>	Philadelphia	July – October 1943.

⁴⁴⁸ Extensive correspondence between AFHQ staff and authorities in London and Washington regarding the coordination of French refits in Bermuda can be found in TNA, ADM 1/13027 – *French Warships Re-arming in Bermuda: Priority and Provision of RDF Equipment and Stores*.

⁴⁴⁹ "Admiral Fénard, Head of French Naval Mission, Washington, is making repeated unofficial queries as to the expected date *Basque*, *Forbin* and *Fortuné* can be taken in hand for refit in Bermuda." Cable from British Admiralty Delegation (B.A.D.) in Washington to Admiralty, 14 October 1943, TNA, ADM 1/13027; letter from the French Committee of National Liberation (co-signed by Giraud and de Gaulle) to the British prime minister, the American president and the Soviet general secretary, 18 September 1943, TNA, CAB 121/401; and Huan, *Les sous-marins français*, 163-166.

⁴⁵⁰ Letter from the CCS to French Naval Mission in Washington, undated but likely drafted in late October 1943, TNA, CAB 121/401.

⁴⁵¹ Dramatically, British aircraft mistakenly sunk *La Perle* on 8 July 1944 as the submarine was crossing the North Atlantic on completion of her refit in Philadelphia, resulting in the loss of all but one of her 58 crewmembers. Huan, *Les sous-marins français*, 175-176; Uboat.net, "FR Perlé," last accessed 26 August 2016, <http://uboaat.net/allies/warships/ship/6114.html>; Uboat.net, "FR Le Centaure," last accessed 26 August 2016, <http://uboaat.net/allies/warships/ship/6133.html>; and Uboat.net, "FR Casabianca," last accessed 26 August 2016, <http://uboaat.net/allies/warships/ship/6139.html>.

⁴⁵² Huan, *Les sous-marins français*, 180; and Uboat.net, "FR Antiope," last accessed 26 August 2016, <http://uboaat.net/allies/warships/ship/6122.html>.

	<i>Émile Bertin</i>	Philadelphia	August – November 1943.
Heavy Destroyers (Reclassified light cruisers on completion of refit)	<i>Le Fantasque</i>	Boston	February – July 1943.
	<i>Le Terrible</i>	Boston	February – July 1943.
	<i>Le Malin</i>	Boston	March – August 1943.
	<i>Le Triomphant</i>	Boston	April 1944 – March 1945.
Submarines	<i>Archimède</i>	Philadelphia	February 1943 – January 1944.
	<i>Amazone</i>	Philadelphia	March – December 1943.
	<i>Le Glorieux</i>	Philadelphia	October 1943 – March 1944.
	<i>La Perle</i>	Philadelphia	January – June 1944.
	<i>Centaure</i>	Philadelphia	May – December 1944.
	<i>Casabianca</i>	Philadelphia	July 1944 – March 1945.
Various	<i>Destroyer Tempête</i>	Bermuda	Spring 1943.
	Sloop <i>Commandant Bory</i>	Bermuda	Spring 1943.
	Sloop <i>Gazelle</i>	Bermuda	Spring 1943.
	Sloop <i>La Gracieuse</i>	Bermuda	Summer 1943.
	Sloop <i>Commandant Delage</i>	Bermuda	Summer 1943.
	Sloop <i>Annamite</i>	Bermuda	Summer 1943.
	Destroyer <i>Simoun</i>	Bermuda	Fall 1943.
	Sloop <i>La Boudeuse</i>	Bermuda	Fall 1943.
	Trawler <i>Victoria</i>	Bermuda	Fall 1943.

The CCS also proved reluctant when faced with repeated requests from Algiers to take *Jean Bart* to the United States to complete the ship's armament. Throughout the first half of 1943, French authorities expended precious resources in Casablanca to make the vessel seaworthy. This work required repairing the worst of the damages inflicted by the Americans during Operation *Torch* and completing some of the initial work left undone when the ship had escaped Saint-Nazaire in June 1940 before her construction was finished. In May 1943, US authorities agreed provisionally to take on the *Jean Bart* but stated that they could not complete the vessel to her full specifications, especially in terms of heavier gunnery. The battleship conducted sea trials off Morocco in September while the French Committee of National Liberation sought confirmation that *Jean Bart* could proceed to an American shipyard that same month.⁴⁵³ The CCS withdrew their earlier agreement in the fall stating higher priority requirements. Admiral Fénard made another submission proposing an alternate (and technically simpler) plan to complete the ship as an aircraft carrier but this was also rejected in blunt terms on 8 October 1943:

Admiral Fénard officially requested that *Jean Bart* should be converted to an aircraft carrier but at yesterday's meeting C.C.S. agreed that *Jean Bart* should be employed as a station ship subject to such repairs from local French resources as are considered warranted. No Allied facilities to be expanded on its reconditioning.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵³ Previously cited letter from the French Committee of National Liberation to the leaders of Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union, 18 September 1943, TNA, CAB 121/401.

⁴⁵⁴ As reported in a cable from the British Joint Staff Mission in Washington to the War Cabinet Office, 9 October 1943, TNA, CAB 121/401. See also Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, 220-221.

The Algiers Admiralty made another plea for *Jean Bart* on 8 December 1943 but "... in March 1944 it was informed that the US Navy was unwilling to divert resources to the ship."⁴⁵⁵ After a request to dock the battleship in Gibraltar was denied by the British, the French gave up and satisfied themselves to leave the vessel in Casablanca for the remainder of the war for use as a floating barrack and alongside technical school.⁴⁵⁶ Additional appeals from Lemonnier for the transfer of an aircraft carrier, either an existing one or a new construction, from the United States or Great Britain, did not meet with anymore success.⁴⁵⁷ One must note that the substance of the debate between the French and the Allies regarding *Jean Bart* in Fall 1943 was markedly different than that about *Richelieu* in the immediate aftermath of Operation *Torch*. Arguments were no longer about the intrinsic relevance of the battleship to modern warfare at sea or matters of prestige for a reawakened France. Instead the evolving needs and priorities of the Allies at the time came to the fore.

The Glassford Plan of January 1943 had acknowledged that American shipyards were already taxed at maximum capacity. But it also underlined the advantages of rapidly refitting existing French vessels in order to get them into the fight as quickly as possible to assist Allied navies still facing nearly overwhelming odds at the time. The British Admiralty Anti-Submarine Report for January 1943 somberly stated that the bulk of German submarines had returned to the North Atlantic so "... to cut the main artery from the United States to Great Britain... (T)he tempo is quickening, and the critical phase of the U-boat war in the Atlantic cannot be long postponed."⁴⁵⁸ Japan's aircraft carrier force had been crippled at Midway in June 1942 and the Americans were on the offensive in the Solomon islands but the Japanese garrison on Guadalcanal was yet to surrender while vicious engagements between surface groups at "Iron-bottom Sound" showed that reversing Japanese advances in the Pacific would require vast numbers of warships, support vessels and landing craft.⁴⁵⁹ The *Afrika Korps* was on the defensive but the Mediterranean remained treacherous for allied ships and submarines as Axis air power based in Italy, Greece and their many islands continued to threaten the Gibraltar-Malta-Alexandria line of communications.⁴⁶⁰

The Italian navy, though mostly confined to port during these critical months, also weighed heavily on the minds of Allied naval leaders, its combination of modern battleships, cruisers, destroyers and submarines constituting a powerful fleet-in-being which could be not be ignored.⁴⁶¹ However, its surrender without a fight following the capitulation of the Italian government of Marshall Pietro Badoglio on 3 September 1943 capped a succession of dramatic

⁴⁵⁵ Jordan and Dumas, *French Battleships*, 162.

⁴⁵⁶ *Idem.*; and Robert Dumas, *Le cuirassé « Jean Bart » 1939-1970* [Battleship *Jean Bart* 1939-1970] (Rennes, FR: Marine Éditions, 2001), 70-71.

⁴⁵⁷ Chapelay, "Le réarmement de la Marine par les Américains," 350-351; and Philippe Masson, "Le réarmement de la Marine française [Rearmament of the French Navy]," *Revue historique des Armées* 3, no. 188 (September 1992): 113.

⁴⁵⁸ Cited by Correlli Barnett in *Engage the Enemy More Closely – The Royal Navy in the Second World War* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1991), 574.

⁴⁵⁹ Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power*, 225-226.

⁴⁶⁰ Barnett, *Engage the Enemy More Closely*, 615-616.

⁴⁶¹ For a great treatment, see Brian R. Sullivan, "A Fleet in Being: The Rise and Fall of Italian Sea Power, 1861-1943," *The International History Review* 10, no. 1 (February 1988): 106-124.

developments that marked a definitive change in the naval balance around the world through the course of that year.⁴⁶² The titanic convoy battles of the spring had marked a turning point leading Admiral Karl Donitz to withdraw his U-boats from the North Atlantic at the very moment allied shipyards and industries were reaching a peak of mobilization.⁴⁶³ In the Aleutians, the Americans seized Attu in May and the Japanese evacuated Kiska in July, while Japan commenced a slow retreat in New Guinea and the Solomon, and adopted a defensive stance on the frontiers of India, as American submarines and shore-based airpower tightened the noose around the Empire's sea lines of communications.⁴⁶⁴ Back in the Mediterranean, the occupation of Lampedusa, Sicily, southern Italy, and Corsica; the neutralization of Sardinia, Crete and other Axis airfields among the Greek islands; and the expulsion of the last of the German troops from North Africa considerably degraded the enemy's capacity to threaten friendly lines of communications through the Middle Sea.⁴⁶⁵

In this context, French North and West Africa retained their value as useful bases to support Allied operations in the Atlantic and against the "soft underbelly" of Europe but these territories also went from contributors to consumers of sea power in Fall 1943. The focus of Allied operations shifted away from the region at the time but the need to provide resources for coastal defence and local convoy escort duties remained, especially as German submarines fell back on more remote regions such as the African periphery and the Caribbean after evacuating the North Atlantic. The Anglo-American navies wished to extract their forces from these areas in order to concentrate forces in Great Britain and the Western Pacific. They encouraged the French to take up such secondary roles in their own waters but they did not need the *Marine nationale* to rejuvenate the instruments of a sea power of the first rank such as aircraft carriers, fast battleships and heavy cruisers as their own prevalence in capital ships grew exponentially over those of the Axis navies throughout these months. In other words, the Anglo-Americans "... were mainly interested in building up those parts of the French fleet that complemented those of the Allies," not refitting just any vessel that could make its way across the Atlantic to North America nor transfer vessels to the French based on priorities formulated by the Algiers *Amirauté*.⁴⁶⁶ This stance would be made even clearer through a new policy promulgated on 4 October 1943.

CCS Directive 358 (Revised) *Policies Regarding French Naval Vessels* sought to "... consolidate into one paper all the policies on the subject of French naval vessels."⁴⁶⁷ It superseded previous directives generated through the CCS machinery but respected the spirit of previous agreements such as those concluded between Churchill and de Gaulle in August 1940 as well as those entered with French North African authorities since Operation *Torch*. As put succinctly by an historian of French rearmament, the directive "... covered all aspects of administration and

⁴⁶² On the surrender of the Italian fleet, see Barnett, *Engage the Enemy More Closely*, 668-670.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, 600-613; and Thomas B. Buell, *Master of Sea Power: A Biography of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King*, 2nd ed. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 292-299.

⁴⁶⁴ The Japanese had seized Attu and Kiska as a diversion during the Midway operation in June 1942. Paul S. Dunn, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy*, 168-171.

⁴⁶⁵ Barnett, *Engage the Enemy More Closely*, 680-685.

⁴⁶⁶ Koburger, *Franco-American Naval Relations*, 85.

⁴⁶⁷ CCS Directive 358 (Revised) *Policies Regarding French Naval Vessels*, dated 4 October 1943. TNA, CAB 121/401. CCS 358 had been promulgated in September but soon required slight amendments consolidated in CCS 358 (Revised).

operational control, such as overhauling, refitting, assignment and employment; it also proposed a detailed supply policy in connection with repairs and the issue of materiel."⁴⁶⁸ The note began by clarifying command and control issues, avoiding the collaborative terms of the initial Clark-Darlan Agreement by using, instead, the clearer construct of the Churchill-de Gaulle framework: "French naval vessels are given initial assignments to operations areas by the Combined Chiefs of Staff... (They) will operate under the operational command of the Allied naval area commander."⁴⁶⁹ Matters of discipline and internal administration remained the purview of French authorities while the Commander-in-Chief US Fleet (still Admiral Ernest J. King at the time) was maintained as the executive agent of the CCS "... in collaboration with the Admiralty through the head of the British Admiralty Delegation, Washington."⁴⁷⁰ The text also confirmed the existing mechanisms to handle French demands:

Requests from the French for new ships, proposals for major overhauls of ships and increases in armament in any theatre should be forwarded to the Allied area and theatre commanders who should give their recommendations, and at the same time, a copy should be forwarded to the Munitions Assignment Board, Washington, via the Chief of the French Naval Mission, Washington, with a copy to Munitions Assignment Board, London.⁴⁷¹

CCS 358 (Revised) reiterated the existing considerations in selecting ships for "reconditioning" and the extent of the work to be done. Only the most modern and capable vessels which could be refitted in the minimum time would benefit from refurbishment of their hull, machinery, gun batteries, fire control and damage control equipment; the augmentation of their anti-aircraft armament as necessary; and the installation of essential radio, sonar and radar sets. Reconditioning of other vessels would only be conducted "... to the extent that it can be accomplished locally."⁴⁷² As for assignment of ships from the United States or Great Britain to the *Marine nationale*, the CCS themselves retained the ultimate authority for such decisions based on three simple requirements. Allocated vessels had to be a) reserved for missions assigned to the French navy by the CCS; b) manned with trained French personnel; and c) employed under allied control.⁴⁷³ Finally, the policy envisioned the Anglo-Americans divesting themselves from the African theatre in the long run:

Equipment now in French African ports, and operated by British or United States personnel, will be turned over to qualified French personnel so that the French may eventually take over the defense of their own territory.⁴⁷⁴

The French admiralty initially welcomed CCS 358 (Revised) because it clarified the policies and processes concerned with naval rearmament that had multiplied through the course of the previous year. Also of great interest to them, the directive provided a viable path for the transfer of vessels from Great Britain and the United States to France, though under strict

⁴⁶⁸ Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, 222.

⁴⁶⁹ CCS Directive 358 (Revised), 2 and 3.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁷¹ *Idem.*

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

conditions.⁴⁷⁵ And CCS 358 (Revised) opened the channel for such transfers, which began within months and continued at a rapid pace throughout the year 1944. As outlined in greater details in Table 6 below, the Anglo-Americans turned over nearly 150 ships and submarines to the French, most notably: six US-built destroyer escorts (DE), six British River-class frigates (manned by the *FNGB*), two British submarines (in addition to the previously *Curie* transferred to the Free French in May 1943), one former Italian submarine captured by the British, thirty-two patrol craft, fifty submarine chasers, thirty US minesweepers and ten British ones, nineteen British harbour defense motor launches (in addition to the two transferred to the Free French in Beirut in February 1943), and five US motor launches for use in the Pacific (in addition to the three Fairmile launches transferred from Canada to the *FNFL* in Saint-Pierre-and-Miquelon in January 1943).

Table 6 – Combined US and British Transfers to the French Navy 1943-1944

(Include all transfers to the *FNFL*, *FNGB*, and *FMA* but not tugs and other small craft)

Category	Vessel(s) French Name	Country of Origin	Remarks
Cannon-class Destroyer Escorts	<i>Sénégalais, Algérien, Tunisien, Marocain, Hova, Somali</i>	US	New builds transferred to the <i>FMA</i> between January and April 1944 (except for <i>Tunisien</i> to the <i>FNGB</i>).
River-class Frigates	<i>L'Aventure, L'Escarmouche, Tonkinois, Croix de Lorraine, La Surprise, La Découverte</i>	UK	All (except <i>L'Aventure</i>) had seen service in the RN before their transfer to the <i>FNGB</i> between October 1943 and October 1944.
U-class Submarine	<i>Curie</i>	UK	New build transferred to the <i>FNGB</i> in May 1943.
V-class Submarines	<i>Doris, Morse</i>	UK	New builds transferred to the <i>FNGB</i> in June 1944 (<i>Doris</i>) and October 1944 (<i>Morse</i>).
Acciaio-class Sub.	<i>Narval</i>	Italy/UK	Transferred in February 1944.
PC451-class Patrol Craft	Various (32 in total)	US	All existing builds except for the last six, all delivered between June and November 1944.
SC497-class Submarine Chasers	Various (50 in total)	US	Mix of existing and new builds transferred between November 1943 and November 1944.
YMS1-class Minesweepers	Various (30 in total)	US	Mix of existing and new builds transferred between March and October 1944.
105-ft Motor Minesweepers (MMS)-class	Various (9 in total)	UK	Existing builds transferred between March and July 1944.
Harbour Defense Motor Launches (HDML)	Various (21 in total)	UK	– 2 to the <i>FNFL</i> in Beirut in February 1943 – 3 to the <i>FMA</i> in Dakar and 16 in Algiers in August 1943.

⁴⁷⁵ Letter from Admiral Fénard, French Naval Mission in Washington, to Admiral King, Commander-in-Chief US Fleet, 15 October 1943, TNA CAB 121/401.

Fairmile Motor Launches	<i>Galantry, Langlade, Colombier</i>	Canada	All existing builds transferred to the <i>FNFL</i> for service in Saint-Pierre-and-Miquelon in January 1943.
US Motor Launches	<i>VP 61, VP62, VP 63, VP 51, VP 52</i>	US	Existing builds transferred to the <i>FNFL/FNGB</i> in Micronesia (<i>VP 61, 62, 63</i> in August 1943 and <i>VP 51, 52</i> in November 1943).

Sources:

Paul Auphan and Jacques Mordal, *La Marine française dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale* [The French Navy and the Second World War], 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: France-Empire, 1967), 634-638.

Jacques Cornic, "Ships for Crews," *Warship International* 22, no. 3 (1985): 251-266.

Jacques Cornic, "Sous la Croix de Lorraine (Under the Cross of Lorraine): The *FNFL* (*Forces Naval Francaises Libres*) 1940-1943 (Free French Naval Forces)," *Warship International* 24, no. 1 (1987): 34-43.

These transfers constituted a big commitment on the part of France's Anglo-American Allies. As well, four shore-based squadrons of the *Aéronavale* operating in Africa were equipped with allied airframes by late 1943: two with Sunderland and Wellington bombers from the Royal Air Force, one with Walruses from the RN's Fleet Air Arm, and one with Catalina flying boats from the United States.⁴⁷⁶ Cynics may point an overabundance of means on the Allied side by 1944, thus greatly facilitating such seemingly generous sacrifices on the part of the American and British navies. Nevertheless, as underlined by the biographer of the US Chief of Naval Operations, "... (i)n retrospect, there had never been enough ships to fight the war. King was forced to juggle ships from one ocean to the other and, in the European theatre, from one front to the other."⁴⁷⁷ France was but one of several Allied nations seeking to rebuild their strength at sea in the closing stages of the conflict and the CCS remained besieged by competing demands for ships, submarines and aircraft until the surrender of Japan in September 1945 and beyond.

But one must also admit that the CCS had relegated the *Marine nationale* to subsidiary roles by denying requests from the *Amirauté* for capital ships. Within weeks of the promulgation of Directive 358 (Revised), Lemonnier submitted an updated requisition to the Joint Rearmament Committee and another one in mid-February 1944, both including requests for transfers over and above those already approved, including an aircraft carrier. These were dismissed summarily: "The CCS had just decided that it would not be beneficial to the war effort to make further assignments of vessels to the French in the near future."⁴⁷⁸ Lemonnier lamented in a letter to Fénard in early 1944: "We have ships but we do not have a fleet... in the sense that we no longer possess a main battle force [*corps de bataille*] which is the vital backbone of any fleet."⁴⁷⁹

Acquiring the means to assemble an aircraft carrier-centric *corps de bataille* became the focus of Lemonnier's planning for the remainder of the war and beyond. Not only would this capacity allow the *Marine nationale* to influence Allied strategy in the closing months of the war

⁴⁷⁶ Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, 223.

⁴⁷⁷ Buell, *Master of Sea Power*, 313. For more cynical views on the Anglo-American "generosity", see Chapelay, "Le réarmement de la Marine par les Américains," 351-353; and Philippe Masson, *Histoire de la marine – Volume 2 – De la vapeur à l'atome* [History of the French Navy – Volume 2 – From Steam to the Atom] (Paris, FR: Lavauzelle, 1992), 488-489.

⁴⁷⁸ Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, 222; and *Minutes of the 147th CCS Meeting*, 25 February 1944.

⁴⁷⁹ Lemonnier to Fénard, 11 January 1944, cited in Masson, "Le réarmement de la Marine française," 113.

but planning for an uncertain peace weighted heavily on the admiral's mind. France could count on sitting at the victors' side at the end of the hostilities but she would likely stand alone in the immediate postwar era. Disquieting signs already showed that the Alliance was unlikely to continue after the surrender of the Axis powers as tensions grew between Washington, London and Moscow over the shape of the next international order. Devastated economically and divided politically, France would struggle in conciliating the demands for civilian reconstruction at home and developing armed forces suitable for a continental power with worldwide interests.

CHAPTER FIVE

PLANNING FOR AN UNCERTAIN PEACE

Late in the afternoon on Monday 11 February 1946, three years to the day after her entrance in New York Harbor, battleship *Richelieu* made a triumphal return to Toulon. The moment was bittersweet, charged with conflicting emotions for the French sailors and the citizenry witnessing the event. Vice-Admiral André Lemonnier, Chief of the Naval General Staff, was on hand to present the ship with a prized unit commendation, the *Croix de guerre*. The battleship had performed exemplary service in the years since modernisation at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, first joining the British Home Fleet bottling up Germany's few remaining capital ships in the fjords of Norway. She then traveled to the Indian Ocean for service with the Royal Navy's Eastern Fleet tasked with blocking Imperial Japanese Navy ships based out of Singapore and striking enemy shore positions in Burma and the Dutch East Indies. And, following the surrender of Japan in September 1945, *Richelieu* escorted troopships dispatched to Indochina to regain control over the colony, later providing fire support to French forces ashore during the first skirmishes with Vietnamese guerillas, the then little-known *Vietminh*.⁴⁸⁰

The crew of *Richelieu* could be proud of their wartime accomplishments. But the war years had left the ship's company bitterly divided between those sailors who had remained loyal to Pétain to the very end, those who had joined de Gaulle into dissidence immediately after the Armistice, and those who had followed Darlan when he switched allegiance to the Allies. These tensions also fragmented the larger *Marine nationale*, the rest of the country's armed forces, and the whole nation. These divisions would take years to overcome. Toulon itself was symbolic of the challenges ahead. The base and the city were devastated by German sabotage and Allied bombings suffered during the Liberation while the harbour remained littered with the wrecks of the ships and submarines scuttled in November 1942. Rebuilding civilian infrastructures, the fleet, and its bases simultaneously necessitated hard choices in the decade ahead, decisions that would be the realm of a body politic as divided as the nation itself. Charles de Gaulle resigned on 20 January 1946 as Chairman of the Provisional Government of France, denouncing resurgence of party politics that he blamed for collapse of the Third Republic in 1940. The move ushered in the era of cabinet instability and national crises that would plague the Fourth Republic until its downfall in 1958.

As worrying for Lemonnier, France's largest warship may have distinguished herself in all assigned tasks but these had taken place in theatres of secondary interest during the last two years of the conflict. By the time *Richelieu* joined the RN's Home Fleet, the threat to the British Isles had passed and the opportunity for an engagement between capital ships was remote. Assignment to the Eastern Fleet had confined the battleship to piecemeal actions on the periphery

⁴⁸⁰ *Richelieu's* return was actually her second visit to France since 1940. The battleship had stopped briefly in Toulon in October 1944 on her way to a refit in Casablanca, between two deployments to the Indian Ocean. For an overview of *Richelieu's* operations in 1943-1946, see Robert Dumas, *Le cuirassé Richelieu 1935-1968* [Battleship *Richelieu* 1935-1968] (Bourg-en-Bresse, FR: Marines Éditions, 1992), 50-54; and John Jordan and Robert Dumas, *French Battleships: 1922-1956* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 190-201. Then-Lieutenant Bernard Favin-Lévêque offers a first-hand account of *Richelieu's* Far East campaigns in *Souvenirs de mer et d'ailleurs* [Recollections from the Sea and Other Places] (Versailles, FR: Éditions des 7 vents, 1990), 113-120.

of Japan's conquests. *Richelieu* did not have the opportunity to contribute to the liberation of metropolitan France, confined to subordinate roles under British command in the Indian Ocean. This deployment was a far cry from Lemonnier's vision of placing the battleship and an aircraft carrier at the centre of a new *corps de bataille* capable of autonomous action and shaping Allied strategy. Meanwhile, the Alliance itself was coming to an end. The United States and Great Britain looked forward to terminating the immense commitments made in wartime to rebuild and support the armed forces of their allies, including the *Marine nationale*. A sense of foreboding hung over the *Richelieu* even as the battleship was secured alongside and her sailors back in their homeland, at long last.

WRAPPING UP A WAR

The *Marine nationale* as a whole shared *Richelieu*'s ambiguous record of tactical excellence matched by mitigated strategic influence since amalgamation in August 1943. Cruisers based out of West Africa (*Georges Leygues, Gloire, Suffren, Dusquesne, Tourville, Montcalm, Émile Bertin*) continued anti-raider patrols on the Dakar-Recife line until March 1944. A continuation of the first mission assigned to the *Forces maritimes d'Afrique (FMA)* after Operation *Torch*, this effort saw the French holding the eastern part of a line anchored at the other end by American cruisers (*Omaha, Cincinnati, Marblehead* and *Memphis*) sailing out of Brazilian ports. The force was also augmented by the Italian ships *Luigi di Savoia Degli Abruzzi* and *Emanuele Filiberto Duca d'Aosta*, operating from the British colony of Freetown after November 1943.⁴⁸¹ But the bulk of the effort for the *FMA* focused on the Mediterranean. Following refit in the United States, and reclassification as light cruisers under the Allied nomenclature, heavy *contre-torpilleurs* of the *Le Fantasque*-class, joined by lighter destroyers and small sloops based out of Alexandria and Beirut (*Moqueuse, Commandant Duboc, Commandant Dominé, Reine des Flots*), proved particularly effective in the conduct of offensive sweeps through the Aegean and Dodecanese islands in 1944 and deep into the Adriatic in the last year of the war. Smaller units continued discharging the mostly monotonous but essential missions of convoy escort and coastal defence. They also carried out the dangerous tasks of minesweeping along the North African coast while rehabilitating severely damaged ports, such as the naval arsenal in Bizerte, Tunisia.⁴⁸²

More glamorous was participation in the amphibious operations conducted in the Mediterranean after Summer 1943. First employed for the Allied landing in Salerno in early September (Operation *Avalanche*), light cruisers *Le Fantasque* and *Le Terrible* were suddenly recalled to join the French force tasked by Giraud to liberate Corsica, a significant effort in naval terms. In addition to these two ships, Admiral Lemonnier assigned cruisers *Montcalm* and *Jeanne d'Arc*, destroyers *L'Alcyon, Le Fortuné, Forbin, Basque* and *Tempête*, submarines *Casabianca, Aréthuste* and *Perle*, as well as two merchant vessels to ferry 5,600 troops and 208 pieces of artillery, tanks and other vehicles over the course of nineteen days. This move was without Allied support save for one British landing craft (*LST 79*), which was the only vessel lost

⁴⁸¹ John Jordan and Jean Moulin, *French Cruisers, 1922-1956* (Barnsley, UK: Seaforth Publishing, 2013), 202-203; and Claude Huan, "La Marine française dans la guerre (1943) [The French Navy during the War (1943)]," *Revue historique des Armées* 188, no. 3 (September 1992): 118-119.

⁴⁸² Paul Auphan and Jacques Mordal, *La Marine française dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale [The French Navy and the Second World War]*, 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: France-Empire, 1967), 451-452; and M.J. Whitley, *Destroyers of World War Two – An International Encyclopedia* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 43-44.

during the operation as a result of a strike by a German bomber on 30 September.⁴⁸³ Thereafter, several of these same units participated in the buildup of Giraud's cherished expeditionary force by ferrying troops from North Africa to serve under General Alphonse Juin in Italy through the winter of 1943-1944 and joined the assault on the island of Elba on 17-19 June 1944.⁴⁸⁴ French involvement in amphibious operations culminated with the landings in southern France (Operation *Dragoon*).

Airborne drops and seaborne landings on the coast of Provence on 15 August 1944 allowed a Franco-American force to seize the ports of Toulon and Marseille before moving up the Rhone River valley to link up with the Allied armies that had landed in Normandy. The *Marine nationale* played an important role in the landings and the follow-on support of troops ashore. Under his direct command, Lemonnier assembled a fleet of 34 vessels of all tonnage, including the battleship *Lorraine*; heavy cruisers *Georges Leygues*, *Montcalm*, *Gloire*, *Émile Bertin*, *Dugay-Trouin* (and, later, the training cruiser *Jeanne d'Arc*); light cruisers *Le Terrible*, *Le Malin* and *Le Fantasque*; as well as eight destroyers and more than a dozen smaller escort vessels.⁴⁸⁵ Afterwards, French units undertook the routine duties of securing the line of communications between North Africa and the *métropole*, minesweeping along the coast of southern France, and urgently rehabilitating the Provence ports. The heavier vessels joined American units to form Task Force 86 on 1 September 1944, initially under US Rear Admiral Davidson but taken over by Rear-Admiral Philippe Auboyneau in October under the new designation of the Flank Force, the first (and only) Allied naval task force placed under French command during the war.⁴⁸⁶ The group was formed to continue harassing the remaining German naval forces still operating in the Gulf of Genoa – and those of the Italian Social Republic, the rump fascist state formed by Mussolini in September 1943 – as well as bombard enemy shore positions at the southern end of the Franco-Italian front until the end of the war.

More ambivalent was the record of French submarines in the Mediterranean, even if the *Marine nationale* sought to concentrate such forces in that theatre after the fusion of August 1943. Admittedly, this concentration commenced under disquieting omens when the Free French submarine *Minerve* left Great Britain for Beirut in October but was attacked by a Canadian Liberator aircraft while navigating on the surface south of Plymouth. The submarine survived but two sailors were killed and several others wounded while the vessel returned to the British Isles

⁴⁸³ Huan, "La Marine française dans la guerre (1943)," 119-120; and Philippe Masson, *La Marine française et la guerre, 1939-1945* [The French Navy and the War, 1939-1945], 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: Tallandier, 2000), 420-421.

⁴⁸⁴ Marcel Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, United States Army in World War II (Washington, DC: Center of Military History United States Army, 1989), 225; and Barbara Brooks Tomblin, *With Utmost Spirit: Allied Naval Operations in the Mediterranean, 1942-1945* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 379-383. Though the British commanded Operation *Brassard*, the French *Commando d'Afrique* and the 9th Colonial Infantry Division provided the bulk of the troops landed on Elba.

⁴⁸⁵ Jordan and Moulin, *French Cruisers*, 205-206; Tomblin, *With Utmost Spirit*, 401-428; and Philippe Masson, *Histoire de l'armée française de 1914 à nos jours* [History of the French Army from 1914 to Today] (Paris, FR: Librairie académique Perrin, 1999), 342-345.

⁴⁸⁶ Jordan and Moulin, *French Cruisers*, 206-209; and Pierre-Emmanuel Klingbeil, *Le front oublié des Alpes-Maritimes (15 août 1944 - 2 mai 1945)* [The Forgotten Front of the *Alpes-Maritimes* (15 August 1944 – 2 May 1945)] (Nice, FR: Serre Éditeur, 2005), 199-205. For a contemporary account, see Hervé Jaouen, *Marin de guerre* [Wartime Sailor] (Paris, FR: Éditions du Pen Duick, 1984), 49-54.

so badly damaged that it spent the rest of the war in reserve.⁴⁸⁷ The former *FNFL* submarine *Junon* proceeded to Algeria in May 1944 but was found in decrepit state and the *FMA* authorities placed her in reserve in August.⁴⁸⁸ Meanwhile, the submersible mine-laying *Rubis*, also scheduled for transfer to the Mediterranean, remained in Great Britain as Allied aircraft had misidentified her replacement, *La Perle*, during the latter's return transit from refit in the Philadelphia Naval Yard and sank her south of Iceland in July 1944, killing all but one of her fifty-eight crew members.⁴⁸⁹

As for the *Forces maritimes d'Afrique*, they could count on fifteen submarines in the wake of Operation *Torch* but all were old and used operating concepts and technologies dating from the interwar period. Although these units spent extensive periods of time patrolling off the coasts of northern Italy and southern France through 1943 and 1944, they experienced few successes, in part as a result of the decreasing number of Axis ships in those waters but also due to the poor quality of their sensors and torpedoes.⁴⁹⁰ Despite these limited results, Allied authorities appreciated the contribution of French submarines in ancillary roles such as landing resistance agents and commandos on occupied coasts, and providing targets for ships undergoing training in anti-submarine schools, allowing the deployment of more modern British and American submarines to active theatres of war such as the Pacific. Meanwhile, in the Atlantic, Allied commanders also relegated French naval assets to secondary roles.

Ships and submarines of the *Forces navales de Grande-Bretagne* (*FNGB* – Naval Forces in Great Britain, the former Free French) remained busily committed to convoy escort duties and coastal raids. Several units deployed for Operation *Neptune* on 6 June 1944 but did not project a strong French presence scattered as they were among the immense Allied armada that closed in on the beaches of Normandy that day. The cruisers *Montcalm* and *Georges Leygues* provided fire support to American troops at Omaha Beach while *Duquesne* remained alongside but available in Great Britain; destroyer *La Combattante* supported the Canadians at Juno Beach; frigates *L'Aventure*, *La Surprise*, *L'Escarmouche*, and *La Découverte* as well as corvettes *Aconit*, *Renoncule*, *Roselys* and *Commandant d'Estienne d'Orves* escorted transports in different groups; six motor torpedo boats of the of the 23 MTB Flotilla provided security against German torpedo boats; and two divisions of minesweepers discharged their duties all along the waterfront.⁴⁹¹ The

⁴⁸⁷ Claude Huan, *Les Sous-marins français 1918-1945* [French Submarines 1918-1945] (Rennes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2004), 191-192. *Minerve's* crew was eventually reassigned to man the submarine *Doris*, a V-class submarine transferred by Great Britain to France in June 1944.

⁴⁸⁸ The *Junon* sailors were repatriated to Great Britain to crew the *Morse*, a new British V-class vessel (HMS *Vortex*) transferred to France in October 1944. On these events, and the tense relations that still existed between the former Free French and the *FMA* authorities in Algeria that year, see the account of the commanding officer of *Junon* and *Morse*, Étienne Schlumberger, in *Les combats et l'honneur des Forces navales françaises libres, 1940-1944* [The Fighting and the Honour of the Free French Naval Forces, 1940-1944] (Paris, FR: Le cherche midi, 2007), 122-126.

⁴⁸⁹ Huan, *Les sous-marins français*, 175-176; and Christian Lecalard, "Activités et disparition du sous-marin mouilleur de mines "LA PERLE" [Activities and Disappearance of the Submarine Minelayer *La Perle*]," *Amicale Rubis*, last modified 14 January 2013, <http://www.sectionrubis.fr/spip.php?article191>.

⁴⁹⁰ Étienne Taillemite, *Histoire ignorée de la Marine française* [Unknown History of the French Navy] 3rd ed. (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2010), 585-587; and Claude Huan, "Les opérations des sous-marins français, Méditerranée 1944 [French Submarine Operations in the Mediterranean, 1944]," *Revue historique des Armées* 156, no. 3 (October 1984): 57, 62.

⁴⁹¹ Auphan and Mordal, *La Marine française*, 493-499 and Masson, *La Marine française et la guerre*, 421.

1er bataillon de fusiliers marins commandos (1er BFMC, the 1st Battalion of Marine Commandos, also known as “Commando Kieffer,” so-named after its commander) counted as the only French unit landed from the sea that day, with less than 200 troops taking part in the initial assault.⁴⁹² The battleship *Courbet*, first flagship of the Free French Naval Forces in 1940, also played an inglorious but important role, towed from Portsmouth to be sunk in front of Arromanches, part of the breakwater set up to protect one of the two artificial harbours, code-named Mulberries.⁴⁹³

The two Mulberries were particularly important to the Allied offensive in Northwestern Europe. The lack of working ports to supply the offensive against Germany plagued the allied effort throughout the following year, a situation made worse early on when the Omaha Beach Mulberry was destroyed in a storm on 19 June 1944.⁴⁹⁴ Eventually breaking out of the Normandy beachhead that summer, Allied troops pushed the frontlines eastward but German garrisons stayed behind to hold France’s Atlantic ports to the death. The capture of Cherbourg, Brest and Toulon demonstrated that fighting to take such defended ports only left rubbles in its wake. The Anglo-Americans left the French to besiege fortified cities such as Lorient, Saint-Nazaire and La Rochelle while they focused on the advance to Germany.⁴⁹⁵ In mid-December 1944, Lemonnier formed the French Naval Task Force (FNTF) to blockade these pockets from the sea and provide gun fire support to the French troops tasked to probe them from landward. Rear-Admiral Joseph Rue remained in command of that unique group of French vessels assigned on and off until its disbandment on 28 May 1945.⁴⁹⁶

French sailors also distinguished themselves ashore. Fighting in France through Summer 1944, the *Commando Kieffer* was granted a short period of rest in Great Britain in the fall before taking part in the assault on the Dutch island of Walcheren in November. The *2^e Régiment blindé de fusiliers-marins (2^e RBFM, 2nd Armoured Regiment of Marines)* and the *2^{ème} Compagnie Médicale et Groupe d'Ambulancières de la Marine* (the "Marinettes", female nurses and drivers of the 2nd Naval Medical and Ambulance Drivers Company) arrived in Normandy on 1 August 1944 with the French army’s 2nd Armoured Division.⁴⁹⁷ From then on, they followed General

⁴⁹² Nick van der Bijl, *No.10 (Inter-Allied) Commando 1942-45: Britain's Secret Commando* (Oxford, UK: Osprey, 2006), 25-40; and Stéphane Simonnet, *Les 177 Français du Jour J* [The 177 Frenchmen of D-Day] (Paris, FR: Tallandier, 2014), *passim*.

⁴⁹³ Masson, *La Marine française et la guerre*, 421.

⁴⁹⁴ Richard M. Leighton and Robert W. Coakley, *United States Army in World War II – Global Logistics and Strategy: 1943-1945* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1968), 372-374, 385-387 and 560-561; and Guy Hartcup, *Code Name Mulberry: The Planning, Building and Operation of the Normandy Harbours*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2011), *passim*.

⁴⁹⁵ Only one German garrison fell under French assault, that holding the Royan and Pointe de Grace complex, blocking the approaches to Bordeaux until its surrender on 30 April 1945. The other pockets were still in German hands on VE day. Stéphane Simonnet, *Les poches de l'Atlantique: Les batailles oubliées de la Libération, janvier 1944 - mai 1945* [The Atlantic Pockets: The Forgotten Battles of the Liberation, January 1944 – May 1945] (Paris, FR: Tallandier, 2015), *passim*.

⁴⁹⁶ Jaouen, *Marin de guerre*, 55-56; as well as Auphan and Mordal, *La Marine française*, 528-535.

⁴⁹⁷ For a first-hand account detailing the operations of the 2^e RBFM and the difficulties of integrating former Free Frenchmen and Giraudists in the same unit, one may consult the reminiscences of Charles de Gaulle’s son, Philippe de Gaulle (who volunteered to go fight ashore in the summer of 1944 after three years of service at sea) in his *Mémoires accessoires* [Accessory Memoirs] – Volume 1 – 1921-1946, 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2010), 468-589.

Philippe Leclerc during his famous advance to Paris and Strasbourg, before crossing the Rhine into Bavaria and seeing the end of the war in Berchtesgaden. The *1^{er} Régiment de fusiliers-marins* (*1^{er} RFM*, 1st Naval Infantry Regiment) fought in Italy in 1943 before landing in southern France and moving up the Rhone valley in Fall 1944. The regiment then joined besieging the German garrisons on the Atlantic coast but the Ardennes offensive forced its return to the main front in December before finishing the war on the Franco-Italian border. The 4th Regiment of *fusiliers-marins* was deployed around Lorient while the *1^{er} Régiment de canonnières-marins* (1st Regiment of Naval Gunners) operated in the Gironde region after having served in Tunisia and on the Italian front.⁴⁹⁸ The 3rd and 5th *RFM* were formed too late to see active service in the war in Europe but many of these troops would later be assigned to the *Corps expéditionnaire français en Extrême-Orient* (*CEFEO* – French Far East Expeditionary Corps) for deployment to Indochina.⁴⁹⁹

The fusion of August 1943 and renewed Anglo-American support also allowed French naval aviators to make an increasing contribution to the fight. Four Free French pilots and a group of mechanics had already taken up their assignment with the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm Squadron 807 earlier that year, flying Seafires from the aircraft carrier *Indomitable* during the invasion of Sicily and then transferring to HMS *Battler* for the Salerno landings.⁵⁰⁰ Meanwhile, another 260 of de Gaulle's flying personnel and ground crews traveled to the United States to train with the amphibian PBY-5A Catalina, eventually forming the *6^e Flottille d'exploration* (6th Patrol Flight) and deploying to Morocco in 1944 to conduct anti-submarine operations over the Atlantic for the remainder of the hostilities.⁵⁰¹ This formation joined those of the *Forces maritimes d'Afrique* already being reequipped in whole or in part with Allied aircraft: one patrol squadron of British Sunderlands and older French Potez-CAMS 141 long-range aircraft (responsible for the sinking of *U-105* on 2 June 1943) and another flying Wellingtons (which sunk *U-403* on 18 August 1943), both out of Dakar; as well as a fighter squadron of French Dewoitine and two *flottilles* of Walrus amphibious biplanes in Algeria. By the end of the hostilities, eight shore-based *Aéronavale* squadrons operated fighters, dive bombers (mainly American Douglas SBD Dauntless) and long-range patrol aircraft procured through Lend-Lease.⁵⁰²

⁴⁹⁸ The *4^e RFM* was formed to bring together all naval personnel who had served with the *Forces françaises de l'intérieur* (*FFI*, Free French Forces of the Interior). Jérôme Souverain, "Marine and F.F.I (1944-1945) [The Navy and the *FFI* (1944-1945)]," *Revue historique des Armées* 199 (June 1995): 112-113.

⁴⁹⁹ Sources on all of these formations are too many to be listed here but Auphan and Mordal provide an adequate summary of these operations on land sprinkled throughout Part 4 (*Le Retour chez soi*, The Return Home) of *La Marine française*, 493-561. See also Vignerat, *Rearming the French*, 225.

⁵⁰⁰ The transfer to the *Battler* followed the torpedoing of the *Indomitable* on 16 July 1943, which did not sink the carrier but forced its evacuation to the United States for extensive repairs. The French aviators were reassigned to other British squadrons in November 1943, where they remained as individual augmentees until the end of the war. Jérôme Baroë, *Cent ans d'Aéronavale en France* [One Hundred Years of Naval Aviation in France] (Rennes, FR: Éditions Ouest-France, 2010), 34; and Jean Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches* [Aircraft Carriers *Dixmude* and *Arromanches*] (Nantes, FR: Marines Éditions, 1998), 40.

⁵⁰¹ Baroë, *Cent ans d'Aéronavale*, 34; and Roger Vercken, *Histoire succincte de l'Aéronautique navale (1910-1998)* [A Brief History of the Naval Aviation (1910-1998)] (Paris, FR: ARDHAN, 1998), 75.

⁵⁰² Baroë, *Cent ans d'Aéronavale*, 35; Vercken, *Histoire succincte de l'Aéronautique navale*, 77-84; Auphan and Mordal, *La Marine française*, 447; and Frédérique Chapelay, "Le réarmement de la Marine par les Américains [The Rearmament of the Navy by the Americans]," In *Les armées françaises pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, 1939-1945* [The French Armed Forces during the Second World War, 1939-1945] (Paris: F.E.D.N.-I.H.C.C., 1986), 352.

French sailors, *fusiliers-marins*, commandos and aviators served effectively after the fusion of August 1943 but they also paid a price discharging the peripheral tasks assigned to the *Marine nationale* by the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS). Symbolic of the unglamorous missions at hand, most of the French vessels sunk thereafter were lost to mines or accidents as illustrated in Table 7 below:

Table 7 – French Warships Lost at Sea August 1943 – May 1945
(Excluding those lost in Indochina)

Date	Vessel Type and Name	Dead/ Total Crew	Remarks
23 November 1943	Trawler-minesweeper <i>Marie Mad</i>	24 / 24	– Mine strike off Ajaccio, Corsica – <i>FMA</i> unit (French build)
21 December 1943	Submarine Chaser <i>Chasseur 5</i> (<i>Carentan</i>)	18 / 24	– Floundered in a Channel storm – <i>FNGB</i> unit (French build returned from the RN to the <i>FNFL</i> on 1 March 1943 and renamed <i>Carentan</i>)
29 December 1943 (Date approximate)	Submarine <i>Protée</i>	70 / 70	– Mine strike off Marseilles – <i>FMA</i> unit (French build formerly with <i>Force X</i> in Alexandria)
9 June 1944	Battleship <i>Courbet</i>	0 / 0	– <i>FNBG</i> unit (French build scuttled off Normandy as a breakwater for the Mulberries)
8 July 1944	Submarine <i>La Perle</i>	55 / 55	– Sank by Allied aircraft in mid-Atlantic – <i>FMA</i> unit (French build modernised in Philadelphia Navy Yard)
22 October 1944	Minesweeper <i>D-202</i>	25 / 30	– Mine strike off Marseille – <i>FMA</i> unit (ex USS <i>YMS-77</i>)
9 January 1945	Submarine Chaser <i>L'Enjoué</i>	60 / 60	– Torpedo strike by <i>U-870</i> off Morocco – <i>FMA</i> unit (ex USS <i>PC-482</i>)
15 February 1945	Submarine Chaser <i>L'Ardent</i>	0 / 60	– Collision with British freighter near Casablanca, Morocco – <i>FMA</i> unit (ex USS <i>PC-473</i>)
23 February 1945	Destroyer <i>La Combattante</i>	68 / 185	– Mine strike at the mouth of the Humber River in Great Britain – <i>FNBG</i> unit (British Hunt-class destroyer transferred to the <i>FNFL</i> in December 1942)

Sources:

Paul Auphan and Jacques Mordal, *La Marine française dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale* [The French Navy and the Second World War], 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: France-Empire, 1967), 493-561.

H. P. Willmott, *The Last Century of Sea Power – Volume Two: From Washington to Tokyo, 1922–1945* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 296-297.

Another serious mishap involved two French warships on Christmas Day 1944 when the light cruisers *Le Terrible* and *Le Malin* collided at high speed near Naples, the latter losing her entire bow section, at the cost of 70 sailors between the two ships, 62 of them in *Le Malin*

alone.⁵⁰³ The last French wartime losses at sea occurred on 17 April 1945 when an Italian motor torpedo boat struck the destroyer *Trombe* in the Gulf of Genoa. The ship survived but nineteen sailors died as a result of the torpedo hit.⁵⁰⁴ One must also recall that these losses did not include those suffered on land by the *fusiliers-marins* and naval commandos, and in the air by the *Aéronavale*, nor the dozens of merchant seamen who continued losing their lives to Axis mines, submarines and shore-based aircraft until the end of the hostilities. Through the course of the entire war, the various elements of the *Marine nationale* – the pre-Armistice fleet, the *FNFL*, the Vichy Navy, the *FMA*, the reunified force after August 1943, and the forgotten Indochina flotilla (see Table 8 next page) – lost 249 warships and submarines (457,000 tons) and another 57,000 tons in auxiliary vessels at the hands of the Axis, Anglo-American forces, infighting among rival French factions and scuttling by their own sailors. 8,358 military crews, including 361 officers, died or went missing. Nearly half of the 1939 merchant fleet vanished with 1,328,858 tons lost to enemy action and accidents, and more than 1,500 mariners lost on the high seas.⁵⁰⁵

These sacrifices had not been for naught. Heavy losses of men, ships and submarines in the immediate aftermath of the Armistice sustained the legitimacy of whichever political regime they pledged allegiance to and among the military powers with whom they aligned. The reunited *Marine nationale* could boast of a meaningful contribution to the Allied war effort in the later years of the conflict and eventual restoration of France as a self-governed and united country. But French admirals did not share the laurels of victory bequeathed onto army generals by popular opinion and their vessels were relegated to secondary roles subservient to allied strategy rather than shaping it to suit French interests. And even such mitigated results would have been impossible to achieve were it not for the proactive support of the Anglo-Americans in refurbishing and modernizing existing French units, training its officers and sailors, and transferring new assets to the fleet. As the hostilities came to an end, time had come to bring that essential support to a bittersweet conclusion, leaving much uncertainty in its wake.

Table 8 – Agony of the Indochina Fleet 1943 – 1945

Date	Vessel Type and Name	Remarks
26 November 1943	Armed Trawler <i>Béryl</i>	– Lost to a mine or torpedo strike by a US submarine near Tuy Hoa.
1 January 1944	Submarine <i>Pégasse</i>	– Stripped of usable parts, abandoned on a river bank near Saigon.
26 February 1944	Survey Ship <i>Astrolabe</i>	– Sunk by US bombers in Da Nang.
26 February 1944	Armed Trawler <i>Picanon</i>	– Sunk by US bombers in Da Nang. – Raised and refurbished, foundered in a typhoon north of Hue on 3 October 1944.
30 April 1944	Sloop <i>Tahure</i>	– Sunk by US submarine while conducting coastal convoy escort near Camranh Bay.
12 January 1945	Cruiser <i>Lamotte-Picquet</i>	– Sunk by US bombers in the Donnai River.

⁵⁰³ Jordan and Moulin, *French Destroyers*, 265.

⁵⁰⁴ Auphan and Mordal, *La Marine française*, 555.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 590-591; and Charles W. Koburger, *Franco-American Naval Relations, 1940-1945* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 100.

12 January 1945	Survey Ship <i>Octant</i>	– Sunk by US bombers in Camranh Bay.
9 March 1945	Submarine Chaser <i>Commandant Bourdais</i>	– Scuttled by own crew in Haiphong
9 March 1945	Gunboat <i>Vigilante</i>	– Scuttled by own crew in Haiphong.
9 March 1945	Gunboat <i>Francis Garnier</i>	– Scuttled by own crew on the Mekong River in Kratié, Cambodia.
9 March 1945	Armed Trawler <i>Paul Bert</i>	– Sunk by French gunfire after seizure by Japanese troops in My Tho (near Saigon).
9 March 1945	Gunboat <i>Mytho</i>	– Sunk by French gunfire after seizure by Japanese troops in My Tho (near Saigon).
9 March 1945	Submarine Chaser <i>Avalanche</i>	– Scuttled by her own crew in My Tho (near Saigon).
10 March 1945	Colonial Sloop <i>Amiral Charner</i>	– Sunk by Japanese bombers in My Tho (near Saigon).
10 March 1945	Gunboat <i>Tourane</i>	– Scuttled by own crew in the Song Be River (near Da Nang).
10 March 1945	Sloop <i>Marne</i>	– Scuttled by own crew in Can Tho (near Saigon).
12 March 1945	Survey Ship <i>Lapérouse</i>	– Scuttled by own crew in Can Tho (near Saigon).
12 March 1945	Armed Trawler <i>Capitaine Coulon</i>	– Scuttled by own crew in Can Tho (near Saigon).
Mid-May 1945	Armed Buoy Tender <i>Armand Rousseau</i>	– Sunk by US bombers while operated by a Japanese crew near Rach Gia.

Note: The only ships of the *Marine nationale* based in Indochina that survived the war were the gunboats *Frézouls* and *Crayssac* which escaped to China after the Japanese coup of 9 March 1945. They sailed back to Haiphong on 15 August 1945, the first French military forces to return to Indochina after Japan's defeat.

Sources:

Paul Romé, *Les oubliés du bout du monde: Journal d'un marin d'Indochine de 1939 à 1946* [The Forgotten at the Other End of the World: Diary of an Indochina Sailor from 1939 to 1946] (Paris, FR: Éditions maritimes & d'outre-mer, 1983), 273-274.

H. P. Willmott, *The Last Century of Sea Power – Volume Two: From Washington to Tokyo, 1922–1945* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 296-297.

WRAPPING UP AID

The Combined Chiefs of Staff decided in February 1944 to complete the delivery of those vessels already assigned for transfer to the French but declined follow-on requests from Lemonnier's staff. Deliveries of larger combatants were completed by late Fall 1944.⁵⁰⁶ In October, Great Britain transferred the last two of six British River-class frigates and the last one of three submarines it provided through the course of the war for crewing by the Free French/*FNGB*.⁵⁰⁷ That same month, United States Navy crews delivered to Toulon the last twenty-one of thirty YMS1-class minesweepers. The last three of thirty-two American PC451-

⁵⁰⁶ Jacques Cornic, "Ships for Crews," *Warship International* 22, no. 3 (1985): 252-263.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 252 and 254.

class patrol craft and the last nine of fifty submarine chasers arrived in November. The provision of British minesweepers lagged behind by a few months with the last six of fifteen 105-ft Motor Minesweepers (MMS)-class delivered in the early months of 1945, along with six 126-ft MMS-class during that same timeframe.⁵⁰⁸ The completion of major amphibious operations in Europe also led to handing over a motley mix of landing vessels through the winter of 1944-1945: thirty US Landing Craft, Vehicle/Personnel (LCVPs); eight US Landing Craft, Medium (LCMs); two US Landing Craft, Tank (LCTs); twenty-one British Landing Barges, Vehicle (LBVs); nine British Landing Barges, Oil (LBOs); and six British Landing Barges, Water (LBWs). This list does not include transfer by the Allies of the multitude of smaller auxiliaries necessary to support day-to-day operations of a large navy: tugs, net tenders, floating cranes, fire boats, and such.

The Americans also made an important contribution by leaving behind large shore infrastructures that the French navy could eventually leverage in its postwar planning. In addition to rehabilitating the commercial ports in North Africa and the *métropole* – from Casablanca and Oran to Marseilles and Le Havre, among others – they dedicated great efforts to restoring the naval dockyards in Bizerte, Toulon, and Brest. They also created a string of new bases and facilities as reported by an American historian of the Second World War French navy: "Before the end, there were some twenty-one identifiable [US] naval bases of various kinds located in French North Africa, and two in France itself. Many of them were as large as small cities."⁵⁰⁹ Another important legacy for the fledgling *Aéronavale* was the opening of American flight schools to French candidates with nearly half of the naval aircrews who obtained qualifications during the years 1942-1946 doing so in the United States (193 pilots in total, with another ninety-two trained in Great Britain, thirty-two in Canada and eighty-three in France).⁵¹⁰ Still, as grateful as French admirals may have been for such support, it remained that the steadfast refusal by the CCS to consider requests for completion of the battleship *Jean Bart* and modernization of additional cruisers, let alone the allocation of a fleet aircraft carrier, grated on Lemonnier and his subordinates.⁵¹¹

The old *Béarn* was refitted in New Orleans as an aircraft transport in 1943-1944. French naval rearmament plans sought to build on this meek beginning by including an obstinate demand for a large, fast aircraft carrier capable of the full range of combat operations expected of those vessels deployed in powerful task forces in the Pacific. Ships of the American *Essex* class came to dominate that category at 30,000 tons, nearly 900 feet in length, with 100 hundred aircraft

⁵⁰⁸ Cornic also mentions that the American transferred three auxiliary tankers (US AOG) to the French in Bizerte between December 1944 and January 1945. Cornic, "Ships for Crews," 264. These are not reported in the main text as that category of vessels is not tracked in this dissertation.

⁵⁰⁹ Koburger, *Franco-American Naval Relations*, 99. For a full listing, see Annex L at pages 144-145 in the same book.

⁵¹⁰ Alexandre Sheldon-Duplaix, "La Mission navale française à Washington et la renaissance de la Marine (3 janvier 1943 – 1^{er} janvier 1946) [The French Naval Mission to Washington and the Rebirth of the Navy (3 January 1943 – 1 January 1946)," *Relations internationales* 108 (Winter 2001): 518. For a first-hand account of flight training in the United States, see once again the memoirs of Charles de Gaulle's son who, after serving at sea and then ashore with the *fusiliers-marins*, volunteered for the *Aéronavale* in the closing months of the war. Philippe de Gaulle, *Mémoires accessoires*, 627-646.

⁵¹¹ To the very end, the French admirals argued for the modernization of cruisers *Duquesne*, *Tourville* and *Suffren* but the CCS refused to take on those older vessels. Jordan and Moulin, *French Cruisers*, 198-202; and Sheldon-Duplaix, "La Mission navale française à Washington," 518.

embarked and capable of sustaining speeds of more than 30 knots.⁵¹² Smaller units displacing from 10 to 15,000 tons with up to fifty airplanes and similar speeds – the light aircraft carrier, often built using sleek cruiser hulls and powerful turbine engines – also grew in importance during these years but the Naval General Staff kept pressuring the Fénard Mission in Washington to press for the largest platform. As noted by French historian Alexandre Sheldon-Duplex, such ambitions were clearly misplaced as the United States never transferred fleet or light carriers to any of its allies, agreeing at most to provide escort carriers to Great Britain.⁵¹³ Often built using converted commercial ships, these vessels were too small, embarking 15 to 30 aircraft, and too slow at less than 20 knots to operate with fast task forces. They played a critical role, though, in providing air coverage to merchant convoys in the Atlantic and the Pacific as well as transporting aircraft into theatres of operations in Europe and in the Pacific.⁵¹⁴

Seemingly as a result of Fénard's relentless lobbying, the Combined Chiefs of Staff relented in February 1945 and agreed to transfer one escort carrier to the *Marine nationale*. The vessel selected was the former passenger cargo ship *Rio Parana*, launched in 1940 and acquired by the US Navy the following year for conversion. Leased to Great Britain in 1942 as HMS *Biter*, the small escort carrier first deployed for Operation *Torch* where, ironically, her complement of Sea Hurricanes contributed to the destruction of more than twenty French aircraft based in Oran. *Biter* then served on North Atlantic convoy routes but suffered damage in November 1943 when a Swordfish crashed into the sea on its final approach, releasing a torpedo that struck the ship's stern. More damage ensued as a result of a fire in August 1944 and she was placed in reserve in January 1945.⁵¹⁵ The vessel was in poor condition when taken over by the French on 9 April 1945, subject to strict conditions from the CCS: the soon-to-be renamed *Dixmude* – commemorating the heroic stand by a brigade of *fusiliers-marins* in that Belgian town in October 1914 – could only be refitted in a French dockyard using French resources. She was to be employed merely as an aircraft transport, not an escort carrier.⁵¹⁶ Even such a scaled-down project proved a challenge for France and *Dixmude* did not resume her role as an actual aircraft carrier until January 1947 when she left Europe for a first operational deployment to Indochina.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹² Lisle A. Rose, *Power at Sea – Volume 2 – The Breaking Storm, 1919-1945* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 387-395; and Alexandre Sheldon-Duplaix, *Histoire mondiale des porte-avions: Des origines à nos jours* [World History of the Aircraft Carriers: From the Origins to Today] (Paris, FR: Éditions Techniques pour l'Automobile et l'Industrie, 2006), 80-85 and 88-89.

⁵¹³ The United States eventually lend-leased 39 escort carriers to Great Britain. Sheldon-Duplaix, *Histoire mondiale des porte-avions*, 79. Moulin mentions 38 in *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches*, 21.

⁵¹⁴ Sheldon-Duplaix, *Histoire mondiale des porte-avions*, 89-90; and Al Adcock, *Escort Carriers in Action* (Carrollton, TX: Squadron Signal Publications, 1996), *passim*.

⁵¹⁵ Robert J. Cressman, *Biter*, last modified 6 February 2006, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/b/biter-i.html>; and Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches*, 46-59. Small at 8,200 tons and propelled by a single screw, *Biter* could only sustain speeds of 16 knots and embark no more than 15 aircraft in the escort carrier role.

⁵¹⁶ Koburger, *Franco-American Naval Relations*, 90-91; and Sheldon-Duplaix, "La Mission navale française à Washington," 517-518. Not having to launch and recover aircraft at sea, *Dixmude* would be able to transport more aircraft stowed tightly in the hangar and even on the flight deck if required, either assembled or disassembled in crates.

⁵¹⁷ On the challenges of putting *Dixmude* back into service and her slow conversion to the role of aircraft carrier in the postwar period, see Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches*, 60-68. French civilian shipyard workers came from Brest to Faslane, Scotland in the summer of 1945 to assist the *Marine nationale* crew making the ex-*Biter* fit to operate at sea again, including the installation of a 10,000-litre

The transfer of *Dixmude* to the French Navy took place under new Allied rearmament channels instituted in Fall 1944 as a result of the liberation of France. Preparing for this momentous event, the French Committee of National Liberation had published a decree on 3 June 1944 relabeling itself the *Gouvernement provisoire de la République française* (*GPRF* – Provisional Government of the French Republic).⁵¹⁸ The structures and powers of the Algiers committee remained in place and the authority of Charles de Gaulle among its members unchanged. Promoting this new name sought to ensure the rapid and orderly seizure of political power by French authorities in France and avoid the imposition by the Anglo-Americans of an Allied Military Government for Occupied Territories (AMGOT) similar to that already installed in Italy and others planned for Germany, Austria and Japan.⁵¹⁹ Although the Allies – especially Roosevelt – were reluctant to recognize the *GPRF*, de Gaulle would outwit them through speed and his mastery of the press.

Invited by Prime Minister Churchill on 4 June 1944 to witness D-Day from London instead of Algiers, the French general first set foot back in the *métropole* on 14 June. He only spent a few hours in Normandy before returning to England on board the destroyer *La Combattante* but stayed long enough to make a powerful and well-publicized speech proclaiming the legitimacy of the *GPRF* to delirious acclaims from the citizens of Bayeux.⁵²⁰ He also left behind Colonel Pierre de Chévigé as the military authority for the liberated zone and diplomat François Coulet to look after civil affairs, both dealing directly with allied commanders on French soil.⁵²¹ De Gaulle then entered Paris and staged a triumphal walk down the *Champs Élysées* on 26 August even as isolated sniper fire was still ringing in parts of the city. It was a dramatic gesture that again reinforced his legitimacy and that of his government among the French people and worldwide opinion.⁵²² By 31 August, the bulk of the French political administration was installed in Paris and de Gaulle formed a new government of national unity on 9 September,

wine tank! The ship was employed as a troop and cargo carrier for the remainder of the year and through most of 1946.

⁵¹⁸ Digithèque MJP, "Ordonnance du 3 juin 1944 substituant au nom du Comité français de la Libération nationale celui de Gouvernement provisoire de la République française [Decree of 3 June 1944 Substituting the Name of Provisional Government of the French Republic instead of French Committee of National Liberation]," *Gouvernement de la Libération*, last accessed 17 October 2016, <http://mjp.univ-perp.fr/france/co1944.htm#3/06/44>.

⁵¹⁹ French historian Annie Lacroix-Riz provides a primer on this complex subject in "Quand les Américains voulaient gouverner la France [When the Americans Wanted to Govern France]," *Le Monde diplomatique* 590 (May 2003): 19. For a full treatment, see Charles L. Robertson, *When Roosevelt Planned to Govern France* (Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), *passim*.

⁵²⁰ On the Bayeux visit, see Éric Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle* (Paris, FR: Gallimard, 2002), 432-433; and Jonathan Fenby, *The General – Charles de Gaulle and the France He Saved* (London, UK: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 241-243. For de Gaulle's own recollections of this day, see his *Mémoires de guerre – Volume 2 – L'unité, 1942-1944* [War Memoirs. Volume 2. Unity, 1942-1944] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1956), 229-231 and *War Memoirs – Volume 2 – Unity, 1942-1944*, trans. Richard Howard (London, UK: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1959), 232-234.

⁵²¹ G.E. Maguire, *Anglo-American Policy towards the Free French* (London, UK: Macmillan Press, 1995), 132. For another contemporary account see that of Anthoine Béthouart, *Cinq années d'espérance – Mémoires de guerre 1939-1945* [Five Years of Hope – War Memories 1939-1945] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1968), 247-251.

⁵²² De Gaulle, *L'Unité*, 304-316; and *Unity*, 305-317; Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle*, 450-451; and Fenby, *The General*, 255-256.

based largely on the former Algiers committee membership but also inclusive of the many strands found within Resistance ranks, including Communists.⁵²³ By then, the British and American administrations – unlike that of Stalin in the Soviet Union – were still reluctant to recognize the French general as leader of the newly liberated and unified country but they eventually relented. On 23 October 1944, London, Washington and Moscow formally acknowledged de Gaulle's cabinet as the provisional government of France although Roosevelt qualified his position the very next day, re-stating the need to insure, eventually, "... both the institution of a democratic regime in France and the ultimate endorsement of that regime by popular expression."⁵²⁴

A first sign that the mechanisms established by the Allies to assist French wartime rearmament would require modification in view of the liberation of the *métropole* appeared in the weeks leading up to the landings in southern France. British Army General Henry Maitland Wilson had succeeded Eisenhower at Allied Forces Headquarters (AFHQ) in Algiers on 8 January 1944. Wilson took the title of Supreme Allied Commander for the Mediterranean after the American general moved to London to plan and execute Operation *Overlord* at Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEP). In mid-July 1944, in the lead up to Operation *Dragoon*, Wilson recommended to the Combined Chiefs of Staff that the provisions of CCS 358 (Revised) "... be extended to the ports expected to be captured in the forthcoming operation and to the French warships and naval personnel likely to be operating outside direct [US] and British control."⁵²⁵ The CCS approved this measure on 21 September but carefully worded their support given the reluctance to contribute to France's postwar plans:

...provided that the supply of repair equipment and materials, ships, and stores to the French Navy in its home ports and to the ports themselves for their rehabilitation be limited to the extent required for the support of operations.⁵²⁶

By Fall 1944, greater coordination between AFHQ, still responsible for rearmament of those French forces based in North Africa, and SHAEP, which had assumed a similar role for units and bases in metropolitan France, became necessary. The latter eventually took the leading role in handling discussions with *GPRF* authorities regarding the rearmament and support of all French military forces. Eisenhower had already ordered the establishment of the SHAEP Mission to France on 3 September under US Army Major General John T. Lewis (a coastal gunnery officer and former military attaché to France) to "... provide liaison between the French Government and Supreme Headquarters and to furnish a staff to aid the French in dealing with

⁵²³ Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle*, 455-458; Fenby, *The General*, 267-269; as well as Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre – Volume 3 – Le salut, 1944-1946* [War Memoirs – Volume 3 – Salvation, 1944-1946] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1959), 4-5 and *War Memoirs – Volume 3 – Salvation, 1944-1946*, translated by Richard Howard (London, UK: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1960), 10-11.

⁵²⁴ As reported in a *New York Times* article dated 24 October 1944 cited in James J. Dougherty, *The Politics of Wartime Aid: American Economic Assistance to France and French Northwest Africa, 1940-1946* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), 180. See also Maguire, *Anglo-American Policy*, 143-144; Simon Berthon, *Allies at War: The Bitter Rivalry among Churchill, Roosevelt, and de Gaulle* (Newark, NY: Carroll & Graph, 2001), 322-323; as well as François Kersaudy, *De Gaulle et Churchill: La mésentente cordiale* [De Gaulle and Churchill: Cordial Disagreement] (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2001), 383-388 and *De Gaulle et Roosevelt: Le duel au sommet* [De Gaulle and Roosevelt: Duel at the Top] (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2006), 438-446.

⁵²⁵ Vignerat, *Rearming the French*, 225.

⁵²⁶ *Idem*.

civil affairs in liberated France."⁵²⁷ In turn, US Army Brigadier General Harold F. Loomis was appointed on 3 October 1944 as head of the Rearmament Division, SHAEF Mission to France, bringing to Paris the larger part of the Anglo-American staff until then employed in Algiers with AFHQ's Joint Rearmament Commission (JRC).⁵²⁸ The mandate of the team evolved throughout the fall, including an extension of its responsibilities to the rearmament of other western European Allies (Belgium, Holland and Denmark) until SHAEF more clearly delineated its duties as depicted by American historian Forrest Pogue:

(1) to set up and implement ground and air rearmament programs which the Combined Chiefs of Staff had approved or might approve in SHAEF's sphere, (2) to provide inspection and training groups for the formation of approved units, (3) to co-ordinate within SHAEF and with the nation concerned all demands for rearmament of units not in approved rearmament programs, (4) to keep the staff sections of SHAEF and missions to foreign governments informed regarding rearmament programs and proposals for rearmament put forward by various nations.⁵²⁹

Although the Rearmament Division nominally included a naval section, the latter remained dormant through Fall 1944. A major reorganization promulgated by SHAEF at the end of December resulted in the standing up of independent naval and air divisions, established under the jurisdiction of SHAEF Mission to France in parallel to the Rearmament Division which would focus solely on building up ground forces from then on. USN Captain Dallas D. Dupre took command of the Naval Division in Paris, overseeing the continued rehabilitation of the *Marine nationale* under the guidance of USN Vice Admiral Allan G. Kirk, head of the US Naval Mission at SHAEF in London.⁵³⁰ Following the surrender of Germany, SHAEF was dissolved on 14 July 1945. Its contingents returned to their respective national authorities, including the Americans who formed US Forces European Theater (USFET), headquartered in Frankfurt with Eisenhower remaining in command until his appointment as US Army Chief of Staff in November.⁵³¹ American personnel continued their work in Rearmament, Naval and Air Divisions transferred directly to USFET while the British stood up their own rearmament organization. However, on 1 November 1945, the US formally terminated its assistance to Allied rearmament and the Fénard Mission in Washington was disbanded on 1 January 1946, bringing that effort to an end.⁵³²

Allies of the United States could have foreseen this precipitated conclusion. Washington accepted in a new Lend-Lease agreement signed with de Gaulle's government on 28 February 1945 the inclusion of unprecedented provisions for civilian reconstruction following the cessation

⁵²⁷ Forrest C. Pogue, *United States Army in World War II – Supreme Command: European Theater Of Operations* (Washington, DC: US Army Centre of Military History, 1954), 320. See also Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics and Strategy: 1943-1945*, 710.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, 324; and Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, 381.

⁵²⁹ SHEAF instruction to SHAEF Mission (France), 22 December 1944, discussed in Pogue, *Supreme Command*, 339 (footnote 15).

⁵³⁰ Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, 384-385.

⁵³¹ Pogue, *Supreme Command*, 511-515; and Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (London, UK: Pocket Books, 1997), 213-220.

⁵³² Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, 390; and Sheldon-Duplaix, "La Mission navale française à Washington," 523.

of hostilities.⁵³³ However, upon Roosevelt's death on 12 April, Vice-President Harry S. Truman took over the presidency and immediately came under domestic political pressure to wind down Lend-Lease. Congress passed a vote that same month prohibiting the use of the act for post-conflict commitments and Senate hearings gave rise to increasing disquiet about its future scale. Reasons to oppose Lend-Lease in the last year of the war were varied, ranging from long-standing "anti-New Dealism" in Republican circles to frustration with growing shortages and rationing on the home front. Perhaps unfairly, concerns also mounted that recipients of American aid were not pulling their full weight in the closing months of the war.⁵³⁴

On 20 August 1945, within days of the defeat of Japan, Truman instructed Leo T. Crowley, head of the Foreign Economic Administration, to cancel all contracts passed under the clauses of Lend-Lease unless countries agreed to complete them on a cash-payment basis.⁵³⁵ On 5 September, Truman clarified his position, stating that military lend-lease was terminated but that the United States would continue providing allied troops with those medical supplies, rations and shelter that countries could not yet supply. In December, he renewed the provision of civilian aid through the harsh winter months but held firm on terminating all outstanding contracts no later than 30 June 1946.⁵³⁶

Meanwhile, bilateral talks between Washington and Paris took place to arrange a final settlement, eventually concluded on 28 May 1946. Negotiators determined that France's wartime debt to the United States amounted to \$720 million. That figure was arrived at through arduous debates to define an extensive list of goods and services that would not need reimbursement as well as defining what amounted to reciprocal aid – for example French goods and property provided for free to US forces operating in North Africa, and major items such as the ocean liner *Normandie*, seized by American authorities in 1941 but lost to a fire in February 1942.⁵³⁷ These sums were deducted from the aid provided by America to all French parties since 1941 (Vichy, the Free French, the Giraudists, the Algiers' Committee of Liberation and the *GPRF*).⁵³⁸ France committed to reimburse this debt, reduced to \$653.3 millions in March 1949 after another round of negotiations resulting from a more accurate compilation of the final bills on both sides, with a 2% interest rate over 30 years starting on 1 July 1951. Final payment occurred in 1980 as the repayment period had been extended by two years through the troubled years of 1958 and 1959 but increased prosperity in the 1960s allowed France to repay its debt slightly ahead of schedule.

⁵³³ The agreement appears in full at The Library of Congress, *Principles Applying to Mutual Aid in the Prosecution of the War against Aggression – Preliminary Agreement between the United States of America and the Provisional Government of the French Republic*, last accessed 20 October 2016, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/us-treaties/bevans/b-fr-ust000007-1075.pdf>. On the negotiations leading up to the accord, see an excellent treatment by Gérard Bossuat in his Chapter 6 ("Les promesses du prêt-bail à la France (février 1945) [The Promises of Lend-Lease to France (February 1945)] of *Les aides américaines économiques et militaires à la France, 1938-1960* [Economic and Military Assistance to France, 1938-1960] (Vincennes: Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique, 2001), last accessed 22 October 2016, <http://books.openedition.org/igpde/2033?lang=fr#notes>.

⁵³⁴ Dougherty, *The Politics of Wartime Aid*, 189-194.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁵³⁶ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁵³⁷ Robert J. Cressman, *Lafayette (AP-53) 1941-1945*, last modified 2 May 2007, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/l/lafayette-ap-53.html>.

⁵³⁸ Dougherty, *The Politics of Wartime Aid*, 208-210; and Bossuat, *Les aides américaines*.

Lend-Lease had played a pivotal role in rehabilitation of the *Marine nationale* over the course of the previous two years. The end of wartime aid by the Anglo-Americans in September 1945 left France's navy with a large force but the overall value of these vessels was questionable. Many of its units were obsolete, others too expensive to modernize, and the overall mix of French, British and American designs – let alone soon-to-be delivered German and Italian war reparations – would challenge French maintainers and suppliers for years to come. Tables 9 and 10 (next page), especially when contrasted with Table 1 in Chapter Two, clearly show that the fleet had grown haphazardly according to allied priorities as opposed to French desires, a heterogenous assembly of *poussières navales* (literally “naval dust”). They also highlight the scale of the challenge facing the admirals tasked with forging a naval instrument capable of defending the national interest at home and abroad as France stood alone in the postwar era.

Table 9 – *Marine Nationale* Vessels of French Origin 1 September 1945

(Not including vessels afloat but confined to port as depot/barrack ships, or in reserve)

Category	Vessel Name or Number of Hulls per Category	Combined Tonnage	Remarks
Dreadnought Battleship	<i>Lorraine</i>	23,500	Obsolete, assigned to gunnery school in Toulon.
Fast Battleships	<i>Richelieu, Jean Bart</i>	70,000	<i>Richelieu</i> : Operational in Trincomalee (Ceylon), soon to depart for Indochina. <i>Jean Bart</i> : Not operational, in Cherbourg awaiting completion.
Aircraft Transport	<i>Béarn</i>	22,500	Obsolete and under repair in Casablanca, soon to depart for Indochina.
Heavy Cruisers (not refitted in the US)	<i>Duquesne, Tourville, Suffren</i>	30,000	<i>Suffren</i> : Operational but obsolete in Toulon, departed for Indochina 21 September 1945. <i>Tourville</i> : Obsolete, in refit in Toulon, departed for Indochina 5 December 1945. <i>Duquesne</i> : Obsolete, in refit in Brest, departed for Indochina 22 December 1945.
Cruisers (refitted in the US)	<i>Gloire, Montcalm, Georges Leygues, Émile Bertin</i>	21,900	<i>Gloire</i> : Operational in Brest, departed for Indochina 21 September 1945. <i>Montcalm</i> : In refit in Toulon (June 1945 – February 1946). <i>Georges Leygues</i> : In refit in Casablanca (June 1945 – January 1946). <i>Émile Bertin</i> : In refit in Toulon, departed for Indochina 11 October 1945.
Light Cruiser (not refitted in the US)	<i>Duguay Trouin</i>	8,000	Operational but obsolete in Algiers, used as a troop transport in the Mediterranean.
Training Cruiser (not refitted in the US)	<i>Jeanne d'Arc</i>	6,500	Operational but obsolete in Beirut, soon to return to at-sea training role for naval cadets.
Light Cruisers (former destroyers modernised in the US)	<i>Le Fantasque, Le Terrible, Le Malin, Le Triomphant</i>	10,400	<i>Le Fantasque</i> : Operational in Toulon, soon to depart for Indochina; <i>Le Malin</i> : In post-collision refit in Toulon; <i>Le Terrible</i> : In post-collision refit in Bizerte; <i>Le Triomphant</i> : Operational in Trincomalee (Ceylon), soon to depart for the Pacific with <i>Richelieu</i> .

Destroyers (fitted with US/UK equipment in Bermuda or North Africa)	<i>Tempête, Simoun, L'Alcyon, Le Fortuné, Forbin, Basque</i>	8,910	<i>Tempête</i> : Operational in Toulon, employed as troop transport in the Mediterranean; <i>Simoun</i> : Operational in Toulon, dispatched for occupation duties in Wilhelmshaven; <i>L'Alcyon</i> : Operational in Toulon, employed as troop transport in the Mediterranean; <i>Le Fortuné</i> : In refit in Casablanca; <i>Forbin</i> : In refit in Bizerte; <i>Basque</i> : In refit in Toulon.
Destroyers (not modernised)	<i>Tigre, Albatros</i>	4,500	<i>Tigre</i> : Operational but obsolete, employed on occupation duties in Kiel. <i>Albatros</i> : Obsolete, still in refit in Casablanca after heavy damage during Operation <i>Torch</i> .
Submarines (refitted in the US)	4 X 1,500-ton types 2 X 600-ton types	7,200	<i>Archimède</i> : Operational in Oran, scheduled for transfer to the Pacific but deployment cancelled. <i>Le Glorieux</i> : Operational in Oran, scheduled for transfer to the Pacific but deployment cancelled. <i>Centaure</i> : Operational in Oran, training duties. <i>Casabianca</i> : Operational in Oran. <i>Amazon</i> : Operational, employed on training duties at Fleet Sonar School Key West, Florida. <i>Antiope</i> : Operational, employed on training duties at Fleet Sonar School Key West, Florida.
Submarines (not modernised)	5 X 600-ton types	3,000	<i>Orphée</i> : Operational, training duties in Oran. <i>Vestale</i> : Operational, training duties in Dakar <i>Sultane</i> : Operational in La Pallice. <i>Junon</i> : In reserve, scheduled for refit in Brest. <i>Iris</i> : Operational but still detained in Cartagena, Spain after escape from 1942 Toulon scuttling.
Colonial Sloops	3 X 2,000-ton types	6,000	<i>Dumont d'Urville</i> : Operational, modernized in Charleston, SC in 1943. <i>Savorgnan de Brazza</i> : Operational but obsolete, soon dispatched to Indochina. <i>Ville d'Ys</i> : Operational but obsolete, operating in French Polynesia.
Minesweeping Sloops	12	7,560	Operational but obsolete.
Submarine Chasers	11	1,430	Operational but obsolete.
Submarine Tender	<i>Jules Vernes</i>	4,350	In Algiers, soon to depart for Indochina.
Gunboats	<i>Frézouls, Crayssac</i>	1,200	Operational but obsolete in Indochina.
Totals	65	236,950	Only 18% of the total number of hulls but 68% of the total tonnage in 1945.

Table 10 – Marine Nationale Vessels of Foreign Origin 1 September 1945

Category	Vessel Name or Number of Hulls per Category	Combined Tonnage	Remarks
Aircraft Transport	<i>Dixmude</i>	8,200	Operational but obsolete in Brest, employed as troop, cargo and aircraft transport.
US Destroyers	6 X Destroyer Escorts (DE)	10,440	Operational and modern : <i>Sénégalais, Algérien, Tunisien, Marocain, Hova, Somali</i> .

British Frigates	6 X River-class	9,000	Operational and modern: <i>La Découverte, L'Aventure, L'Escarmouche, La Surprise, Croix de Lorraine, Tonkinois.</i>
British Corvettes	7 X Flower-class	8,050	Operational but obsolete: <i>Lobelia, Aconit, Renoncule, Commandant Detroyat, Roselys, Commandant Drogou, Commandant d'Etienne d'Orves.</i>
British Submarines	3 X V-class	1,950	<i>Curie, Doris, Morse</i> : Operational and modern.
Italian Submarine	<i>Narval</i>	710	Operational but obsolete.
British Minesweepers	15 X 105-ft MMS 6 X 126-ft MMS	4,080	Operational and modern.
US Minesweepers	30 X YMS1-class	8,100	Operational and modern.
US Submarine Chasers	50 X SC497-class	5,000	Operational and modern.
US-built Patrol Craft	32 X PC451-class	12,000	Operational and modern.
Motor Launches and Motor Torpedo Boats	32 X various classes	1,920	All operational but a mix of modern and obsolete material.
Auxiliaries	120 X landing crafts and auxiliaries	43,600	Most operational but a mix of modern and obsolete equipment.
Totals	309	113,050	82% of the total number of hulls but only 32% of the total tonnage in 1945.

Sources:

Paul Auphan and Jacques Mordal, *La Marine française dans la Seconde Guerre mondiale* [The French Navy and the Second World War] 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: France-Empire, 1967), 607-638.

Philippe Masson, *La Marine française et la guerre, 1939-1945* [The French Navy and the War, 1939-1945] 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: Tallandier, 2000), 487-519.

John Jordan and Jean Moulin, *French Cruisers, 1922-1956* (Barnsley, UK: Seaforth Publishing, 2013), 206-211.

John Jordan and Jean Moulin, *French Destroyers: Torpilleurs d'Escadre & Contre-Torpilleurs, 1922-1956* (Barnsley, UK: Seaforth Publishing, 2015), 265-278.

Jacques Cornic, "Ships for Crews," *Warship International* 22, no. 3 (1985): 251-266.

PLANNING TO REBUILD ALONE

These numbers (374 ships, submarines and light vessels totalling 350,000 tons) were considerable given the trials suffered by the *Marine nationale* since 1939. A recent study has placed the French fleet fourth in size behind those of the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union at that time, the same rank held at the outset of the Second World War (behind the US, UK and Japan), with even more hulls than in 1939.⁵³⁹ But its overall tonnage counted for less than half of that making up the fleet six years earlier (350,000 tons vice 745,000), far behind the Anglo-Americans in its ability to mount large, autonomous naval operations at great distance from its homeports. The only units capable of undertaking such blue-water missions in the foreseeable future remained *Richelieu*, the four cruisers and the four heavy destroyers refitted in the United States, and the dozen or so modern escort vessels leased from the Americans and the

⁵³⁹ Rob Stuart, "Was the RCN ever the Third Largest Navy?" *Canadian Naval Review* 5, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 8-9. The author indicates that the Canadian fleet was slightly ahead of the French Navy in May 1945 but the rapid demobilization undertaken in the summer left the RCN behind the *Marine nationale* on VJ-day.

British. Even the submarines transferred to the Free French by Great Britain and those refitted in the Philadelphia Navy Yard verged on obsolescence already.

Domestically, the last two years of the war had put a dramatic end to the short-lived rise of the navy in French consciousness. Unlike the *Marine nationale*, the army had seemed to bear a very large part of responsibility for the humiliating Armistice, momentarily losing the respect that had endured through centuries of European warfare, regardless of victory or defeat on the battlefield.⁵⁴⁰ From 1940 to 1942, both Pétain and de Gaulle used their respective fleets to sustain political legitimacy and negotiate adroitly with the Allies and the Axis. But, after Operation *Torch*, the army came back to the fore. Soldiers from the *métropole* and across the empire fought and died in Tunisia, Italy, France and Germany – with more to follow in Indochina – while action at sea received less and less coverage in the papers. By 1945, de Gaulle was simply known as *le Général* while Juin, Leclerc, de Lattre de Tassigny and Koenig were familiar to all citizens of France, unlike senior leaders of the French navy.

The most well-known French admiral of the Second World War remained the collaborationist Darlan, with the rebellious Muselier but a faint memory, and the bland Lemonnier an obscure figure even while still in command. Despite the *épuration* (purge or purification) commenced by the Gaullists after the 1943 fusion, the navy remained populated by former Vichysts. They were the officers who would have to convince their government and their fellow citizens of the continued importance of sea power in the postwar era and the requirement to invest vast sums to regenerate a modern fleet.

Not that the navy's senior leadership had waited for the end of the hostilities to ponder these issues. The CCS may have decried that French admirals were using allied assistance to develop a postwar fleet but laying out building plans well into the future had become a central mandate for any naval leader since the turn of the century. Lemonnier did just that after the fusion of August 1943. While continuing to arm and modernise anything that could float and fight to make an immediate contribution to the Allied war effort, he rapidly built on the initial work of his predecessor (Michelier) and submitted in September a vision for a postwar navy worthy of a rejuvenated France with great power ambitions. It proposed a fleet structured to defend the *métropole* and the empire independently of the Allies, capable of operating autonomously around the world, built around several task forces – each pairing one fleet aircraft carrier and one battleship, and a suite of escorting cruisers, destroyers and replenishment vessels as practiced in the Pacific War. The navy would also require groups composed of smaller escort carriers and escorts vessels for the likely replay of the Battle of the Atlantic, as well as large, long-range attack submarines. Meanwhile, ongoing littoral operations in Europe and Asia showed the need for an eclectic mix of amphibious vessels, fast motor torpedo boats, smaller submarines and minesweepers.⁵⁴¹

⁵⁴⁰ For an introduction to the complexities of the relationship between France and her army to 1940, see the introduction chapter in Robert O. Paxton, *Parades and Politics at Vichy: The French Officer Corps under Marshall Pétain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 3-38; and Elizabeth Kier, "Culture and French Military Doctrine before World War II," in *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996), 186-215.

⁵⁴¹ Philippe Masson, "La marine française en 1946 [The French Navy in 1946]," *Revue d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale* 110 (April 1978): 81.

Lemonnier submitted this initial assessment to the French Committee of National Liberation in preparation for the plea Giraud and de Gaulle addressed jointly to the Allies on 18 September 1943.⁵⁴² Laying out ambitious demands for rebuilding their newly unified forces, it was answered with regards to naval matters through the promulgation CCS Directive 358 (Revised), as discussed in the previous chapter.⁵⁴³ Strategic and practical realities dramatically circumscribed Lemonnier's original vision. The French Committee's request only included the completion of *Jean Bart* and acquisition of a single aircraft carrier in terms of capital ships while the CCS reply eliminated any reference to such large vessels, focusing support on the regeneration of escorts and minesweepers in addition to a few cruisers and submarines. While France's naval planners did not abandon their original ambitions once they moved back into the old *Amirauté* on the *rue Royale* in Paris in September 1944, they also realized the need to plan for a humbler *flotte de transition*, a postwar transition fleet based on a more sober assessment of the conditions likely to prevail after the defeat of Germany.

The Navy General Staff submitted another study on 6 November 1944 to Minister of the Navy Louis Jacquinot. It highlighted four concerns that would severely impede France's capacity to regenerate a fleet worthy of a great power in the forthcoming years.⁵⁴⁴ First and foremost was the widespread destruction of naval dockyards and civilian shipyards in the *métropole* as a result of German sabotage and Allied bombings. Compounding this issue was the loss of several key industrial facilities and dispersal of workers through the war years, particularly those required for production of specialised marine equipment – heavy guns and munitions, main engines and propulsion train, advanced welding for submarine high-pressure joints, etc.⁵⁴⁵ Also lost was the industrial base and experience to produce modern aircraft necessary to renew an indigenous *Aéronavale*, both long-range shore-based patrol planes and those to embark in some future aircraft carrier. Last, but as concerning, was the absence of domestic expertise in the scientific and technical fields which had assumed so much importance in such a short time during the war at sea – radars and sonars, radio communications and encryption, fire-control and electronic warfare systems, etc.

Given these crippling factors, Lemonnier reported that France would not be able to build new warships domestically, other than small patrol craft and auxiliaries, before the end of 1947 at the earliest. The report assumed that the hostilities would be over by then and that allied

⁵⁴² Letter from the French Committee of National Liberation to the British prime minister, the American president and the Soviet general secretary, 18 September 1943, The National Archives (Kew, UK; hereafter TNA), CAB 121/401 *Re-equipment and Employment of French Forces – Volume I*.

⁵⁴³ CCS Directive 358 (Revised) *Policies Regarding French Naval Vessels*, 4 October 1943, TNA, CAB 121/401.

⁵⁴⁴ *Service historique de la Défense* [Defence Historical Service] (Vincennes, FR; hereafter *SHD*), 3 BB 2 SEC 114, folder labelled *Situation de la Flotte – Tonnage – De 1939 à 1950* [Fleet Status – Tonnage – From 1939 to 1950], *Rapport au Ministre: Programme d'une flotte de transition* [Report to the Minister: Transition Fleet Programme] dated 6 November 1944.

⁵⁴⁵ On the state of naval dockyards and civilian shipyards at the time, as well as the loss of key industrial infrastructures, one may consult a dire 1944 testimony of Navy Minister Jacquinot the *Commission de la Défense nationale* [National Defence Commission] in front of the *Assemblée consultative provisoire* [Provisional Consultative Assembly]. France, *Archives nationales* [National Archives] (Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, FR; hereafter *Archives nationales*), C//15275 – *Séances de la Commission de la Défense nationales 1944 – 1946* [Sessions of the National Defence Commission 1944 – 1946], Minutes of the session held on 29 November 1944.

assistance would come to an end with no transfer of British or American vessels other than those already approved by the CCS in 1944.⁵⁴⁶ Several *Marine nationale* units would reach their *limite d'âge* (end of service life) by the end of 1947, requiring their paying off and leaving a fleet of barely 100,000 tons made up of the *Richelieu*, five cruisers, four light cruisers, five submarines and a handful of frigates, corvettes and torpedo boats. The transition plan laid out very conservative ambitions in the short term: no new constructions in 1945 with resources focused on maintaining existing vessels and bringing into service the ships and submarines transferred by the Allies; the completion in 1946 of vessels abandoned in French yards in 1940 while still under construction (essentially five submarines, three destroyers, and a handful of torpedo boats); and in 1947 construction of the first light units ordered as part of this new transition fleet as well as completion of the battleship *Jean Bart*. Additionally, Lemonnier recommended adoption of British and American calibers for all new armaments in order to facilitate acquisition of munitions on the international market for the foreseeable future.

In contrast to such immediate restraint, the Chief of the Navy General Staff also proposed launching a series of studies forthwith so that plans for building up a much larger fleet – a *plan de base* – would be available when France's shipbuilding capacity was restored, after 1947 presumably. It called for four fleet aircraft carriers of 22,000 tons, all French construction or a mix that would include the acquisition of light or escort carriers from overseas. A minimum of two should nevertheless be built in France to develop a domestic capability and ensure inclusion of the latest lessons learned from the war. Heavy cruisers would be required at a rate of one new build per year while two light cruisers a year were warranted. The current mix of destroyers, frigates, corvettes and *avisos* would be replaced by only two classes, a large one of 1,500 tons and a smaller one of 300 tons, while only one type of submarine would remain at 750 tons. One large and one small escort, as well as one submarine, would be launched every six months to affect the timely replacement of existing platforms. The report concluded that such tremendous increase in production would require the specialization of shipyards, each category of vessels being allocated to a specific yard, and that production would continue at such rates until a peace treaty and the reassessment of international conditions allowed a better definition of the post-transition fleet.

The naval staff expanded on these ambitions in a follow-on report submitted by Admiral Lemonnier to Minister Jacquinot on 11 April 1945.⁵⁴⁷ This document provided a more fulsome picture, moving beyond the types and number of vessels that warranted building to take into consideration likely future missions for the *Marine nationale* as well as the personnel and the framework of bases required to support the fleet. It described the minimum navy tasks as the defence of the metropolitan territory and essential sea lines of communications (in particular that between the Europe and North Africa), policing the Empire, and contributing a credible force to an expected international security organisation. Such missions would require no less than two battleships, four fleet aircraft carriers and six escort carriers, twelve cruisers (six heavy and six light), thirty destroyers and thirty large submarines. This main force was to be augmented by patrol crafts and minesweepers as well as smaller coastal submarines; a training flotilla of large ships and auxiliaries; 30 squadrons of shore-based and carrier aircraft; and a sufficient number of

⁵⁴⁶ This report preceded the late approval by the CCS of the transfer of the escort carrier *Biter/Dixmude* in early 1945.

⁵⁴⁷ *SHD*, 3 BB 2 SEC 114, *Rapport au Ministre: Statut naval d'après-guerre* [Report to the Minister: Postwar Naval Statute], 11 April 1945.

tankers, maintenance ships, and auxiliary vessels. The fleet would reach 400,000 tons – 150,000 tons of which would be aircraft carriers – supported by a vast network of bases as follows:

- Main bases:
 - In the *métropole* and North Africa: Brest, Cherbourg, Toulon, Mers el-Kebir, and Bizerte
 - In the Empire: Dakar, Diego Suarez (Madagascar), Cam Ranh (Indochina)

- Secondary bases:
 - In the *métropole* and North Africa: Boulogne, Lorient, Ajaccio, Algiers, and Casablanca
 - In the Empire: Nouméa (New Caledonia), Fort-de-France (Martinique), Pointe-Noire (French Congo), Djibouti and Bora Bora (French Polynesia).

Planners also recommended continuing the prewar practice for the *Marine nationale* to exercise responsibility for local defence of its shore installations, thus the requirement for additional shore-based aircraft, artillery and troops. This plan would bring total personnel demand to 70,000 officers, sailors, naval aviators and *fusiliers-marins* (regulars and conscripts alike: 20,000 embarked in ships and submarines; 20,000 for the *Aéronavale*; 20,000 marine troops; and 10,000 shore personnel). This proposed number for the peacetime navy was ambitious given that the navy's wartime ranks peaked at 93,000 on 1 June 1945 (5,500 officers; 78,500 ratings; 1,100 women of the female service; 2,000 auxiliaries; and 5,900 support personnel).⁵⁴⁸ Lemonnier's shipbuilding plans seemed even more aggressive, aiming to launch 60,000 tons' worth of warships per year, double the output of French yards during the interwar.⁵⁴⁹

For the more immediate term, though, the surrender of Germany in May and the belief that France would dispatch a large expeditionary force to the Pacific led Minister Jacquinot to endorse the navy's proposal and more on 28 June 1945.⁵⁵⁰ In addition to the April plan, the draft legislation meant for submission to de Gaulle's Provisional Government included the immediate overhaul of the seaplane carrier *Commandant Teste*,⁵⁵¹ and the completion of the cruiser *De*

⁵⁴⁸ Philippe Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique: la marine française (1945-1958)* [Toward a Nuclear Navy: The French Navy (1945-1958)] (Paris, FR: LGDJ, 1997), 17.

⁵⁴⁹ As noted by Strub in *La renaissance de la marine française*, 29.

⁵⁵⁰ SHD, 3 BB 8 CSM 1 – Various Files *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* [Superior Council of the Navy] 1945-1946, *Projet d'ordonnance du 28 juin 1945 fixant la composition de la flotte au cours des années 1945-1946* [Draft Legislation Determining the Composition of the Fleet for the Years 1945-1946 dated 28 June 1945].

⁵⁵¹ Scuttled in November 1942, *Commandant Teste* was raised by the Italians in May 1943, captured by the Germans in September 1943, sunk by Allied bombers in 1944 and raised again by the French in February 1945. John Jordan, "Aircraft Transport *Commandant Teste*," in *Warship 2002-2003* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 2003), 36.

Grasse,⁵⁵² the destroyer *L'Aventurier*,⁵⁵³ submarines *La Créole*, *L'Africaine*, *L'Astrée*, *L'Artémis*, *L'Andromède*, *L'Antigone*,⁵⁵⁴ and the submarine minelayer *Corail* (all vessels which were under construction but not yet completed at the time of the Armistice). The draft proposed the purchase of three new destroyers from Great Britain as well as the acquisition from Germany of six surrendered Type-XXI submarines,⁵⁵⁵ six Narvik-class destroyers,⁵⁵⁶ and six motor torpedo boats as war reparations. Two large submarine tenders, one hospital ship and three cargo ships would be required to provide logistical support to the fleet expected to deploy to the Pacific in the coming months. Lastly, it included provisions for the immediate formation of four new *Aéronavale* squadrons and aimed to retain a total of 83,500 personnel in the service.

But even before Jacquinot could bring this proposal to Cabinet, dramatic developments that summer – namely the surrender of Japan and the end of military Lend-Lease – led him and Admiral Lemonnier to reconsider future plans. A new draft legislation dated 17 September 1945 differed considerably from the previous one, starting with the admission that efforts to define the structure of a long-term, post-transition fleet – another *plan de base* – would be in vain at this point given the prevailing uncertainty with regards to future technological developments, France's geostrategic commitments, and budget allocations in future years.⁵⁵⁷ The new draft limited itself to promulgating a plan for the year 1946, starting with much lowered ambitions, closer to the *flotte de transition* envisioned in November 1944 than more recent iterations, starting with personnel figures dropped to 72,000 (of which 58,000 would be embarked crews).

⁵⁵² *De Grasse* was the lead of a three-ship class of 8,000-ton cruisers ordered in 1937. *De Grasse* was laid down in the Lorient Naval Dockyard in August 1939, due to enter service in 1942. The German entered Lorient on 22 June 1940 when the ship was 28% complete. Jordan and Moulin, *French Cruisers*, 146. Orders for her sister-ships (*Châteaurenault* and *Guichen*) had been cancelled at the outset of the war before any work had begun.

⁵⁵³ *L'Aventurier* was the last of twelve 1,800-ton Le Hardi-class destroyers authorized in the years leading up to the Second World War. Eight were launched and saw service prior to the 1940 Armistice while *L'Aventurier*, authorized in 1938 to enter service in 1943, was still under construction in Bordeaux at the time. Jordan and Moulin, *French Destroyers*, 182; and Whitley, *Destroyers of World War Two*, 50-51.

⁵⁵⁴ These were all 900-ton coastal submarines of the *Aurore*-class, fifteen of them having been ordered in the late 1930s. *La Créole* was laid in a Le Havre shipyard in 1938, launched in emergency just ahead of the German onslaught in June 1940 while 78% completed, towed to Great Britain where she remained in reserve for the duration of the war until towed back to France in 1945. *L'Africaine* was captured by the Germans while still on the slipway in a yard up the Seine River from Le Havre, where worked continued under their supervision but she was not completed before the end of the war. *L'Artémis* (also in Le Havre), *L'Astrée* and *L'Andromède* (both in Nantes), and *L'Antigone* (in Chalon-sur-Saône, in the heart of France upriver from Lyon) followed the same pattern. Netmarine.net, "La saga des sous-marins de la classe *Aurore* [The Saga of the *Aurore*-class Submarines]," last modified 4 February 2013, <http://forum.netmarine.net/viewtopic.php?t=2915>.

⁵⁵⁵ The Type XXI submarines included the latest German developments and would greatly influence the evolution of submarines in the postwar era. See Olivier Huwart, *Sous-marins français: 1944-1954, la décennie du renouveau* [French Submarines: 1944-1954, the Decade of Renewal] (Rennes, FR: Marines éditions, 2003), 13-14; and Fritz Köhl and Eberhard Rössler, *The Type XXI U-Boat*, 2nd ed. (Annapolis, MD: US Naval Institute Press, 2002).

⁵⁵⁶ Various known as Narvik-class or Type 1936/Type 1936A/Type 1936A(Mob), fifteen were commissioned in Germany between 1940 and 1943. These fast and powerful vessels (2,500 tons) were closer to light cruisers than the typical destroyer, as were the French *Le Fantasque* class. Whitley, *Destroyers of World War Two*, 62-69.

⁵⁵⁷ SHD, 3 BB 8 CSM 1, *Rapport au Ministre: Plan d'armement pour 1946* [Report to the Minister: 1946 Armament Plan], 17 September 1945.

Navy missions were also reorganised, with that of re-establishing French sovereignty over Indochina ranking first and necessitating the reapportionment of ships to form a Far East Naval Force (*Richelieu*, one heavy cruiser, six cruisers and four colonial sloops); an Indochina flotilla (three destroyers, six frigates and three minesweepers), and the resources to put back into service the naval bases in Saigon and Cam Rhan; a transport force using all suitable warships in the absence of dedicated troop transports (initially four cruisers, the carriers *Béarn* and *Dixmude*, and the submarine tender *Jules Verne*); and a brigade of 2,400 *fusiliers-marins*.⁵⁵⁸ Forces tasked with missions closer to Europe (such as occupation duties in Germany and a flotilla in the *Levant*) would be minimal in view of that effort, with the exception of those required to continue minesweeping the French coasts with no less than 112 vessels dedicated to that undertaking, including several confiscated from Germany.

The only new construction to start in 1946 would be an aircraft carrier (possibly the first in a series) while work would continue at a slower pace on those existing builds as listed in the June draft, including the battleship *Jean Bart* and the cruiser *De Grasse*. Future studies only concerned a new light cruiser and a fast escort vessel. On the *Aéronavale* front, the naval staff limited their aspirations to ordering “from the Allies” (no nation mentioned) new fighters to equip one squadron destined to form the basis of a carrier wing, as well as spares and replacements as necessary for the six squadrons already equipped with American and British planes to continue operations for the next two years. Lastly, the document included an annex dealing with claims for additional German vessels (the six *Narvik*-class destroyers, six Type-23 torpedo boats, six Type-XXI submarines, fifteen minesweepers, two submarine tenders and three cargo ships). Another laid out views on permanent cessions from the Allies: two aircraft carriers, six destroyers, two troop transports, two tankers and one repair ship from the US, as well as four British destroyers. Neither annex commented on the likelihood of obtaining such transfers in the short term.

Thus, from Fall 1943 up to the end of 1945, French postwar naval rearmament plans underwent considerable reassessments, from rather grandiose in September 1943 to humble in November 1944 to even more ambitious in April and June 1945 to a pale shadow of themselves in September 1945. These developments did not occur in a vacuum. In addition to the developments on the international scene (the defeat of Germany, the sudden surrender of Japan, the abrupt cessation of Lend-Lease), Admiral Lemonnier and Navy Minister Jacquinot had to take into account directions from their government – the French Committee for National Liberation and then the *GPRF* – and answer the often-conflicting views expressed by a variety of representative sitting in the quasi-legislatures in place at the time.⁵⁵⁹ And debates over budget

⁵⁵⁸ The report stated that more than 100,000 troops had already been returned from Europe to Africa since the beginning of the 1945 using those same warships. De Gaulle originally envisioned the dispatch of a 70,000-troop contingent to Indochina. De Gaulle, *Le salut*, 228; and *Salvation*, 224.

⁵⁵⁹ The *Assemblée consultative provisoire* (Provisional Consultative Assembly) held sessions in Algiers from September 1943 to July 1944 and then in Paris from November 1944 to August 1945 as mandated jointly by de Gaulle and Giraud within the framework of the French Committee for National Liberation and then solely by de Gaulle’s Provisional Government of the French Republic. Although not elected, that body provided a forum to representatives from the Resistance, the territories rallied to the Allied cause and former Third Republic politicians to make their views known to the executive branch as a quasi-legislature. It was replaced by the *Assemblée constituante* (Constituent Assembly) after the first post-war election held

allocations would only grow more acrimonious through Fall 1945. As summed up most aptly by a contemporary observer, French leaders now had to resolve a fundamental quandary:

It was understood that all of our energies had to be dedicated to the liberation of the metropole and Indochina. This was the necessary price to regain our independence and our honour, and our territories overseas. But the surrender of Germany yesterday and that of Japan today changes this perspective. We must win the peace now. And without delay we must ask ourselves what policy must follow these victories: can we simultaneously rearm and rebuild?⁵⁶⁰

BUDGETING FOR PEACE

With Churchill committed to subsidizing *la France libre* since August 1940, as well as the Roosevelt administration taking on economic support to French North Africa in February 1941 and the rebuilding of Giraud's armed forces after November 1942, the matter of financing military rearmament had not weighed heavily on the Algiers Committee in 1943. This seeming *laissez faire* came to an abrupt end in Fall 1944 after de Gaulle's Provisional Government moved to Paris. Both British financial support and American Lend-Lease involved reimbursements at the end of the hostilities, two important contributors to the postwar debt expected to balloon as the extent of the damage inflicted on the country's civilian infrastructure became evident. In the more immediate term, government expenses for fiscal year 1945 were expected to reach a staggering 465 billion francs with revenues of barely 222 billion. Industrial output that year would amount to 38% of the 1938 level while production of wheat that summer was half that of 1939.⁵⁶¹ Six million inhabitants were homeless, 635,000 citizens (military and civilians) had perished, and 585,000 veterans from the three services and the Resistance returned home as invalids.⁵⁶² As in every war-torn country, inflation was rife and the black market thrived, bringing the matter of postwar finances to the forefront even as the Allies had yet to defeat the two remaining Axis powers.

Though seized with these issues, de Gaulle also remained dedicated to restoring France's *grandeur* for the longer-term and credible armed forces were central to that project: "To regain her status was not all. France must also be able to maintain it."⁵⁶³ The rebuilding of the *Armée d'Afrique* continued unabated to reach the objectives agreed to by Giraud and Roosevelt at Anfa in February 1943. Eight army divisions were fully equipped in Fall 1944 with three more being built up en route to an overall target of eleven. Overseeing this plan on the French side was General Alphonse Juin, appointed in August 1944 as Chief of the General National Defence Staff (*Chef de l'État-major général de la Défense nationale, CEMGDN*).⁵⁶⁴

on 21 October 1945. Marcel Morabito, *Histoire constitutionnelle de la France de 1789 à nos jours* [Constitutional History of France from 1789 to Today], 14th ed. (Paris, FR : LGDJ, 2016), 387-394.

⁵⁶⁰ René Courtin, "Réarmement ou reconstruction [Rearmament or Reconstruction]?" *Le Monde*, 18 August 1945, last accessed 9 January 2017, http://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1945/08/18/rearmement-ou-reconstruction_1860439_1819218.html?xtmc=rearmement_ou_reconstruction&xtcr=1.

⁵⁶¹ Strub in *La renaissance de la marine française*, 25. The fiscal year in France is the same as the calendar year.

⁵⁶² De Gaulle, *Le salut*, 235; and *Salvation*, 231.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, 7 and 12.

⁵⁶⁴ Digithèque MJP, "Ordonnance du 4 avril 1944 concernant l'organisation de la défense nationale [Order of 4 April 1944 Concerning the Organisation of National Defence,]" *Le Comité français de la libération*

Juin informed the CCS – through a letter to US Army General George C. Marshall on 7 September 1944 – that the Liberation had opened up a vast pool of recruitment in metropolitan France, which would allow building up beyond the Anfa targets. Marshall replied on 22 September that the CCS were committed to meeting Roosevelt’s pledge of eleven divisions but no more. Any additional US equipment transferred in the forthcoming months should be directed to replenish existing formations, namely those deployed on the front lines which were then experiencing grievous losses, rather than creating new ones.⁵⁶⁵ This stance launched an effort in Paris to look at French future military needs autonomously of the Allies, especially as de Gaulle grew concerned about undue foreign influence over the growth of France’s armed forces as he stated on 16 October 1944:

The exclusive control exercised today by the Americans on French rearmament, in terms of quantities and formations, is not acceptable. We need to take stock of our own possibilities and create a certain number of divisions and army corps, structured as required for our own needs... I am looking forward to receive recommendations from the National Defence Committee in order to commence laying out the foundations of new and enlarged units taking into account resources currently available and the production expected from national industries in the future.⁵⁶⁶

In order to guide the Committee’s study, de Gaulle outlined three fundamental missions for France’s armed forces in the postwar era: a) project a high-readiness force beyond the country’s borders in response to a specific crisis (*capacité d’intervention immédiate*); b) defend the *métropole* and overseas possessions (*sécurité du territoire*); and c) train the reserves (*instruction des réserves*) for the eventuality of another total and extended war in Europe.⁵⁶⁷ Juin submitted his first proposal to the *CDN* on 2 October 1944: an intervention force of twelve divisions; a “sovereignty force” of 150,000 troops for the Empire; a large metropolitan army of regulars and trained reservists which assumed a two-year commitment for conscripts; an air force of 2,500 planes; and a 500,000-ton navy. De Gaulle sent the team back at that same meeting, limiting the intervention force to ten divisions, the aviation to 2,000 planes and the navy to 300,000 tons, also stating that the nation would not support conscription beyond one year.⁵⁶⁸

nationale, last accessed 11 January 2017, <http://mjp.univ-perp.fr/france/co1943cfln2.htm#HC>; and Philippe Vial, "La genèse du poste de chef d’état-major des armées [Genesis of the Post of Chief of Staff of the Armies]," *Revue historique des Armées* 248 (2007): 32.

⁵⁶⁵ Vigneras, *Rearming the French*, 321.

⁵⁶⁶ Note from de Gaulle to *GPRF* Commissioner for War André Diethelm dated 16 October 1944, reproduced in full in de Gaulle, *Le salut*, 333. The divisions built up under the Anfa Plan were structured and equipped in accordance with US Army regulations and doctrine, which often sat uncomfortably with the French army experience and principles. The extent of the supply corps attached to each formation was particularly dismaying to the French.

⁵⁶⁷ Jean Delmas, "De Gaulle, la défense nationale et les forces armées, projets et réalités (1944-janvier 1946) [De Gaulle, National Defence and the Armed Forces, Ambitions and Realities (1944-January 1946)]," *Revue d’histoire de la Deuxième guerre mondiale* 110 (April 1978): 12-14. A fourth mission, support to international security (*participation à la sécurité internationale*), was added in early 1945 in preparation for joining the United Nations.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 15. The draft decree fixing the conscription period at one year was endorsed by the Committee on 8 March 1945. *Archives nationales*, F/60/3009 – *Dossiers des séances du Comité de défense nationale* 23 décembre 1944 –

There followed repeated exchanges between Juin's staff and the Committee, where de Gaulle continued to reject overly ambitious plans on the part of his military chiefs. Though an army man and committed to France's *grandeur*, the head of the provisional government had become cognizant of the fiscal burden that unrestrained military ambitions would impose on the nation. Prospects became especially dire when cancellation of Lend-Lease in August 1945 informed these debates. De Gaulle promulgated an additional constraint on 13 September 1945 whereby defense expenditures could amount to no more than one third of the state's overall outlays.⁵⁶⁹ With this momentous decision, the debate changed from what kind of armed forces France *ought to have* to what the country *could afford* as the government focused on finalising its budget for fiscal year 1946.

For Minister of Finance René Pleven, this policy meant a defence budget of 120 billion francs and yet the project submitted by Juin to the National Defence Committee on 4 December 1945 still required 157 billion.⁵⁷⁰ De Gaulle compromised, endorsing a defence budget of 137 billion after having shaved four billion from the air force proposal, five billion from the navy's, and eleven from the army's, accepting a *force d'intervention* of only seven divisions.⁵⁷¹ But this decision was not the end of the discussion as the approval of the budget by the legislature marked the final step in the unraveling relationship between de Gaulle and the newly elected Assembly.

As a result of the general election on 21 October 1945, the legislature was dominated by the Left with the Communists controlling 26% of the seats and the Socialists 23.8%. The Right (or the Centre-Right to be more accurate) was primarily represented by the *Mouvement républicain populaire* (MRP – the Popular Republican Movement), which stood at 24.9%.⁵⁷² The latter hardly considered themselves Gaullists, however, and *le Général* could not expect them to support his policies blindly if differences arose between the executive authority and the legislative body, a likely prospect at the time.

The conflict came to a head during a marathon debate on 31 December lasting into the night as the budget legislation had to be voted in time for the new fiscal year. Socialists tested the balance of power by seeking to impose further cuts to the defence estimates presented by the government, which de Gaulle refused to accept. Addressing the Assembly in person on 1 January 1946, *le Général* made an imperious plea and the budget bill passed later that day as proposed but by a narrow margin only. De Gaulle had succeeded in preserving the primacy of the executive for the time being, although this last altercation seemed to leave him broken. He resigned three weeks later denouncing the resurgence of self-serving party politics. The perceived authoritarian willingly abandoned power as the Assembly elected the Socialist Félix Gouin to the presidency of the Provisional Government of the French Republic on 26 January.⁵⁷³ Months of acrimonious

13 novembre 1946 [Files of the sessions of the National Defence Committee 23 December 1944 – 13 November 1946], minutes of the session held on 8 March 1945.

⁵⁶⁹ *Archives nationales*, F/60/3009, minutes of the National Defence Committee, 13 September 1945.

⁵⁷⁰ *Archives nationales*, F/60/3009, minutes of the National Defence Committee, 4 December 1945.

⁵⁷¹ Delmas, "De Gaulle, la défense nationale et les forces armées," 22.

⁵⁷² Morabito, *Histoire constitutionnelle de la France*, 391-393.

⁵⁷³ The same process whereby de Gaulle was confirmed in power by a vote of the Constituent Assembly in November 1945. The debate continues today whether *le Général* was abandoning power for good at the time or expected instead that a popular uprising or even a military coup would result in his recall *à la* 1958.

debates followed about the future political regime of France, her place in the world, and budget allocations, as the wartime Alliance faded away while conflict in Indochina and a budding cold war in Europe threatened the prospects of a long-lasting peace.

These uncertain circumstances left Admiral Lemonnier in a difficult position to uphold the interests of the *Marine nationale* and plan a credible fleet for the future. On the one hand, the navy had done well in combat given the challenging circumstance its officers and sailors had faced but the seeming commitment of a large majority of naval officers to Vichy – or at least to Darlan until November 1942 – had left the institution divided and bruised politically. The end of the wartime Alliance and the damage inflicted on its shore installations, as well as private shipyards and key industries in the *métropole*, left it unable to acquire new ships or submarines from former allies and incapable of generating new constructions of its own for the next several years. Geopolitical uncertainty on the international scene and tactical confusion with regards to the future of war left planners unable to identify a clear enemy and delineate the means to fight at sea in the new atomic era. Even under a political leader as dedicated to restoring France's *grandeur* as de Gaulle, Lemonnier had to scale down his grandiose plans for a fleet capable of upholding the country's ambitious return as a great power. Budget constraints tramped national ambition and strategic thought in shaping the future fleet, sacrificing what one believed France should have in favour of whatever the Ministry of Finance would grant the Minister of the Navy.

On the other hand, nobody lamented "what good will a navy be to us now?" Both Pétain and de Gaulle, each under dramatically different circumstances, had demonstrated the political value of a naval fleet for national leaders. Indochina and troubles in other corners of the Empire would soon demonstrate the contribution ships and sea-borne aircraft could make to fighting new forms of insurgencies overseas. The Iron Curtain descending over Europe would show that another foe much closer to home also warranted building up forces on land *and* at sea for containment and deterrence. A new association between the western powers would ensue, bringing renewed possibilities for naval cooperation and fleet growth.

Nevertheless, French admirals were bound to approach such collaborative opportunities warily. Wartime experience – both for the *FNFL* veterans who dealt directly with the British and those from the *Forces maritimes d'Afrique* in negotiating with the Combined Chiefs of Staff – revealed that support of allies extended only so far as the latter's interests dictated, even at the expense of the junior partner. This dichotomy came to the fore in the coming years as Lemonnier sought to continue leveraging Anglo-American support in developing a nascent *Aéronavale* while his political masters came close to surrendering France's naval autonomy in adopting a military policy shaped by one overriding objective: the defence of the Rhine.

For the principal's views on this episode, see de Gaulle, *Le salut*, 273-290; and *Salvation*, 267-284. For more objective assessments, see Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle*, 517-527; and Fenby, *The General*, 302-312.

CHAPTER SIX

LA DÉFENSE DU RHIN: OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS, AND UNCERTAINTIES

Late in the afternoon on Monday 3 March 1947, the aircraft carrier *Dixmude* arrived off Cap Saint-Jacques at the mouth of the Dong Nai River, the waterway leading from the South China Sea to Saigon, the capital of Cochinchina.⁵⁷⁴ Once the ship manoeuvred to the flying course (the heading and speed required to provide a relative wind suitable to launch aircraft), nine American-built Douglas SBD-5 Dauntless dive-bombers flew off the ship and rose into the setting sun. They headed to Tan Son Nhut, the airfield that served both as a civilian airport for the city and a French air force base, while *Dixmude* resumed course and transited up river to enter the Saigon naval base later in the evening. What seemed a routine evolution at the time – aircraft transferring to a base ashore so they could perform flying missions while the carrier was in port – actually marked a momentous event on that particular day. It was the first time in history that *Aéronavale* planes launched from a French carrier deployed in a theatre of war ready for combat operations. The squadrons of the older *Béarn* had flown from airfields in northern France while the carrier remained in the Mediterranean at the outset of the Second World War.⁵⁷⁵ Since then, *Béarn*, and *Dixmude* after 1945, had only served as troop and aircraft transports.

This pivotal event had to be qualified, though, as the *Marine nationale* continued struggling through the uncertainties of the postwar era. *Dixmude* was arriving from France but had been unable to conduct flying operations during the five-week voyage. Though meant to operate as a carrier once in theatre, whiffs of her humble transport days followed as authorities used this transit to transfer to Indochina twenty-nine air force planes (seventeen Morane-Saulnier *Criquet* for liaison and reconnaissance, and twelve British-made Spitfire fighters, all dismantled in crates), 360 tons of additional material, and thirty-six passengers, mostly personnel from the *Armée de l'air* (the French air force). The cargo blocked part of the flight deck so that the ship's dive-bombers could be launched but not recovered, thus staying on board until they flew off Cap Saint-Jacques. The air force badly needed such reinforcements as it only counted in the whole of Indochina three squadrons of fighter-bombers (two flying Spitfires, the other equipped with Mosquitos) and two transport groups (one operating C47s and the other Amiot *Toucans*). These limited assets became severely strained when the *Vietminh* resumed a violent guerilla campaign after negotiations with the French government failed in late 1946.

Dixmude returned to sea on 13 March for four weeks of reconnaissance and bombing missions in support of troops deployed in the coastal areas from Cochinchina to the Tonkin.⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁴ Jean Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches* [Aircraft Carriers *Dixmude* and *Arromanches*] (Nantes, FR: Marines Éditions, 1998), 68; and Jérôme Baroë, *Cent ans d'Aéronavale en France* [One Hundred Years of Naval Aviation in France] (Rennes, FR: Éditions Ouest-France, 2010), 42.

⁵⁷⁵ In October 1939, *Béarn*'s fighter squadron relocated to an airfield near Calais and two reconnaissance and bomber squadrons proceeded respectively to Boulogne and Berck (near Dieppe). They were still in those locations when the Germans invaded France in May 1940. Roger Vercken, *Histoire succincte de l'Aéronautique navale (1910-1998)* [A Brief History of the Naval Aviation (1910-1998)] (Paris, FR: ARDHAN, 1998), 64-65.

⁵⁷⁶ The *Aéronavale* also dispatched four PBY-5A Catalina flying boats from Morocco to Cochinchina in the fall of 1945. Soon joined by four more, they would remain in theatre until 1951, providing crucial support

This small but important effort – given the growing role of air power in fighting the insurgency – truly marked the renaissance of an operational *Aéronavale*. As put succinctly at the time by Admiral Robert Battet, Commander of the *Forces maritimes d'Extrême-Orient* (FMEO – Far East Maritime Forces): "A carrier-borne squadron has performed successfully in wartime conditions."⁵⁷⁷ By then, the British government had already agreed to transfer another aircraft carrier, HMS *Colossus*, to serve under the Tricolour as the *Arromanches*. A light fleet carrier of 13,500 tons, 700 feet in length and capable of embarking upward of fifty aircraft, this was a “real” carrier and the *Marine nationale* could again call itself a carrier navy, at least periodically based on the availability of the *Dixmude* and *Arromanches* between maintenance cycles.

This renaissance showed the opportunities, threats and uncertainties that the postwar years presented to the navy. Although France seemingly stood alone in the new peacetime era, French concerns with the potential for Germany to rise again soon merged with that of the former Anglo-American allies regarding a belligerent Soviet Union. The military alliance had come to an end but economic and material aid from the United States and Great Britain resumed in different forms. Nevertheless, naval planners on the *Rue Royale* struggled in trying to pay off obsolete vessels and build up a fleet worthy of a great power at the dawn of the nuclear age. They welcomed assistance from London and Washington but actively resisted their influence in shaping the future *Marine nationale* while working warily with a political class divided over national priorities. The moment of greatest danger for Vice-Admiral André Lemonnier, Chief of the Naval General Staff, would come in the fall of 1948. Minister of National Defence Paul Ramadier then proclaimed the primacy of the “defense of the Rhine,” sacrificing naval growth to build up an army and air force focused on France’s greatest vulnerability as a continental power, her land border. This dramatic turnaround stood in stark contrast to the promising symbolism of the rebirth of French naval air power launched just a few years earlier.

REBUILDING THE AÉRONAVALE

The French Navy stands accused today of having ignored the potential of naval aviation in the interwar period.⁵⁷⁸ Accurate to a point, in that the senior leadership of the *Marine nationale* was largely dominated by battleship admirals such as Darlan, this assessment does warrant scrutiny. Although obsolete by the beginning of the Second World War, the aircraft carrier *Béarn* and the seaplane carrier *Commandant d'Este*, had contributed to a mature if overly lengthy reflection within French naval circles on the use of air power at sea. Some proposed in 1935 the conversion of cruisers *Duquesne* and *Tourville* into aircraft carriers.⁵⁷⁹ This suggestion

in performing reconnaissance and surveillance missions in the littoral and over land, as well as transport tasks along the entire length of the Indochina coast. Baroë, *Cent ans d'Aéronavale*, 42; and Marine nationale, "Flottille 28F [28 F Squadron]," last modified 8 October 2014, <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/marine/operations/forces/aeronautique-navale/flottilles/flottille-28f>.

⁵⁷⁷ Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches*, 71.

⁵⁷⁸ For typical views, see Jean Meyer and Martin Acerra, *Histoire de la Marine française des origines à nos jours* [History of the French Navy from the Origins to Today] (Rennes, FR: Éditions Ouest-France, 1994), 349; and Étienne Taillemite, *Histoire ignorée de la Marine française* [Unknown History of the French Navy], 3rd ed. (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2010), 576-577.

⁵⁷⁹ John Jordan and Jean Moulin, *French Cruisers, 1922-1956* (Barnsley, UK: Seaforth Publishing, 2013), 53; and Alexandre Sheldon-Duplaix, *Histoire mondiale des porte-avions: Des origines à nos jours* [World History of the Aircraft Carriers: From the Origins to Today] (Paris, FR: Éditions Techniques pour l'Automobile et l'Industrie, 2006), 57.

did not come to pass as an even more ambitious initiative was endorsed by Admiral Darlan and approved by the National Assembly in 1938 to fund the construction of two carriers of 18,000 tons, capable of making 33 knots and embarking upwards of forty planes.

Work on the *Joffre* began in November 1938 and *Painlevé*'s keel was laid in May 1939.⁵⁸⁰ These two large carriers were meant to respond to Germany's ambition to build two such vessels of the Graf Zeppelin-class as announced in 1935 but the Armistice did not allow their completion. After the hostilities, Lemonnier, despite his limited experience with naval aviation, fully adhered to the policy of regenerating the fleet around task forces centered on the combination of aircraft carriers, battleships and a retinue of escort and replenishment vessels. He was supported in that vision by Rear-Admiral Henri Nomy, commander of the *Aéronavale* since June 1944.⁵⁸¹ The latter would play a pivotal role in the regeneration of French naval aviation in these early years and shaping the larger Cold War navy, serving as Chief of the Naval General Staff from 1951 to 1960.

Nomy had missed the Great War when he graduated from the *École navale* in 1918 but manifested an early interest in flying. He obtained his wings in 1924 and qualified as a fighter pilot in 1927 before serving with the Air Ministry in the early 1930s. Followed several years of service with large seaplanes, conducting long-range cruises in the Baltic and the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as one of the first crossings of the South Atlantic in 1934. He eventually rose to command the seaplane squadron embarked in *Commandant d'Este* in 1936 and then the naval air station in Berck, on the Channel, where one of *Béarn*'s dive-bomber squadrons was relocated at the outset of the Second World War. Directly leading a fighting retreat on land ahead of approaching columns of German *panzers* in June 1940, Nomy was captured in Boulogne and remained a prisoner of war until his liberation a year later in the wake of the Paris Protocols. Darlan appointed him commander of the Port Lyautey naval station in Morocco but Nomy missed the North African landings as his faith in the Vichy regime had faltered already. Having resigned from his command and returned to the *métropole* in June 1942, he went into dissidence and joined the Resistance until he rallied North Africa in August 1943 and resumed his duties with the newly reunited *Aéronavale*.

Nomy managed the wartime rebuilding of French naval aviation with the aid of the Allies and contributed studies in support of Lemonnier's planning for a postwar fleet, culminating with a report submitted to the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* (CSM, Superior Council of the Navy) on 27 June 1945.⁵⁸² The study depicted the current state of the *Aéronavale* in bleak terms: eight shore-based squadrons assembling barely one hundred obsolete and heteroclit planes of French, British and American origin, manned by 6,400 personnel, with only two aircraft transports –

⁵⁸⁰ *Joffre* had been completed to 28% by the time France fell but *Painlevé* was but a naked keel and erect steel frames in June 1940. Sheldon-Duplaix, *Histoire mondiale des porte-avions*, 57-58; and Philippe Quérel, "L'échec du PA-28, premier porte-avions française de l'après-guerre [The Failure of PA-28, the First Postwar French Aircraft Carrier]," *Institut de Stratégie comparée*, last accessed 23 November 2012, http://www.institut-strategie.fr/pub_mo3_Querel.html.

⁵⁸¹ Taillemite, *Dictionnaire des marins français*, 392-393; and Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 20.

⁵⁸² *Service historique de la Défense* [Defence Historical Service] (Vincennes, FR; hereafter *SHD*), 3 BB 8 CSM 1 – Various Files *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* [Superior Council of the Navy] 1945-1946, folder labelled *Reconstitution des forces aéronavales* [Reconstitution of the Naval Air Forces], 27 June 1944. See also Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française*, 32-33.

Béarn and *Dixmude*. It acknowledged the objective endorsed previously by the *Comité de Défense nationale* (CDN – National Defence Committee) to acquire up to four hundred aircraft by 1950 and proposed a two-step plan given the paucity of French resources at the time: as a stopgap measure, purchase or lease modern aircraft from overseas in 1946-1947 and then complete the growth to four hundred planes using domestic production from 1948 to 1950.

Nomy added that, even refitted as aircraft carriers, *Béarn*, *Commandant Teste* and *Dixmude*, could only operate one or two squadrons each in that role and the ships' slow speed limited their operational effectiveness. Given that France was unlikely to gather the means to build a fleet carrier before 1950, he proposed that existing large, fast "gun carriers" be converted as quickly as possible: *Jean Bart*, to embark three squadrons, as well as the cruisers *Duquesne* and *Tourville* with one squadron each (referring back to the 1935 proposal). This would provide the *Marine nationale* with three fast carriers capable of deploying as elements of a task force while the older three would remain in the *métropole* and North African waters for training and convoy escorts. Minister Jacquinot endorsed the outline of a four hundred-plane *Aéronavale* on 5 July 1945.⁵⁸³ Embarked aviation would be divided in four squadrons of fighters and four squadrons of torpedo-bombers (also capable of surveillance and reconnaissance) as well as five more squadrons based ashore but equipped with similar aircraft in order to provide training, rotation between deployments, replacements and spares. These thirteen formations would be complemented by five squadrons of shore-based, long-range patrol planes and two transport units, for a total of twenty squadrons.

Ship-wise, however, economic realities in the latter half of 1945 and the acceptance of a much humbler *flotte de transition* for 1946 considerably affected the renewal of an operational seagoing aviation. Plans to refit *Commandant Teste*, *Duquesne* and *Tourville* as aircraft carriers were quickly abandoned while the overriding need to dispatch troops and equipment to Indochina meant that *Béarn* and *Dixmude* would continue to operate in the transport role without modernisation for some time.⁵⁸⁴ As for *Jean Bart*, the debate grew increasingly bitter within the highest ranks of the *Marine nationale* whether the ship should be completed as a gun or an aircraft carrier. The CSM reviewed plans for both options but the latter would necessitate nearly as much time and money as that required to build a new carrier while only providing a limited capability (forty aircraft ready for operations with fourteen more slung from the hangar deck head), likely outdated by the time the ship entered service. Minister Jacquinot endorsed on 21 September 1945 the recommendation of Admiral Lemonnier to complete *Jean Bart* as a battleship, though dissenting voices would continue to be heard in the following months.⁵⁸⁵ A typical statement was that proffered at the time by Rear-Admiral Pierre Barjot, another veteran of the *Aéronavale*, then serving with the *État-major général de la Défense nationale* (EMGDN, the National Defence General Staff):

⁵⁸³ SHD, 3 BB 8 CMS 1 – Various Records of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* [Superior Council of the Navy] 1945-1946, Minutes of the Superior Council of the Navy held on 5 July 1945.

⁵⁸⁴ Quérel, "L'échec du PA-28"; and Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, "Marine et innovation: La Marine française face au porte-avions après la Seconde Guerre mondiale [Navy and Innovation: The French Navy and the Aircraft Carrier after the Second World War]," *Guerre mondiale et conflits contemporains* 238 (2010): 122.

⁵⁸⁵ SHD, 3 BB 8 CMS 1 – Minutes of the Superior Council of the Navy held on 21 September 1945.

It was surprising in 1945 to see the Naval General Staff supporting the cause of the battleship against that of the aircraft carrier. This attitude, which dominated the discussions of 21 September 1945, clearly reveals that despite the experience of the war the mythology surrounding the big guns continues to rule our naval thinking.⁵⁸⁶

Barjot was disingenuous in presenting a one-sided view of the minister's decision. While *Aéronavale* proponents had argued for converting *Jean Bart* into an aircraft carrier – Barjot had authored a study to that effect back in Fall 1943⁵⁸⁷ – her completion as a battleship did not equate to a slavish commitment to the gun carrier. Indeed, Lemonnier had also ordered that several other options be explored, ranging from completion of the work initiated before the war on the existing hull of the *Joffre*, to building a new aircraft carrier using those same prewar plans, to starting a new version from scratch using updated plans that would integrate the latest technologies and the lessons from the previous conflict.⁵⁸⁸ The first two were quickly abandoned on practical grounds; the poor state of *Joffre*'s hull and other building material left abandoned in the open air for years reflected that of the ship's drawings, with many key documents lots or destroyed during the hostilities. However, work continued on developing new prototypes, three of which were presented to the CSM on 2 October 1945: PA-28 (light carrier of 15,700 tons for 3B francs); PA-29 (22,500 tons for 4,5B francs); and PA-27 (26,130 tons for 5B francs).⁵⁸⁹

All three would be capable of a maximum speed of 32 knots and embarking a similar number of aircraft. The main difference in price and weight would be found in the level of protection afforded to the ships (in terms of an armoured flight deck and anti-air gunnery) based on the lessons from the Pacific War. Most concerning for Louis-Lazare Kahn, the naval architect heading the *Direction centrale des constructions et armes navales* (DCCAN, Central Directorate of Constructions and Naval Armaments, tasked with overseeing the design and constructions of all new vessels for the *Marine nationale*) was the inability of French shipyards to deliver a first platform until 1950 at the earliest.⁵⁹⁰ Given such delay, the CSM settled on a recommendation to initiate the construction of two light aircraft carriers of the cheaper PA-28 variant as soon as possible while seeking the acquisition of one or two existing platforms from overseas through outright purchase or long-term lease in order to fill the more immediate gap. Minister Jacquinet endorsed these recommendations on 15 October 1945 and Admiral Nomy took the lead in the search for a carrier, an effort which would merge with his ongoing initiative to acquire new aircraft from France's former allies.⁵⁹¹ This new mission took in a context dramatically different than before as the wartime mechanisms for military aid no longer existed in the new peacetime era.

⁵⁸⁶ Cited in John Jordan and Robert Dumas, *French Battleships: 1922-1956* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 210, quoting the minutes of the EMGDN meeting held on 24 September 1945. The reader will recall Barjot as the lone French naval officer present at the meeting of the Vichy North African dissidents with US Army General Clarke at Cherchell, Algeria in October 1942.

⁵⁸⁷ SHD, 3 BB 8 CSM 1 – Folder labelled *Achèvement du "Jean Bart"* [Completion of *Jean Bart*], note from Commander Barjot to the Chief of the Naval General Staff, 10 September 1943.

⁵⁸⁸ Quérel, "L'échec du PA-28;" and Coutau-Bégarie, "Marine et innovation," 122-123.

⁵⁸⁹ SHD, 3 BB 8 CMS 1 – Minutes of the Superior Council of the Navy held on 2 October 1945.

⁵⁹⁰ For an introduction to Kahn, see Taillemite, *Dictionnaire des marins français*, 272. His son Pierre Kahn provided a more in-depth portrait in *Essai sur les méthodes de pensée et d'action de l'ingénieur général du Génie maritime Louis Kahn* [An Essay on the Processes of Thought and Action of Naval Architect Louis Kahn] (Paris, FR: Académie de marine, 1973), *passim*.

⁵⁹¹ SHD, 3 BB 8 CMS 1 – Minutes of the Superior Council of the Navy held on 15 October 1945.

MILITARY AID IN PEACETIME

France did not quite stand alone after the end of the Second World War but the end of military Lend-Lease in August 1945 left her yearning for assistance in rebuilding her armed forces. De Gaulle had secured a position of prominence at the United Nations with a permanent seat on the Security Council but the organisation's charter did not provide channels for signatories to assist another member in growing its military strength. Visiting Moscow in December 1944, *le Général* had signed the Franco-Soviet Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Aid, turning to the Soviets as he doubted the Anglo-American commitment to containing Germany in the future, which he expected to re-emerge as a perennial threat to France.⁵⁹² The bilateral agreement remained in effect in the immediate postwar period but it did not address the matter of military aid and French leaders did not consider the Soviet Union a viable source of modern armament in any case. This left the United States and Great Britain as the most likely sources of assistance to a France struggling to rebuild her economy while restoring her military power.

The United States quickly terminated Lend-Lease in 1945 but did not quite abandon France and the other European nations struggling through the cold winter months of 1946. Civilian and humanitarian assistance continued until the next summer and Washington accepted fairly reasonable terms in negotiating war debt repayments. By that point, the dire state of the European economies caused the administration of President Harry S. Truman to focus on economic assistance, not military means, to ensure continued peace: "Believing that economic rivalries led to war, American foreign-policy planning for the postwar period had sought both security and prosperity through economic instruments."⁵⁹³

The viability of the Bretton Woods system of monetary management, agreed to in July 1944, rested on integration of functioning economies after the war. This assessment led the United States to agree to important peacetime money transfers to several Western European countries, including \$650 million to France in May 1946. Though badly needed, the loan fell well-short of French hopes, coming as it did in the wake of the \$3.5 billion accorded to Great Britain in January and the strict conditions attached to Washington's pledge of assistance.⁵⁹⁴ The funds had to be used to buy materials and equipment in the United States that could only be carried to the *métropole* in American ships while their distribution would be monitored by US control agents based in France. The accord also included several clauses promoting free market

⁵⁹²See University of Hawaii eVols, "The Franco-Soviet Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Aid," last accessed 17 February 2017, <https://evols.library.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/10524/32777/1/17-Volume8.pdf> for an English version of the treaty. De Gaulle provided an extensive account of his visit to Moscow and his views on the treaty in his *Mémoires de guerre* – Volume 3 – *Le salut, 1944-1946* [War Memoirs – Volume 3 – Salvation, 1944-1946] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1959), 54-79; and *War Memoirs* – Volume 3 – *Salvation, 1944-1946*, translated by Richard Howard (London, UK: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1960), 58-82. For an excellent analysis by a French author, see Georges-Henri Soutou, "General de Gaulle and the Soviet Union, 1943-5: Ideology or European Equilibrium," in *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-53* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 310-333.

⁵⁹³ John S. Hill, "American Efforts to Aid French Reconstruction between Lend-Lease and the Marshall Plan," *Journal of Modern History* 64 (September 1992): 502.

⁵⁹⁴ On the US loan to Great Britain, see Darden Callaway, "The Anglo-American Loan of 1946: U.S. Economic Opportunism and the Start of the Cold War" (master's thesis, Davidson College, 2014), last accessed 17 February 2017,

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.694.6681&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

practices and put restraints on the traditional French approach of economic *dirigisme*, constraining France's freedom of action in disbursing such aid.⁵⁹⁵ Just as bad for France's armed forces, the agreement did not apply to military acquisitions as it was concerned with civilian reconstruction and industrial revitalization.

This development seemed to eliminate the United States as a source of support to regenerate the French *Aéronavale*, at least in the short term. Rear-Admiral Nomy visited Great Britain several times through the winter of 1945-1946 to negotiate transfer of aircraft carriers, warplanes and ancillary equipment. A first round of discussions took place in London from 30 October to 13 November 1945, leading to purchase by France of the material required to complete the refit of *Dixmude* into an operational aircraft carrier.⁵⁹⁶ The transaction – for 12,800 British pounds – provided mainly for radars, advanced communication gear and spares, although operational priorities delayed the ship's modernization until Fall 1946. At the same time, Nomy secured another contract worth £450,000 to procure twenty-four Seafire fighters, twelve Sunderland patrol planes and twenty Wellington bombers (as well as an appropriate supply of spare parts and ammunition, and another twenty Spitfires, twenty Wellingtons and twenty-six Anson multi-role aircraft, all older versions configured for training).⁵⁹⁷ Nomy also obtained that a first group of eight *Aéronavale* officers take carrier pilot and deck landing officer training at the Fleet Air Arm school located in Easthaven, Scotland. Less successful were discussions concerning the acquisition of an aircraft carrier.

The talks were positive initially, including an inspection visit to the escort carrier *Pretoria Castle*, a converted ocean liner which was in much better shape than HMS *Biter* (the future *Dixmude*) when the French acquired the latter. The deal fell through, however, when the civilian owners of the former claimed the vessel back at the end of 1945.⁵⁹⁸ This setback turned into a blessing when Nomy returned to London in January 1946 and quickly negotiated the five-year lease of a modern light aircraft carrier.⁵⁹⁹ Not quite in the same league as the fleet carrier long sought by the French admiralty, HMS *Colossus* was nevertheless a step clearly above the converted *Biter* and *Pretoria Castle*.

Launched in September 1943 as the lead ship of her class, the light carrier included the early lessons learned by the British in the Mediterranean and the Americans in the Pacific. *Colossus* could sustain a maximum speed of 25 knots and embark two squadrons of Seafires and one squadron of Dauntless dive-bombers. Following service with the British Pacific Fleet, the vessel refitted in South Africa and returned to Portsmouth in July 1946. Barely two weeks later, on 6 August, a French crew took possession and hoisted the Tricolour at the stern, soon setting

⁵⁹⁵ Negotiations for the loan took place in parallel to those concerned with finalizing France's Lend-Lease repayment. Hill, "American Efforts to Aid French Reconstruction," 520-522; and Gérard Bossuat, *Les aides américaines économiques et militaires à la France (1938-1960): une nouvelle image des rapports de puissance* [American Economic and Military Assistance to France (1938-1960): A New Portrait of the Power Relationships] (Paris, FR: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 2001), last accessed 2 February 2017, <http://books.openedition.org/igpde/2023>.

⁵⁹⁶ Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches*, 63; and Coutau-Bégarie, "Marine et innovation," 123.

⁵⁹⁷ Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches*, 44; and Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 57-58.

⁵⁹⁸ Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches*, 44.

⁵⁹⁹ *Idem*; and Coutau-Bégarie, "Marine et innovation," 123.

sail for France, first stopping in Cherbourg and eventually making their way to Toulon, *Colossus*' newly assigned homeport.⁶⁰⁰ Thanks to Great Britain, France had acquired her first purpose-built aircraft carrier since the launch of the *Béarn* in 1928 but what was behind such generosity towards the French on the part of "perfidious Albion" in these early days of the postwar era?

Several contentious issues strained relations between London and Paris at the time. Be it under Prime Minister Churchill or his successor Clement Attlee after July 1945, Whitehall officials fretted over the ambitions of French politicians in the Levant, the harsh treatment they wished to impose on defeated Germany, as well as the presence of influential Communists in the Provisional Government of France and early Fourth Republic cabinets. Nevertheless, British and French leaders also shared common concerns in the postwar era. They ranged from disquiet over the looming withdrawal of American military forces from continental Europe to maintaining control over their respective empires despite growing pressure at the United Nations to accept some form of Rooseveltian trusteeship over their colonies on the way to eventual independence.⁶⁰¹ And defence industries in Great Britain, struggling with the sudden halt of domestic military orders, would obviously profit from continued sales to France while the Admiralty viewed the renewed adoption of RN equipment, standards and practices as conducive to greater interoperability (and influence) with her sister navy.⁶⁰²

Goodwill continued in the following months with sixty-three *Aéronavale* pilots and sixty radar operators and technicians attending training in Great Britain in 1946. That same year, the Royal Air Force transferred fifteen Spitfires from a squadron crewed by Polish nationals but recently dissolved in Italy.⁶⁰³ Although training and that last transaction came for free, as did the initial two years of the five-year lease of the aircraft carrier *Colossus*, continued support to France's navy proved attractive to the British government. The other commitments were conducted through cash transactions, not long-term loans or previous wartime mechanisms that postponed payment to some future date. From the French point of view however, these arrangements – as valuable as they were given the paucity of armament industries in France at the time – also meant that an inordinate portion of the naval budget went to growing the *Aéronavale*. Such a commitment would severely hamper Admiral Lemonnier's ability to rejuvenate a surface fleet worthy of the vision outlined in earlier building plans, especially given the dramatic developments then affecting French domestic politics.

⁶⁰⁰ *Colossus* would only be formally renamed *Arromanches* in March 1947. On the ship's service with the RN and her early months under the French flag, see Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches*, 117-124; and Uboat.net, "HMS Colossus," last accessed 19 February 2017, <http://www.uboot.net/allies/warships/ship/3237.html>.

⁶⁰¹ For an introduction to this complex relationship, see Anne Deighton, "Entente Neo-Coloniale: Ernest Bevin and the Proposals for an Anglo-French Third World Power, 1945-1949," in *Anglo-French Relations since the Late Eighteenth Century* (London, UK: Routledge, 2008): 201-218. For French views, see the proceedings of the academic conference held in Paris in 1989 published in René Girault (ed.) "La mésentente cordiale: les relations franco-britanniques, 1945-1957 [Cordial Misunderstanding: Franco-British Relations, 1945-1957]" in *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* 18 (1990): *passim*.

⁶⁰² Nomy's mission to London came on the heels of a similar visit by French air force officials in September 1945 who negotiated the acquisition of enough airplanes, spares and ammunition to furnish ten squadrons of fighters, bombers and transports for £3,000,000. TNA, ADM 1/17529 – *Seafire Aircraft and Equipment for the French Naval Air Service*, letter from Mr. J.G. Gibson (British Air Ministry) to Mr. D.F.C. Blunt (British Treasury), dated 10 November 1945.

⁶⁰³ Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 58.

SHRINKING FLEET AND POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY

The years 1946 and 1947 presented the Chief of the Naval General Staff with particularly complex circumstances on the political front. De Gaulle had left the Provisional Government of France halfway through the Constitutional Assembly's efforts towards proposing a new constitution to the French people. Elected representatives endorsed a first draft on 19 April 1946 but the project was rejected in the national referendum held on 5 May, virulently derided by de Gaulle and others for instituting a powerful unicameral legislature and a weak executive branch. The assembly was dissolved and another convened following the national election of 2 June, which gave more seats to parties from the Right at the expense of the Left. Conservative Georges Bidault replaced socialist Félix Gouin at the head of the Provisional Government but he still had to retain Communists in his cabinet under a formula that would become known as *tripartisme*.⁶⁰⁴ Another constitutional draft included some changes propounded by the Gaullists (a bicameral legislature) but rejected others (a powerful presidency) and was adopted in the assembly on 29 September, approved through popular referendum on 13 October, and formally enacted on 27 October 1946.⁶⁰⁵

Followed another round of national election on 11 November to populate the first postwar National Assembly and establish a new *Conseil de la République* (a weakened consultative Senate), the two chambers of the Fourth Republic's Parliament. Socialist Léon Blum formed the last provisional governments to manage the transition to the new constitutional regime. Parliament elected socialist Vincent Auriol on 16 January 1947 to the post of *Président de la République française* (President of the French Republic) for a mandate of seven years. Another socialist, Paul Ramadier, assumed executive power on 22 January as the *Président du Conseil des ministres français*, President of the Council of French Ministers, a prime minister appointed by the President but responsible to the National Assembly, which retained the right of veto over the composition of the Cabinet.

Along with upheavals that kept the political class engaged in a continuous cycle of elections and referenda, Lemonnier had to contend with the evolving structure bequeathed by de Gaulle for the control of the armed forces. *Le Général* had maintained a simple framework whereby the *Président du gouvernement* (de Gaulle, who also appointed himself *Ministre de la Défense nationale*) acted as both political and military Commander-in-Chief but the head of each military service was responsible for administrative matters to a civilian minister (with Lemonnier reporting to *Ministre de la Marine* Louis Jacquinot, while the *Ministre de la Guerre* and the *Ministre de l'Air* oversaw the other branches). Once confirmed in power by the Assembly in November 1945, de Gaulle introduced a cabinet where he retained the role of Minister for

⁶⁰⁴ The label *tripartisme* refers to the coalition mode of government first instituted in France under de Gaulle and continued in the early years of the Fourth Republic. It provided for the three main parties – the *Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière* (SFIO, the Socialists), the *Parti communiste français* (PCF, the Communists) and the *Mouvement républicain populaire* (MRP from the Centre-Right) – to make up the government after each election by granting cabinet seats in proportion to their electoral results.

⁶⁰⁵ For an objective primer on the tortuous instauration of the Fourth Republic as discussed in this paragraph and the next, see Assemblée nationale, "Le Gouvernement provisoire et la Quatrième République (1944-1958) [The Provisional Government and the Fourth Republic (1944-1958)]," last accessed 5 March 2017, http://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/decouvrir-l-assemblee/histoire/histoire-de-l-assemblee-nationale/le-gouvernement-provisoire-et-la-quatrieme-republique-1944-1958#node_2228.

National Defence but eliminated the three service ministers, replacing them with a single *Ministre des Armées* (Minister for the Armies, Edmond Michelet from the Center-Right, responsible for the administration of the services) and a *Ministre de l'Armement* (Minister for Armament), the communist Charles Tillon, responsible for the procurement of military material for the three branches. Having already instituted greater unity in the conduct of military affairs through creation of the *État-major général de la Défense nationale*, this last initiative completed de Gaulle's vision by imposing a seeming harmony in the political direction of the armed forces.⁶⁰⁶

De Gaulle formally cemented this framework through promulgation of a decree on 4 January 1946, mere weeks before resigning, but his successors did not apply it with quite the same Gaullian spirit.⁶⁰⁷ In accordance with the new constitution, the President of the Republic took the title of Commander-in-Chief although, as most functions assigned to the head of state, it remained symbolic. The *Président du Conseil* – the head of government, referred to as prime minister hereafter for simplicity – assumed responsibility for the direction of the armed forces and the coordination of national defence.⁶⁰⁸ Léon Blum, as leader of the last Provisional Government, delegated the post of *Ministre de la Défense nationale* to another member of the cabinet while the ministers for the Armies and that of Armament were demoted to the rank of “parliamentary secretaries of state” (*Sous-secrétaire d'État aux Armées* and *Sous-secrétaire d'État à l'Armement*). Faced with renewed demands from the Communists clamouring for more influential ministries in forming the Fourth Republic's first cabinet, Ramadier assigned them the post of Minister for National Defence in January 1947, although with great reluctance.

Socialists and Communists were political competitors in France, both seeking to exploit left-leaning tendencies in the electorate. The prime minister tried to minimize the influence of the *Parti communiste français* (PCF – French Communist Party) in cabinet while maintaining its support in the National Assembly. In that, parties of the Centre-Right – which support he also needed – held him to close account. As importantly, Ramadier had to reassure his interlocutors in Washington and London that France was not at risk of falling squarely within Moscow's orbit, a challenge as the PCF actively and openly supported Stalinist views in the postwar years. Taking most responsibilities away from the *Ministre de la Défense nationale*, the prime minister abolished the two *sous-secrétariats* (*Armées* and *Armement*) and reinstated more powerful ministers for the army (Paul Coste-Floret from the Right), the air force (the centrist André Maroselli), and the navy (with the return of the Gaullist Louis Jacquinot) to “contain” the defence minister.⁶⁰⁹ This latest development was certainly welcome at the *Rue Royale*.

⁶⁰⁶ Philippe Vial, "La genèse du poste de chef d'état-major des armées [Genesis of the Post of Chief of Staff of the Armies]," *Revue historique des Armées* 248 (2007): 32-33; and Bernard Chantebout, "Le partage des responsabilités de la défense entre politiques et militaires de 1945 à 1962 [The Demarcation of Responsibilities for Defence between Politicians and Soldiers from 1945 to 1962]," in *Militaires en République, 1870-1962: Les officiers, le pouvoir et la vie publique en France* [Soldiers in the Republic, 1870-1962: Officers, Power and Public Life in France] (Paris, FR: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1999), 86-87.

⁶⁰⁷ Gouvernement provisoire de la République française, "Décret no 46-34 du 4 janvier 1946 portant organisation de la défense nationale [Decree no. 46-34 dated 4 January 1946 on the Organisation of National Defence]," *Journal officiel de la République française* (13 janvier 1946): 322-323.

⁶⁰⁸ Chantebout, "Le partage des responsabilités de la défense," 83.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

A known figure familiar with naval affairs, Louis Jacquinot quickly joined the fight to assist Admiral Lemonnier with the frustrating tasks of managing the shrinking fleet and disbursing a dwindling budget. In a December 1946 note addressed to the *Ministère des Armées*, the Naval General Staff provided a summary of French and foreign-built vessels which had been condemned or mothballed as a result of obsolescence, wartime damage and/or prohibitive routine maintenance costs: three former Vichy battleships, one aircraft transport (*Commandant Teste*), two cruisers, fourteen destroyers, twelve sloops (*avisos*), one British corvette, twenty-seven submarine chasers, eight torpedo boats, eighteen motor torpedo boats, ten armed trawlers/gun boats/patrol craft, four miscellaneous support vessels (tankers, tenders) and no less than twenty-five submarines.⁶¹⁰ A similar decrease took place in terms of personnel with a precipitated decline from the June 1945 peak of 93,000 officers and sailors past the postwar objective of 72,000 proposed by Lemonnier in September 1945 to the ceiling of 45,000 imposed by the Provisional Government in January 1946.

Admittedly, this last figure was alleviated by a temporary reprieve of 5,000 additional sailors assigned to minesweeping duties in the *métropole* and North African waters as well as 5,000 more serving with the Indochina fleet, the latter paid by the *ministère de la France d'outre-mer* (Ministry of Overseas France, the former department for the colonies). This situation left the *Marine nationale* with a temporary strength of 55,000 personnel pending the completion of these last two tasks, as stated by Minister for the Armies Edmond Michelet in front of the Assembly's National Defence Commission in February 1946.⁶¹¹

All postwar navies faced dramatic retrenchment in terms of hulls and personnel but what worried French admirals was the shrinking share of naval appropriations in the overall national defence budget. These figures reached a low of 14% in 1946, in contrast to the interwar period when it hovered at 20-25%. The navy minister's ability to fund new constructions or refit existing vessels, while subsidizing the rejuvenation of the *Aéronavale* through direct purchases overseas, was severely constrained.⁶¹² Although the battleship *Jean Bart* arrived in Brest on 12 February 1946 to commence an extensive period of repair (addressing the damages inflicted by the Allies during the war) and to complete her armament as a modern "... task force flagship, heavy AA [anti-air] vessel, and fire-support ship for shore bombardment," work would only progress at a glacial pace through the following years due to the limited funding allocated to that project.⁶¹³ Efforts to finish those prewar constructions found relatively intact on French slips after the Liberation were mostly suspended, including that of the cruiser *De Grasse* and destroyer *L'Aventurier*, as well as submarines *Artémise* and *Antigone*.⁶¹⁴ Work continued on three other

⁶¹⁰ SHD, 3 BB 2 SEC 114 – *Situation de la Flotte – Tonnage – De 1939 à 1950* [Fleet Status – Tonnage – From 1939 to 1950], note from the French Naval General Staff to the *Ministère des Armées* "Condamnations de bâtiments faites depuis la Libération [Paying off of Vessels since the Liberation]," 10 December 1946.

⁶¹¹ France, *Archives nationales* [National Archives] (Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, FR; hereafter *Archives nationales*), C//15275 – *Séances de la Commission de la Défense nationales 1944 – 1946* [Sessions of the National Defence Commission 1944 – 1946], statement by Minister Michelet, 13 February 1946.

⁶¹² SHD, 3 BB 2 SEC 114, Report from the *Secrétariat d'état à la Marine* to the General National Defence Staff titled *Bilan de la Marine française au 1^{er} janvier 1948* [State of the French Navy on 1 January 1948].

⁶¹³ *Archives nationales*, C//15275, statement by Commander Barthélémy at National Defence Commission on 20 February 1946. The quote in English is from Jordan and Dumas, *French Battleships*, 211.

⁶¹⁴ Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française*, 62; and Philippe Masson, "La marine française en 1946 [The French Navy in 1946]," *Revue d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale* 110 (April 1978): 85.

submersibles as well as four small *avisos/sloops* but this was the extent of new builds expected to join the French fleet in the coming years.

Transfers from the defeated Axis powers provided another source of growth but the “Big Three” sought to limit such ambition in the closing months of the war. The subject of German war reparations was fiercely debated at the Potsdam Conference (17 July – 2 August 1945) but, to de Gaulle’s great frustration, France did not have a seat at that table. Regarding naval war reparations, the text of the final agreement promulgated unequivocally that the “... total strength of the German surface navy... shall be divided equally among the U. S. S. R., U. K., and U. S.”⁶¹⁵ The lesser Allies could not avail themselves of any such vessels and another provision stated: “The larger part of the German submarine fleet shall be sunk. Not more than thirty submarines shall be preserved... for experimental and technical purposes.”⁶¹⁶ Nevertheless, France succeeded in capturing a number of ships and submarines abandoned in metropolitan ports and across the Rhine by withdrawing German forces in 1944 – 1945 and Great Britain also agreed in 1946 to transfer some of its own seizures and war reparations to the *Marine nationale*. In total, acquisition of German vessels amounted to four U-boats seized in France and two more transferred from Great Britain, thirteen minesweepers captured in Germany, as well as eight destroyers and torpedo boats secured from Great Britain:

- *U-510*: Type IXC, launched 1941, surrendered in Saint-Nazaire on 12 May 1945, served as the *Bouan* until late 1950s;
- *U-123*: Type IXB, launched 1940, scuttled in Lorient in August 1944, raised and served as the *Blaison* until late 1950s;
- *U-471*: Type VIIC, launched 1943, sunk by US bombers in Toulon in August 1944, raised and served as the *Millé* until late 1950s;
- *U-766*: Type VIIC, launched in 1943, damaged by the Allies in La Pallice in August 1944, repaired and served as the *Laubie* until late 1950s;
- *U-2326*: Type XXIII, launched in August 1944, transferred by the British in February 1946, lost with all hands in a diving accident off Toulon in December 1946;
- *U-2518*: Type XXI, launched in November 1944, transferred by the British in February 1946, served as the *Roland Morillot* until 1967;
- Two Narvik-class destroyers from UK: *Z25* (launched 1940, renamed *Hoche*, in service until 1958) and *Z31* (launched 1942, renamed *Marceau*, in service until 1958);
- Two Maas-class destroyers from UK: *Z5* (launched 1937, renamed *Desaix*, in service until 1958) and *Z6* (commissioned 1937, renamed *Kleber*, in service until 1958);

⁶¹⁵ United States Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference), 1945, Volume II*, “Protocol of the Proceedings of the Berlin Conference (dated 1 August 1945),” last accessed 21 May 2018, <https://history.state.org/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v13/d273>.

⁶¹⁶ *Idem*. The agreement was more lenient regarding the repartition of Germany’s surviving merchantmen. They were also to be divided equally among the three signatories but the latter accepted to share those transfers with their respective allies : “The United Kingdom and the United States will provide out of their shares of the surrendered German merchant ships appropriate amounts for other Allied States whose merchant marines have suffered heavy losses in the common cause against Germany, except that the Soviet Union shall provide out of its share for Poland.”

- Two Elbing-class torpedo boats from UK: *T23* (launched 1942, named *L'Alsacien*, in service until 1954) and *T28* (launched 1943, named *Lorrain*, in service until 1959);
- Two T1-class torpedo boats from UK: *T11* (commissioned 1940, renamed *Bir Hakeim*, in service until 1951) and *T20* (commissioned 1942, renamed *Baccarat*, in service until 1951); and
- Nine M35-class and four M40-class minesweepers from UK.⁶¹⁷

Following negotiations that dragged on until July 1948 to finalize the naval clauses of the February 1947 peace treaty between Italy and the allied powers, the French navy also took on two Italian light cruisers, four destroyers, one sloop, two motor torpedo boats, one tanker and nine auxiliaries.⁶¹⁸ Though welcome in terms of numbers, all of these acquisitions from Germany and Italy would not make much of a contribution given this paltry 1950 assessment by the *Amirauté*:

The German vessels were built during the hostilities in a hurried manner with material of an inferior quality. Their continuous service during the war and their abandonment after the conflict aged them prematurely. The Italian ships, built before the war, also suffered a long period of abandon after the hostilities. Their equipment is obsolete, especially their electronics, which would require an extensive period of refit and modernization to restore to operational status.⁶¹⁹

Another challenge to rejuvenating a fleet of modern warships was the priority accorded to the rehabilitation of France's merchant navy. Even before the Liberation, powerful voices within the Provisional Government warned that the wartime loss of half of the country's capacity to transport passengers, solid cargo and oil products by sea grievously constrained the country's capability to rebuild national infrastructure as well as providing for the food and sanitary needs of the people, in the *métropole* and overseas. While the end of the hostilities resulted in an overabundance of merchant shipping from other nations available for hire, lease or outright purchase, such transactions would impose an excessive drain on the limited amount of foreign currencies available in Paris. René Plevin, de Gaulle's Minister of the Economy and Finance, proved especially vehement in that regard, joined as he was by influential figures such René Meyer, the Minister of Public Works and Transport, and René Coty, soon to be appointed Minister for Reconstruction and Urbanism.

Coty reported to the National Assembly in December 1945 that the costs to charter foreign shipping would rise to 350 million US dollars in 1946 alone.⁶²⁰ Within months, as French

⁶¹⁷ Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 27; Claude Huan and Jean Moulin, *Les sous-marins français 1945-2000* [French Submarines 1945-2000] (Rennes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2004), 9-11; and Olivier Huwart, *Sous-marins français: 1944-1954, la décennie du renouveau* [French Submarines: 1944-1954, the Decade of Renewal] (Rennes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2003), 70-97. The acquisition of the Type XXI (*U-2518*) and Type XXIII (*U-2326*) submarines proved particularly valuable in providing the French navy with unique exposure to the revolutionary technologies that came to shape submarine warfare in the early Cold War.

⁶¹⁸ Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 29; and Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française*, 90.

⁶¹⁹ *SHD*, 3 BB 2 SEC 114, Report from the *Secrétariat d'état à la Marine* to the Minister of National Defence titled *Bilan de la Marine française au 1^{er} octobre 1950* [State of the French Navy, 1 October 1950].

⁶²⁰ *Archives nationales*, C//15304 – *Séances de l'Assemblée nationale constituante décembre 1945 – avril 1946* [Sessions of the National Constituent Assembly December 1945 – April 1946], minute of the session held on 28 December 1945.

commercial yards became available, they were set to build civilian ships of all types, much cheaper by the ton, simpler in design, and quicker in production than more complex men-of-war.⁶²¹ *Marine nationale* dockyards also contributed to this effort, with Brest first laying the keel of the *Penlan* on 29 July 1946, a collier of 4,700 tons launched the following February, even as work on the battleship *Jean Bart* – an important priority for Admiral Lemonnier – languished in the next dock over. Naval yards in Brest, Lorient, Cherbourg and Toulon would go on to repair 22 liners, 129 freighters and 37 fishing boats through 1946-1947, receiving additional orders for building 60,000 tons of new merchant vessels, 4,500 train cars, as well as other heavy equipment for civilian use.⁶²² This last measure proved controversial, perceived as it was by the political Right and among some naval circles as a misappropriation of naval resources to poach contracts from privately-owned yards at the expense of work in support of the *Marine nationale*.

However, Communist minister Charles Tillon, coordinator of this policy in his role as *Ministre de l'Armement*, repeatedly pointed out, quite rightly, that this effort actually contributed to rejuvenation of the navy's shore infrastructures during a period when the French government could not subsidize any more work on warships. Trained workers with rare specialist skills dispersed during the course of the war returned to their former jobs and civilian commitments allowed those naval dockyards to upgrade their facilities and building techniques while making an important contribution to the national effort of reconstruction.⁶²³ French admirals also appreciated that resources dedicated to reconstituting the merchant navy would contribute to the nation's sea power in the long run, even if at the more immediate expense of the naval fleet.⁶²⁴ It remained, though, that Minister Jacquillot and Admiral Lemonnier could only use limited credits and dockyard space during that time to mitigate the steady decline of the fleet rather than initiate a genuine renaissance, thus far limited to the *Aéronavale*. Even in that case, success rested entirely on the lease of the carrier *Colossus* and the continued procurement of British planes as French firms failed to develop new aircraft prototypes.

The Chief of the Naval General Staff communicated a bleak assessment to newly appointed Minister for the Armed Forces Pierre-Henri Teitgen in November 1947.⁶²⁵ Starting on

⁶²¹ On the rebuilding of the merchant navy in the early postwar era, see Bernard Cassagnou's magisterial treaty *Les grandes mutations de la Marine marchande française (1945-1995)* [The Great Changes in the French Merchant Navy (1945-1995)] (Vincennes, FR: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 2003), 37-61.

⁶²² Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 35-36; and Frédéric Marquié, "La reconversion des Chantiers et Arsenaux de la Marine (1946-1953) [The Reconversion of the Navy's Shipyards and Dockyards (1946-1953)]," *Revue historique des armées* 220, no 3 (September 2000): 112-127.

⁶²³ Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 37; and Marquié, "La reconversion des Chantiers et Arsenaux de la Marine," 124-126. See Tillon's autobiography for his views as *Ministre de l'Armement* in Charles Tillon, *On chantait rouge* [We Were Singing Red] (Paris, FR: Robert Laffont, 1977), 438-447.

⁶²⁴ Marquié, "La reconversion des Chantiers et Arsenaux de la Marine," 118-119.

⁶²⁵ One will recall that socialist Prime Minister Ramadier had reinstated dedicated ministers for the services at the beginning of his first government in January 1947, largely to check his communist minister of national defence. Defeated in a vote of non-confidence in the National Assembly in the midst of grave fiscal troubles and social unrest in the fall, Premier Ramadier formed a second but short-lived government (22 October – 19 November 1947) where he retained a single minister for the armed forces (Teitgen, from the centre-right *Mouvement républicain populaire* – *MRP*, the Popular Republican Movement) but returned to the dual secretariats concept, in lieu of separate service ministers. He appointed André Maroselli (from the centre-left *Parti radical-socialiste* – *PRS*, Radical-Socialist Party) as *Secrétaire d'État aux Forces armées* and Johannès Dupraz (also from the *MRP*) as Secretary of State for the Armement. Although this

a positive note, he stated that the *Marine nationale* could meet its current missions: defend the national territory and that of the *Union française*, contribute a naval task force for service under the United Nations when mandated, and ensure the security of France's critical sea lines of communications, namely between the *métropole* and North Africa in the Mediterranean, and from Brest to Dakar in the Atlantic. However, he was also adamant that the continuous paying off of obsolete vessels without new procurements would lead the French fleet into oblivion by 1959, with only one battleship (assuming that *Jean Bart* would not be completed), two aircraft carriers, two cruisers, three ocean escorts and four submarines left, all of them obsolete, for an overall fleet tonnage of barely 69,180 tons.⁶²⁶ This emotional outburst came on the heels of a fateful decision by the political authorities. Although funding for the light aircraft carrier *PA-28* (tentatively named *Clémenceau*) was included in the 1948 defence estimates approved by the National Assembly on 14 August 1947, a Cabinet decree put that project on hold on 9 October as a result of the on-going budgetary crisis facing the flailing Ramadier government at the time.⁶²⁷ This blow badly undermined Lemonnier's aspirations for the *Marine nationale* to move up from the status of a nominal carrier navy to that of a credible one in the near future.

As dire as that development may have seemed, it should be kept in perspective. French historian of the Fourth Republic navy Philippe Quérel noted astutely that no country in the world commenced building a new aircraft carrier during the period 1945-1950. The British slowly advanced work on the four Centaur-class carriers (*Centaur*, *Albion*, *Bulwark* and *Hermes*) begun in 1944-1945 but they would not enter service until the 1950s. All carriers commissioned into the US Navy from the defeat of Japan to beginning of the Korean War (the Essex-class *Leyte*, *Keasarge*, *Valley Forge*, *Philippine Sea* and *Oriskany*; the Midway-class *Coral Sea*; as well as the Saipan-class *Saipan* and *Wright*) had been laid down during the Second World War. Though approved in 1948, the construction of five United States-class "supercarriers" was abruptly cancelled the following year in the midst of a bitter debate over the respective roles of the strategic bomber and naval aviation in a nuclear world.⁶²⁸ Indeed, French strategist Hervé Coutau-Bégarie observed that the decision to suspend work on the *Clémenceau* at the time was actually a blessing in disguise: the project would have engulfed huge sums to deliver an obsolete platform of limited capacity – smaller and slower than either the British Centaurs and the American Saipans – sometime in the far future based on the very slow (and expensive) rate of progress then observed for completion of the battleship *Jean Bart*.⁶²⁹

would mark the end of Louis Jacquinot's tenure as Minister for the Navy, he remained in Parliament and continued his involvement in naval affairs with the Commission for Defence and Overseas Territories.

⁶²⁶ *SHD*, 3 BB 2 SEC 114, Report from the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* to the *Ministère des Forces armées* titled *Renouvellement de la Flotte française* [Renewal of the French Fleet], dated 26 November 1947; and Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 72.

⁶²⁷ President of the Council of French Ministers Decree 47-1957 dated 9 October 1947, *Journal officiel de la République française – Débats parlementaires* [Official Journal of the French Republic – Parliamentary Debates, hereafter *Journal officiel*] (10 October 1947), 10078. Not aimed specifically at the *PA-28*, the decree froze all new military projects at the time. For the latest technical specifications for the vessel at that point, see *SHD*, 3 BB 2 EG 57 – Various Records of the *Direction centrale des constructions et armes navales* [Central Directorate of Constructions and Naval Armaments], briefing note *Porte-avion léger PA-28. Caractéristiques principales* [Light Aircraft Carrier *PA-28*. Main Characteristics], 22 August 1947.

⁶²⁸ Quérel, "L'échec du *PA-28*."

⁶²⁹ Coutau-Bégarie, "Marine et innovation," 123.

As importantly, the Cabinet decision of October 1947 did not signify that the political class disavowed the idea of the *Marine nationale* as a blue-water carrier navy but rather underlined the continued dilemma it faced in establishing priorities between civilian reconstruction and military rearmament in the postwar era. Debates in the National Assembly that led to the budgetary approval of the previous August did not give rise to many attacks against the concept of the aircraft carrier itself nor that of strong French navy but the economic argument eventually prevailed. As reported by the Finance Commission on 6 August 1947:

Several members, without denying the importance of aircraft carriers in general or the value for France of acquiring a modern one, assess that, given the current economic and financial circumstances, it would not be reasonable to incur such a large outlay... The cost of the ship, which must include that of the aircraft it will carry, is only one dimension of the problem. Such commitment would also result in reallocating precious resources away from other valuable and necessary endeavours in support of the rehabilitation of the national economy, including skilled technicians, experienced workers and considerable quantities of material, resulting in dire consequences that appear unacceptable for the time being.⁶³⁰

In other words, the fundamental principle that France needed a navy did not come under attack in the National Assembly. Instead, the eventual fate of Project PA28 showed a considerable gap in the level of ambition entertained by the successive governments of the early Fourth Republic and that of the *Amirauté*. Indeed, Lemonnier completed his November 1947 report to Minister Teitgen with a new transition plan, the *Plan transitoire de 1947*. He proposed re-launching work on the aircraft carrier *Clémenceau*; initiating the immediate building of six generic escort vessels of 2,500 tons as an initial step to commence replacing the light cruisers, destroyers and corvettes that would all become obsolete by 1954 (with a second tranche to bring the total number of escort to sixteen by 1958); complete the submarines *Artemis* and *Antigone* (found on slipways at the Liberation) as well as start building a new submarine of 1,200 tons inspired by the revolutionary German Type XXI; and progress the completion of *De Grasse* as an all anti-aircraft gun cruiser.⁶³¹ Coming on the heels of the fall of Ramadier's short-lived second government (22 October – 19 November 1947), however, the report went nowhere.

Having failed to get a short-term proposal through, the navy adopted a different approach under the new Schuman government. The latter retained Pierre-Henri Teitgen as Minister for the Armed Forces but eliminated the positions *Sous-secrétaire d'État aux Forces armées* and *Sous-secrétaire d'État à l'Armement* in favour of three *Secrétaires d'État*, one for each of the services, with Joannès Dupraz (from the Centre-Right *MRP*) assigned as Minister for the Navy. On 24 March 1948, Dupraz chaired a meeting of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* where he was presented with a larger, more fulsome *Plan de base 1950* seeking to shape the rejuvenation of the entire fleet for the longer-term.⁶³² This “basic plan” proposed a wide range of new construction and upgrades to existing vessels to be initiated most urgently and completed by late 1952.

⁶³⁰ Statement of Pierre Meunier, Chair of the Finance Committee, to the National Assembly on 6 August 1947, *Journal officiel* 90 (7 August 1947), 3970.

⁶³¹ SHD, 3 BB 2 SEC 114, Report from the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* to *Ministère des Forces armées, Renouvellement de la Flotte française* [Renewal of the French Fleet], 26 November 1947.

⁶³² SHD, 3 BB 8 CMS 3 – Various Records of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* [Superior Council of the Navy] 1947-1948, Minutes of the Superior Council of the Navy session held on 24 March 1947.

The plan was ambitious, seeking to provide the *Marine nationale* with the capability to deploy two task forces on a permanent basis while maintaining the necessary assets to defend metropolitan and *Union française* territories, as well as securing the strategic sea lines of communications in time of conflict. It necessitated a large number of vessels: two battleships, four light carriers and three escort carriers, six cruisers, forty destroyers and smaller ocean escorts, fifteen to twenty submarines, and forty other auxiliaries (amphibious vessels, minesweepers, etc.). The plan provided for a fleet of 400,000 tons requiring 20,000 to 30,000 tons of new builds per year and maintained an objective of 400 aircraft for the *Aéronavale* divided among 20 squadrons. Lemonnier submitted a more refined version on 9 April 1948 (defining annual construction targets for 1949, 1950, 1951 and 1952, as well as providing a more accurate breakdown of types and numbers of ships in all categories), which was endorsed by the Minister on 13 May.⁶³³ Dupraz then put up a valiant fight to have this vision accepted in cabinet but the budget presented in Summer 1948 only included a one-year tranche providing for work on the *Jean Bart*, completing the submarines *Artémis* and *Antigone*, and the construction of small amphibious vessels for Indochina.

Still, the budget was defeated in the Assembly by the parties of the Left decrying military appropriations that would claim 35% of the nation's finance for that year.⁶³⁴ This loss caused the Schuman cabinet to fall on 19 July, to be followed by two fragile governments, that of André Marie (26 July – 28 August) and Schuman again but for barely a week (3 – 7 September). A semblance of stability finally returned on 11 September with the ascension to the premiership of radical Henri Queuille, who would remain in power until October 1949. By then, the navy's ambitions for either a transitory proposal *à la 1947* or a more fulsome *Plan de base 1950* had been defeated but cabinet instability that summer was not wholly responsible for this dire conclusion. A disconnect remained between the proposed priorities expressed by France's admirals and those of the political class, regardless of the lobbying effort put forward by Dupraz, who remained Minister for the Navy throughout these months, including in the Queuille Cabinet.

As importantly, even had the *Marine nationale* been appropriated such sums, the national shipbuilding capability was just not available to meet the intended objectives along the ambitious timelines delineated in both documents.⁶³⁵ Alternatively, had money been available, the *Amirauté* could have considered another possibility, that of acquiring new vessels overseas. Though not an option until then, dramatic developments on the international scene were about to bring such a

⁶³³ SHD, 3 BB 2 SEC 114, Report from the Chief of the Naval General Staff to the Minister for the Navy, *Programme naval* [Naval Programme], 9 April 1948; and 3 BB 8 CSM 2, Note from the Minister for the Navy to the Chief of the Naval General Staff, 13 May 1948.

⁶³⁴ Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française*, 56.

⁶³⁵ As reported to the National Defence Commission quoting a statement by Minister for the Armed Forces Teitgen. *Archives nationales*, C//15339 – *Séances de la Commission de la Défense nationales 1946 – 1948* [Sessions of the National Defence Commission 1946 – 1948], minutes of the session held on 9 June 1948. Reflective of the limited capacity of French shipyards was the continued requirement to get costly merchant shipping from builders overseas. Despite the priority assigned to building these vessels domestically, rejuvenating France's merchant navy in an expeditious manner necessitated the acquisition of nearly one million tons of civilian hulls on the foreign market, namely seventy-five "Liberty ships" and nineteen tankers from the United States as well thirty-three cargo vessels of various types from Great Britain and Canada. Paris purchased these ships using US funds obtained through the postwar loan negotiated with Washington in May 1946 and rapidly transferred their ownership to various French companies in return for long-term repayments at low interest rates. Cassagnou, *Les grandes mutations*, 42-43.

course of action to the fore. Once again Lemonnier and his colleagues would be called upon to consider the range of opportunities and frustrations that working with allies entailed, in a manner very similar to that observed during the previous conflict.

BUDDING COLD WAR AND THE RETURN OF THE ALLIANCES

Admiral Lemonnier's efforts to rebuild the *Marine nationale* did not take place in a geostrategic vacuum and the fleet had been quite busy since the end of the war. Indeed, one of the pitfalls he faced in trying to "sell" the dire state of the navy to political authorities was the continued success of his officers and sailors in meeting their assigned missions. Their tasks spanned a wide range of post-conflict, peacetime and active combat duties.⁶³⁶ Even before the end of the war, France stood up the *Forces maritimes du Rhin* (the Rhine Maritime Forces) which was soon integrated in the larger occupation force maintained in Germany. Its 500 personnel and 50 small vessels (reaching a peak of 800 sailors and 100 platforms in 1956) were responsible to patrol and police that vital artery as well as support cross-river operations by the army in case of renewed hostilities.⁶³⁷ Reconstruction of shore infrastructure and minesweeping in the *métropole*, North Africa and Indochina continued unabated throughout the late 1940s. Sovereignty patrols resumed in Europe and throughout the *Union française*, as did periodic deployments in support of the Newfoundland fisheries, while the prewar network of bases, ships and aircraft dedicated to *sauvetage aéro-maritime* (SAMAR – Air and Sea Search and Rescue) was reconstituted. Meteorological work as well as scientific missions and hydrographic surveys commenced anew in 1947, including deployments to isolated outposts abandoned during the war such as the Kerguelen Islands in the southern Indian Ocean, Terre Adélie on the Antarctic continent, and Clipperton Island off Mexico's Pacific coast. But one overriding operational commitment dominated the fleet's employment through these postwar years: contributing to the control of restive populations in the former colonies of the *Union française*.⁶³⁸ What at first was expected to constitute a temporary commitment would soon consume an inordinate amount of personnel and resources for the French navy and the country's other services.

It commenced with a bloody precedent in Algeria on the very day of the end of the hostilities in Europe. Victory celebrations in the provincial capital of Sétif on 8 May 1945 turned violent, with Algerian nationalists killing 103 *pieds-noirs* (settlers of European descent) and seriously wounding another hundred that day, a day that included instances of rapes and the murder of children. French authorities launched a brutal repression campaign that spread across eastern Algeria in the following weeks and claimed several thousands of victims.⁶³⁹ Heavy

⁶³⁶ Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 123-125.

⁶³⁷ Stood up on 3 April 1945, the force was eventually dissolved in 1966. An introduction can be found at Marine nationale, "La Marine sur le Rhin [The Navy on the Rhine]," last modified 28 June 2010, <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/marine/manifestations/la-marine-sur-le-rhin> while Georges Prud'homme *et al.* provide a more fulsome treatment in *Les Forces Maritimes du Rhin* [The Rhine Maritime Forces] (Strasbourg, FR: Carré Blanc, 2007). The force's archives are maintained in the Cherbourg's section of the *Service historique de la Défense*. See SHD – Échelon de Cherbourg – Cherbourg, France, Répertoire numérique du versement de 1966-05 – A1 à A382 – *Les Forces maritimes du Rhin*.

⁶³⁸ The *Union française* replaced France's colonial empire under the terms of the constitution of the Fourth Republic. For an introduction, see Jaques Frémeaux, "L'union française: le rêve d'une France unie?" in *Culture impériale 1931-1961* (Paris, FR: Éditions Autrement, 2004), 163-173.

⁶³⁹ For an introduction to this controversial episode, see Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria, 1954 – 1962*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: New York Review Books, 2006), 23-28. For a full treatment, see

cruiser *Duguay-Trouin* and smaller units participated in these violent reprisals, landing detachments of sailors and *fusiliers-marins* to assist army troops, and carrying indiscriminate shore bombardments "... to intimidate the rebels."⁶⁴⁰ The Algerian episode was short-lived but more troubling events spread to other territories, including a large-scale campaign of terror that commenced in Madagascar in late 1946, with natives torturing and murdering French officials, *colons* and Madagascans working for the colonial administration.

The movement quickly gathered speed and turned into a full-blown insurgency in March 1947, leading to another campaign of violent repression by French troops that continued into the following year. The *Marine nationale* was called upon to participate in the reinforcement of the island's garrison by conveying troops from the *métropole* and North Africa as well maintaining a potent naval force of destroyers and colonial sloops in the region to provide fire support and put landing parties ashore on several occasions until 1949. The cruiser *Duguay-Trouin* transported a troop of naval commandos from Toulon in May 1947 and remained on station until October.⁶⁴¹ The ship once again fired her heavy guns against rebel positions and coastal villages suspected of supporting the insurrection, an initial contribution that paved the way to a bloody repression and left tens of thousands of natives dead or displaced in insalubrious camps.

The Madagascar uprising was overshadowed by the larger Indochina insurgency, where the *Marine nationale* played an important role until the very end. Warships took on a considerable burden in transporting the initial *Corps expéditionnaire français en Extrême-Orient* (CEFEO – French Far East Expeditionary Corps) in 1945-1946 and then providing fire support as French forces continued to grow – from 38,500 on 1 January 1946 to 128,600 personnel on 1 December 1947. Of that, up to 8,500 were provided by the navy. They included the *Brigade marine d'Extrême-Orient* (BMEO – Far East Naval Brigade), stood up in September 1944 and eventually numbering 3,000 *fusiliers-marins* and naval commandos. Some 5,500 sailors and naval aviators also served with the ships of the *Forces maritimes d'Extrême-Orient* (FMEO – Far East Maritime Forces) and two squadrons of shore-based patrol aircraft.⁶⁴² In addition to the usual range of missions discharged by warships employed in a counter-insurgency role (shore bombardment, security of the coastal lines of communications,

Jean-Louis Planche, *Sétif 1945: histoire d'un massacre annoncé* [Sétif 1945: History of an Expected Massacre] (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2006).

⁶⁴⁰ Jordan and Moulin, *French Cruisers*, 213. See also Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 26; Annie Rey-Goldzeiguer, *Aux origines de la guerre d'Algérie, 1940-1945: De Mers-el-kébir aux massacres du Nord-Constantinois* [The Origins of the Algerian War, 1940-1944: From Mers el-Kebir to the Massacres in the North Constantine] (Paris, FR: Éditions de la Découverte, 2002), 295; and Algéroisement . . . Vôte, "Bombardement de la région de Sétif par la marine [Bombardment of the Sétif Area by the Navy]," last accessed 10 April 2017, <http://algeroisementvotre.free.fr/site0301/mai1945/mai45101.html>.

⁶⁴¹ On the *Duguay-Trouin*, see Jordan and Moulin, *French Cruisers*, 214; and Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française*, 118. On the larger conflict and the involvement of the *Marine nationale*, see Anthony Clayton, *The Wars of French Decolonization* (London, UK: Routledge, 1994), 79-87; and Hubert Granier, *Histoire des marins français: A Madagascar (1947-1948) et en Indochine (1946-1954)* [A History of the French Sailors: In Madagascar (1947-1948) and Indochina (1946-1954)] (Rennes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2010), 208-212.

⁶⁴² Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française*, 48 and 64. Note that the naval contribution in terms of personnel by the end of 1947 was larger than that of the air force which maintained 5,100 aviators and technicians in theatre at the time. One will also recall that the Ministry of Overseas France paid for 5,000 of the naval personnel deployed in Indochina.

interdiction of enemy supply traffic at sea), sailors and aviators of the *Marine nationale* distinguished themselves in two particular roles during that conflict, riverine warfare and the provision of air support from the sea.

Following the initial campaign of *Dixmude* in March-April 1947, the ship returned to Indochina in October with a complement of nine SBD dive-bombers but also transporting twelve air force Spitfire fighters and twelve *Toucan* transports (French-built *Junker Ju52*) as well as 130 passengers from the different services. After disembarking cargo and personnel in Saigon, *Dixmude* resumed her role as an aircraft carrier, with her lone squadron of Dauntless providing seaborne air support, until she set sail for France in April 1948.⁶⁴³ The *Colossus*, officially re-designated *Arromanches* through ministerial decree on 4 March 1947 and coming out of an extensive refit that lasted from November 1947 to April 1948, undertook her first deployment to Indochina in October 1948. The carrier arrived off Cap Saint-Jacques at the end of November and departed in early January 1949 with ten Dauntless dive-bombers and two Seafire fighters as an embarked complement.⁶⁴⁴ As in the case of *Dixmude*, both transits to and back from theatre involved transport duties as *Arromanches* delivered seven NC 710 *Martinet* (French-built twin-engine light transports based on the German *Siebel* design), twelve tons of *Banque de l'Indochine* currency, and another 500 tons of miscellaneous cargo. She then took on 100 tons of material and the remains of 555 deceased military personnel back to the *métropole*. While in Indochina, *Dixmude* and *Arromanches* completed valuable services by augmenting France's understrength airpower but their contribution was often limited by the small number of aircraft they could operate (on average six for the former, eight for the latter due to maintenance, equipment breakdown, etc.). As problematic, the two ships could not maintain a constant rotation in the region as a result of refit cycles and other missions in Europe, despite the growing scale of the *Vietminh* insurgency.

The presence of the French navy on Indochina's numerous waterways would prove much more enduring. Heteroclite flotillas of self-propelled barges, Japanese launches and even motorized junks were assembled hastily in 1945-1946.⁶⁴⁵ The *Marine nationale* formally organised these forces, supplemented by a variety of landing craft obtained from the Americans and the British, as the *Force amphibie de la Marine en Indochine* (FAMIC – Naval Amphibious Force in Indochina) in January 1947. This command coordinated a number of *divisions navales d'assaut* (naval assault divisions, colloquially known as the *dinassauts*) tasked with missions such as the routine resupply of isolated outposts and supporting autonomous raids upriver by the *fusiliers-marins*. They also played an important role during larger operations with the army, taking part in simultaneous assaults of enemy strongholds by amphibious and airborne troops. Sailing in vessels of all types that often lacked regular maintenance and looked most unusual as a

⁶⁴³ Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches*, 72-74. *Dixmude* got to demonstrate a new role during that campaign, that of “intra-theatre transport” when she carried seventeen Morane-Saulnier *Criquet* 500 (French-built *Storch* liaison and reconnaissance planes) and 160 personnel from Saigon to the Tonkin in November 1947. The carrier also lost three Dauntless during that deployment (two crashing on land and another at sea, all due either to pilot error or mechanical failure), with three replacements delivered by a chartered cargo ship in March 1948 while *Dixmude* was still in Indochina.

⁶⁴⁴ Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches*, 134-136.

⁶⁴⁵ For accounts by two officers who joined these riverine forces in 1945-1946, see Yannick Guiberteau, *La Dévastation, cuirassé de rivière* [The *Dévastation*, Riverine Battleship] (Paris, FR: Albin Michel, 1984); and Hervé Jaouen, *Marin de guerre* [Wartime Sailor] (Paris, FR: Éditions du Pen Duick, 1984), 61-65.

result of the mounting of armour plating and armament that ranged from small machine guns to heavy mortars and even tank turrets – depending on the size of the platforms and the imagination of their crews – the *dinassauts* sailors developed a reputation for mischief but unparalleled esprit de corps during these years.⁶⁴⁶ They delivered critical support until the very end of the Indochina war and the United States Navy would replicate that experience in Vietnam a decade later.

Although American advisors and military aid were not yet bound for Indochina in 1948, French authorities had already taken pains to frame the colonial conflict as part of the Cold War then gathering strength. Initially concerned with the prospect of a resurging Germany and eager to maintain a seeming balance between the two superpowers in the immediate postwar era, early Fourth Republic leaders had followed in the wake of de Gaulle by complementing his December 1944 agreement with Moscow with another pact of “alliance and mutual aid” through the Treaty of Dunkirk signed with Great Britain on 4 March 1947.⁶⁴⁷ At that very moment, however, the unlikely German threat receded behind that of an increasingly belligerent Soviet Union, as observed in successive meetings of the Council of Foreign Ministers struggling to resolve issues left in the wake of the Second World War while the Red Army remained on a wartime footing. Western anxieties grew as a result of Moscow’s forceful imposition of friendly regimes in Eastern Europe, its reluctant withdrawal from Iran and Manchuria, continued occupation of North Korea, Stalin’s incessant pressure on Turkey to gain free access to the Mediterranean through the Bosphorus, and his active support to Communist insurgents in Greece.

An exhausted Great Britain announced in February 1947 that it could no longer finance the royalist regime in Athens nor continued mobilization of Turkish military forces, leading the American administration to take the fateful step of appropriating \$400 million in aid and deploying advisory missions to Greece and Turkey. In an appearance before a joint session of Congress on 12 March, Truman effectively launched the doctrine of containment:

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States of America to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure. I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way.⁶⁴⁸

Secretary of State Marshall soon followed by announcing at Harvard on 5 June 1947 that the United States would provide direct aid to European powers willing to coordinate the recovery

⁶⁴⁶ Jaouen provides further insight of this later period narrating his second tour in Indochina in *Marin de guerre*, 79-91; as does Maurice Raymond de Brossard – who commanded the 1st *Dinassaut* in 1950-1951 – in *Dinassaut* (Paris, FR: Éditions France-Empire, 1952). For more extensive (and objective) narratives, see Charles W. Koburger, *The French Navy in Indochina: Riverine and Coastal Forces, 1945-54* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1991); and Victor Croizat, *Vietnam River Warfare 1945-1975* (London, UK: Blandford Press, 1986), 36-71.

⁶⁴⁷ For an introduction, see Greenwood, *The Alternative Alliance*, 253-282; and Élisabeth du Réau, “Les origines et la portée du traité de Dunkerque vers une nouvelle “entente cordiale? (4 mars 1947)” [The Origins and the Impact of the Treaty of Dunkirk towards a New “Entente Cordiale”? (4 March 1947)]” *Matériaux pour l’histoire de nos temps* 18 (1990): 23-26.

⁶⁴⁸ For a full transcript of the speech, one can access American Rhetoric, “Harry S. Truman: The Truman Doctrine, delivered 12 March 1947 before a Joint Session of Congress,” last modified 8 March 2017, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/harrystrumantumandoctrine.html>.

and reconstruction of their shattered economies within the Bretton Woods framework.⁶⁴⁹ Moscow reacted swiftly by dictating that eastern European countries could not participate in the plan and establishing the “*Cominform*” (Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties) to coordinate the actions of Communist parties committed to countering “western imperialism.” From then on, the two superpowers confronted each other with profoundly conflicting views, and they expected other nations to take a side in this contest. As couched in vitriolic terms by Andrei Zhdanov at the *Cominform*'s founding conference in September 1947:

The cardinal purpose of the [US-led] imperialist camp is to strengthen imperialism, to hatch a new imperialist war, to combat socialism and democracy, and to support reactionary and antidemocratic pro-fascist regimes and movements everywhere.⁶⁵⁰

Meanwhile, France experienced her own domestic Cold War. Adoption of *tripartisme* in the wake of de Gaulle's resignation from the Provisional Government seemingly ushered a postwar spirit of cross-party cooperation dedicated to making France great again and providing a bridge between the eastern and western camps. This goodwill rapidly dissipated, however, as conflicting priorities – between civil reconstruction and military rejuvenation, greater autonomy for the former colonies and resumed imperial ambitions, runaway inflation and a growing welfare state – all contributed to tearing apart the political and social fabric of the country. Tensions between the Communist Party and successive socialist premiers grew particularly strident until Paul Ramadier expelled all *PCF* ministers from his cabinet in May 1947.

This rupture was precipitated in large part by the Communists' refusal to support increased credits for the Indochina War and their vociferous denigration of the repression in Madagascar, as well as open support for widespread worker strikes disruptive to the national economy.⁶⁵¹ Still the largest party in the National Assembly with 28% of the seats, the *PCF* was out of cabinet but continued to exercise a destabilizing influence in Parliament. Nevertheless, Ramadier and successive premiers developed and maintained a new coalition – *la Troisième Force*, the Third Force – by bringing in conservative Radicals and a variety of smaller centre-right parties to confront the simultaneous but divided opposition of the far left on the one hand and, on the other, a new conservative party founded by de Gaulle in April 1947, the *Rassemblement du Peuple français* (*RPF* – Rally of the French People).⁶⁵² From then on,

⁶⁴⁹ The Programme for European Recovery is better known today as the Marshall Plan. The speech is reproduced in full in Trevor Salmon and William Nicoll (ed.), *Building European Union – A Documentary History and Analysis* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1997), 28-30.

⁶⁵⁰ California State University Northridge, "Andrei Zhdanov: Report on the International Situation to the *Cominform* – The fundamental changes caused by the war on the international scene, 22 September 1947," last accessed 5 April 2017, <http://www.csun.edu/~twd61312/342%202014/Zhdanov.pdf>.

⁶⁵¹ One of the best narrative of this complex period remains that of Georgette Elgey, *Histoire de la IV^e République: La République des Illusions, 1945 – 1951* [History of the Fourth Republic : The Republic of Illusions, 1945 – 1951] 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: Fayard, 1993), 313-369. See also Frank Giles, *The Locust Years: The Story of the Fourth French Republic, 1946-1958* (London, UK: Secker & Warburg, 1991), 64-71. Nearly simultaneously, Communists were also expelled from government in Belgium (in March) and in Italy (in May).

⁶⁵² De Gaulle resolved himself to found a political movement promoting his views about a stronger presidential regime and an autonomous but influential France on the international scene. Éric Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle* (Paris, FR: Gallimard, 2002), 537-543; and Jonathan Fenby, *The General – Charles de Gaulle and the France He Saved* (London, UK: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 326-335.

Troisième Force governments kept France squarely in the western camp, to the great relief of America and Great Britain, concerned as they were with developments on the Old Continent.

As observed by one British historian, the vague wording of the Treaty of Dunkirk regarding a resurgent Germany had resulted "... in a pact of which the principal value was the purely technical, and arguably redundant, one of normalising Anglo-French relations."⁶⁵³ But the immediacy of the Soviet threat soon concentrated minds in London and Paris. Another round of negotiations got underway to arrive at a more extensive agreement that included the Low Countries or "Benelux" (namely Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxemburg), leading to signing on 17 March 1948 the Treaty of Economic, Social and Cultural Collaboration and Collective Self-Defence, otherwise known as the Brussels Pact.⁶⁵⁴ Though still cognizant of the German problem in committing the signatories to "... take such steps as may be held to be necessary in the event of a renewal by Germany of a policy of aggression," the agreement was in fact a response to the Soviet threat and incorporated several important precedents. It introduced notions such as standing arrangements for a joint defensive system in peacetime, strengthened economic and cultural ties as elements of collective defence, and the establishment of "... a Consultative Council, which shall be so organised as to be able to exercise its functions continuously."⁶⁵⁵

Political and military leaders dedicated the following months to developing the peacetime machinery that would allow pact members to provide a signatory "... under armed attack in Europe ... all the military and other aid and assistance in their power."⁶⁵⁶ A sense of urgency propelled these talks as Communists forcefully seized power in Czechoslovakia in February 1948 and Moscow launched the blockade of West Berlin in June.⁶⁵⁷ The Consultative Council consisting of the five foreign ministers stood as the supreme body of the new alliance and the subordinated Western Union Defence Committee allowed the defence ministers to provide coordinated political direction to their military chiefs. Further deliberations resulted in standing up the Western Union Defence Organisation (WUDO) in September, the military arm of the Brussels Pact led by combined chiefs-of-staff overseeing the Permanent Military Committee of the Western Union.⁶⁵⁸ Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery, then Great Britain's Chief of the Imperial General Staff, was appointed permanent Chairman of the Land, Naval and Air Commanders-in-Chiefs Committee, with headquarters in Fontainebleau, on the outskirts of Paris. Another British officer, Air Chief Marshal Sir James Robb, took the role of Commander Air

⁶⁵³ Greenwood, *The Alternative Alliance*, 283.

⁶⁵⁴ The agreement is found in full at North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *The Brussels Treaty: Treaty of Economic, Social and Cultural Collaboration and Collective Self-Defence, 17 March 1948*, last modified 1 October 2009, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17072.htm. On the circumstances and negotiations that led to the treaty, see Elgey, *La République des Illusions*, 471-477; and Lawrence S. Kaplan, *NATO 1948 – The Birth of the Transatlantic Alliance* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 59-62.

⁶⁵⁵ NATO, *The Brussels Treaty*, Article VII.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Article IV.

⁶⁵⁷ On the significance of these two episodes, see Dunbadin, *The Cold War*, 144-147 and 152-153; Kaplan, *NATO 1948*, 42-44 and 107-109; and Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 32-34.

⁶⁵⁸ Kaplan, *NATO 1948*, 149-153; and Sean M. Maloney, *Securing Command of the Sea – NATO Naval Planning, 1948-1954* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 67-68.

Forces while France appropriated the two other key posts with the appointment of General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny on the army side and Vice-Admiral Robert Jaujard for the naval forces.⁶⁵⁹

The Brussels Pact and the WUDO were viewed positively in the French navy. The appointment of Jaujard would provide the *Rue Royale* with an influential voice within the organisation, especially as the sailor proved much more effective in that collaborative context than de Lattre de Tassigny, who quickly developed an acrimonious relationship with Montgomery. Another positive prospect arose when leaders from the five powers met in London in April 1948 "... to study their military equipment needs, with a view to determining how much they could meet from their own production and how much supplementary aid should be requested from the United States."⁶⁶⁰ From July on, American and Canadian representatives joined these talks, providing a venue for France and her allies to supplement their struggling industries with an alternative source of production to rejuvenate their army, air and naval forces.⁶⁶¹ *Amirauté* planners welcomed this initiative as they continued struggling to find a way to acquire new constructions for the fleet. Little did they know that the prospect of renewed foreign assistance would also entail a dramatic realignment of national priorities in September 1948.

MISE EN PARENTHÈSE DE LA FLOTTE

Marshall's European Recovery Program did not include provisions for military aid. Truman had stated in his March 1947 address to Congress that American "... help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes."⁶⁶² Within a year, though, it became evident that Western Europe would necessitate a considerable influx of equipment from overseas to build up the modicum of a credible deterrent against the Soviet threat, perhaps in the form of a "military ERP" as acknowledged during secret talks between American, British and Canadian representatives in March 1948.⁶⁶³ Instituting mechanisms to disburse such aid would be fraught with difficulty in the midst of a presidential election year in the United States.

Administration officials were especially aware of the need to conciliate "America First" voices in Washington by avoiding connotations reminiscent of the wartime Lend-Lease and alleviating a debilitating impact on America's own rearmament. Republican Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, once a leading light of the isolationist movement, accepted to clear an initial path by pushing through a resolution on 11 June that encouraged the "... (a)ssociation of the United States, by constitutional process, with

⁶⁵⁹ The choice of Robert Jaujard was an enlightened one given his combat record and extensive experience in working with the Allies during the war. Jaujard was commanding the *Richelieu* task group when appointed to the WUDO in Fall 1948. Taillemite, *Dictionnaire des marins française*, 255.

⁶⁶⁰ Lord Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years, 1949-1954* (Utrecht, Netherlands: Bosch, 1954), 9.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 9; Lawrence S. Kaplan, *A Community of Interests: NATO and the Military Assistance Program (1948-1951)* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defence Historical Publication, 1980), 20-22; and National Security Council Report (NCS 9/3) dated 28 June 1948 "The Position of the United States with Respect to Support for Western Union and Other Related Free Countries" in United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1948 – Volume III – Western Europe* (hereafter *FRUS 1948*) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), 140-141.

⁶⁶² American Rhetoric, "Harry S. Truman: The Truman Doctrine."

⁶⁶³ "Minutes of the Second Meeting of the United States-United Kingdom-Canada Security Conversations, Held at Washington, March 23, 1948," *FRUS 1948*, 65.

such regional and other collective arrangements as are based on continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, and as affect its national security."⁶⁶⁴ But even this growing bipartisanship in support of greater cooperation between the United States and the Western Union did not mean that military aid would flow immediately and freely. The Europeans needed to help themselves first. Then, and only then, would Washington meet carefully defined and prioritized needs as stated in a National Security Council (NSC) Report endorsed by President Truman in July 1948:

It should be made clear ... that the ERP precedent should be followed and that: (1) they [WU states] must first plan their coordinated defense with the means presently available, (2) they must determine how their collective military potential can be increased by coordinated production and supply, including standardization of equipment, (3) we would then be prepared to consider and screen their estimates of what supplementary assistance from us was necessary, (4) we would expect reciprocal assistance from them to the greatest extent practicable, and (5) legislation would be necessary to provide significant amounts of military equipment but the President would not be prepared to recommend it unless the foregoing conditions have been met.⁶⁶⁵

US Army Major General Lyman Lemnitzer delivered this blunt message to Western Union officials later that same month when he arrived in Great Britain at the head of his country's delegation of observers to the Western Union's Military Committee.⁶⁶⁶ The five powers had commenced discussions in April 1948 on the matter of coordinating the production and standardization of equipment but the American approach clearly put the onus on them to initiate a new process of peacetime military aid. A major conference of the Union's defence ministers was called for 27-28 September to address this fundamental issue. Ironically, it was to take place in Paris but the gathering was ill-timed for France.

The country had just gone through a severe period of instability with the successive falls of Prime Ministers Schuman, Marie and Schuman again. Though radical Henri Queuille would finally gain the confidence of the National Assembly to form a more lasting government on 11 September, his overriding priorities were clear: the restoration of domestic order as violent workers strikes continued across the country, and protection of the French franc through a range of austerity measures designed to bring inflation under control, including new cuts to the defence budget. Symbolically, Queuille retained the finance portfolio for himself and appointed an influential figure as Minister of National Defence, the former socialist premier Paul Ramadier who had expelled the communists from cabinet and molded the Third Force as a viable alternative to the previous *tripartisme*.⁶⁶⁷ Ramadier would have two weeks to get ready for the next ministerial meeting of the Western Union. Within five days of his appointment he dispatched an initial missive that proved pivotal in preparation for this important event.

⁶⁶⁴ "Senate Resolution 239 (Vandenberg Resolution), June 11, 1948," *FRUS 1948*, 136.

⁶⁶⁵ NSC 9/3, *FRUS 1948*, 141. The report also included this telling statement in recognition of the administration's concerns with the November election: "Nothing should be done requiring Congressional action prior to next January."

⁶⁶⁶ Kaplan, *A Community of Interests*, 20-21.

⁶⁶⁷ On Queuille's appointment and his first few months in power, see Elgey, *La République des Illusions*, 488-500; and Giles, *The Locust Years*, 104-109.

Addressing the secretaries of state and the chiefs of staff for the three services on 16 September, Ramadier ordered them to collaborate on the elaboration of an urgent plan for the “reconstitution of the overall military forces of France” (*Plan de reconstitution de l’ensemble des Forces militaires françaises*).⁶⁶⁸ This plan would expand on the approach that had emerged during the Western Union’s Military Committee summer sessions: the pooling and specialization of national resources, augmented by military aid from allies overseas, to ensure the common defence of Western Europe. For Ramadier, the greatest and most effective contribution France could make to this framework, especially given its geographic position on the continent, was the establishment of a powerful *force aéroterrestre*. Pre-positioned east of France’s land border at high readiness, this joint air/land force would blunt an enemy offensive towards the Rhine River on the very first day of the war.

While acknowledging that the defence of the larger *Union française* also necessitated additional forces, Ramadier placed *la défense du Rhin* (the defence of the Rhine) at the apex of France’s interests, trumping all other concerns in the reconstitution of the French military. This effort required, first and foremost, the expansion of heavily mechanized land forces in Europe as well as the development of an air force focused on air defence and close air support to the army. Within this construct, the role of the navy would be limited to maintaining “... essentially light escort forces and shore infrastructures in Africa.”⁶⁶⁹ For Lemonnier and his fellow admirals, this situation was 1943 all over again with one important difference: the Allies would assist in rebuilding the French fleet at the cost of restraining it to subordinate secondary missions but the concept was promoted by the French government itself this time around.

Secretary of State for the Navy Joannès Dupraz replied to this *mise en parenthèse de la Flotte* – placing the rearmament of navy on hold (“in parentheses”) – with a sharp rebuke on 27 September.⁶⁷⁰ While recognizing the importance of preparing for battle east of the Rhine River, Dupraz decried the reductionist approach to the navy’s fundamental missions and the sacrifice of the means required for defence of the *Union française*. The letter also included a reminder of the intrinsic value of sea power to France as a country with worldwide interests and an emotional appeal for the constitution of balanced armed forces in support of a viable national defence in the postwar era. Referring Ramadier to annexes attached to his covering letter, Dupraz once again presented the detailed submission provided earlier by Admiral Lemonnier in support of his proposal for a *Plan de base 1950* and expanded on how such a vision for a balanced, blue-water fleet fitted in a strategy focused on the defence of the Rhine.

While the army and the air force would focus on the battle in Europe, the navy could make an essential contribution by discharging vital missions inside and out of that theatre. The *Marine nationale* would secure the strategic sea lines of communications with the Union to ensure the safe arrival of personnel and material reinforcements from overseas. Its footprint across the *Union française* would reduce the necessity for the other services to maintain assets outside metropolitan France. It would continue its assigned tasks in defence of commercial ports

⁶⁶⁸ *SHD*, 3 BB 2 SEC 114, Letter from the Minister of National Defence to the Secretaries of State and Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces (War, Navy, Air), 16 September 1948.

⁶⁶⁹ *Idem*.

⁶⁷⁰ *SHD*, 3 BB 2 SEC 114, Letter from the Secretary of State for the Navy to the Minister of National Defence, 27 September 1948.

and naval bases in the *métropole*, negating the need to divert army and air force resources for that purpose. The fleet's mobility would cause the enemy to disperse forces away from the European battlefield by threatening offensive actions on the flanks of Eurasia in cooperation with allied navies. And the navy could make a direct contribution east of the Rhine by deploying *Aéronavale* planes and *fusiliers-marins* units on the frontline were such reinforcements requested by the army.

The impact of Dupraz' dispatch at that early stage is difficult to judge. Dated 27 September, one must assume that Ramadier did not receive it in time to shape his input at the Western Union defence ministers' meeting which started that same day. Regardless, these proceedings turned into somewhat of a non-event as the participants had not yet had enough time to define their defence needs to the level of refinement expected by the Americans. Similar meetings continued through the fall but the WU military chiefs struggled to come up with a united rearmament plan, as observed by NATO historian Lawrence S. Kaplan:

No movement had been made to pool inventories and production resources in order to draft a balanced program, and even the list of deficiencies was incomplete and unsatisfactorily screened... It was obvious that they were superficial and drawn according to the needs of national rather than European defense.⁶⁷¹

Regardless of the lack of results at this stage, these discussions confirmed the adherence of the Brussels Pact members to the concepts of pooling resources and specialization among their armed forces. Such ideas were also likely to carry over in the framework of the expanded North Atlantic Treaty then under negotiation. Acceptance of this approach by France's Minister of National Defence put great strain on his relations with the Secretary of State for the Navy in the coming year. Ramadier implicitly accepted that the Allies – namely the Anglo-American navies – could be relied upon to secure Western Europe's sea lines of communications and interests overseas, allowing the French to focus limited resources on making a large and influential contribution to the land battle east of the Rhine. But Dupraz expressed severe doubts about this fundamental assumption in his original missive of 27 September 1948, a reflection of a deeply held belief among the country's admirals, to be reiterated constantly in the coming months:

It would be a grievous mistake to believe that we can rely on foreign navies to discharge these heavy tasks. There is no doubt that their assistance would be essential and would grow during the hostilities but, at the outset of the conflict, during those weeks when the fate of the nation would be at stake as occurred in 1914 and 1940, we would likely have to count on our own resources only, as each nation would be hard-pressed to meet their own military requirements at sea. Allied navies would dispose of limited means at the beginning of the war, only those means maintained in peacetime. These are sparse capabilities given the length of the sea lines of communications and the distance to the theatres of operations where their interests would be threatened. Would we really accept depending on the will of our Allies at such dire hour? Allies who can have dramatically different views from that of the French government on the strategy to adopt in the defence of France's soil and her families in the *métropole*? Can we abandon to foreign authorities the responsibility for our ports, be they on the continent or overseas?⁶⁷²

⁶⁷¹ Kaplan, *A Community of Interests*, 23.

⁶⁷² *SHD*, 3 BB 2 SEC 114, Dupraz to Ramadier, 27 September 1948.

Nevertheless, the Secretary of State and Admiral Lemonnier could not allow such distrust to blind them to the fact that the French navy remained in dire need of assistance to build up a credible Cold War fleet. By late 1948, French yards had yet to launch a new warship or submarine of large tonnage since the battleship *Jean Bart* had escaped Saint-Nazaire while still under construction in 1940. The *Aéronavale* was growing in size – from eight to ten squadrons, including three carrier-based formations, though still well short of the target of 20 squadrons – but all aircraft remained Second World War designs, acquired from the British and the Americans.⁶⁷³ The Queuille government would soon suspend the carrier project *PA28* and postpone completion of *Jean Bart* in June 1949.⁶⁷⁴ By then, the *Amirauté* had already accepted that the cruiser *De Grasse* would not be completed until 1953 at the earliest given the inability of French industry to produce heavy naval guns.⁶⁷⁵ Of the nine cruisers that had survived the war, four were still operational (*Gloire*, *Georges Leygues*, *Montcalm* and *Duguay-Trouin*, the latter based in Indochina) but three were confined alongside as floating barracks (*Suffren* in Toulon, *Tourville* in Brest and *Duguay-Trouin* in Arzew, Algeria). Aging *Émile Bertin* and *Jeanne d’Arc* found themselves restricted to training tasks, one with the gunnery school in Toulon and the other with the *École navale* out of Brest.⁶⁷⁶

Despite the announcement by the Americans that they would no longer seek the return of vessels loaned to France under the terms of the Lend Lease programme and the on-going integration of German seizures and Italian war reparations in 1948, the following year witnessed the continued shrinking of the French fleet as a result of the incessant withdrawal of aging units.⁶⁷⁷ By January 1950, it would sink to a new postwar nadir as illustrated in Table 11 below:

Table 11 – French Fleet on 1 January 1950

Numbers of hulls per Category	Modern Tonnage (sous l’âge)	Obsolete Tonnage (hors d’âge)	Tonnage under Construction (ongoing/suspended)	Remarks
3 X Battleships	35,000	22,000	35,000	- <i>Richelieu</i> operational, <i>Jean Bart</i> suspended, <i>Lorraine</i> in reserve
3 X Aircraft Carriers/Transports	22,200	22,200	0	- <i>Arromanches</i> (14,000 tons) operational - <i>Dixmude</i> (8,200 tons) operational - <i>Béarn</i> (22,200 tons) in reserve
10 X Heavy Cruisers	35,200 (12,400 for training)	37,250 (7,250 still in service)	8,000	- <i>Dusquesne</i> , <i>Tourville</i> , <i>Suffren</i> (10,000 tons each) obsolete and in reserve - <i>Duguay-Trouin</i> (7,250 tons) in service - <i>Émile Bertin</i> (5,900 tons) and <i>Jeanne d’Arc</i> (6,500 tons), both on training duties - <i>Gloire</i> , <i>Georges Leygues</i> and <i>Montcalm</i> (7,600 tons each) operational - <i>De Grasse</i> (8,000 tons), work suspended

⁶⁷³ Baroë, *Cent ans d’Aéronavale*, 38-39.

⁶⁷⁴ *Journal officiel*, 22 June 1949, 3532-3538 provides a full record of the long and lively debate which took place in the *Assemblée nationale* the previous day on the matter of suspending work on the *Jean Bart*.

⁶⁷⁵ *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CSM 3 – Various Records of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* [Superior Council of the Navy] 1947-1948, Minutes of the Superior Council of the Navy held on 26 November 1947.

⁶⁷⁶ Jordan and Moulin, *French Cruisers*, 213-222.

⁶⁷⁷ *SHD*, 3 BB 2 SEC 114, Naval General Staff document (author unknown) titled *Note de présentation d’un projet de statut naval* [Briefing Note on a Draft Naval Law], 30 July 1949.

6 X Light Cruisers	17,000 (5,140 in reserve)	0	0	- <i>Le Terrible</i> and <i>Le Fantasque</i> (2,570 tons each, pre-WWII builds, modernized in USA during the war) operational - <i>Chateaurenault</i> and <i>Guichen</i> (3,360 ton each, Italian war reparations) operational - <i>Le Malin</i> and <i>Le Triomphant</i> (2,570 tons each, pre-WWII builds, modernized in USA during the war) in reserve
13 X Destroyers	14,410 (7,410 in reserve)	8,650 (2,450 in service)	0	- <i>Tigre</i> (2,100 tons, commissioned 1926), <i>Basque</i> (1,400 tons, commissioned 1931), <i>Alcyon</i> (1,400 tons, commissioned 1929), <i>Forbin</i> (1,400 tons, commissioned 1929), all obsolete and in reserve - <i>Albatros</i> (2,450 tons, commissioned 1932) obsolete but still in service - <i>Kleber</i> (2,200 tons, commissioned 1937), <i>Marceau</i> (2,600 tons, commissioned 1942), <i>Alsacien</i> (1,100 tons, commissioned 1942), <i>Lorrain</i> (1,100 tons, commissioned 1943), all former <i>Kriegsmarine</i> , modern and operational - <i>Hoche</i> (2,600 tons, commissioned 1940), former <i>Kriegsmarine</i> , modern, in reserve - <i>D'Estaing</i> (1,570 tons, commissioned 1937), <i>Jurien de la Gravière</i> (1,620 tons, commissioned 1943), <i>Duperré</i> (1,620 tons, commissioned 1943), former <i>Regia Marina</i> , modern, in reserve
6 X Cannon-class Destroyers Escorts	7,800	0	0	- <i>Algérien</i> , <i>Sénégalais</i> , <i>Somali</i> , <i>Hova</i> , <i>Marocain</i> , <i>Tunisien</i> (1,300 tons, WWII US Lend-Lease), all modern, operational
6 X River-class Frigates	8,700	0	0	- <i>Croix de Lorraine</i> , <i>L'Aventure</i> , <i>L'Escarmouche</i> , <i>La Découverte</i> , <i>La Surprise</i> , <i>Le Tonkinois</i> (1,450 tons each, WWII UK transfers), all modern and operational
4 X Large Sloops <i>Avisos de 1ère classe</i>	8,200	0	0	- <i>Francis Garnier</i> (2,200 tons, former <i>Regia Marina</i>), modern and operational - <i>La Grandière</i> , <i>Savorgnan de Brazza</i> and <i>Dumont d'Urville</i> (2,000 tons each, French prewar but modernized builds), all modern and operational
16 X Light Sloops <i>Avisos de 2e classe</i>	9,720	0	660	- Nine 640-ton and six 660-ton, all modern and operational - <i>Commandant Duquing</i> construction suspended for budgetary reasons
42 X Minesweepers	12,680 (1,760 in reserve)	2,450	0	- Seven ex-German (600 tons each), modern and operational - Two ex-German (600 tons each), modern but in reserve

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Four ex-German (550 tons each), obsolete and in reserve - 28 YMS1-class (US Lend-Lease, 280 tons) all modern with 26 operational and 2 in reserve - One obsolete British MMS-class, in reserve
91 X Patrol Crafts Boats	8,080 (5,525 in reserve)	6,180 (1,220 in service)	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Three French builds, 600 tons each, all modern and operational - 32 PC451-class patrol craft (US Lend-Leased, 110 tons each), considered modern, 15 operational and 17 in reserve - 53 SC497-class submarine chasers (US Lend-Leased, 110 tons each), obsolete with 10 operational and 43 in reserve - Three pre-war French submarine chasers, 120 tons each, obsolete with one still operational and two in reserve
13 X Submarines	4,920	1,980 (1,680 in service)	4,100	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Le Glorieux</i> (1,380 tons, in service 1934) and <i>Junon</i> (600 tons, in service 1937), both obsolete but operational - Former U-boats still in service: <i>Roland Morillot</i> (ex-U2518), <i>Blaison</i> (ex-U123), <i>Millé</i> (ex-U471), <i>Laubie</i> (ex-U766), <i>Bouan</i> (ex-U510) - <i>La Créole</i>, <i>L'Africaine</i> and <i>L'Astrée</i> had been under construction in 1940 but only completed in 1949-1950. - <i>L'Andromède</i> under active construction - <i>Artémise</i> and <i>Antigone</i> under construction but work suspended
44 X Large Auxiliaries (Indochina amphibious fleet not included)	48,150	25,000	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 15 hydrographic research vessels (8 in service, 7 in reserve) - 3 aviation tenders (all in service) - 2 maintenance ships (<i>navires-ateliers</i>, both in service) - 7 personnel and cargo transports (3 in service, 4 in reserve) - 13 oilers (7 in service, 6 in reserve) - 4 frigates dedicated to meteorological services (all in service)
257 vessels	232,060	125,710	47,760	<p>Combined total: 405,530 tons (54% of the 1939 fleet, see Table 1)</p> <p>Available for service (operational and in reserve combined): 357,770 tons (48% of the 1939 fleet)</p> <p>Actually in service: 232,060 (31% of the 1939 fleet)</p>

Source:

SHD, 3 BB 2 SEC 114, Briefing Note from the Naval General Staff *3e Bureau* (Operations) to the Secretary of State for the Navy titled *Situation au 1er janvier 1950 des principaux bâtiments de la Flotte* [Status of the Large Vessels of the Fleet on 1 January 1950], 23 January 1950

Table 11 presents a complex picture of achievements and unfulfilled ambitions on the part of *Marine nationale* leaders through the challenging years of the early postwar era. With 257 warships and submarines and a combined tonnage of more than 400,000 tons, the fleet remained in 1949 the largest in continental Europe, a potent force that continued discharging all of the missions expected of it by the nation at the time, in metropolitan waters and across the *Union française*. On the other hand, even by adopting a very generous understanding of what vessels could still be considered “modern” and “operational” – be they modernized pre-WWII French cruisers, the converted aircraft carrier *Dixmude* or other British and American wartime transfers as listed above – the ability of the French navy to conduct large-scale, autonomous blue-water missions was dramatically limited as symbolized by the standing commitment to provide a task force when called upon to support a United Nations’ response to a crisis overseas.

The *Amirauté* defined such a formation as one aircraft carrier, one battleship, three cruisers and a varied complement of escort ships, supply vessels and submarines depending on the mission at hand. However, the French navy would only be able to dispatch such a force during those limited periods when both *Arromanches* and *Richelieu* were available simultaneously, always an uncertain combination given the requirements for refits, training, other national tasks, etc. As well, with only 232,000 tons of ships and submarines actually operational (and nearly half of those vessels small patrol boats and auxiliaries), the fleet fell quite short of that sought by French admirals who continued to target a mix of 300,000 tons in warships and another 100,000 tons in patrol craft and auxiliaries to meet France’s national needs.⁶⁷⁸ As concerning was the future of that motley assembly of French and foreign vessels.

Without new builds to compensate for the unavoidable paying off of obsolete units, the operational fleet could be expected to shrink to 85,000 tons by 1955.⁶⁷⁹ Virtually all work to complete those ships and submarines found intact in France after the war had been suspended by the Queuille government, a long way from the 20,000-ton a year in new construction advocated by the *Rue Royale* since 1946. Meanwhile, negotiations proceeded apace for signatories of the Brussels Pact to join forces with the United States, Canada, Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Italy and Portugal within a new peacetime organization seeking to secure Western Europe and North America against the Soviet threat. Clearly, return of the alliance system resulted in more opportunities, threats and uncertainties for the French navy. The *Amirauté* could expect that the Alliance would initially exercise a clear naval superiority in the North Atlantic but under Anglo-American leadership, with little room for a French voice in shaping maritime strategy. Minister Ramadier would likely continue pursuing a policy centered on the defence of the Rhine,

⁶⁷⁸ *SHD*, 3 BB 2 SEC 114, Correspondence from the Chief of the Naval General Staff to the Minister of National Defence and the Secretary of State for the Navy, *Mémoire sur la politique navale française* [Memorandum on French Naval Policy], 25 February 1949.

⁶⁷⁹ *SHD*, 3 BB 2 SEC 114, Naval General Staff document (author unknown) *Mémoire résumant la situation de la Marine nationale au 1er janvier 1949* [Summary of the Situation of the French Navy on 1 January 1949], 31 January 1949.

propounding that resource pooling and mission specialization decreased the need for France to maintain large blue-water forces, the first time ever that a French politician of influence proclaimed his acceptance that the country had to entrust her interests beyond the *métropole* and North Africa to the navies of allies.

Simultaneously, France's admirals kept alive the hope of rebuilding a modern fleet capable of exercising some influence at sea; thus, they had to, once again, step warily into the embrace of the Anglo-Americans to make up for the continued weakness of the nation's industries and ongoing budgetary woes. As experienced during the Second World War, foreign assistance – even with the aim of creating the tool necessary to restore France's *grandeur* at sea – would likely result in an uncomfortable dependence and relegation to the subordinate missions of convoy escorts and coastal defence. French historian Philippe Vial later illustrated this ambiguous development in the following terms, setting the tone for the next stage in the rearmament of the *Marine nationale*:

Hopes for allied help were explicitly stated in justifying renewed ambitions to restore France's rank... Here lied the paradox: the desire to avoid another episode of subordination led the men of the *Rue Royale* to plan on assistance that would necessarily generate dependency! A vicious circle which could not be avoided given the evolution of the international conjecture as the state of the fleet required urgent decisions.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁸⁰ Philippe Vial, "De la nécessité de l'aide, des inconvénients de la dépendance: le réarmement de la Marine sous la IV^e République [Of the Need for Assistance and the Drawbacks of Dependency: The Navy's Rearmament Under the Fourth Republic]," *Revue historique des Armées* 215 (June 1999): 22.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RETURN TO A STRATEGY OF ALLIANCE: BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP OR BITTER *DÉJÀ VU*?

The sun shone brightly over the Philadelphia Navy Yard on Saturday, 12 August 1950, seven years after the cruiser *Montcalm* had completed her refit in the USN shipyard. As the wartime support provided by America in rebuilding the French fleet came to a sudden halt in 1945 and France's own dockyards had yet to demonstrate the capacity to build new warships, the scene taking place that day was powerful in its symbolism. Two American-built Cannon-class Destroyer Escorts (DE) were lying alongside each other, flying the US flag for the last time. Following a short ceremony, USN sailors hauled down the colours and two *pompons rouges* – French sailors so-called for the ball of red wool sewn atop their headdress – hoisted the Tricolour at the stern of the former USS *Samuel S. Miles* (DE-183) and USS *Riddle* (DE-185), signifying formal transfer to the French navy as the *Arabe* and the *Kabyle*.⁶⁸¹ They were the first two of six destroyer escorts that the United States would hand over to France in the coming months, only one element of the wide-ranging Mutual Defense Assistance Program authorized under the premise of the Mutual Defense Assistance Act signed by US President Harry S. Truman on 6 October 1949. As the Cold War turned increasingly tense in the late 1940s and early 1950s, MDAP played a significant role in the rejuvenation of French seapower. However, it also exposed the same ambivalence that had qualified similar support during the previous conflict as Washington and Paris continued holding conflicting visions.

The two destroyer escorts certainly looked smart and trim, sporting a fresh paint scheme and a good assortment of weaponry and sensors for their size, with four diesel engines driving two shafts to propel their 1,300 tons at speeds up to 20 knots.⁶⁸² And yet they were no more modern or powerful than the six other Cannon-class DEs transferred to France in 1944.⁶⁸³ *Samuel S. Miles* and *Riddle* were cheap wartime constructions, built in less than four months. They had seen hard service in the Pacific, including a *kamikaze* hit that inflicted serious damage on the latter. Both were quickly decommissioned after the war, suffering the vagaries of tropical heat and humidity while mothballed up the St. Johns River, outside Green Cove Spring in

⁶⁸¹ Jean Moulin, *Destroyers d'Escorte en France, 1944-1972* [Destroyer Escorts in France, 1944-1972] (Nantes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2004), 96 and 101.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*, 132-144 and M.J. Whitley, *Destroyers of World War Two – An International Encyclopedia* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 300-302 provide an extensive discussion of the vessels' technical specifications and weaponry.

⁶⁸³ The destroyer escorts were all named after French colonial ethnicities. The Second World War transfers were the *Algérien* (F701, ex-*Cronin* DE107), *Sénégalais* (F702, ex-*Corbesier* DE106), *Tunisien* (F706) (ex-*Crosley* DE108), *Marocain* (F705, ex-DE109), *Hova* (F704, ex-DE110) and *Somali* (F703, ex-DE111). The four that followed the *Arabe* and *Kabyle* in 1950 were the *Bambara* (F719, ex-*Sweaver* DE186), *Sakalave* (F720, ex-*Wingfield* DE194), *Touareg* (F721, ex-*Bright* DE747), and *Soudanais* (F722, ex-*Cates* DE763). Two more were added through another tranche in 1952, *Berbère* (F723, ex-*Clarence L. Evans* DE113) and *Malgache* (F724, ex-*Baker* DE190), for a total of fourteen Cannon-class DEs serving under the Tricolour. Whitley, *Destroyers of World War Two*, 55; and Philippe Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française sous la Quatrième République (1945-1956) – La Quatrième République a-t-elle eu une ambition navale pour la France? [Renewal of the French Navy under the Fourth Republic (1945-1956) – Did the Fourth Republic Have a Naval Ambition?]* (Paris, FR: Université Paris I, 2006), 162.

northern Florida, until towed to Philadelphia for a short refit in Summer 1950.⁶⁸⁴ The ships would certainly augment the capacity of the *Marine nationale* but, under the terms of MDAP, which itself followed the signature of North Atlantic Treaty on 4 April 1949, they were meant to be employed in NATO's area of responsibility. France was not to deploy them for national commitments beyond the purview of the Alliance, such as the defence of *Union française* territories, an important military concern for Paris at the time, given the desperate struggle then ongoing in Indochina.

As in 1943, resumption of American assistance to France was greeted warmly but left many questions unanswered for French admirals and politicians alike. The explosion of a first Soviet atomic bomb on 29 August 1949, followed by the proclamation of the People's Republic of China by Mao Zedong in October of that same year and the North Korean offensive across the 38th parallel on 25 June 1950 certainly brought an added level of urgency in the delivery of aid from North America to the European allies.⁶⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the awkward experience of the Second World War, when help sought to restore France's *grandeur* had resulted in dependence and subordination, remained a burning memory at the *Rue Royale*.

American aid recommenced flowing in a variety of forms while French shipyards, industries and research centres soon started making a direct contribution to building up the country's defence in general and her navy in particular. This situation was a far cry from the moment of greatest danger of just a few years earlier when Minister of National Defence Paul Ramadier promoted a single focus on the defence of the Rhine and accepted a seemingly unavoidable *mise en parenthèse de la flotte*. Still, it was this return to a strategy of alliance which had permitted Ramadier to advocate for a powerful *force aéroterrestre* at the expense of the fleet, a course of action that successive governments could continue if they chose to do so. French admirals, as will be shown, demonstrated great sagacity in embracing NATO but they would continue confronting that inescapable paradox, unsure whether the strategy of alliance would beget a beautiful friendship with the American ally in peacetime or turn into bitter *déjà vu* reminiscent of the strains of the wartime era.

FROM THE WESTERN UNION TO NATO

French views proved remarkably consistent during the multifaceted negotiations that led to signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in April 1949.⁶⁸⁶ Successive Third Force cabinets which held power from conclusion of the Brussels Pact in March 1948 to founding of NATO a year later favoured closer military links with the United States and Canada as the Western Union did not assuage French security fears. The three "Benelux" allies could provide little in terms of actual armed might in support of the defense of Western Europe while Great Britain remained reluctant

⁶⁸⁴ Moulin, *Destroyers d'Escorte*, 94-96 and 99-101.

⁶⁸⁵ For précis of these dramatic events, see John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War* (London, UK: Penguin Books, 2005), 34-46; and Maurice Vaïsse, *Les relations internationales depuis 1945* [International Relations Since 1945] 14th ed. (Paris, FR: Armand Collin, 2015), 16-37.

⁶⁸⁶ For brief overviews of the overall process, see Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 457-460; and Vaïsse, *Les relations internationales depuis 1945*, 30-32. Lawrence S. Kaplan provides a more in-depth treatment in *NATO 1948 – The Birth of the Transatlantic Alliance* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 165-228.

to commit forces to the Continent in advance of a Soviet offensive.⁶⁸⁷ As perceived in Paris, the French armed forces would bear the brunt of bloody fighting in the faint hope of keeping the assailant beyond the Rhine River. The United States and Canada declared solidarity with the Western European Union and launch of the Marshall Plan boded well for further cooperation but memories of 1914 and 1939 left French leaders skeptical of ambiguous professions of good faith on the part of potential allies.

What they sought was a formal pledge of armed assistance in peacetime and the Truman administration agreed to initiate such discussions as it would place the defence of Western Europe within a more effective Atlantic security system.⁶⁸⁸ By and large, French admirals approved of this commitment to a wider alliance even though the leading voice assumed by the *Marine nationale* within the Western Union Defence Organisation (WUDO) would likely diminish in the face of American leadership in shaping NATO's maritime strategy.⁶⁸⁹ The expected prize in return for this concession: immediate access to direct material assistance from the United States.

To this day, the treaty's best known clause remains Article 5, which states that an attack against one or more member states shall be considered an attack against all. But, unlike the Brussels Pact which committed the allies to an immediate *armed* response, the NATO text allowed that each signatory would react "... by taking forthwith... such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force."⁶⁹⁰ American negotiators imposed this wording ("action as it deemed necessary") to facilitate ratification in the House where the automatism of a military reaction implied in the WU's model could be construed as undermining Congress' authority to declare war. It also confirmed that assistance could take several forms as outlined in Article 3: "In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack." Bringing the two together, and building upon the legacy of the Western Union Defence Organisation (WUDO), Article 9 specified:

The Parties hereby establish a Council, on which each of them shall be represented, to consider matters concerning the implementation of this Treaty.... The Council shall set

⁶⁸⁷ For a French perspective, see Maurice Vaisse, "L'échec d'une Europe franco-britannique, ou comment le pacte de Bruxelles fut créé et délaissé [The Failure of of Franco-British Europe, or How the Brussels Pact Was Created and Abandoned] in *Histoire des débuts de la construction européenne (9 mars 1948 – mai 1950)* [History of the Beginnings of the Construction of Europe (9 March – May 1950) International Relations Since 1945] (Brussels, BE: Bruylant, 1986), 369-389. See also Pierre Guillen, "France and the Defence of Western Europe: from the Brussels Pact (March 1948) to the Plevin Plan (October 1950)," in *The Western Security Community, 1948-1950: Common Problems and Conflicting National Interests during the Foundation Phase of the North Atlantic Alliance* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 1994), 125-130.

⁶⁸⁸ Cable from Secretary of State Marshall to the Embassy in France for relay to French foreign minister Georges Bidault dated 12 March 1948. United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1948 – Volume III – Western Europe* (hereafter *FRUS 1948*) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974), 50.

⁶⁸⁹ *Service historique de la Défense* [Defence Historical Service] (Vincennes, FR; hereafter *SHD*), 3 BB8 CSM 3 – Various Records of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* [Superior Council of the Navy] 1947-1948, minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 1948.

⁶⁹⁰ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *The North Atlantic Treaty, 4 April 1949*, last modified 21 March 2016, http://www.nato.int/cps/cs/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm?selectedLocale=en.

up such subsidiary bodies as may be necessary; in particular it shall establish immediately a defence committee which shall recommend measures for the implementation of Articles 3 and 5.⁶⁹¹

Lord Ismay, the organization's first Secretary General, later recollected the priority accorded by the signatories to establish the peacetime structure required to implement the means to achieve deterrence and self-defence through mutual aid *before* hostilities broke out:

(T)heir first task was to devise and create collective machinery which would enable them to fulfil these obligations. They were in fact specifically committed to doing so by Article 9 of the Treaty; and a Working Group had been set up two days before the Treaty was actually signed to make recommendations as to the agencies which should be established, and the methods which should be adopted, to prepare a collective plan of defence for the protection of the North Atlantic area.⁶⁹²

Fulfilling their mandate for coordination would be a challenge for those agencies, as illustrated on the day following the treaty's signature. On 5 April 1949, the five Brussels Pact powers submitted to Washington a combined request for military aid but similar pleas were made separately by Denmark, Italy, and Norway.⁶⁹³ Even the Western Union document lacked the coordinated collective defence focus demanded by the Americans, instead providing a disjointed statement of national requirements. In that sense, the dawn of NATO did not alleviate the inability of the European signatories to enunciate clearly their current ability to contribute militarily to the common defence as well as quantify and qualify in Alliance terms the level of assistance they collectively and individually sought. The senior US representative to the Western Union, Major-General Lyman Lemnitzer, had already asked for a list of specific needs at the meeting of WU Defence Ministers of 27-28 September 1948 but the proceedings had only resulted in a vague statement. Another attempt to gain greater clarity came at a meeting of the Western Union Military Committee on 15 November 1948 but the Chiefs of Staff again only provided a list of "national deficiencies." The Committee also outlined the Western Union's vital interests on that occasion, in a bid to shape NATO's early strategy:

(1) Holding the enemy as far east in Germany as possible; (2) defending Western Union countries against air attacks; (3) defending the Middle East as an offensive base of operations; (4) defending North Africa; and (5) controlling sea communications.⁶⁹⁴

Conciliating these interests with those of the non-Brussels Pact allies would be the task of the North Atlantic Council (NAC), established under the treaty's Article 9. A direct "descendant" of the Western Union's Consultative Council, it assembled the foreign ministers of each member state on a periodic basis at first but became a standing feature in 1952 through the appointment of permanent representatives and selection of a secretary general overseeing "... a single integrated and strengthened international staff secretariat... to provide the Council with the necessary

⁶⁹¹ *Idem*.

⁶⁹² Lord Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years, 1949-1954* (Utrecht, Netherlands: Bosch, 1954), 23.

⁶⁹³ *Idem*; and Lawrence S. Kaplan, *A Community of Interests: NATO and the Military Assistance Program (1948-1951)* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defence Historical Publication, 1980), 32-33.

⁶⁹⁴ Kaplan, *A Community of Interests*, 22-23.

assistance in broadening its fields of activity.⁶⁹⁵ The defence ministers formed a short-lived Defence Committee as well but its functions were absorbed by the NAC in 1951. The WUDO's military structure also migrated to NATO with establishment of the Military Committee (first led by US General of the Army Omar Bradley, Chairman of the American Joint Chiefs of Staff) and its subordinated Standing Group of international military staff, initially based in Washington.⁶⁹⁶ With regards to the planning and conduct of operations on the European continent, General Dwight D. Eisenhower accepted in December 1950 an appointment to the new post of Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR). This role placed him at the head of Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), soon to be located in Rocquencourt (outside of Paris) to lead those forces assigned to Allied Command Europe (ACE).⁶⁹⁷

On the sea front, Admiral Lynde D. McCormick assumed the post of Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT) in January 1952.⁶⁹⁸ In that role, the American retained his US responsibilities as Commander of the USN Atlantic Fleet and simultaneously direct from Norfolk, Virginia those forces assigned by NATO to Allied Command Atlantic (ACLANT). SACLANT came into existence later than SACEUR but this should not diminish the importance of the maritime domain within Alliance plans. McCormick stood as co-equal to Eisenhower in the NATO hierarchy but his appointment had been delayed by British reservations about American officers leading both commands. Differences were eventually settled with the creation of the Channel and Southern North Sea Command (CHANCOM) under a RN admiral as Commander-in-Chief (CinCCHAN), nominally coequal to SACEUR and SACLANT but with a lesser range of responsibilities.⁶⁹⁹ As for France which once held the most senior naval post within the WUDO with Jaujard as FO Western Europe, it had to be content with subordinate commands in NATO: Commander Bay of Biscay Sub-area (Vice-Admiral François Jourdain at first, who reported to Commander-in-Chief Eastern Atlantic Area, a RN officer placed under SACLANT) and Commander Western Mediterranean (Vice-Admiral Antoine Sala, reporting to Commander-in-Chief Allied Forces Mediterranean, a RN officer under SACEUR).⁷⁰⁰ As for Jaujard himself, he was transferred to the post of Commander Allied Naval Forces Central Europe, working for his countryman Marshall Juin, Commander-in-Chief Allied Forces Central Europe under SACEUR.

⁶⁹⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Reorganization of NATO – Report by the Council Deputies to the Ninth Session of the North Atlantic Council, 23 February 1952*, last accessed 22 May 2017, https://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/null/2/0/20093/C_9-D_4_ENG.pdf.

⁶⁹⁶ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, *Defence Committee – History*, last access 22 May 2017, <http://archives.nato.int/defence-committee-2>; and *Note by the Secretary to the North Atlantic Defense Committee on Directive to the Military Committee, 25 October 1949*, last access 22 May 2017, http://archives.nato.int/uploads/r/null/9/9/99044/DC_001_2_ENG_PDP.pdf.

⁶⁹⁷ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Gregory W. Pedlow (SHAPE Historian), *The Evolution of NATO's Command Structure, 1951-2009*, last access 22 May 2017, <http://www.shape.nato.int/resources/21/evolution%20of%20nato%20cmd%20structure%201951-2009.pdf>.

⁶⁹⁸ Sean Maloney, *Securing Command of the Sea – NATO Naval Planning, 1948-1954* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 112-136 and 146-149; and Joel J. Sokolsky, *Seapower in the Nuclear Age: The United States Navy and NATO, 1949-1980* (London, UK: Routledge, 1991), 16-19 and 36-37.

⁶⁹⁹ Winston Churchill led this fight, both as leader of the opposition against Prime Minister Clement Attlee and after his return to the premiership following the election of 25 October 1951. Steve Marsh, "Churchill, SACLANT and the Politics of Opposition," *Contemporary British History* 27, no. 4 (2013): 445-465. Admiral Sir Arthur Power took command of CHANCOM in February 1952 while retaining his RN appointment as Commander-in-Chief Portsmouth. Maloney, *Securing Command of the Sea*, 147.

⁷⁰⁰ Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years*, 84-87; and Maloney, *Securing Command of the Sea*, 179-196.

Admittedly, all these positions were of interest to the *Marine nationale*. Command of the two Alliance's sub-areas placed French officers in charge of the sea lines of communications of most strategic importance to France: those between the *métropole* and North and West Africa, as well as arrival points of the large North Atlantic convoys expected to carry vital reinforcements from North America in case of war. From an Alliance point of view, the range of responsibilities handled by these commanders fitted squarely with tasks assigned to the French navy, coastal defence and local convoy escort – the notion of local in this context being extended to cross-Mediterranean movements between France and Algeria as well as in the Atlantic from France to Morocco and Senegal.⁷⁰¹

Meanwhile, the former commander of the *Marine nationale*, Admiral André Lemonnier, took on a role of some stature as naval deputy to SACEUR, retaining that post until his retirement in 1956.⁷⁰² A sprinkling of French staff officers across the various allied naval headquarters in Europe and in Virginia also allowed France to exercise a certain impact on the developments of plans, tactics and procedures as NATO's maritime posture evolved through the early 1950s. Nevertheless, very few of them – even Lemonnier and Jaujard, who worked under SACEUR – could effectively influence the senior planners then actively engaged in developing the Alliance's maritime strategy under SACLANT. Building upon previous WUDO work, the Norfolk-based staff most immediate task was that of creating plans that included the requirement to facilitate the intervention of American and Canadian forces in Europe were the Soviet and the Communist satellites to launch an attack.

North American forces would need to get across the Atlantic as fast as possible to reinforce their allies before those were overwhelmed by a large-scale communist offensive across the breath of Western Europe. The last Canadian units had departed Germany in 1946 while US Army strength on the continent declined to a Cold War nadir of 83,400 dispersed and ill-prepared troops by December 1949.⁷⁰³ Even the influence of America's atomic arsenal was in question at the time, with ongoing debates on the actual effectiveness of these weapons on the battlefield while its value as a strategic deterrent was bound to decrease into the 1950s with the growth of Soviet nuclear stockpiles.⁷⁰⁴ Any influx of conventional forces from North America once the hostilities began would take time and require keeping open the North Atlantic lines of communications in the face of significant submarine forces, especially if they had the opportunity to take up their war stations in advance of a surprise attack.⁷⁰⁵ As for the enemy's surface fleet, while not yet strong enough to turn the central front in Europe nor threaten the North American

⁷⁰¹ Philippe Quérel, "La Marine entre l'O.T.A.N. et l'Union française au début des années 1950 [The Navy between NATO and French Union at the Beginning of the 1950s]," *Revue historique des Armées* 201 (December 1995): 45; and Robert S. Jordan, *Alliance Strategy and Navies: The Evolution and Scope of NATO's Maritime Dimension* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 109.

⁷⁰² Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years*, 84; and Taillemite, *Dictionnaire des marins français*, 327.

⁷⁰³ Isabel Campbell, *Unlikely Diplomats: The Canadian Brigade in Germany, 1951-64* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2013), 22-24; and United States Army Europe, "History Timeline," last accessed 26 May 2017, <http://www.eur.army.mil/organization/timeline.htm>.

⁷⁰⁴ Lawrence Freedman, "The First Two Generations of Nuclear Strategists," in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 737-741; and John Buckley, *Air Power in the Age of Total War* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 208.

⁷⁰⁵ Bryan Ranft and Geoffrey Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: MacMillan Press, 1989), 99-100; and George W. Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power – The U.S. Navy, 1890-1990* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 288-289.

shores directly, it certainly had the means to neutralize West European ports through mine and air warfare in support of a westward ground offensive.⁷⁰⁶

By December 1949, Moscow still maintained twenty-seven Red Army divisions in East Germany and seventy-five more were spread out between Poland and the Ural Mountains. And these formations did not include the forces of its satellites. Facing this formidable body were a mere twelve NATO divisions dispersed around the continent at various levels of readiness. Barely one thousand allied aircraft could confront six thousand Soviet planes.⁷⁰⁷ Defence against such a juggernaut would require to trade space for time, though at great cost to the European members of the Alliance. The United States joined NATO with a short-term strategy in 1949 that accepted the initial loss of virtually the whole of continental Europe while North American forces were assembling in Great Britain to launch another D-Day to roll back the enemy. Peacetime political pressure from the Allies, however, forced adoption in April 1950 of the Medium Term Defence Plan as official NATO policy.

The MTDP promulgated a 90-degree defence line to be maintained at all cost forward of the Ijssel and Rhine Rivers (on a North-South axis) and along the Italian Alps (along a rough East-West line). Holding those positions would avoid sacrificing the Benelux and French heartland by falling back to the Channel and the Pyrenees.⁷⁰⁸ Either way, the survival of Western Europe would play out as a desperate fighting withdrawal across West Germany, with the use of American atomic bombs on the frontline to blunt the Soviet advance. Sustaining the struggle on land would necessitate waging war on a critical maritime front as well, spread across the entire North Atlantic area.

Within months of the surrender of Japan, American admirals envisioned the USN assembling carrier task forces capable of delivering atomic weapons deep into enemy territory, for the dual purposes of strategic bombing of its industrial centres and elimination of the Soviet naval bases in tactical terms.⁷⁰⁹ Self-sustaining surface groups would move into the Norwegian and Barents Seas, as well as the Mediterranean and near the USSR's Pacific coast to bring targets within range of carrier aviation. This offensive mission would take on an overriding priority in shaping the Cold War USN while Britain's Royal Navy focused on a more defensive role for the escort of large transoceanic convoys in the expected reiteration of the Battle of the Atlantic.⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰⁶ NATO, *Report from the Military Committee to the North Atlantic Defense Committee on North Atlantic Treaty Organization Medium Term Plan* (dated 28 March 1950), last accessed 12 July 2017, <http://www.nato.int/docu/stratdoc/eng/a500328d.pdf>.

⁷⁰⁷ Kaplan, *A Community of Interests*, 77-78; as well as Jean Doise and Maurice Vaïsse, *Diplomatie et outil militaire: Politique étrangère de la France, 1871-2015* [Diplomacy and Military Instrument: The Foreign Policy of France, 1871-2015], 3rd ed. (Paris, FR: Éditions du Seuil, 2015), 514-515.

⁷⁰⁸ Lawrence S. Kaplan, "Strategic Problems and the Central Sector, 1948-1969: An Overview," in *Blueprints for Battle: Planning for War in Central Europe, 1948-1968* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2012), 6-8; and Andrew M. Johnston, "The Construction of NATO's Medium Term Defence Plan and the Diplomacy of Conventional Strategy, 1949-1950," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 12, no. 2 (2001): 79-124.

⁷⁰⁹ Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power*, 284-292; and Jakub J. Grygiel, "The Dilemmas of US Maritime Supremacy in the Early Cold War," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 2 (April 2005): 187-216.

⁷¹⁰ Thomas C. Hone et al., "The Development of the Angled-Deck Aircraft Carrier," *Naval War College Review* 64, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 67-69; and Eric J. Grove, *From Vanguard to Trident: British Naval Policy since World II* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1987), 31-34.

Within the approach of mission specialization first envisioned under the Western Union and later adopted by NATO, the navies of France and the other continental states were to complement the Anglo-American fleets through subordinate missions.

Though secondary, such roles were critical, indeed essential, to sustain operations on the central front. NATO inherited a logistics infrastructure established after 1945 east of the Rhine by the United States and Great Britain to support occupation forces in Germany, not to fight a war. Supplies flowed south from two critical ports on the North Sea, Hamburg and Bremerhaven, resulting in logistic lines that ran parallel to the border with the Communist territories. This disposition violated an essential military tenet whereby such a line should be perpendicular to the front in order to avoid its interruption in case of an enemy breakthrough. Even more concerning in the NATO case, the ports were badly positioned on the North Sea and too close to the Soviet occupation zone, forming a bottleneck that could be cut off from the sea, struck from the air or quickly seized by a Red Army advance.

A sounder approach would be an east-west line anchored on France's distant and open Atlantic coast, forming the backbone of a strategy of defence in depth. Washington and Paris concluded an accord to that effect in November 1950 to make the ports of La Pallice and Bordeaux, both on the Bay of Biscay, the head of a framework of railways, pipelines and depots to be constructed along an axis passing through Poitiers, Orléans and Fontainebleau before reaching a terminal in Nancy, near the German border. Supplies and reinforcement would be routed from there to final destinations along the central front in case of conflict.⁷¹¹ The US agreed to fund the largest part of infrastructure costs while France assumed the burden of defending the seaborne approaches to the Atlantic ports, with a particular emphasis on minesweeping.

Specialization made sense in an alliance context and a similar division of duties had worked well during the Second World War, at least in an Anglo-American perspective. However, peacetime political considerations and questions of national interests beyond NATO greatly complicated its application among the smaller powers. Nowhere was this predicament more obvious than in France. Fourth Republic leaders hoped to form with the United States and Great Britain a powerful triumvirate within the alliance but their ambitions continued to be undermined in 1949 by the conflicting demands of rebuilding military strength in Europe while rejuvenating civilian infrastructure in the face of continued social unrest at home, all the while fighting the insurgency in Indochina and sustaining troops across the *Union française*. The French navy represented a microcosm of this awkward situation.

Lemmonier and his fellow admirals rejoiced in the advent of NATO and looked forward to renewed material support from the allies. Nevertheless, they refused to limit their vision to the subordinate roles assigned to them by *les Anglo-saxons*. They readily accepted responsibility for

⁷¹¹ Philippe Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique: la marine française (1945-1958)* [Toward a Nuclear Navy: The French Navy (1945-1958)] (Paris, FR: LGDJ, 1997), 171-172; and James A. Huston, *Outposts and Allies: U.S. Army Logistics in the Cold War, 1945-1953* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1988), 92. For the original US-France agreement on this matter, see telegram from US Ambassador in France to the Secretary of State dated 4 November 1950 in United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1950 – Volume III – Western Europe* (hereafter *FRUS 1950*) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), 1435-1436.

these missions but they also continued to pursue national ambitions and would soon come to decry the apparent arrogance of the Americans in scrutinizing their demands for military aid. However, *Rue Royale* planners may not have fully grasped that juggling peacetime political considerations and questions of national interest challenged leaders on both sides of the Atlantic.

The 1948 election had kept Truman in power for a second term and allowed the Democratic Party to wrestle control of the House of Representatives and the Senate from the Republicans.⁷¹² Nevertheless, administration officials remained cognizant of the need to cultivate bipartisan support at outset of the Cold War, especially when it came to instituting a regime of active military assistance to the newly reunited Western European allies. Any such programme needed to minimize comparisons with the wartime Lend-Lease Act, still perceived by many in Washington as overly generous and abused by so-called free-riders. Instead, authorities had to calibrate the provision of such aid in terms that measured effects not only for the purpose of mutual assistance but in their actual contribution "... to the military security of the United States in the event of war."⁷¹³ There laid the challenge of developing an effective apparatus to coordinate peacetime distribution of military assistance in ways that would conciliate the often conflicting demands of collective defence and national interests before hostilities commenced.

FRAMEWORK FOR PEACETIME MILITARY ASSISTANCE

Distribution of American assistance to Cold War allies did not take place strictly within the confines of the North Atlantic Treaty. This unprecedented peacetime commitment both preceded the organization's founding in time and subsumed it within a larger global vision. Truman's statement to Congress in February 1947 had launched the doctrine of containment, giving rise that same year to direct military assistance to Greece and Turkey; the Marshall speech announcing the European Recovery Program; the signature of the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance between the United States and several Central and South American states as a pact of hemispheric collective defence (the "Rio Pact" concluded on 2 September 1947 in Rio de Janeiro); as well as continued commitment to the Nationalist camp in China's civil war despite growing doubts about the viability of Chiang Kai-shek's regime.⁷¹⁴ Negotiations with other nations got underway to discuss economic and military assistance in parallel to the talks already taking place with the Western Union. These developments gave rise to concerns that so many uncoordinated initiatives could become self-defeating as observed by historian Chester J. Pach in reference to a late 1947 report from the US Army Plans and Operations Division:

Emergency assistance on a country-by-country basis... prevented systematic efforts to balance commitments against resources and postponed considerations of permanent solutions to foreign armament needs. The deletion of surplus material, the sharp contraction of munitions industries since 1945... threatened not only current programs

⁷¹² Robert A. Divine, "The Cold War and the Election of 1948," *The Journal of American History* 59, no. 1 (June 1972): 90-110.

⁷¹³ Kaplan, *A Community of Interests*, 24.

⁷¹⁴ Text of the original Rio Pact can be found at Organization of American States, *Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance*, 2 September 1947, last accessed 31 May 2017, <http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/b-29.html>.

but also future efforts to arm foreign nations... [D]rastic reforms were needed to maintain military assistance as an effective, continuing instrument of national policy.⁷¹⁵

As recommended in a National Security Council (NSC) report submitted during the NATO Treaty negotiations, the Truman administration set about lobbying Congress for not only "... a North Atlantic arms bill but a broader measure that would provide the president with the general authority and funds he lacked to arm foreign nations... [and] establish an integrated, worldwide program for military assistance."⁷¹⁶ On 25 July 1949, the same day that President Truman formally ratified the North Atlantic Treaty, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs started examining a White House draft of the Mutual Defence Assistance Act, an ambitious proposal shaped around distribution of aid through three channels: transfer of equipment (so called end-items), direct financial aid (to finance the production of military equipment in North America for the Allies and to assist the Europeans in acquiring the means to increase their own production capacity), and access by allied personnel to school and production facilities in the United States as well as the dispatch of U.S. experts to allied countries to train and advise in the production, use and maintenance of American equipment.⁷¹⁷

The draft legislation came under close scrutiny and raised concerns in Washington, particularly among senators denouncing the authority it granted to the president in deciding the allocation of aid to specific countries, a responsibility they felt belonged to the House. Laborious negotiations through the following months led to successive amendments and eventual enactment on 6 October of a text carefully worded to authorize the provision of direct military aid to foreign recipients while circumscribing the president's autonomy in attributing such assistance.⁷¹⁸ The Mutual Defense Assistance Act, however, did not elaborate on the mechanisms to disburse the funds once appropriated and left it to the executive branch to determine. As a first step, Truman attributed overall responsibility for managing the worldwide programme to the State Department, placing the Office of the Director of Mutual Defense Assistance under the Secretary of State.⁷¹⁹

In turn, the Secretary of Defense appointed Major General Lemnitzer to head the Department of Defense Office of Military Assistance to provide "... unified direction and authoritative coordination of the military phase of planning, programming, logistic and training activities in connection with military assistance."⁷²⁰ Aid to NATO members became the purview of the interdepartmental European Coordinating Committee (ECC) established in London under the American ambassador to the United Kingdom, as the political, military, and economic coordinating agency for the program in the European area. A similar approach – the distribution of economic and military aid both controlled by diplomats – shaped the Military Assistance

⁷¹⁵ Chester J. Pach, *Arming the Free World: The Origins of the United States Military Assistance Program, 1945-1950* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 130.

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁷¹⁷ Kaplan, *A Community of Interests*, 44.

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 45-49; and Steven L. Rearden, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense – Volume 1 – The Formative Years 1947-1950* (Washington, DC: Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1984), 504-506. The text of the Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949 can be found in full at Annex D of Kaplan, *A Community of Interests*, 214-222.

⁷¹⁹ Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years*, 24; and Rearden, *The Formative Years*, 510. James Bruce, a former bank executive and ambassador to Argentina, was appointed as the first director on 17 October 1949.

⁷²⁰ Secretary of Defense Memo, 25 November 1949, cited in Rearden, *The Formative Years*, 510.

Advisory Group (MAAG) set up in each recipient country. They operated under direction of the local ambassador as part of a country team that included political, economic, and military personnel. Military assistance reached recipients through army, navy and air force sections in each MAAG.⁷²¹ By late 1949, the MDAP framework was in place and ready to commence disbursing aid to the NATO allies subject to two requirements that needed implementation before the appropriation of funds as specifically stated in the Mutual Defense Assistance Act: adoption of a strategic concept for the integrated defence of the North Atlantic area, and bilateral agreements to define the assistance provided to each country.

A comprehensive framework was necessary to shape the development of allied military forces in the coming years based on missions assigned by the Alliance to national forces. The NATO strategic concept developed by the Military Committee's Standing Group through Fall 1949 made for sober reading in view of the overwhelming superiority of the Soviet Union in conventional forces. It emphasized the challenges of defending against a Communist offensive and reinforced the concept of specialization promoted by the Americans. Reduced to its core, the document stated that the United States would conduct strategic bombing in the enemy's rear and be ready to use tactical nuclear weapons on the central front; the USN and the RN would look after the transoceanic sea lines of communications; and the continental allies – foremost France – would provide the bulk of the troops deployed east of the Rhine to take on the Red Army.⁷²²

This division of labour required France and her neighbours to expand their ground forces quickly and develop complementary capabilities in terms of air defence and tactical air support, as well as coastal and harbour defence. This effort would facilitate a strategy anchored on the Ijssel-Rhine-Alps defence line.⁷²³ Unstated was the dire cost the European partners would pay in resisting a Soviet onslaught – on the front lines and at home given the enemy's capability to conduct an air offensive across the length of the continent – while the United States and Canada remained relatively safe beyond the Atlantic, at least until the Soviets developed a capability for intercontinental bombing.⁷²⁴ But at that juncture the Europeans could only agree to these terms in order to secure North American assistance.

The NATO Defence Committee endorsed the Standing Group's document on 1 December 1949, and forwarded it for acceptance by the North Atlantic Council on 6 January. President Truman approved the concept on 27 January, the very day that the United States concluded bilateral agreements implementing aid programmes with the eight European allies which had requested military assistance, including France.⁷²⁵ Both chambers of the French parliament approved this accord on 15 March 1950. By then, the aging *Dixmude*, once again

⁷²¹ Rearden, *The Formative Years*, 511; and Kaplan, *A Community of Interests*, 51-52.

⁷²² Andrew M. Johnston, "The Construction of NATO's Medium Term Defence Plan and the Diplomacy of Conventional Strategy, 1949-1950," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 12, no. 2 (June 2001): 94.

⁷²³ Rearden, *The Formative Years*, 482.

⁷²⁴ The main Soviet strategic bomber was the Tupolev TU-24, a reverse-engineered version of the US B-29 Superforteress. It could fly across the length of Western Europe from bases in the USSR and return but only reach North America on one-way "suicide" sorties. Maloney, *Securing Command of the Sea*, 88.

⁷²⁵ Rearden, *The Formative Years*, 482; Johnston, "The Construction of NATO's Medium Term Defence Plan," 94; and Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years*, 24; and United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951 – Volume IV Part 1 – Europe: Political and Economic Developments* (hereafter *FRUS 1951*) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985), 771.

employed as a humble aircraft transport, had already arrived in Norfolk, Virginia to embark a first consignment of American aid. Washington and Paris publicized the event as the dawn of an unprecedented Franco-American friendship that promoted peace through deterrence. The ship left with great fanfare on 18 March, bursting at the seams with twenty-two Grumman F6F-5 Hellcats fighters, twenty-two Curtiss SB2C-5 Helldivers dive-bombers, 145 tons of aircraft spares, and 276 tons of miscellaneous materials.⁷²⁶ Boasts about the delivery of naval equipment as the first milestone in the provision of assistance should not be misinterpreted however.

The priority allocated to France in the overall MDAP appropriation was clear. The bulk of the US \$900M initially budgeted for fiscal year 1950 was directed to the NATO allies and France received fully half of that allocation. But that was primarily in support of Paris' commitment to provide 55 percent of the ground troops to be deployed in West Germany and the determination to pursue a rapid buildup of the country's tactical aviation, leaving only a marginal portion to the *Marine nationale*.⁷²⁷ French admirals may well have considered the launch of peacetime US military assistance under Truman eerily reminiscent of the wartime programme agreed to by Roosevelt at Anfa in early 1943, focused as it was on building up Giraud's North African army. The French government having endorsed these priorities, *la défense du Rhin* looked set to continue dominating formulation of defence policy in the *métropole*. This stance left France's navy in a difficult position when trying to avail itself of a greater share of American aid and outlining its contribution to defeating a land offensive in West Germany.

APPORTIONING US ASSISTANCE TO FRANCE

Planning for resumption of American aid to the *Marine nationale* took place in a context of considerable acrimony in Paris. *Rue Royale* officials spent the greater part of the Queuille Government's time in office (September 1948 – October 1949) arguing over the place of sea power in the vision of Minister for National Defence Paul Ramadier. He focused on the defence of the Rhine in a context of great fiscal restraint. French leaders had resumed a strategy of alliance at the dawn of the Cold War – first through the Dunkirk Treaty, then the Western Union, then NATO – and could look forward to the commitment by the United States of considerable resources to the *redressement* of France through the Marshall Plan and MDAP. Nevertheless, the government's priority remained that of salvaging the value of the French currency as part of the ongoing battle against a rising inflation that still threatened the social and economic fabric of the country. Key to the effort was decreasing national military expenditures which consumed a quarter of the government's budget in 1948-1949.⁷²⁸

⁷²⁶ Jean Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches* [Aircraft Carriers *Dixmude* and *Arromanches*] (Nantes, FR: Marines Éditions, 1998), 77-78; and Charles C. Cogan, "From the Fall of France to the *Force de Frappe* : The Remaking of French Military Power, 1940-62," in *The Fog of Peace and War Planning: Military and Strategic Planning under the Fog of Uncertainty* (London, UK: Routledge, 2006), 237.

⁷²⁷ Kaplan, *A Community of Interests*, 54; and Gérard Bossuat, *Les aides américaines économiques et militaires à la France (1938-1960): une nouvelle image des rapports de puissance* [American Economic and Military Assistance to France (1938-1960): A New Portrait of the Power Relationships] (Paris, FR: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 2001), last accessed 22 October 2017, <http://books.openedition.org/igpde/2023>.

⁷²⁸ Maurice Vaisse, "Ramadier et les problèmes de défense nationale (1947-1949) [Ramadier and the National Defence Problems (1947-1949)]," in *Paul Ramadier, la République et le socialisme* [Paul Ramadier, the Republic and Socialism] (Paris: Complexe, 1990), 281; and Philippe Masson, *Histoire de*

To this end, Ramadier sought to implement important reductions in manpower across all three services. Prevailing conditions – namely the commitment to building up forces for the defence of the Rhine while maintaining an adequate contingent fighting in Indochina – conspired to minimize gains on that front. The only alternative was imposing economies on the materiel side. Ramadier initially experienced more success in that area by restraining modernization and growth of a heavy bomber aviation and limiting naval constructions (recalling the suspension of work on the *Jean Bart* and *PA-28* in Spring 1949) but at the cost of increasingly bitter relations with the secretaries of state for the air force and the navy, as well as their senior military staff.⁷²⁹ Of note, the growing fracture among the political figures overseeing the military establishment developed in parallel to the decrease in influence of the *État-major de la défense nationale* (EMDN – National Defence Staff), marking the decline of another unifying voice in defence.⁷³⁰ Its influential wartime commander, General Alphonse Juin, left in May 1947, only to be replaced by a succession of lesser-known figures, a trend no doubt encouraged by generals and admirals who foresaw that the budget battles ahead would necessitate strong service voices. The thin veneer of collegiality at the top of France's defence establishment seemed to crack at the very moment when distribution of material assistance from the United States necessitated unified input from the Allies.

US frustrations had come to the fore as a result of the inability of Western Union members to forge united requests for assistance in Alliance terms, and the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty did not alleviate this concern. France's first NATO submission was typical in that regard, mixing up demands for equipment necessary to bulk up its strength in Europe, North Africa and Indochina as well as providing for well-rounded armed forces rather than clearly underlining how these would contribute to the Alliance's division of labour.⁷³¹ Surprisingly, given later disagreements that would arise as to the role of the French navy within NATO, the list submitted by *Rue Royale* planners on 5 March 1949 as part of the larger national inventory seemed notably restrained and suitably adapted to the Alliance needs.

It included requests for one light aircraft carrier (meant to replace the aging *Dixmude* to form the nucleus of an anti-submarine "hunter-killer group"), six destroyer escorts, twenty-four minesweepers, 120 aircraft, as well as a mix of upgraded equipment (minesweeping suites, radars and sonars, modern gunnery) and various ammunition.⁷³² But the Queuille government had not yet suspended work on *Jean Bart* and *PA-28* by that point. One could begin to see in these initial

l'armée française de 1914 à nos jours [History of the French Army from 1914 to Today] (Paris, FR: Librairie académique Perrin, 1999), 381.

⁷²⁹ For an extensive discussions, see Strub, *La renaissance de la Marine française*, 105-144; and Doise and Vaisse, *Diplomatie et outil militaire*, 501-505.

⁷³⁰ Masson, *Histoire de l'armée française*, 376-377; and Philippe Vial, "La genèse du poste de chef d'état-major des armées [Genesis of the Post of Chief of Staff of the Armies]," *Revue historique des Armées* 248 (2007): 34.

⁷³¹ Kaplan, *A Community of Interests*, 56-57.

⁷³² Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 180; and Philippe Vial, "De la nécessité de l'aide, des inconvénients de la dépendance: le réarmement de la Marine sous la IV^e République [Of the Need for Assistance and the Drawbacks of Dependency: The Navy's Rearmament Under the Fourth Republic]," *Revue historique des Armées* 215 (June 1999): 25. This list was actually produced in preparation for a meeting of the WU Consultative Council scheduled to take place in London on 14-15 March 1949 but meant to shape the initial demands for American assistance on the part of the five Western Europe members once the North Atlantic Treaty took effect. Strub, *La renaissance de la Marine française*, 103-104.

talks the approach the French navy would adopt for most of the 1950s in dealing with Allied assistance: focus demands for foreign aid on those instruments necessary for subordinate missions attributed to France by the Allies so that national resources could be dedicated to forging the means of a true blue-water navy.

This approach came to a grinding halt within months in the face of higher economic and social priorities. Ramadier forced suspension of work on France's two new capital ships while limiting metropolitan shipyards to work already underway for a few escorts, submarines and amphibious vessels. The first tranche of American assistance for fiscal year 1950 (1 July 1949 to 30 June 1950) included funding for delivery of six destroyer escorts, spare parts and munitions, as well as requested aircraft (sixty F6F-5 *Hellcat* and sixty SB2C-5 *Helldiver*, starting with those embarked in *Dixmude* in March 1950) and provision of training in the United States for pilots. However, only six YMS minesweepers, less than a quarter of those demanded originally, hoisted the Tricolour in the following months while the request for an aircraft carrier was ignored altogether. The USN elected instead to prorogue the lease on *Dixmude* at no cost, a small consolation for French admirals.⁷³³ The US proved generous by allocating half of the MDAP envelope to France that year but the proportion of the French defence budget allocated to the *Marine nationale* decreased to 15.3%, in contrast to the 20-25% figure that had prevailed in the decades leading to the Second World War.⁷³⁴ There appeared the great paradox of 1949: the prospect of increased allied assistance allowed Ramadier to decrease national expenditures dedicated to the navy while US aid would neglect French naval rearmament, at least initially.

Later that same year, another frustrating paradox confronted Lemonnier and his staff. Following a period of relative longevity, the Queuille government fell on 5 October, after thirteen months in office. This change forced the departure of Ramadier as Minister of National Defence, certainly welcome news at *Rue Royale*, but it ushered in another period of cabinet instability that prevented an in-depth review of his policy of defence of the Rhine and *mise en paranthèse de la flotte*. Georges Bidault led two successive cabinets (October 1949 – February 1950 and February – June 1950) with Henri Queuille returning for barely a week in early July 1950. René Pleven followed from July 1950 to February 1951 and Queuille again resumed power from February to July 1951. During these same twenty months, René Pleven and Jean Raymond-Laurent would act respectively as minister of national defence and secretary of state for the navy from October 1949 to July 1950, each to be replaced by Jules Moch and André Monteil who both remained at the helm until Summer 1951.

⁷³³ Vial, "De la nécessité de l'aide, des inconvénients de la dépendance," 25; Strub, *La renaissance de la Marine française*, 162 ; and National Archives and Records Administration (College Park, MD; hereafter NARA), RG 84 Box 2 – Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State – France, Paris Embassy – Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP) Subject Files, 1949-1953, Letter from US Ambassador to France David Bruce to France Minister for Foreign Affairs Robert Schuman, 31 May 1950, including the secret annex "Fiscal Year 1950 MDA Program – France." Although France had received the former HMS *Biter* from Great Britain on 9 April 1945, the ship actually belonged to the United States. Technically, Great Britain first transferred the ship back to the USN for transfer to the *Marine nationale*. The United States retained control over the modalities of its lease to France from thereon. Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches*, 60.

⁷³⁴ Philippe Strub, "La renaissance de la Marine française sous la Quatrième République, 1945-1956 [Renewal of the French Navy under the Fourth Republic, 1945-1956]," *Bulletin de l'Institut Pierre Renouvin* 1, no. 25 (2007): 201.

This instability resulted in great part from the unraveling of the Third Force movement. The Socialists grew increasingly at odds with successive coalition governments which moved steadily to the right of the political spectrum in their economic and social policies as well as in their attachment to the Atlantic camp in the context of the Cold War.⁷³⁵ Concerned with regaining leadership of the Left in the face of the continued popularity of the Communist Party, members of the *Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière* (SFIO, the French Section of the Workers' International League, today's *Parti socialiste*) left cabinet altogether in the wake of the June 1951 elections, which installed the Fourth Republic's second legislature (1951-1955).

Cabinet instability did not necessarily mean that national policy making in general and defence planning in particular had to begin anew every time a new government was sworn in. Throughout the years of the Fourth Republic, key players remained at the cabinet table, merely moving from one government to the other following hard-fought negotiations among the parties. Other voices continued contributing through influential bodies such as the National Defence Commission of the *Assemblée nationale*. Nevertheless, the continued possibility of a cabinet falling at short notice, especially over budgetary matters, merged with the destabilizing voice of the Communist Party in the Assembly and constant denunciations by Gaullist deputies of any initiative that did not make a direct contribution to the *grandeur* of a sovereign France. These factors greatly complicated the task of military planners seeking to respond to the priorities of the sitting government, especially for those toiling at the *Rue Royale* as they soon faced the added uncertainty surrounding the succession of Admiral Lemonnier, at the helm of the French navy since the 1943 reunification.

Selected for the post of naval deputy to SACEUR, Lemonnier was succeeded on 31 May 1950 as Chief of the Naval General Staff by Vice-Admiral Robert Battet, commander of the Far East maritime forces in 1947-1948 and head of the navy's training schools in 1949-1950. The choice was widely praised in naval circles given the admiral's operational experience and professional credibility but his tour turned short when he passed away on 15 July 1950 after a few weeks of acute illness.⁷³⁶ Appointed to the same post on 18 August, Vice-Admiral Roger Lambert lasted less than a year, felled as he was by his own shortcomings, a superb mariner and warrior but prone to bouts of drunkenness and patent Anglophobia.⁷³⁷

Following a grave incident in the presence of shocked NATO naval attachés who witnessed both symptoms during a lively lunch hosted on board the cruiser *Émile Bertin*, Lambert was effectively fired on 1 June 1951 and replaced by Vice-Admiral Henri Nomy.⁷³⁸ Nomy, as discussed earlier, played a key role in the resurrection of the *Aéronavale* in 1943-1947. Since then, he had served as Vice-Chief of the Naval General Staff (1947-1949), Inspector General of

⁷³⁵ Frank Giles, *The Locust Years: The Story of the Fourth French Republic, 1946-1958* (London, UK: Secker & Warburg, 1991), 143; and Gilles Morin, "La Troisième Force [The Third Force]," *Historiens et géographes* 89, no. 361 (March 1998): 368-371.

⁷³⁶ Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 20; and Taillemite, *Dictionnaire des marins français*, 32.

⁷³⁷ Strub, *La renaissance de la Marine française*, 199; and Étienne Taillemite, *Dictionnaire des marins français*, 295-296

⁷³⁸ Strub, *La renaissance de la Marine française*, 205. Strub based his account of Lambert's firing on the memoirs of the minister of national defence at the time, Jules Moch, in *Une si longue vie* [Such a Long Life] (Paris, FR: Robert Laffont, 1976), 403-404.

Naval Aviation (1949) and Inspector General of the Navy (1950).⁷³⁹ His appointment as head of the navy – and that of Battet previously – underlined the rise in influence of naval aviators in the *Marine nationale* and brought much renewed focus and steadiness to the post, remaining in that role until July 1960.

Naval planners in Paris certainly welcomed such renewed focus and steadiness, especially in the wake of a dramatic occurrence in Asia a year earlier, with deep repercussions that rippled all the way to France. Though taking place half-way around the world, the sudden march of North Korean troops across the 38th parallel on 25 June 1950 immediately resulted in increased tensions in Europe as many observers decried the event as the precursor to a general Soviet offensive against NATO. This premise gave greater urgency to the need for the provision of military aid from North America to Europe. It also boosted allocation of France's own resources to national defence despite the Fourth Republic's unfinished effort at civilian reconstruction and the deepening quagmire in Indochina. Through this crisis another opportunity arose for the *Marine nationale* to renew its approach of leveraging foreign assistance to acquire the means to discharge its subordinate alliance missions while maximizing national resources to develop a credible blue-water fleet. But it remained to be seen whether Battet and Lambert could seize the moment during their short-lived tenures.

KOREA, INDOCHINA, AND RENEWED AMERICAN ASSISTANCE

Another war brought another paradox. The outbreak of the Korean conflict imposed further military burden on an overstretched France but also greatly increased the perceived threat against Western Europe and the *métropole* itself, resulting in a marked boost in NATO's military preparedness and increase of foreign assistance within the Atlantic Alliance. The circumstances behind hostilities on the Korean peninsula are well known.⁷⁴⁰ Less familiar is the French commitment to making a contribution in repelling the Communist invasion. Both US officials and Fourth Republic leaders expressed similar concerns in the days following the march of Kim Il-sung's forces into South Korea, as summed up by French political analyst Raymon Aron on the day following the invasion:

Since 1946, the Soviet Union has pursued a course of permanent aggression against the free world but using limited means. Cold War conventions seemed to prohibit the use of armed force, be it by Russian troops or those of satellite nations. For the first time, this prohibition is violated. Some may say that Korean forces are not attacking another country but liberating an occupied part of their own land. It remains that up to yesterday all borders traced at Tehran and Yalta, even the most absurd ones, had so far remained inviolate... Tolerating this form of aggression in 1950 would call for further aggression in 1952 or 1953 that would leave no chance for an enduring peace.⁷⁴¹

⁷³⁹ Taillemite, *Dictionnaire des marins français*, 393 ; and *Les hommes qui ont fait la Marine française* [The Men Who Forged the French Navy] (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2008), 383.

⁷⁴⁰ For adequate summaries, see Gaddis, *The Cold War*, 40-46; and J.P.D. Dunbabin, *The Cold War*, 2nd ed. (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education, 2008), 170-183. Maurice Vaisse provides a French perspective in Vaisse, *Les relations internationales depuis 1945*, 29-30.

⁷⁴¹ Raymon Aron, "Épreuve de force [Test of Strength]," *Le Figaro* (26 June 1950), last modified 25 June 2015, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/histoire/archives/2015/06/24/26010-20150624ARTFIG00333-le-25-juin-1950-la-coree-du-nord-envahit-la-coree-du-sud.php>.

This statement very much reflected the common resolve of the governments of Georges Bidault, Henri Queuille and René Pleven, which rotated in quick succession during these critical weeks.⁷⁴² France, holding a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, firmly backed successive resolutions denouncing the North Korean aggression and authorizing the formation of a unified military force in Korea to be commanded by an American officer.⁷⁴³ Within weeks, the *Amirauté* ordered the colonial sloop *La Grandière* to proceed from Indochina to Korea where it served in support of the UN troops besieged in Pusan, before taking part in the daring amphibious assault against Inchon on 15 September and the landing operation to take Wonsan (on North Korea's east coast) on 20 October.

The ship continued discharging various missions in the region until recalled to Indochina late in November.⁷⁴⁴ That same month, the *bataillon de Corée* arrived in Pusan and entered the frontline in January 1951, where it continued operating as part of the US Army's 2nd Division until the armistice of 27 July 1953.⁷⁴⁵ Both sailors of *La Grandière* in the early months and French army troops – on average one thousand soldiers through the following years – distinguished themselves in combat. Nevertheless, given the scale of the conflict, some cynical observers derided France's effort in Korea as mere tokenism following the grand statements proffered at the UN in Summer 1950. Such a perspective underestimated the scale of the challenge faced by French forces already fighting alone in another part of Asia.

Though considered a manageable problem since its outbreak in December 1946, the *Vietminh* insurrection in Indochina only grew worse in the following years. The fighting forced the steady expansion of the *Corps expéditionnaire français en Extrême-Orient* (CEFEO – French Far East Expeditionary Corps) to 154,000 French and colonial troops in 1950.⁷⁴⁶ On the political side, France reluctantly granted Cambodia, Laos and a unified Vietnam (Tonkin, Annam and Cochinchina) a semblance of sovereignty as associate states within the *Union française* in

⁷⁴² The Bidault cabinet fell on 24 June 1950 but he remained as a caretaker premier until Queuille formed a second cabinet on 2 July but the latter had to resign only two days later. Queuille continued to discharge daily affairs until René Pleven formed a more lasting cabinet on 12 July, staying in power until 28 February 1951. France-politique.fr, "Histoire politique de la Quatrième République – Vie politique," last modified 19 July 2013, <http://www.france-politique.fr/vie-politique-1945-1958.htm>. For a contemporary analysis of this latest bout of government instability and the impact of the Korean War in France, see correspondence from the US Ambassador to France to the Secretary of State, "Review of Political Developments during the Months of June, July and August 1950," dated 1 September 1950, *FRUS 1950*, 1383-1387.

⁷⁴³ United Nations, "Security Council Resolution 82 of 25 June 1950," last accessed 1 July 2017, <http://unscr.com/files/1950/00082.pdf>; and United Nations, "Security Council Resolution 84 of 7 July 1950," last accessed 1 July 2017, <http://unscr.com/files/1950/00084.pdf>.

⁷⁴⁴ Two sailors embarked in *La Grandière* during these events provided their reminiscences in Louis Tailhades, "La Marine nationale dans la Guerre de Corée [The French Navy and the Korean War]," *Revue historique des armées* 180, no. 3 (Juin 1990): 87-91; and Léon C. Rochette, "Mine Warfare Korea," and "French and English in Korean Waters: Operation Chromite," *Mine War News* 3, no. 3 (October 1998), last accessed 1 July 2017, http://france-coree.assoc.pagespro-orange.fr/eurokorvet/uk/minewarfare_korea.htm.

⁷⁴⁵ Kenneth Hamburger, "Le rôle du « bataillon de Corée » dans la guerre de Corée [The Role of the "Battalion of Korea" in the Korean War,]" *Revue historique des Armées* 246 (2007), last modified 1 August 2008, <http://rha.revues.org/2453>; and Jacques Vernet and Pierre Ferrari, *Corée 1950-1953: L'héroïque bataillon français* [Korea 1950-1953: The Heroic French Battalion] (Le Prouet, FR: Éditions Lavauzelle, 2004), *passim*.

⁷⁴⁶ Doise and Vaïsse, *Diplomatie et outil militaire*, 554; and Cogan, "From the Fall of France to the *Force de Frappe*," 235 and 240-241.

1949.⁷⁴⁷ This gesture did little to placate Ho Chi Minh and his supporters fighting for full independence, especially as Mao Zedong seized power in Beijing in October, assuring Vietnamese rebels safe havens in southern China and increased material support. Simultaneously, news of the dramatic *affaires des généraux* (the Generals' Affair) exploded on the public scene, deepening the disarray already existing within the French political and military classes regarding Indochina.

Following an extensive tour of battle lines in Spring 1949, General Georges Revers, Chief of Staff of the French Army, drafted a top secret report on the situation in the former colony. He concluded that even a considerable increase in the size of the expeditionary corps or direct intervention by the United States would not bring about a military resolution. The problem was political in nature and required a political solution that entailed a negotiated settlement with the *Vietminh*.⁷⁴⁸ The report, meant for very limited distribution at the highest level of government, was leaked within weeks, exposing the French public, France's allies, as well as Indochinese friends and foes to views at odds with the confident discourse still mouthed by authorities in Paris at the time. Considerable recriminations and deep suspicions ensued between politicians and generals, as well as within different army circles as to the source of the leak and the report's credibility.⁷⁴⁹ By the end of the year, General Revers and a host of other figures had been effectively fired while several others elected to retire to avoid similar humiliation. *Marine nationale* officials avoided that particular controversy but French admirals could not fully escape the distrust with which politicians tarred those in uniforms as civil-military relations grew increasingly confrontational during that period.

Adding to tensions in the *métropole*, setbacks in Asia complicated matters. The *Vietminh* inflicted a humiliating defeat on the French army during the Battle of *Route Coloniale 4* in

⁷⁴⁷ The associate states of the *Union française* assumed a larger part of autonomy in the management of their internal political and administrative affairs but France retained control over their defence, diplomacy and national finances. On the arrangements negotiated between Paris and the various Indochinese authorities in Spring and Summer 1949, see Fredrik Logevall, *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* (New York, NY: Random House, 2012), 210-212; as well as the dated but still excellent study by Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York, NY: Viking, 1984), 174-175. For a succinct but thorough assessment of the local and global conditions that shaped events in Indochina in 1949, one must consult Michel Bodin, "1949 en Indochine, un tournant? [1949 in Indochina, a Turning Point?]," *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 4, no. 236 (2009): 135-154.

⁷⁴⁸ See Logevall, *Embers of War*, 235-237; and Robert L. Miller and Dennis Wainstock, *Indochina and Vietnam: The Thirty-Five-Year War, 1940-1970* (New York, NY: Enigma Books, 2013), 71-73 for useful introduction to this critical milestone in the Indochina War, little known outside of France. D. Domergue-Cloarec, "La mission et le rapport Revers [The Revers Mission and Report]," *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 37, no. 148 (October 1987): 97-114 and Georgette Elgey, *Histoire de la IVe République: La République des Illusions, 1945 – 1951* [History of the Fourth Republic: The Republic of Illusions, 1945 – 1951], 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: Fayard, 1993), 577-611 provide more in-depth studies on the military and political dimensions of these events.

⁷⁴⁹ For the growing rift between the political and military classes as a result of the challenges faced in Indochina, see Hugues Canuel, "From Concordance to Discordance in Post-War France: Validation of a Theory of Civil-Military Relations," *Defence Studies* 13, no 4 (Winter 2013): 447-449; Michel L. Martin, *Warriors to Managers: The French Military Establishment since 1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1981, 34-38; and Antoine Daveau, "Le poids de la guerre d'Indochine [The Burden of the Indochina War]," *Revue d'histoire diplomatique* 4 (1993): 333-357.

October 1950, France's "... greatest colonial defeat since Montcalm had died at Quebec."⁷⁵⁰ French commanders had decided to evacuate isolated northern Tonkin border posts using the *RC4* road – nothing more than a single lane jungle track. Swooping in on contingents proceeding on foot mainly, insurgents killed or captured more than 5,000 French and colonial troops in three bloody weeks of jungle fighting. Barely 700 survivors made their way to safety in small and harried groups, confirming some of Revers' worst fears and leading France's general public – and the Allies – to realize that the French army could lose the Tonkin, if not Indochina altogether, in the coming months.⁷⁵¹

This glaring show of despondency resulted in part from the lack of air support in theatre, a factor worsened at the time by absence of an aircraft carrier as the *Arromanches* was in Toulon, getting ready for another refit and exposing the limitations of a single-carrier navy.⁷⁵² Meanwhile, US General of the Army Douglas MacArthur had succeeded in turning the situation in Korea around and began his push north of the 38th parallel but Chinese troops had already moved south of the Yalu River. They launched a devastating assault in November and caused a despondent MacArthur to call for a campaign of strategic bombing against targets in Manchuria.⁷⁵³ As in June though, these setbacks in Asia only reinforced in American minds the importance of the Soviet threat in Europe.

A memorandum prepared by the State Department's Bureau of German Affairs for Secretary of Defence George C. Marshall on 16 October 1950, ahead of his meeting with a French delegation that week, painted an alarming picture:

Our intelligence sources inform us [that] Soviet forces are in advanced state of readiness for war and could initiate offensive operations without warning. They could at any time seize and occupy Western Germany east of the Rhine, the North Sea ports, and the Low Countries... We can only assume in our planning that the [Soviet military posture in East Germany is] indicative of greater intentions.⁷⁵⁴

The memorandum included call for immediate action:

The above situation, coupled with the known long-range objectives of the Kremlin, have produced a situation which has convinced [us] that we must sacrifice for our own security and do so quickly while we still have the shield of decided atomic superiority.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵⁰ Bernard B. Fall, *Street without Joy: The French Debacle in Indochina*, 3rd ed. (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2005), 33.

⁷⁵¹ Masson, *Histoire de l'armée française*, 396-397; and Logevall, *Embers of War*, 238-250. For contemporary views of the harrowing battle, see Amédée Thévenet (ed.), *La Guerre d'Indochine racontée par ceux qui l'ont vécue* (Paris, FR: Éditions France-Empire, 2001), 104-141.

⁷⁵² Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches*, 139-140.

⁷⁵³ Tony R. Mullis, "Douglas MacArthur," in *Generals of the Army – Marshall, MacArthur, Eisenhower, Arnold, Bradley* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2013): 100-102; and Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1973), 390-391.

⁷⁵⁴ Memorandum from the Director of the Bureau of German Affairs, Department of State, to the Secretary of Defense, dated 16 October 1950, *FRUS 1950*, 1411-1412..

⁷⁵⁵ *FRUS 1950*, 1411.

Indeed, developments in Korea, worsened by France's setbacks in Indochina, served as a catalyst within NATO that dramatically accelerated the dynamic of foreign military assistance already under way to deter the overarching Soviet threat in Europe. On 19 July 1950, President Truman declared that "... free nations of the world must step up their common security program... In the case of the North Atlantic area... I shall lay before Congress a request for such funds as are shown necessary to the attainment and maintenance of our common strength at an adequate level."⁷⁵⁶ In September, having approved buildup of US forces in Europe, Truman formally endorsed National Security Council Report 68 (NSC 68) *United States Objectives and Programs for National Security*, giving primacy to the military dimension of containment and turning away from the priority allocated to economic aid since 1947.⁷⁵⁷ Meanwhile, the \$1.225 billion MDAP bill for 1951, in front of Congress for consideration as the fiscal year actually started on 1 July 1950, was increased by \$4 billion in August, of which \$3.504 billion went to NATO when the president signed the supplemental appropriation bill on 23 September.⁷⁵⁸ The next, harder step was allocating the money among the Allies. Time was of the essence for Washington.

Secretary of State Dean Acheson peremptorily asked the European members of NATO on 22 July 1950 for statements within two weeks detailing their commitment to a similar increase in their own defence effort as well as their views on the distribution of increased MDAP funding.⁷⁵⁹ On 5 August, the newly installed government of René Pleven replied with an ambitious 3-year plan seeking to increase the defence budget by 19% in 1950 (from 420 billion French francs (FF) to 500 billion FF) and another 16% in 1951 to reach 580 billion FF, not including the cost of fighting in Indochina and defending the rest of the *Union française*, an expenditure of 220 billion FF per year. An additional 2,000 billion FF was specifically allocated under a stand-alone rearmament bill to fund twenty army divisions in Europe (10 in 1951 and five each in 1952 and 1953), compress a five-year air force expansion plan into three years (to stand up 28 new fighter squadrons and another 24 for tactical air support), and increase funding for convoy escort and coastal defence.⁷⁶⁰ A month later, Pleven extended the duration of compulsory service from 12 to 18 months, an important boost to the defence of Europe as conscripts could only be made to serve

⁷⁵⁶ Harry S. Truman Library & Museum, "Special Message to the Congress Reporting on the Situation in Korea, 19 July 1950," last accessed 5 July 2017,

<https://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=822&st=&st1=>.

⁷⁵⁷ Curt Cardwell, *NSC 68 and the Political Economy of the Cold War* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 160-210; and Ken Young, "Revisiting NSC 68," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 15, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 3-33. President Truman directed the Departments of State and Defence on 31 January 1950 to conduct this combined study, which was presented to the president on 14 April, before the outbreak of the Korean War. However, initial dissensions within the administration on the scope of the military effort proposed therein delayed a final endorsement until the fall. The full document can be found at Harry S. Truman Library & Museum, "NSC 68 – A Report to the National Security Council by the Executive Secretariat on United States Objectives and Programs for National Security," last accessed 5 July 2017, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/10-1.pdf.

⁷⁵⁸ Kaplan, *A Community of Interests*, 104-105.

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁷⁶⁰ Strub, *La renaissance de la Marine française*, 167-168; and "Review of Political Developments," *FRUS 1950*, 1386.

on the continent (metropolitan France and the French occupation zones in Germany and Austria), not in the overseas territories of the *Union française*, let alone to fight in Indochina.⁷⁶¹

France's North Atlantic Allies certainly welcomed Pleven's ambitious plan, although many doubted his ability to finance it without triggering another wave of devastating inflation.⁷⁶² In part to alleviate such concerns and in response to recommendations submitted by the MDAP South East Asia Survey Mission – dispatched on 4 July to study defence requirements in Indochina, Indonesia, Malaya, Burma and Thailand – the Truman administration agreed in September 1950 to stand up a dedicated MAAG in Saigon.⁷⁶³ Washington had already initiated the provision of economic assistance to the three Indochinese associate states in February by redirecting funds previously assigned to the Chinese Nationalists, now defeated and isolated on the island of Taiwan.⁷⁶⁴ Direct military aid followed in July and the Truman administration agreed in December to a stand-alone MDAP agreement dedicated to Indochina, an effort funded and administered in addition to and independently of the programme managed by MAAG France.⁷⁶⁵

In naval terms, MDAP Indochina provided a welcome reprieve to the *Marine nationale* as it lessened the burden of directing a continuous flow of amphibious vessels and river patrol craft to the Far East, as well as the necessary fuel, spare parts and ammunition necessary to support operations. French admirals could also leverage the American commitment to the fights in Korea and Indochina to support their narrative whereby France's security, and that of the North Atlantic Alliance itself, extended beyond a narrow focus on the European central front in the context of the larger Cold War. However, disagreements still existed in defining the roles the French navy was meant to play in the coming years and the means it required to discharge its assigned missions. Regardless of America's newfound largesse towards France and the other European allies, continued differences between French admirals and politicians on the one hand, and Paris and Washington on the other, continued hampering the formulation of mutually agreed visions.

⁷⁶¹ Conscripts could not be compelled to serve overseas but they could volunteer for combat in Indochina. France, Archives nationales [National Archives] (Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, FR; hereafter Archives nationales), C//15341 – *Séances de la Commission de la Défense nationales 1950 – 1951* [Sessions of the National Defence Commission 1950 – 1951], statement by Minister of National Defence Moch at the session held on 6 December 1950.

⁷⁶² Telegram, US Ambassador in France to the Secretary of State, 16 September 1950, *FRUS 1950*, 1388.

⁷⁶³ Logevall, *Embers of War*, 257; and NARA, RG 84 Box 1, Telegram from Department of State to American Embassy in Paris, 4 July 1950.

⁷⁶⁴ NARA, RG 84 Box 1, Telegram from the American Embassy in Paris to Department of State, dated 11 May 1950.

⁷⁶⁵ The United States Information Service announced in July that the "... first shipment of military ground equipment for Indochina, under the U.S. Mutual Defense Assistance Program, will get under way Friday by ship from San Francisco... It will not be the first military aid for the Indochinese states of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, associated under the French Union, officials pointed out today. They have already received eight C-47 planes. In addition, landing craft are now being reactivated on the west coast of the United States for delivery to Indochina as soon as possible." NARA, RG 84 Box 1, USIS News Release, dated 6 July 1950, "MDAP Shipments to Indochina Announced." See also Logevall, *Embers of War*, 256.

CONCILIATING DIFFERING NAVAL VISIONS

The Medium Term Defence Plan (MTDP) adopted by NATO's Defence Committee on 1 April 1950 for building up the armed forces of the alliance members by 1 July 1954 had been a victory of sorts for the French politicians at the expense of the admirals. As already discussed, the plan accepted the strategy promoted by the continental Allies – most loudly in Paris – seeking to "... hold the enemy as far to the east in Germany as possible..." but it also confirmed the relegation of their navies to the roles of local convoy escort and coastal defence.⁷⁶⁶ Although the plan had established immediate national force objectives for July 1951, the outbreak of the Korean War forced a revision of several aspects of MTDP within months of its adoption, especially in terms of accelerated production objectives for 1954. The Truman administration also intimated that the decision to dispatch additional American forces to Europe would be contingent on the rearmament of a newly united West Germany – the US, British and French zones of occupation having been amalgamated into the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) on 23 February 1949 (the Soviets following suit with the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in October). While the prospect of a buildup of American strength on the Old Continent was welcome in France, that of rearming the former enemy met with firm opposition.

Washington and Paris agreed on the requirement to increase immediately the defense effort in Europe but they disagreed on the means being proposed to achieve this aim. The disagreement took on a very public face during the North Atlantic Council meeting taking place in New York on 18 September 1950. Secretary of State Acheson formally proposed to integrate a large contingent of West German ground troops in what would become NATO's Allied Command Europe the following year. The explosive news forced a recess to allow national representative to consult with their respective governments.⁷⁶⁷ In France, many within Pleven's cabinet were leery of the US initiative, largely reflecting a public opinion vehemently opposed to the concept. Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Schuman put up a ferocious fight in defending the French position when the parties reconvened on 26 September. Paris could agree, at most, to a light and mobile paramilitary police force to discharge security duties in Germany in wartime and the employment of "civilian construction battalions" to assist in expanding NATO infrastructures beforehand. Though isolated by the end of the conference, Schuman succeeded in delaying an official decision, to Acheson's great frustration.

The final communiqué announced that the Council had agreed "... to the establishment at the earliest possible date of an integrated force under centralized command, which shall be

⁷⁶⁶ NATO, *Report from the Military Committee to the North Atlantic Defense Committee on North Atlantic Treaty Organization Medium Term Plan* (dated 28 March 1950), last accessed 12 July 2017, <http://www.nato.int/docu/stratdoc/eng/a500328d.pdf>.

⁷⁶⁷ For extensive records related to these proceedings, see *FRUS 1950*, 1388-1395. Secretary of State Acheson provided his personal recollections of that episode in *Present at the Creation: My Years at the State Department* (New York, NY: Norton, 1969), 441-445. For a range of analyses, consult Elgey, *La République des Illusions*, 569-570; Frédéric Bozo, *La politique étrangère de la France depuis 1945* [France's Foreign Policy Since 1945] (Paris, FR: Flammarion, 2012), 34-36; Edward Fursdon, *The European Defence Community: A History* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1980), 78-86; as well as Michael Creswell and Marc Trachtenberg, "France and the German Question, 1945-1955," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 5, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 16-22.

adequate to deter aggression and to ensure the defence of Western Europe."⁷⁶⁸ It carefully avoided referring to a direct military contribution from West Germany, however. Instead, it instructed the Defence Committee to study the issue further:

The utilization of German manpower and resources was discussed in light of views recently expressed, by democratic leaders in Germany and elsewhere. The Council is in agreement that Germany should be enabled to contribute to the build-up of the defence of Western Europe... [It] requested the Defence Committee to make recommendations at the earliest possible date as to the methods by which Germany could most usefully make its contribution.⁷⁶⁹

German rearmament did not directly impact naval matters as the American proposal was purely concerned with ground troops in order to make up for the army divisions the European NATO members seemed unable to generate. It did not envision the formation of a West German navy or an air force at that stage. But French obstructionism on that specific question dramatically affected Franco-US relations in Fall 1950 despite the apparent goodwill that had flowered through the summer months.⁷⁷⁰ Among others in the United States, the US Joint Chiefs of Staff repeatedly stated their dissatisfaction that France actively opposed mobilizing German resources in support of the defence of Western Europe while struggling to raise but a fraction of the one hundred army divisions it fielded in 1940, just a decade before.⁷⁷¹ Such predispositions did not bode well for the upcoming visit to Washington of a French ministerial delegation co-led by Minister of National Defence Jules Moch and Minister of Finance Maurice Petsche. Talks took place 13-18 October 1950 with the aim of discussing future rearmament plans in view of the supplemental assistance approved by Congress in September. The visit would come just in time to assist France's government to prepare its budget submission due to the National Assembly before the end of the year.

Concerned as the Americans were with building up ground and air forces in Europe while the French camp was preoccupied with the desperate jungle fight along the *RC4* then underway in Indochina, not much time was spent discussing naval issues that week.⁷⁷² Tellingly, no naval officer was present among either delegation. Nevertheless, the subject of support to the *Marine nationale* did come up on the first day to discuss the bid formulated earlier by the *Amirauté* for inclusion in the supplementary MDAP allocation announced by Truman in August 1950. As in 1949, navy planners formulated a request that seemingly reflected Alliance priorities and common defence requirements: one anti-aircraft cruiser, three large fleet destroyers, sixteen smaller destroyer escorts, forty-one minesweepers; the necessary equipment, spares and ammunition necessary for operating these units; additional aircraft, including jet fighters of the type being introduced for service on board USN and RN carriers; and additional training billets in the United States for ground and air crews.⁷⁷³ The continued need for minesweepers and destroyer escorts was evident in terms of the NATO-assigned missions of coastal defence and

⁷⁶⁸ NATO, *North Atlantic Council Meeting Final Communiqué – New York, 26 September 1950*, last accessed 12 July 2017, <https://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c500926a.htm>.

⁷⁶⁹ *Idem*.

⁷⁷⁰ Kaplan, *A Community of Interests*, 127; and Fursdon, *The European Defence Community*, 83.

⁷⁷¹ Kaplan, *A Community of Interest*, 121; and Masson, *Histoire de l'armée française*, 383-384.

⁷⁷² *FRUS 1950*, 1396-1434 provides a full record of these talks in terms of the American perspective.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1398 and 1405; and Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 185.

convoy operations. One could also justify the anti-aircraft cruiser, fleet destroyers and jet fighters as necessary for the defence of a carrier-centric anti-submarine warfare (ASW) hunter-killer group but this last step did not square with the American position on French naval armament.

US representatives – including Secretary of State Acheson and Secretary of Defence Marshall – endorsed the French proposal to a degree on 13 October: "With regards to naval vessels, the French production program, from the point of view of timing, appears reasonable."⁷⁷⁴ But they proved much more guarded in their approach to the subject of naval aviation: "Secretary Marshall said... the French should economize by making only anti-submarine carrier-based aircraft and delete the fighter aircraft."⁷⁷⁵ This perspective prevailed in the following weeks as further negotiations resulted in the dismissal of the request for cruiser and fleet destroyers (perceived in the US as adequate for integration in attack carrier formations rather than the humble ASW hunter-killer groups), the destroyer escorts (those would have been in addition to the six DEs already included in the original MDAP 1950 appropriation), and the jet fighters (limiting French hopes to more WWII-era propeller aircraft). In contrast, negotiations for naval allocations within the new MDAP Indochina agreement proved more promising.

In this case, the United States undertook the delivery of six Landing Ship Support Large (LSSL – heavy gun- and rocket-carrying WWII amphibious vessels designed to provide close fire support to troops already ashore or in the process of landing from other craft), thirty-six Landing Craft Vehicle and Personnel (LCVP, also WWII craft but used for the actual landing of troops and vehicles) and fourteen Supermarine Sea Otter amphibian patrol aircraft (a variant of the proven Walrus biplane design, to be purchased from the British using MDAP funds).⁷⁷⁶ While urgency contributed to the seeming generosity of the MDAP Indochina transfers, the relative paucity of the 1950 supplemental plan with regards to the French metropolitan fleet was telling of American priorities. France needed to buildup her *corps aéroterrestre* in West Germany immediately, especially as Paris promoted a strategy of forward defence while blocking the rearmament of her neighbour to the east. As far as Truman administration officials were concerned, the time was not opportune to divert precious allied resources to purely national ambitions.

Perhaps, but the United States also seemed reluctant to fill France's demands regarding coastal defence tasks and convoy duties within the MDAP supplemental bill, especially the minesweepers and destroyer escorts. Practical concerns seem to have prevailed in that regard. By Fall 1950, increasing reactivation work of ships maintained in reserve since WWII imposed a tremendous burden on American shipyards in response to the widening demand from the United States and overseas. The importance of the lowly minesweeper truly came to the fore that year, especially in the wake of the Wonsan landing in Korea, which reminded naval planners of the debilitating effect mines could impose on the freedom of movement at sea and the scale of resources needed to defeat that threat. This demand led to serious bottlenecks as the USN sought to grow its own mine warfare assets for deployment to Asia at the very moment the European

⁷⁷⁴ *FRUS 1950*, 1405.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1398.

⁷⁷⁶ Strub, *La renaissance de la Marine française*, 203.

allies clamoured for more transfers.⁷⁷⁷ As for destroyer escorts, two of the six DEs ordered the previous year were yet to be delivered (*Touareg*, ex-*Bright* DE747, and *Soudanais*, ex-*Cates* DE763) and consideration for additional transfers to France were postponed to future MDAP iterations.⁷⁷⁸ As limited as end-item deliveries may have seemed, one must acknowledge that American aid also took different forms that would prove as relevant in the long term.

MDAP legislation allowed two conduits for military assistance: material in the form of the end-items (finished military goods, ranging from bullets to tanks, ships and aircrafts) and direct financial aid. The latter could be disbursed as Additional Military Production (AMP) or Off Shore Procurement (OSP).⁷⁷⁹ AMP allowed the United States to subsidize defence production in Europe through "... the provision of dollar financing of materials (both raw materials and components), machine tools, technical services, licenses and prototypes."⁷⁸⁰ Instead of restricting the provision of military goods from WWII stocks and industrial production in America, AMP "... was designed to enhance production in the NATO countries of certain specified military items."⁷⁸¹ Washington contributed funds to develop military industries in a given country and subsidize the local production of armament for use by that country's armed forces.

OSP provided an avenue to "... pay foreigner [sic] countries to build armaments for the United States and western Europe, both for those nations that built the armaments and for transfer to other NATO countries."⁷⁸² In other words, the US funded the production in Europe of goods for use by the producing country or a third party within the Alliance (say building ships in the Netherlands for the Portuguese navy). OSP did not play much of a role in the early years of MDAP but AMP is quite relevant to this discussion as French dockyards and industry finally showed the potential to undertake new naval constructions on a larger scale in the early 1950s.⁷⁸³

France's *arsenaux* and commercial shipyards had focused mostly on civilian production and refurbishment of existing naval units since the end of the war. Meanwhile, the *Direction centrale des constructions et armes navales* (DCCAN – Central Directorate of Constructions and Naval Armaments), under the energetic leadership of Louis-Lazare Kahn until 1950, undertook several studies of new models in all classes of ships in preparation for new building programmes. Prime Minister Pleven's announcement of an accelerated three-year rearmament plan allowed Admiral Lambert – appointed head of the navy just days earlier – to submit a proposal developed during the few weeks his predecessor (Battet) had spent in office with a view to initiate new

⁷⁷⁷ Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power*, 322; and David Miller, *The Cold War: A Military History* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 219-222.

⁷⁷⁸ Moulin, *Destroyers d'Escorte en France*, 115.

⁷⁷⁹ For an excellent insight into these various dimensions, one may consult several files held in a large folder labeled *M.D.A.P. Orientation Meeting – January 11th & 12th 1950*, NARA, RG 84 Box 2.

⁷⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, "ECC Draft No. 2, 9 January 1950 – Additional Military Production Program, 2."

⁷⁸¹ Cardwell, *NSC 68 and the Political Economy of the Cold War*, 217.

⁷⁸² *Ibid.*, 242.

⁷⁸³ Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 180-181. American authorities were initially leery of channeling too much funding to OSP contracts as they appeared to favour direct competition with US industries, which could, in turn, threaten support for MDAP in Congress and the Senate. The first OSP contract attributed to a French firm was signed in June 1951.

constructions in French shipyards through the years 1951, 1952 and 1953.⁷⁸⁴ Following Truman's announcement of the MDAP supplemental bill in September, Minister of National Defence Moch called for input from the services to define the defence and rearmament budgets for 1951.⁷⁸⁵ He endorsed a final plan on 5 October, which provided Lambert with the guidance required to outline a five-year building programme of 50,000 tons, at an average of 10,000 tons a year, to launch the following vessels:

- One new AA cruiser in addition to completing *De Grasse* for that same role;
- Four fleet destroyers (the new type *T-47*);
- Seven destroyer escorts (the new type *E-50*);
- Seven 600-ton coastal patrol craft;
- Twelve 150-ton harbour patrol craft;
- Twenty-one coastal minesweepers;
- Four Narval-class submarines (based on the German Type XXI); and
- 4,600 tons of amphibious vessels of various classes.⁷⁸⁶

Dated 16 October 1950, Lambert's submission conveyed both restraint and ambition. In terms of capital ships, the proposal did not dispute the previous cancellation of the carrier project *PA-28*, nor did it promote increased funding for battleships. At the time, *Richelieu* was in the middle of a refit commenced at Brest in January 1950, an important investment of resources to refurbish the machinery, main gunnery, and the miscellany of auxiliary systems found on that tired vessel. Plans to complete the once hoped-for modernization of electronic sensors and anti-air weapons, however, were abandoned: "When she emerged from refit in October 1951, *Richelieu* had been restored to the state she was in at the end of her reconstruction in the United States [in 1943]."⁷⁸⁷

Thereafter, the battleship served with the gunnery school in Toulon before permanent mooring in Brest as a training and accommodation ship in 1956.⁷⁸⁸ Meanwhile, *Jean Bart* had left Brest following the slow repair of her wartime damages in 1946-1947 and the fitting out of

⁷⁸⁴ SHD, 3 BB 2 SEC 114 – Folder labelled *Situation de la Flotte – Tonnage – De 1939 à 1950* [Fleet Status – Tonnage – From 1939 to 1950], letter from Secretary of State for the Navy Monteil to Minister of National Defence Moch "Plan de développement des Forces Armées – Marine [Development Plan for the Armed Forces – Navy]," 24 August 1950.

⁷⁸⁵ Strub, *La renaissance de la Marine française*, 199-200.

⁷⁸⁶ SHD, 3 BB 2 SEC 114, Letter from Chief of the Staff of the Navy Lambert to Secretary of State for the Navy Monteil, "Constructions navales à entreprendre entre 1950 et 1954 (Plan de cinq ans) [Naval Shipbuilding to Be Undertaken Between 1950 and 1954 (Five-Year Plan)]," 16 October 1950. The *T-47* provided a "... destroyer-size escort capable of operating at fleet speed, with the task of protecting a carrier task force against hostile aircraft and submarines." John Jordan, "*Surcouf* – The French Postwar Destroyers – Part 1," *Warship IX*, no. 35 (1985): 146. The smaller *E-50* was destined to defend slower oceanic and transmediterranean convoys against submarines and provide for its self-defence against attacking aircraft. Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 114. Extensive files submitted for consideration by the navy's highest body on the AA cruiser, *T-47*, *E-50*, 600-ton coastal patrol craft, 150-ton harbour patrol craft and the Narval-class submarine (*Projet de sous-marin "e.48"*) can be found in SHD, 3 BB8 CSM 4 – Various Records of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* [Superior Council of the Navy] 1949-1950.

⁷⁸⁷ Jordan and Dumas, *French Battleships: 1922-1956* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 206.

⁷⁸⁸ Robert Dumas, *Le cuirassé Richelieu 1935-1968* [Battleship *Richelieu* 1935-1968] (Bourg-en-Bresse, FR: Marines Éditions, 1992), 58-60. Upon sailing one last time from Toulon on 30 January 1956, *Richelieu* manoeuvred for a few hours in company with *Jean Bart* (as well as the two former Italian cruisers *du Guichen* and *Châteaurenault*), the only time the two sister-ships operated together.

her remaining main armament and propulsion machinery, completed in Spring 1949.⁷⁸⁹ Thereafter, she was restricted to peacetime manoeuvring with the fleet, awaiting further funding to install the modern sensors and updated anti-air gun batteries required to allow her deployment in harm's way. Lambert's plan did not provide a timeline for this last but crucial step were the French navy to retain the ability to operate a modern battleship in the 1950s. In another sign of restrained ambition, the head of the navy proposed "downgrading" the light cruisers *Châteaurenault* and *du Guichen* through their conversion to the role of ASW command destroyers. However, he reiterated his concern with the fact that the remaining cruisers – *Émile Bertin*, *Georges Leygues*, *Montcalm* and *Gloire* – were nearing the end of service lives without plans for their replacement.⁷⁹⁰

The report also welcomed the contribution of a rejuvenated aeronautical industry. This renewal allowed for the acquisition in 1951 of eighteen newly designed Nord 1400 long-range flying boats (the *Noroit*, a twin-engine monoplane with an enclosed cabin for a crew of seven, which first flew in 1949) and thirty-five Nord 1002 *Pingouin*, single-engine monoplanes capable of embarking four personnel. Although modeled after the old German Messerschmidt 108 and unable to operate from a carrier, the latter proved highly useful for initial aircrew training, an important need as the *Aéronavale* was quickly expanding to meet increasing MDAP aircraft deliveries.⁷⁹¹ Left unstated was the likely ambition that the acquisition of an anti-air cruiser, fleet destroyers and another tranche of destroyer escorts from the United States, as well as the provision of AMP funding to subsidize the building of smaller vessels in French shipyards, would leave room for directing national funds to more ambitious naval projects in future budgets.

As in 1949, such hopes did not endure. American deliveries of naval end-items (other than aircraft) fell well-short of those envisioned by Lambert while the final defence budget and rearmament plan adopted by the *Assemblée nationale* on 8 January 1951 did not make up for these shortfalls. Overall military French military expenditures grew from 559 billion FF in 1950 to 881 billion FF in 1951 (from 25.5 to 36.4% of the national budget), with MDAP transfers adding 140 billion FF in 1951.⁷⁹² The share of the navy's appropriations in the national budget grew from 15 to 18.3% over these two years and, of the 35 billion FF invested by the US for the production of military goods in France in 1951, 9.3 billion FF went to naval rearmament.⁷⁹³ These investments played a critical role in the modernisation of French shipyards. They also subsidized the immediate start of construction programmes for the *T-47* destroyers, the *E-50* escorts and new coastal minesweepers, the conversion of the cruisers *Châteaurenault* and *Guichen* to the ASW role, and the ability of French industries to commence producing modern

⁷⁸⁹ Jordan and Dumas, *French Battleships: 1922-1956*, 211; and Robert Dumas, *Le cuirassé « Jean Bart » 1939-1970* [Battleship *Jean Bart* 1939-1970] (Rennes, FR: Marine Éditions, 2001), 37-43.

⁷⁹⁰ The *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* endorsed the reclassification of the two former Italian light cruisers in October 1950. 3 BB 8 CSM 4, minutes of the Superior Council of the Navy meeting 11 October 1950.

⁷⁹¹ Strub, *La renaissance de la Marine française*, 202. Both types were produced by the state-owned *Société nationale de constructions aéronautiques du Nord*. Earlier, another state-owned entity, the *Société nationale des constructions du Sud-Ouest*, was tasked to deliver eighty Bloch MB.175T shore-based torpedo bomber. This twin-engine monoplane with a crew of three was developed after the Liberation using the plans of the prewar light bomber Bloch MB.175 ordered by the French air force. Deliveries to the *Aéronavale* took place between 1947 and 1950. This model proved unsatisfactory and was replaced by the Grumman TBM Avenger starting in 1952. Roger Vercken, *Histoire succincte de l'Aéronautique navale (1910-1998)* [A Brief History of the Naval Aviation (1910-1998)] (Paris, FR: ARDHAN, 1998), 94.

⁷⁹² Strub, *La renaissance de la Marine française*, 180; and Kaplan, *A Community of Interests*, 155.

⁷⁹³ Strub, *La renaissance de la Marine française*, 203-204; and Archives nationales, C//15341, statement by Minister of National Defence Moch at the session of the *Commission de la défense nationale* held on 6 December 1950.

electronics (radars, sonars, etc), naval guns and munitions. Nevertheless, even though the term “defence of the Rhine” had been erased from policy documents since the departure of minister Ramadier in October 1949, NATO’s adoption of a strategy of forward defence in Germany, promoted by successive French governments, did not bode well for an end to the *mise en parenthèse de la flotte*.

By then, the Americans had already announced that MDAP naval deliveries would not meet to numbers and capabilities requested by the French. End-items, including aircraft for the *Aéronavale*, remained limited to WWII stocks or similarly aging designs built after the hostilities, such as British Sunderlands and Lancasters soon to be acquired for long-range maritime patrols.⁷⁹⁴ Though ministers Moch and Petsche had fought for Admiral Lambert’s October requests in Washington, they admitted defeat as this effort did not warrant threatening support from the United States for the build up of the army and tactical aviation in Europe. Appearing before the National Assembly’s *Commission de la défense nationale* in the weeks leading up to the vote on the forthcoming rearmament bill, Moch made a telling statement:

If we had unlimited funds, I would gladly make an additional effort for the navy but the problem is not that. The problem, as resources available are few, is to design a plan that best uses these limited funds to meet our most immediate needs. There is no doubt that, given the current geopolitical context *and the fact that the biggest navies are with us while our frontier to the East remains undefended*, the first military duty of France is to assemble a formation of ground troops with the complement of tactical aviation necessary to protect that force... As much as politics is the art of choosing the lesser evil, so is the role of the defence minister in resolving the most pressing problem at hand while respecting existing budgetary constraints... We have an imperious duty to make a massive effort on behalf of the army and, if I had another 50 billion FF to divide between the three services this year, *the part of this increase that would go to the navy would still be minimal*.⁷⁹⁵ [Emphasis added]

So, the WWII paradoxes that reappeared in 1948-49 when France resumed a strategy of alliance continued confronting the navy’s leadership in 1950 and seemed likely to persist through the following years. On the one hand, France joined NATO and gained access to the wealth of resources the United States made available through MDAP, at the very moment when the Cold War came to the brink and caused the French government to place rearmament back on an equal footing with civilian reconstruction. This moment should have presented the *Marine nationale* with a unique opportunity for unprecedented regeneration. Admirals Lemonnier, Battet and Lambert – with the active support of naval ministers Raymond-Laurent and Monteil – tried to make the best of this opening, quickly leveraging any US and French resources that became available. On the other hand, the Soviet threat on the Alliance’s eastern border drove the United States to demand that the continental Allies urgently build up a credible *force aéroterrestre* for deployment on the central front. And successive French governments readily endorsed this focus, especially when Secretary of State Acheson made it clear that failure to do so would lead to the rearmament of France’s former foe, West Germany.

⁷⁹⁴ Archives nationales, C//15341, statement by Secretary of State for the Navy Monteil at the session of the *Commission de la défense nationale* held on 6 December 1950.

⁷⁹⁵ Archives nationales, C//15341, statement by Minister of National Defence Moch at the session of the *Commission de la défense nationale* held on 6 December 1950.

The focus on the central European front would only gain momentum in the following months. Fighting in Asia, so dire in the closing weeks of 1950 with the UN forces pushed back from the Yalu River by the Chinese and the French still reeling from their humiliating defeat along the *RC4* in the Tonkin, subsided in the new year. General Matthew Ridgway, newly installed as Commander Eighth United States Army and soon to replace a frantic MacArthur calling publicly for atomic strikes in Manchuria, stabilized the Korean front on the 38th parallel by Spring 1951.⁷⁹⁶ Earlier on, in December 1950, General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny had come to the rescue in Indochina, immediately restoring morale within the expeditionary corps and quickly inflicting several bloody defeats on overly confident *Vietminh* troops.⁷⁹⁷ These victories in Asia – or at least turning defeats into less pressing military draws – reemphasized the centrality of the Soviet threat in Europe, confirming NATO’s strategy of forward defence and the subordinate role of France’s navy in that context. The 8 January 1951 French rearmament bill and continued US support through MDAP provided the *Marine nationale* (and French naval industries) with increasing capacities but left ambitions for a capable and credible blue-water fleet in abeyance. Unresolved in this paradoxical period was whether the years ahead would see the triangle of conflicting interests and priorities between the French government, the *Rue Royale* and Washington evolve into an agreeable construct of mutually supporting objectives or disintegrate further into a flux of renewed and bitter confrontations.

⁷⁹⁶ Weigley, *The American Way of War*, 391-393; and Thomas E. Ricks, *The Generals: American Military Command from World War II to Today* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2012), 176-191.

⁷⁹⁷ De Lattre simultaneously replaced General Marcel Carpentier as military commander and civil servant Léon Pignon, then the *Haut-commissaire de France en Indochine*, amalgamating military and civil powers into one office as recommended by General Revers in his 1949 report. Masson, *Histoire de l’armée française*, 397-398; Logevall, *Embers of War*, 261-278; and Fall, *Street without Joy*, 37-44.

CHAPTER EIGHT

BUILDING A BLUE-WATER FLEET

The sun had yet to rise over the horizon but a pallid glow already silhouetted *La Fayette* as the aircraft carrier turned to the flying course in the pre-dawn hours of Thursday, 1 November 1956. Gathering speed through the warm waters of the Eastern Mediterranean, the French ship launched several American-built Chance-Vought F4U-7 Corsair dive-bombers which formed up and flew due south to complete their assigned mission: sinking the Egyptian warships based in the port of Alexandria. The strike was a small part of the much larger *Opération 700*. Using as a pretext the Israeli invasion of the Sinai in the previous days, Great Britain and France planned to seize the Suez Canal Zone with a combined force of airborne and amphibious troops to turn back the nationalisation of the Universal Suez Ship Canal Company by President Gamal Abdel Nasser earlier in July.⁷⁹⁸ For the first time since the end of the Second World War, pilots of the *Aéronavale* prepared to carry out what they considered the core mission of carrier aviation, striking at the enemy's fleet.

The moment had been long-awaited as they spent the intervening years fulfilling seemingly secondary roles in providing air support to ground troops fighting insurgencies in Indochina and Algeria, and to those ships training in the North Atlantic as anti-submarine warfare (ASW) hunter-killer groups in a Cold War that had yet to turn hot. However, the feverish excitement that reigned onboard *La Fayette* during these early morning hours – as well as in the carrier *Arromanches* and the rest of the *Force navale d'intervention* (Naval Intervention Force) assembled for the expedition – turned to frustration as a result of the interference of a key ally of Great Britain and France: the United States.

Concerned with the reaction of the Warsaw Pact, the nascent Non-Aligned Movement at the United Nations, and the Arab world at large, President Dwight D. Eisenhower disapproved of the Anglo-French-Israeli offensive against Egypt.⁷⁹⁹ His administration had already launched a wide range of diplomatic and military measures since the summer, including concentration of the United States Navy (USN) Sixth Fleet to shadow the movement of Anglo-French forces in the Eastern Mediterranean as well as prepositioning naval assets off the coast of Egypt to dissuade further escalation.⁸⁰⁰ Two American destroyers had made their way into Alexandria after the ultimatum addressed to Cairo by London and Paris on 30 October. Other USN ships and submarines also manoeuvred into the area, greatly complicating the identification of friendly,

⁷⁹⁸ For introductions to the conflict, see Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 573-585; and Sabine Marie Decup, *France-Angleterre: Les relations militaires de 1945 à 1962* [France-England: Military Relations from 1945 to 1962] (Paris, FR: Economica, 1998), 89-112. Yoram Meital provides different views in "Egyptian Perspectives on the Suez War," in *The 1956 War: Collusion and Rivalry in the Middle East*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: Routledge, 2013): 195-208.

⁷⁹⁹ On Eisenhower's thinking and actions during the Suez crisis, see Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 528-546; Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (London, UK: Pocket Books, 1997), 436-451; and Isaac Alteras, "Eisenhower and the Sinai Campaign of 1956: The First Major Crisis in US-Israeli Relations," in *The 1956 War: Collusion and Rivalry in the Middle East*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: Routledge, 2013): 25-46.

⁸⁰⁰ George W. Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power – The U.S. Navy, 1890-1990* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 361-362; and William B. Garrett, "The U.S. Navy's Role in the 1956 Suez Crisis," *Naval War College Review* 22, no. 7 (March 1970): 66-78.

neutral and enemy assets. Conscious that mistakenly firing upon American units would entail dramatic consequences, French and British authorities severely restricted the ability of pilots to engage warships, requiring stringent visual identification of vessels larger than patrol boats.⁸⁰¹ Though later sorties against airfields and troop concentrations inland proved decisive in preparing for an airborne drop on 5 November and an amphibious assault the following day, the presence of American ships, aircraft and submarines offshore as well as in Alexandria and Port Said greatly restrained the effect of French and English naval air sorties during that fateful week.⁸⁰² Renewed US pressures – namely denying a British request for financial assistance from the International Monetary Fund – and threatening gestures from Moscow led to a ceasefire on 7 November and a humiliating withdrawal of the invading force the following month.

The irony was obvious. The US had provided the bulk of the means that allowed France to join Great Britain in this undertaking. The French naval commander for *Opération 700* (*Musketeer* for the British), Rear-Admiral Pierre Lancelot, sailed in the cruiser *George Leygues*, modernised in Philadelphia in 1943. *La Fayette* had been transferred to the *Marine nationale* from the USN in 1951. The carrier group commanded by Rear-Admiral Yves Caron included the type T-47 fleet destroyers *Surcouf*, *Bouvet*, *Cassard* and *Kersaint*, as well as the E-50 destroyer escorts *Le Corse*, *Le Brestois*, *Le Boulonnais* and *Le Bordelais*, all built in French yards but subsidized with American funds through the Additional Military Production (AMP) channel.

Other units had been delivered from America as end-items under the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP), including the eight Cannon-class destroyer escorts acquired in 1950-1952, a miscellany of amphibious vessels and minesweepers, and all of the aircraft embarked in *La Fayette* and *Arromanches*. Preparations for Suez had also showed the *Marine nationale* – as well as the other French military services and those of Great Britain – wanting in its ability to mount a large-scale expeditionary operation of the type a credible sea power should be capable of.

French admirals had spent the previous decade scrambling to manage simultaneously the rapid decommissioning of aging vessels and the slow rebuilding of a new fleet. Meanwhile, their units were dispersed to fight insurgencies across the *Union française* (Madagascar, Indochina and Algeria) or preparing for another battle of the Atlantic as a member of NATO. The challenge of assembling a single *Force navale d'intervention* in the Mediterranean, working up its heteroclite elements, and practicing joint procedures for amphibious and combined operations in the summer and fall of 1956 proved nearly insurmountable.⁸⁰³ The ensuing loss of face put an end to any

⁸⁰¹ Jean Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches* [Aircraft Carriers *Dixmude* and *Arromanches*] (Nantes, FR: Marines Éditions, 1998), 178-186; and *Les porte-avions La Fayette & Bois-Belleau* [Aircraft Carriers *La Fayette* and *Bois-Belleau*] (Nantes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2000), 67-72.

⁸⁰² Philippe Vial, "La Marine et l'opération de Suez [The Navy and the Suez Operation]," in *La France et l'opération de Suez* [France and the Suez Operation] (Paris, FR: ADDIM, 1997), 181-226; and Eric Grove, *From Vanguard to Trident: British Naval Policy since World II* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1987), 191-192.

⁸⁰³ For telling statements, see the post-action report presented by Rear-Admiral Lancelot upon his return from the operation and reproduced in full in Jean-Pierre Beauvois, "La Marine dans la crise de Suez [The Navy in the Suez Crisis]," *Revue historique des Armées* 207, no. 2 (1997): 81-100; and a severe critique proffered by Vice-Admiral Pierre Barjot during a meeting of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* in June 1957. Barjot had commanded all French military forces during Suez and acted as deputy to the overall

aspiration on the part of France and Great Britain to resume a policy of unilateral intervention overseas reminiscent of their former grandeur as colonial powers. But Suez also provided a dramatic catalyst that allowed the *Marine nationale* to reflect extensively on the conduct of war at sea in the modern era. Implementation of badly needed structural and procedural changes necessary to leverage the modern instruments of sea power that were just then joining the fleet followed, with more funded by the National Assembly for delivery within the coming decade.

Successive governments realized that the previous fixation on the defence of the Rhine and a strategy of forward defence as far east in Germany as possible would not be enough to meet the country's political ambitions and military needs in the context of the Cold War. National means and allied assistance had, by 1956, allowed initial delivery of those tools necessary for France to resume a place of influence on the high seas and within the Atlantic Alliance. The battleship *Jean Bart* and cruiser *De Grasse* were finally completed in 1955 and a second anti-air cruiser, *Colbert*, launched the following year.⁸⁰⁴ In addition to *La Fayette*, the Americans agreed in 1953 to transfer another light aircraft carrier – USS *Belleau Wood* – to serve under the Tricolour as the *Bois Belleau*. French governments committed funding in 1954 and 1955 for building two modern carriers, *Clémenceau* and *Foch*, in French yards. By then, twelve T-47 fleet destroyers and five T-53s were either in service or under construction, as were four E-50 and fourteen E-52A/B fast escorts, and three coastal escorts of the Le Fougueux-class. Nine *avisos-escorteurs* (sloop escorts) of the Commandant Rivière-class and another eleven L'Adroit coastal escorts would follow in 1957-58, in addition to six Narval and four Aréthuse submarines, all built in France, to join four S-class submarines transferred from Great Britain in 1951-52.

The year 1956 would stand as one of paradoxes in the maturation of the postwar *Marine nationale*. On the one hand, allied material and monetary assistance combined with renewed prosperity at home to generate the means to build ships, submarines and shore infrastructure at a tremendous pace. By then, France had suffered defeat in Indochina and the Algerian struggle was already turning desperate but the French navy counted as an increasingly respected voice in allied naval circles and within the national defence establishment. On the other hand, the Suez embarrassment also showed the limits of France's influence on events overseas and the continued inability of the French fleet to operate autonomously in support of national interests and ambitions.

These circumstances illuminate the development of two successive documents that would come to shape decisively regeneration of the surface fleet for decades to come: the *Statut naval de*

commander of the Anglo-French expedition, British Army General Charles Keightley. *Service historique de la Défense* [Defence Historical Service] (Vincennes, FR; hereafter *SHD*), 3 BB 8 CMS 9 – Various Records of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* [Superior Council of the Navy] 1957-1958, Minutes of the Superior Council of the Navy held on 30 July 1957.

⁸⁰⁴ In what turned out to be the only combat assignment in her short-lived operational career, *Jean Bart* deployed for the Suez crisis. The battleship first proceeded to Algiers to embark the shock troops of the *Marine nationale* "Commando Hubert" and the Foreign Legion paratroopers of the *1er Régiment étranger de parachutistes* to transport them to Cyprus where they transferred to the amphibious ships of the force tasked to take Port Said. *Jean Bart* provided fire support off that landing zone in the following days but concerns about collateral damage severely restricted the employment of her heavy guns, and she was detached to return to France on 7 November. Robert Dumas, *Le cuirassé « Jean Bart » 1939-1970* [Battleship *Jean Bart* 1939-1970] (Rennes, FR: Marine Éditions, 2001), 75.

1952, which set the path for a credible blue-water surface fleet and the 1955 *Plan bleu* that sought to elaborate a longer-term vision of a mature navy capable of upholding France's *grandeur* through the complex peacetime circumstances of the Cold War and standing ready to fight in the unprecedented conditions of the nuclear era. In that pivotal decade, renewed tensions with successive Fourth Republic governments and the Allies over the roles and missions of the *Marine nationale* continued while additional complications arose out of the dramatic rise and fall of the European Defence Community project in 1952-1954.

THE CONTINUED CHALLENGE OF DIFFERING NAVAL VISIONS

As a committed building effort had only been launched the summer before, France's naval fleet was still very much in transition in July 1951 as outlined at Table 12. Figures show a total of 250,000 tons – 300,000 tons if including various auxiliaries and amphibious vessels – but the fleet remained an assemblage of French prewar constructions and allied transfers of Second World War stocks. The T-47 destroyer *Surcouf* was the only genuine postwar unit and her construction had barely begun. The French navy did not have the ability to maintain a carrier task force available to respond to a national crisis or a sudden UN commitment nor provide NATO with at least one ASW hunter-killer group on a continuous basis. The smaller destroyer escorts, minesweepers and patrol craft were operating at full capacity, dispersed as they were on operations that ranged from the *métropole* to the antipodes of the *Union française*, especially as the fight in Indochina called on ever more resources. The submarine force could not conduct operations of its own, dedicated as it was to supporting the ASW training of the surface fleet. This portrait made for a bleak assessment of the *Marine nationale*'s operational capability six years after the end of the Second World War.

Table 12 – Main French Fleet on 1 July 1951

(does not include oilers and auxiliaries, amphibious craft, planes and submarine tenders)

Numbers of hulls per Category (Not including ships in reserve or used as floating barracks, schools, etc)	In service, capable of combat in modern conditions	In service or in refit but obsolete	Under Construction / Completion / Modernization	Remarks
2 X Battleships	0	1	1	- <i>Richelieu</i> in refit in Cherbourg, limited to training role at gunnery school - <i>Jean Bart</i> in service but back in dry dock in November 1951 for final completion
2 X Aircraft Carriers	1	0	1	- <i>Arromanches</i> operational - <i>La Fayette</i> still in the US but with French crew working up
1 X Aircraft Transport	0	1	0	- <i>Dixmude</i> in service
6 X Cruisers	3	2	1	- <i>Gloire</i> , <i>Georges Leygues</i> and <i>Montcalm</i> operational - <i>Émile Bertin</i> and <i>Jeanne d'Arc</i> on training duties - <i>De Grasse</i> in reserve in Lorient, to be towed Fall 1951 to Brest for completion

11 X Fleet Destroyers	5	2	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Kleber, Marceau, Alsacien, Lorrain</i> (modernized former German destroyers) operational - <i>Le Malin</i> (prewar <i>contre-torpilleur</i> / light cruiser re-commissioned on 1 July 1951 to deploy to Indochina with <i>Arromanches</i>) operational - <i>Alcyon</i> and <i>Albatros</i> (pre-war <i>contre-torpilleurs</i>) on training duties at the gunnery school - <i>Surcouf</i> (first of the <i>T-47</i>) laid at Lorient shipyard July 1951 - <i>Chateaurenault</i> and <i>Guichen</i> (former Italian cruisers) in La Seyne shipyard for conversion to ASW command destroyers - <i>Hoche</i> (former German destroyer) in refit for conversion to trial ship role
18 X Destroyer Escorts	12	6	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 12 X former US Cannon-class (<i>Algérien, Sénégalais, Somali, Hova, Marocain, Tunisien, Touareg, Soudanais, Kabyle, Arabe, Bambara, Sakalave</i>) operational - 6 X former UK River-class frigates (<i>Croix de Lorraine, L'Aventure, L'Escarmouche, La Découverte, La Surprise, Le Tonkinois</i>) operational
24 X Corvettes / Sloops	0	24	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>La Grandière, Savorgnan de Brazza</i> and <i>Dumont d'Urville</i> (colonial sloops) obsolete but adequate for <i>Union française</i> - <i>Francis Garnier</i> (former Italian colonial sloop) obsolete but adequate for <i>Union française</i> missions - 10 X <i>Élan</i>-class and 6 X <i>Chamois</i>-class prewar <i>avisos-dragueurs</i>, obsolete but adequate for metropolitan and <i>Union française</i> missions - 4 X US Tacoma-class frigates employed as unarmed weather ships (<i>Mermoz, La Place, Le Brix, Le Verrier</i>)
38 X Minesweepers	Various			- 9 ocean-going and 29 coastal sweepers, even mix of modern and obsolete builds
35 X Coastal Patrol Craft	Various			- Mostly obsolete but adequate for metropolitan and <i>Union française</i> coastal patrol tasks
11 X Submarines	3	6	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>La Créole, L'Africaine, L'Astrée</i> (laid in 1939-1940, completed in 1949-1950) operational - <i>Junon</i> (in service 1937), employed in the training role

				- Former U-boats <i>Roland Morillot</i> , <i>Blaison</i> , <i>Millé</i> , <i>Laubie</i> , <i>Bouan</i> employed for training and experimentation - <i>L'Andromède</i> and <i>Artémise</i> (laid in 1939-1940, work interrupted by WWII) still under construction
Totals	24 76,100 tons	42 102,900 tons	9 77,000 tons	

The *Aéronavale* had yet to join the jet age, with all of its carrier- and shore-based squadrons flying proven but obsolete aircraft designs of the previous decade. However, such a bleak reading of conditions at the time could be misleading. Naval aviation had already come to dominate planning at the *rue Royale* as Admiral Henry Nomy, the navy's senior pilot, took over from the boisterous Lambert as *Chef de l'État-major général de la Marine (CEMGM)* in June 1951.⁸⁰⁵ If any doubt still lingered in the immediate postwar era, the "big guns carriers vs. aircraft carriers" debate had since been resolutely concluded, with the latter the reigning capital ship, key to exercising sea power in the coming decades.⁸⁰⁶ Nuclear weapons would soon become small enough for delivery by carrier-based aircraft while flexible carrier wings could discharge the full range of missions through the Cold War, from forming the nucleus of ASW hunter-killer groups to the provision of air defence at sea and in the littoral, as well as mobile fire support to forces ashore, as demonstrated in Korea and Indochina. By 1951, the *Marine nationale* had also completed a resolute turn away from the Royal Navy towards the USN in its approach to carrier operations – be it in terms of doctrine, procedures and equipment – and could envision continued growth through the provision of American aid.

The purchase of *Arromanches* from Great Britain represented the final act in the postwar tutelage of French naval aviation by the RN. London had agreed in 1946 to lease the former *Colossus* to France for five years. As the initial agreement was coming to an end, Admiral Lambert secured his government's approval to negotiate a permanent solution, concluded on 9 March 1951. France would keep possession of the carrier by buying her outright, at the cost of 1.5 million British pounds to be paid in four yearly annuities starting on 6 August, the end of the lease period.⁸⁰⁷ Great Britain's willingness to dispense with *Colossus* resulted in part from the RN's budget cuts and continued manpower problems since the end of the Second World War. Unable to fill ongoing shortages in the fleet, leasing and selling mothballed carriers to like-minded nations constituted a practical way to share the burden in providing ASW carrier groups

⁸⁰⁵ Taking over as head the navy in an acting capacity in June 1951 after Lambert's firing for an alcohol-related incident, Nomy was confirmed in this post in October. Étienne Taillemite, *Les hommes qui ont fait la Marine française* [The Men Who Forged the French Navy] (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2008), 383.

⁸⁰⁶ Alexandre Sheldon-Duplaix, *Histoire mondiale des porte-avions: Des origines à nos jours* [World History of the Aircraft Carriers: From the Origins to Today] (Paris, FR: Éditions Techniques pour l'Automobile et l'Industrie, 2006), 100-101 and 107-116; Hervé Coutau-Bégarie, "Marine et innovation: La Marine française face au porte-avions après la Seconde Guerre mondiale [Navy and Innovation: The French Navy and the Aircraft Carrier after the Second World War]," *Guerre mondiale et conflits contemporains* 238 (2010): 120-121 and 126; Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power*, 335-339; and Grove, *From Vanguard to Trident*, 10-12 and 55-57.

⁸⁰⁷ Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches*, 141; and Roger Vercken, *Histoire succincte de l'Aéronautique navale (1910-1998)* [A Brief History of the Naval Aviation (1910-1998)] (Paris, FR: ARDHAN, 1998), 84.

while generating precious revenues for the Treasury. By 1951, Great Britain had already transferred the escort carrier HMS *Nairana* to the Netherlands where she served as the HNLMS *Karel Doorman* (replaced in 1948 by the Colossus-class light carrier *Venerable*, which also sailed under the Dutch flag as *Karel Doorman*). Canada operated the Colossus-class *Warrior* in 1946-1948 before her replacement with the Majestic-class *Magnificent* in 1948, the same year that her sister ship HMS *Terrible* entered Australian service as HMAS *Sydney*.

From then on, the *Aéronavale* embarked on a decided course of “Americanisation”. Admiral Lemonnier had commenced discussion with the USN for transfer of a light carrier. Citing the 1949 decision by the French government to cancel the *PA-28* project and the (then) expected termination of the lease of the *Arromanches* from the British, the French admiral submitted in February 1950 a convincing case to justify provision of one American aircraft carrier to ensure that France could deploy a viable ASW hunter-killer group as mandated by NATO. Lengthy negotiations led to a more detailed accord on 16 October for the lease at no cost of the Independence-class light carrier USS *Langley* as part of the next MDAP tranche. As in the case of the Cannon-class destroyer escorts delivered the previous year, Washington insisted that the ship be employed exclusively on ASW missions in the North Atlantic treaty area. Regardless of this restrictive clause, the acquisition of the *Langley* marked an important transition in the maturation of France’s postwar naval aviation.⁸⁰⁸ It was accompanied by the delivery of another forty-two Grumman F6F-5 Hellcats day fighters and ten F6F-5N for night fighting, as well as forty-two Grumman TBM Avengers for ASW missions and twenty-four North American Aviation SNJ-4 single-engine trainers, all to be delivered during the French fiscal year 1951.

Though a dated platform from the early years of the Second World War, the Independence-class carrier provided the French navy with a tremendous asset, capable of sustained speeds of thirty knots and embarking thirty aircraft. Originally planned as a Cleveland-class cruiser, she and eight of her sister-ships were designated for conversion to the light carrier role while under construction in 1941-1942, retaining their sleek hulls and powerful machinery. *Langley*, originally laid as the USS *Fargo* (CL 85) in April 1942, was commissioned in August 1943 and saw active combat in the Pacific in 1944-1945. Employed to repatriate troops from Asia and Europe in 1946, the carrier was paid off in Philadelphia in February 1947, where she remained mothballed until selected for reactivation and transfer to France in early 1951.⁸⁰⁹

Having suffered no damage during the war and benefitting from an extensive overhaul in Summer 1945 before her assignment to the Atlantic Reserve Fleet, *Langley* was still in excellent condition when a French crew marched onboard to hoist the Tricolour on 2 June 1951 following months of training in USN schools and vessels. The sailors and aviators of the newly re-named *La Fayette* undertook an extensive shakedown cruise off the American eastern seaboard through

⁸⁰⁸ Moulin, *Les porte-avions La Fayette & Bois-Belleau*, 49; and Philippe Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française sous la Quatrième République (1945-1956) – La Quatrième République a-t-elle eu une ambition navale pour la France?* [Renewal of the French Navy under the Fourth Republic (1945-1956) – Did the Fourth Republic Have a Naval Ambition?] (Paris, FR: Université Paris I, 2006), 203.

⁸⁰⁹ On *Langley*’s wartime service as CVL-27, see Moulin, *Les porte-avions La Fayette & Bois-Belleau*, 28-29; and Naval History and Heritage Command, *Langley II (CVL-27)*, last modified 28 July 2015, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/l/langley-cvl-27-ii.html>.

the summer, leaving Norfolk, Virginia on 1 September, arriving in Toulon two weeks later to great acclains.

La Fayette's arrival in Europe to undertake missions in the North Atlantic treaty area freed up *Arromanches* for several years of nearly continuous service in Indochina. Having completed an extensive refit in late 1950 and early 1951, and an intense working up period in the spring and summer months, the former British carrier set sail at the end of August. This second deployment to the Far East (having first served there from October 1948 to January 1949) had been anxiously awaited by French authorities in Indochina. As demonstrated during the Battle of *Route colonial 4* in October 1950, the absence of carrier-based air cover could severely impede operations ashore given the paucity of air fields in Indochina and the limited number of air assets in theatre. The *Armée de l'air* still only had 360 combat planes dispersed through the whole of Indochina by 1954, with a third of those often unavailable due to maintenance and repair.⁸¹⁰

Arromanches' complement of twenty-five aircraft could make a significant difference in support of a particular operation. The ship returned to Indochina for three tours: September 1951 to May 1952, September 1952 to February 1953, and September 1953 to August 1954.⁸¹¹ Returning to France in between these deployments for refit and training new crews, she also embarked a large complement of additional naval and air force aircraft, spares and personnel for delivery to Indochina at the beginning of each tour. By then, transporting large number of aircraft around the world had indeed assumed a critical importance for the *Marine nationale*. This effort sought to build up French air strength in Indochina and keep up with the increasing rate of transfers from America through MDAP, a role eminently suitable for *Arromanches*' aging predecessor.

Following two tours in Indochina in the role of aircraft carrier despite her limited operational capability (in March-April 1947 and from October 1947 to April 1948), *Dixmude* had returned for a transport mission in Summer 1949. Back in France, she sailed from Toulon one last time as an aircraft carrier, with two last Seafires flying off her deck on 28 November. From then on, she resumed duties as a dedicated aircraft transport, starting with the first embarkation of MDAP naval aircraft in Norfolk in March 1950 for delivery to Bizerte, Tunisia as narrated earlier.⁸¹² She quickly returned to Virginia, arriving on 4 May to embark a typical load: nineteen Hellcats fighters and nineteen Helldivers dive-bombers, 170 tons of spare parts (including twenty-five spare engines), forty-eight tons of ammunition and seventy-eight tons of training rockets, as well as another ten tons of various cargo and more than 100 cases of parachutes for the

⁸¹⁰ Philippe Masson, *Histoire de l'armée française de 1914 à nos jours* [History of the French Army from 1914 to Today] (Paris, FR: Librairie académique Perrin, 1999), 406.

⁸¹¹ Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches*, 140-172; and Roger Vercken, *Histoire succincte de l'Aéronautique navale*, 107-111. An important factor in the ability of *Arromanches* to remain in theatre for these extensive periods was the access to British dry docks in the Pacific. The French carrier benefitted from short but critical overhauls in Singapore (January-February 1952) and Hong Kong (January 1953 and February 1954) that provided much needed relief to the crews and allowed scrapping off accumulated underwater growth that could reduce the ship's top speed by as much as ten knots.

⁸¹² Though dedicated to transport tasks thereafter, the French navy would wait until 4 January 1952 to officially reclassify her as an aircraft transport. Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches*, 77-78.

French army.⁸¹³ Another pick up followed in July (eighteen Hellcats and nineteen Helldivers) for delivery to Bizerte, then leaving Toulon in August for a trip around the world.

Dixmude first delivered materiel to the Martinique and then crossed the Panama Canal to embark planes, spares and ammunition in San Francisco – as well as one hundred American military advisors, who would soon form the nucleus of the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) Indochina. Materiel and personnel were disembarked in Saigon, reached on 28 October 1950. The aircraft transport completed her circumnavigation when she returned to Toulon on 21 December, after a brief stop in Bizerte to unload, among other things, 300 tons of Vietnamese rice, just one more example of the varied nature of the cargo embarked during these transits. *Dixmude* maintained this frantic rhythm throughout the following years, returning to the United States in April, May, August and November 1951; February and March 1952 (before going into refit from May to December); and February, April and August 1953 (before a trip to India in November to deliver thirty-five Dassault MD 450 Ouragan fighter-bombers, the first French military jet produced on large scale for the *Armée de l'air* and overseas export).⁸¹⁴

The sheer scale of deliveries taken on by *Dixmude* – and many more carried in civilian hulls through the same period – clearly showed the commitment of resources by the United States to the rearmament of France in the early 1950s. The nature of the material being transferred to the French navy, though, also revealed a continued reluctance in Washington to endorse the level of ambitions contemplated at the *rue Royale*. Requests for jet aircraft were denied and *Dixmude* embarked Second World War piston-engine Corsairs and Avengers as late as 1957 for delivery to France. Meanwhile, the lease terms of *La Fayette* limited that carrier to NATO ASW missions. AMP funding played a pivotal role in quick-starting naval construction in French yards but the provision of US dollars remained carefully restricted to building, in addition to minesweepers and amphibious craft, those T-47 and E-50 destroyers required for the escort of ASW hunter-killer groups and slower merchant convoys, not some future French carrier strike group.

Even discussions of items of common interests could give rise to serious disagreements. Following the adoption by the *Assemblée nationale* on 8 January 1951 of a new defence budget for the current fiscal year and a longer-term rearmament policy, Minister of National Defence Jules Moch addressed to the US government a comprehensive plan to implement the legislation. This note having been circulated in Washington, the US embassy in Paris relayed to French authorities an aide-memoire providing the consolidated feedback of various agencies "... with a view to increasing the effectiveness of the present Franco-American efforts to strengthen the combat effectiveness of the French military establishment."⁸¹⁵ The section concerned with naval matters attributed a low priority to the construction in France of submarines and carrier planes, as well as the purchase of long-range patrol aircraft from Great Britain (Lancasters and

⁸¹³ See *ibid.*, 79-81 for *Dixmude*'s busy programme in 1951.

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 81-85.

⁸¹⁵ National Archives and Records Administration (College Park, MD; hereafter NARA), RG 84 Box 5 – Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State – France, Paris Embassy – Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP) Subject Files, 1949-1953, aide-memoire from the United States Embassy in Paris to the French Ministry of National Defence, 4 February 1951.

Sunderlands). It recommended, instead, that greater emphasis be placed on the production of minesweepers, LCVPs and destroyer escorts.⁸¹⁶

This “desire” drew a sharp reply penned by Chief Naval Architect Louis-Lazare Kahn who stated that the French plan was designed to satisfy national imperatives as well as alliance requirements.⁸¹⁷ Though they were in short supply, increasing the production of minesweepers in France would impact the construction of new fleet destroyers and the completion of the cruiser *De Grasse*. Kahn also decried the proposal submitted in earlier US correspondence that an American minesweeper design be adopted for construction by French shipyards for the purpose of equipment standardisation within NATO. Kahn stated that contracts had already been let for the construction of a superior French model and the fact that the British were still building their own design provided a precedent which could not be ignored.

Submarines also proved contentious in 1951. Later that spring, MAAG authorities in Paris suggested that France should put plans for construction of six new Narval-class submersibles on hold and concentrate national resources on building surface units. American scepticism with regards to French ambitions in reconstituting a modern submarine fleet was two-fold: operational and technical.⁸¹⁸ First, NATO war plans did not call for France to provide a large submarine contribution beyond some capability for coastal patrol off the *métropole*. Secondly, the record of French shipyards in tackling the considerable challenges involved in the construction of submersibles capable of the performance required in the postwar era (extreme depths, higher speeds, improved autonomy, quieter hulls) appeared weak.

Though three submarines first laid before the war had entered service in 1949-1950 (*La Créole*, *L’Africaine*, *L’Astrée*), they were largely completed along their original prewar drawings, while two more (*L’Andromède*, *Artémise*) remained under construction.⁸¹⁹ Delays continued to plague work on the latter as a result of repeated attempts to incorporate new designs and equipment based on lessons from the previous conflict and the study of German U-boats (enclosed sail for increased speed and quiet, air-breathing snorkel, improved combat information centre and torpedo arrangements). These challenges did not deter the French, however, and they presented some valid arguments in justifying their continued pursuit of submarine construction.

Within the context of the Alliance, the provision of an effective escort force demanded that ships and aircraft be provided with the opportunity to train against realistic targets. Modern submarines could provide the platforms capable of replicating the tactics and technical performance of the Soviet submarines. North American and West European fleets would be called upon to defeat in case of war. Dedicating national resources to building such modern platforms would also contribute to developing unique capabilities and expertise in French shipyards that the

⁸¹⁶ As for the other services, the aide-memoire proposed that France abandons the construction of a new heavy tank (the AMX-50), as well as the Bréguet 851 transport plane and the Ouragan MD 450 jet fighter.

⁸¹⁷ NARA, RG 84 Box 5, Letter from naval architect L. Kahn to Deputy Special Assistant for MDAP France E.G. Trueblood, 30 March 1951.

⁸¹⁸ Claude Huan and Jean Moulin, *Les sous-marins français 1945-2000* [French Submarines 1945-2000] (Rennes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2004), 14.

⁸¹⁹ Olivier Huwart, *Sous-marins français: 1944-1954, la décennie du renouveau* [French Submarines: 1944-1954, the Decade of Renewal] (Rennes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2003), 77-80 and 177-180.

Alliance could leverage in the longer-term, making these facilities as valuable as the vessels they would launch.⁸²⁰ The debate was short-lived, however, as French authorities elected to dedicate purely national resources to their submarine projects, depriving the Americans of the leverage they could have exercised had the *Marine nationale* sought MDAP funding to support such endeavour.

Rue Royal planners obtained the inclusion of *projet E-48* in the 1951 rearmament plan.⁸²¹ The fruit of extensive postwar studies and practical experimentation using the German Type XXI *Roland Morillot* (the former *U-2518*, launched in 1944, surrendered to the British in 1945 and transferred to France in 1946), the lead vessel of the Narval-class was laid in the Cherbourg naval dockyard in December 1951 with three more following in 1952-1954 (*Marsouin*, *Dauphin* and *Requin*) and another two in 1954-1955 (*Espadon* and *Morse* ordered from civilian shipyards near Le Havre).⁸²² As these constructions would not enter service for several years, the French navy sought to cover the gap in ASW training capability by leasing vessels from Great Britain. Talks led to an agreement in December 1951 for transfer of four Second World War S-class submarines for four years at a cost of 245 million French francs (FF): *La Sibylle* (HMS *Sportsman*, launched in April 1942), *Le Saphir* (HMS *Satyr*, launched in September 1942), *La Sirène* (HMS *Spiteful*, launched in June 1943), and *La Sultane* (HMS *Statesman*, launched in September 1943).⁸²³ Although *La Sibylle* suffered a tragic fate – the submarine sank with her entire crew of 47 while exercising with surface ships in the Mediterranean on 24 September 1952 – her sister-ships made an important contribution to the operational readiness of the *Marine nationale* for several years.

The French navy proposed a follow-on to the Narval class, which had been designed for long-range patrolling against surface ships. First raised in *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* deliberations in 1948, the idea of a submarine specifically designed to attack and destroy other submarines quickly gained support and a first study was launched the following year.⁸²⁴ It was inspired in part by a similar effort in the USN – leading to the commissioning of USS *Barracuda* in November 1951 – and the German Type XXIII, a small coastal U-boat designed during the Second World War to patrol in shallower and enclosed waters such as in the North and the Black Seas.⁸²⁵ The CSM endorsed *projet I-53* in 1952, a *sous-marin de chasse* ('hunting' or attack

⁸²⁰ SHD, 3 BB 8 CSM 4 – Various Records of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* [Superior Council of the Navy] 1949-1953, "Situation de la Flotte sous-marine. Besoins en sous-marins. Proposition de programme [Situation of the Submarine Fleet. Needs for submarines. Proposal for a Programme]," 19 September 1952.

⁸²¹ Huwart, *Sous-marins français: 1944-1954*, 174-177. For extensive background material on the evolution of the project, see the folder labeled "CSM – Projet sous-marin E 48 [CSM – Submarine Project E 48]" in SHD, 3 BB 8 CSM 4.

⁸²² Huan and Moulin, *Les sous-marins français 1945-2000*, 12-13; and Huwart, *Sous-marins français: 1944-1954*, 190-193.

⁸²³ Huan and Moulin, *Les sous-marins français 1945-2000*, 15; and Philippe Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique: la marine française (1945-1958)* [Toward a Nuclear Navy: The French Navy (1945-1958)] (Paris, FR: LGDJ, 1997), 247.

⁸²⁴ SHD, 3 BB 8 CSM 3 – Various Records of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* [Superior Council of the Navy] 1947-1948, minutes of the Superior Council of the Navy meeting 15 May 1948.

⁸²⁵ On the rise of the attack submarine and the launch of USS *Barracuda*, see Norman Friedman, *U.S. Submarines Since 1945: An Illustrated Design History* (Annapolis, MD: United States Naval Institute, 1994), 75-82. Gordon Williamson discusses the German Type XXIII in *Wolf Pack: The Story of the U-boat in World War II* (Oxford, UK: Osprey, 2005), 63-65.

submarine), larger than the Type XXIII but smaller than the *Narval*, for employment in the Mediterranean.⁸²⁶ Based in Mers el-Kebir and Bizerte, they would guard against Soviet submarines seeking to threaten the strategic lines of communications between North Africa and the *métropole* in case of conflict. Two were first approved for construction in Cherbourg in 1953 (*Aréthuse* and *Argonaute*) and another two the following year (*Amazon* and *Ariane*), successively entering service between 1958 and 1960.⁸²⁷

Their small size and overly narrow specialization proved a liability but building up on the developmental work and experimentation required for the launch of the *Aréthuse*-class would lead to the design of the larger and more polyvalent *Daphné*-class.⁸²⁸ Eleven of these *sous-marins torpilleurs de 2e classe* (2nd class torpedo submarines) were launched between 1964 and 1970 for service in France while another fourteen joined the navies of Portugal, Spain, South Africa and Pakistan, a testament to the tremendous advances French industry would make in the highly complex and competitive world of submarine export in the 1960s.⁸²⁹ But such success still lay well into the future as the spectre of differing naval visions held in Paris and Washington continued to challenge the more immediate development of the *Marine nationale*. Symbolic were the laborious negotiations over a French request submitted on 5 March 1953 for the lease of two modern American submarines. The *rue Royal* couched this new requirement as essential to make up for the loss of the *Sibylle*, the inability of the British to meet a previous request to lease four more S-class vessels, and the expectation that the *Aréthuse*-class submarines would not come into service until the end of the decade. The Chief of Naval Operations denied this appeal on 4 May 1954 for not meeting Alliance needs as perceived by the USN.⁸³⁰

The decision did not draw much attention outside the navy as it came in the midst of climactic events. Dien Bien Phu was about to fall in Indochina and a new insurgency would start six months later in Algeria, continuing to detract French military strength from the defence of Europe. The armistice signed in Panmunjom on 27 July 1953 had brought the Korean War to an inconclusive draw but it was soon replaced as a source of military tension in Asia by repeated confrontations between the United States and China over Taiwan. By then, Dwight D. Eisenhower had taken over the presidency of the United States and Joseph Stalin had passed away in Moscow without a clear successor, leaving the future of East-West relations in flux.

The enactment of the Mutual Security Act in October 1951 had previously signified the continued militarisation of American aid but left the matter of integrating a remilitarised

⁸²⁶ SHD, 3 BB 8 CSM 4 – minutes of the Superior Council of the Navy meeting 15 May 1952.

⁸²⁷ The four *Aréthuse*-class submarines remained in service until the early 1980s. Three of them (*Aréthuse*, *Amazon* and *Ariane*) were later sunk as target ships but *Argonaute* is on display today as a museum submarine at the *Cité des sciences et de l'industrie* in Paris. Visit by the author, 15 July 2014.

⁸²⁸ The CSM approved *Projet J-4* on 2 October 1954 and construction of the first three units (*Daphné*, *Diane* and *Doris*) was included in the 1955 defence budget. SHD, 3 BB 8 CSM 5 – Various Records of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* [Superior Council of the Navy] 1954, minutes of the Superior Council of the Navy meeting 2 October 1954.

⁸²⁹ Portugal ordered four *Daphnés* in 1964. South Africa and Pakistan followed suite with three each in 1967. Four were built under license in Spain for use by the Spanish navy, starting in 1965. Huan and Moulin, *Les sous-marins français 1945-2000*, 18-19; and Netmarine.net, "Les sous-marins à haute performance de 800 tonnes du type *Daphné* [The *Daphné*-class high-performance submarines of 800 tons]," last accessed 15 August 2017, www.netmarine.net/bat/smarins/junon/typedaphne/index1.htm.

⁸³⁰ Huan and Moulin, *Les sous-marins français 1945-2000*, 17.

Germany as the outstanding source of strain for the unity of the Atlantic Alliance and that of the French polity itself. Tortuous debates over the fate of the European Defence Community would leave the place and shape of sea power in this vision ill-defined at the very moment when the Mutual Security Act signalled increased American aid to support the further growth of the French fleet, though not necessarily as envisioned on the *rue Royale*.

COMMUNAUTÉ EUROPÉENNE DE DÉFENSE

French minister for foreign affairs Robert Schuman had succeeded in blocking the proposal by US Secretary of State Dean Acheson for the immediate armament of West Germany in September 1950 but debate over integration of a German contribution to the Atlantic Alliance remained alive. The government of Prime Minister René Pleven elected to preempt other unwelcome proposals by quickly formulating one of its own for consideration at the next meeting of NATO defence ministers. Endorsed by the French cabinet on 8 October, the *plan Pleven* was first revealed publicly in the *Assemblée nationale* on 24 October and Minister of National Defence Jules Moch brought it to the Alliance's Defence Committee the following week.⁸³¹ Largely shaped by Jean Monnet – author of the *Plan Schuman* which proposed in May 1950 the creation of a single authority to control the production of steel and coal in France and West Germany – the French proposed a mechanism that would allow the inclusion of German troops in the Alliance but avoid the creation of a German army.⁸³² Instead, this contribution would be amalgamated into a larger military body characterized by "... complete fusion of its human and material elements assembled under a united political and military European authority."⁸³³ The vision called for an ambitious plan to achieve political aims and address military concerns:

- The European members of NATO and West Germany would contribute troops, material and logistical support to a single, unified military body;
- The army would report to one minister responsible to a new, elected European assembly;
- Nations would provide large contingents of small units, no larger than battalions, avoiding the formation of autonomous German brigades or divisions as well as the need for a German general staff or officers of the general rank;

⁸³¹ Sources on the *Plan Pleven* and the European Defence Community are too numerous to be listed in full but three stand out in providing valuable insights in the debates that took place during those years: Edward Fursdon, *The European Defence Community: A History* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1980); Kevin Ruane, *The Rise and Fall of the European Defence Community: Anglo-American Relations and the Crisis of European Defense, 1950-55* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); and Michel Dumoulin (ed.), *La Communauté européenne de défense, leçons pour demain? / The European Defence Community, Lessons for the Future?* (Bern, CH: Peter Lang, 2000).

⁸³² The *Plan Schuman* gave rise to the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952, laying the foundations for the establishment of the European Economic Community in 1958, which became the European Community in 1993 and the European Union in 2009. For an introduction to this complex topic, see Pierre Gerbet, "La naissance du plan Schuman [The Origin of the Plan Schuman]," in *Le plan Schuman dans l'histoire, intérêts nationaux et projet européen* [The Schuman Plan in History, National Interests and European Project] (Brussels, BE: Bruylant, 2004): 13-51; and William I. Hitchcock, "France, the Western Alliance, and the Schuman Plan, 1948-1950," *Diplomatic History* 21, no. 4 (October 1997): 603-630.

⁸³³ France, Archives nationales [National Archives] (Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, FR; hereafter Archives nationales), "Déclaration de René Pleven sur la création d'une armée européenne le 24 octobre 1950 [Statement by René Pleven on the Creation of a European Army on 24 October 1950]," *Journal officiel de la République française* (25 October 1950): 7118.

- German battalions would be made up of individuals recruited directly by the European ministry of defence, negating the need for a German ministry of defense and an army;
- The army would be employed for operations by NATO's Supreme Commander Europe;
- A central authority would oversee a common budget and a common armament plan; and
- Contributing nations would retain control of those armed forces not integrated in the European army (such as those deployed by France in *Union française* territories) but Germany would not be entitled to military forces outside of the EDC framework.⁸³⁴

Prepared in haste and with great secrecy by Monnet and a few collaborators, without input from the French military or the foreign affairs bureaucracy, nor consultation with the Allies before its announcement, the proposal met with little enthusiasm.⁸³⁵ Acheson's initial reaction was telling: "French plan as stated seems to give Germany permanently second class status... We are sure any such plan would be wholly unworkable and would never be accepted by the German people whose genuine support is necessary."⁸³⁶ Nevertheless, the concept eventually gained traction as the "least bad solution" to break the impasse over German rearmament, especially after drawn-out negotiations led to an accord that saw France accepting several compromises to gain the endorsement of the Allies: equality in status among the contributing nations, including Germany; division-size national formations, including German divisions; abandonment of the concept of one European minister of defence – who would likely have been French – in favour of a collaborative council of defence ministers, including one from Germany; and the adoption of supranational political institutions less powerful than those Monnet envisioned originally.

This long gestation led to the signing in Paris of the European Defence Community (EDC) Treaty – *Traité de la Communauté européenne de défense (CED)* – on 27 May 1952 by representatives from France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Italy and the Federal Republic of Germany.⁸³⁷ Great Britain did not adhere to the Community due to reservations about the supranational elements found therein but associated itself with the United States in a common commitment to mutual self-defence, declaring that "... if any action from whatever quarter threatens the integrity or unity of the community, the two Governments will regard this as a threat to their own security."⁸³⁸ By and large a compromise, the final version of the EDC text nevertheless preserved France's fundamental demands as commented in a contemporary analysis:

⁸³⁴ *Ibid.*, 7118-7119.

⁸³⁵ Georgette Elgey provides more insight on Monnet's role and the relative lack of input from the French military into the formulation of the plan in her *Histoire de la IVe République: La République des Contradictions, 1951 – 1954* [History of the Fourth Republic: The Republic of Contradictions, 1951 – 1954], 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: Fayard, 1993), 269-274.

⁸³⁶ United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950 – Volume III – Western Europe* (hereafter *FRUS 1950*) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), telegram from the Secretary of State to the Embassy in France, 27 October 1950.

⁸³⁷ The French versions of the EDC Treaty and related documents can be found in full at Digithèque MJP, "Communauté européenne de défense – Paris, 27 mai 1952 [European Defence Community – Paris, 27 May 1952]," last accessed 20 August 2017, <http://mjp.univ-perp.fr/europe/1952ced.htm>.

⁸³⁸ United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954 – Volume V – Western European Security (in two parts) – Part 1* (hereafter *FRUS Western European Security 1952-1954*) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1983), Tripartite Declaration dated 27 May 1952.

The Pleven Plan is designed to prevent the military possibility of Germany's making war again... True, the French had to make concessions... But the EDC Treaty prevents, at least, from a French point of view, the re-creation of a German national army and a German general staff, limits the number of German troops, [and] prevents the production of heavy and atomic war matériel by Western Germany.⁸³⁹

French admirals approached the matter quite diffidently. Like their army and air force colleagues, they had not been consulted in the formulation of the original *Plan Pleven*, concerned with a "European army", not naval matters per se. The 1952 treaty enlarged this scope by referring to *Forces européennes de défense* (European defence forces) composed of army, navy and air force components but even that much more detailed text – consisting of 132 articles and twelve associated protocols – only briefly discussed the maritime angle. Article 70 limited the European naval force to the coastal defence mission. Article 10 confirmed that the signatories could maintain distinct naval forces to protect territories outside Europe and defend the lines of communications to these territories, as well as deploy on international missions mandated by the United Nations.⁸⁴⁰ Couched in such terms, the agreement did not "threaten" the *Marine nationale* with wholesale amalgamation in a larger European navy and seemed to provide a viable framework to contain a resurgent German fleet in the future. On that last requirement, Vice-Admiral Nomy had been quite clear in a November 1950 note to the French Chiefs of Staff Committee:

The creation of a German navy which is homogeneous, balanced and able to conduct offensive operations must remain outlawed. However, one can envision a navy reconstituted with a purely defensive character, of which the sole mission would be the maritime defense of the German coast.⁸⁴¹

In theory, French naval representatives could approach the military staff talks held in 1951 to flesh out the *Plan Pleven* with serenity. The German fleet would not grow beyond a secondary coastal force mostly confined to the Baltic. France's naval contribution could be limited to units based in the Channel and those of the *flottille du Rhin*, the riverine force operating on the Rhine – both elements continuing with their assigned duties virtually unchanged.⁸⁴² Strategically, however, the concept proved much more problematic, focused as it was on amalgamating the military potential of the continental European members of NATO and West Germany to build up a potent *force aéroterrestre* to defend the central front. The EDC reinforced the very narrative *Marine nationale* leaders had sought to neutralize since 1948, namely that continental navies could abandon blue-water missions to the Anglo-American fleets and satisfy themselves with the secondary mission of coastal defence. By then, French admirals were already planning operations and assigning their assets to meet national and Alliance commitments but more formal obligations under the terms of the treaty could eventually threaten the blue-water

⁸³⁹ Joseph L. Kunz, "Treaty Establishing the European Defense Community," *The American Journal of International Law* 47, no. 2 (April 1953): 275.

⁸⁴⁰ Digithèque MJP, "Communauté européenne de défense."

⁸⁴¹ SHD, 3 BB8 CEM 4 – Various Records of the *Comité des Chefs d'état-major* [Chiefs of Staff Committee] 1950-1951, "Réarmement allemand: mission de la Marine allemande [German Rearmament: Mission of the German Navy]," 21 November 1950.

⁸⁴² SHD, 3 BB8 CEM 4, briefing note dated 22 December 1951, "Intégration de la Marine française dans la Marine européenne [Integration of the French navy in the European navy]."

ambitions of the *Marine nationale*. As noted more recently by two French historians: "Under these conditions, integrating even a limited portion of its potential within the EDC would represent for the navy a foreboding sacrifice, materially threatening for the future."⁸⁴³

"Materially threatening" as the treaty included a range of financial and economical clauses – articles 83 to 100 and 101 to 111 respectively – meant to facilitate the greater integration of the signatories' defense industries under the oversight of a powerful central commissariat. A reflection of Monnet's unifying vision, these arrangements sought greater coordination and standardization to effect efficiencies in the production and sustainment of the European force through common budgetary and armament programmes.⁸⁴⁴ This approach entailed a high level of *dirigisme* by the central *Commissariat de la défense* to determine which country would produce which armament, the adoption of common calibers and standards, etc.

As a result of West Germany being a signatory and all members deemed equals, all were subject to the same clauses adopted to ensure that the former enemy could not resume an independent military might. Thus, the signatories could not conduct atomic research for the purpose of defence nor could they export or import war material to and from third countries (i.e. beyond the EDC membership). This restriction translated into dire prospects for a French military still dependent on American material assistance while the country's manufacturers were just starting to make inroads on the international arms market. Mechanisms to gain exemptions from these strict terms existed but granting those applications would be reviewed – and could be denied – by a supranational *Commissariat* that France would not necessarily control in the future.

The search for greater efficiencies also continued in the months that followed the signature of the treaty, leading to acrimonious debates within the committees tasked to implement its provisions in practice. For example, French naval representatives assiduously fought off intimations that national logistic and supply services, and even dockyards, would eventually need supranational integration. Others continued to debate the size and shape of the German contribution while bilateral relations with the British military and the North American allies, as well as matters of command assignments within the EDC itself, remained in dispute.⁸⁴⁵ Overshadowing these military concerns, however, was the rapid unraveling in France of the fragile political consensus over the treaty in the months that followed its signature.

The election of the Fourth Republic's second legislature in June 1951 led to weakened Third Force cabinets. Thanks in large part to the Marshall Plan, the country had already embarked on a remarkable path of economic growth that would last thirty years, the decades from 1945 to 1975 later becoming known as *les Trente Glorieuses*, the "Glorious Thirty." Still, the political and social malaise that marked the Fourth Republic regime continued.⁸⁴⁶ The election saw the Communists and the de Gaulle-inspired *RPF* (the *Rassemblement du Peuple français*)

⁸⁴³ Ludovic Caserta and Philippe Vial, "La Marine nationale, l'OTAN et la C.E.D. (1950-1954) ou l'impossible marine européenne [The French Navy, NATO and the EDC (1950-1954) or the Impossible European Navy]," *Revue historique des Armées* 215 (June 1999): 82.

⁸⁴⁴ For an in-depth analysis of the treaty, see Fursdon, *The European Defence Community*, 150-188.

⁸⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 198-199; as well as Caserta and Vial, "La Marine nationale, l'OTAN et la C.E.D.," 82-84.

⁸⁴⁶ Frank Giles, *The Locust Years: The Story of the Fourth French Republic, 1946-1958* (London, UK: Secker & Warburg, 1991), 161-164; and Elgey, *La République des Contradictions*, 13-45.

take the larger shares of the popular votes at twenty-six and twenty-two per cent respectively but neither could seize power nor would they join the cabinet formed in August by René Pleven, from the Centre-Right *Union démocratique et socialiste de la Résistance* (UDSR – Democratic and Socialist Union of the Resistance). As noted earlier, Guy Mollet's Socialists, third in the popular vote at fifteen per cent, also broke with the Third Force movement and refused to return to government, concerned as they were to regain their leadership of the wider leftist movement. Thus, successive cabinets did not include representation from the three largest parties in the National Assembly, greatly complicating the task of successive coalition governments seeking to implement the EDC as the debate over ratification of the treaty grew increasingly strident.

Though at opposite ends of the political spectrum, both Communists and Gaullists denounced the *Communauté's* framework as an abdication of French sovereignty, subjecting the signatories to subservience to Anglo-American imperialism from the outside and domination by Germany from within. Opposition to the EDC also crept across the party spectrum such as when Édouard Herriot, who commanded widespread respect as President of the National Assembly, loudly and quite publicly declared at the Radical-Socialist Party Congress on 17 October 1952 that the treaty "... contravenes the French constitution since it entails an abandonment of national sovereignty without reciprocity. Certain advantages accrue to Germany but none to France."⁸⁴⁷ Worst of all was the seeming sacrifice of *l'Armée* itself for those who dreaded its amalgamation into an amorphous European army.⁸⁴⁸ As de Gaulle declared after the signature of the treaty:

All muddled up with the conquered nations, Germany and Italy, France must give up her men, her weapons, her money, in a stateless confusion. This debasement is inflicted on her in the name of equal rights, so that Germany may be thought of as having no army while it rebuilds its military strength. Of course, France, among all of the great nations that have an army today, is the only one to lose hers.⁸⁴⁹

De Gaulle's position did not necessarily reflect that of all senior military officers.⁸⁵⁰ Powerful voices rose up in defence of the EDC, including those of army generals Paul Ély (selected in 1953 as Chief of the National Defence Staff) and Edgard de Larminat, appointed to preside the EDC's Military Committee, in which capacity he published a heartfelt plea on behalf of the European project.⁸⁵¹ Nevertheless, the vast majority of the officers from the three services opposed the project. Admiral Nomy was careful not to paint himself in a corner at the time and did not attack the overall framework directly. Instead, he expressed his skepticism by focusing on specific aspects of the accord, such as the continued distribution of American aid to the Allies:

Nowhere [in the Treaty] is the allocation of external assistance (credits, end-items, and off-shore production) considered for approval by the member-states... but such

⁸⁴⁷ Cited in Fursdon, *The European Defence Community*, 201.

⁸⁴⁸ Elgey, *La République des Contradictions*, 559-561.

⁸⁴⁹ Statement by Charles de Gaulle on 6 June 1952 reproduced in full in Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages – Volume 2 – Dans l'attente, 1946-1958* [Speeches and Messages – Volume 2 – In Waiting, 1946-1958] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1970), 524.

⁸⁵⁰ Masson, *Histoire de l'armée française*, 387-389 ; and Elgey, *La République des Contradictions*, 377.

⁸⁵¹ Edgard de Larminat, *L'Armée européenne* [The European Army] (Paris, FR: Berger-Levrault, 1952).

consultation is essential when it comes to resources that will affect the *Marine nationale*.⁸⁵²

His minister, *Secrétaire d'État à la Marine* Jacques Gavini (in the post since August 1950, thus a member of the Cabinet which had endorsed the treaty's signature), soon manifested his opposition to several elements of the framework in much more forceful language. Typical was this answer to a proposal from the EDC Military Committee to expand the responsibilities of the *Commissariat* with the transfer of the navy's directorate of construction and naval armaments to that supranational authority:

It seems abnormal to me to see such an unjustified concept – elaborated by irresponsible and incompetent bodies – substituting itself to the proven models followed by navies everywhere and the French navy in particular... There is ground to fear the consequences on national forces and to question whether the country's blue-water naval forces will not become elements of the EDC one day.⁸⁵³

The minister expressed the greatest fear of his officers in this statement by pointing out the potential for unbridled entropy on the part of the *Communauté*, which could eventually threaten the fundamental aspiration of French admirals seeking to restore the navy as an instrument of national will. Facing growing opposition from within the political class as well as from the military ranks and the larger public, successive French prime ministers (René Pleven, August 1951 – February 1952; Antoine Pinay, March – December 1952; René Mayer, January – May 1953; and Joseph Laniel, July 1953 – June 1954) delayed seeking ratification of the EDC Treaty in the *Assemblée nationale*, doubting they could secure the necessary votes.⁸⁵⁴ By Summer 1954, four of the six signatories had ratified the accord but the Italians announced they would not hold a vote until France did so given the uncertainty then reigning in Paris, especially in the wake of a dramatic statement by famed General Alphonse Juin.

Made a marshal of France in May 1952, employed as NATO's Commander Allied Forces Central Europe (CINCENT) since 1953, he publicly denounced the agreement in April 1954.⁸⁵⁵ Shortly thereafter, Dien Bien Phu fell to the *Vietminh* and the Geneva Conference consecrated France's defeat, creating an opportunity for Paris to refocus once again on the defense of Europe. The newly-installed government of Pierre Mendès France (June 1954 – February 1955) called for a conference of the signatories to renegotiate those aspects of the EDC that most irritated its French opponents but this last attempt at salvaging the accord failed dramatically. France's exasperated allies had lost interest in making further concessions to the country that had originally promoted the concept. Resolved to cauterize the bleeding ulcer and skeptical of the

⁸⁵² Briefing note from the Naval General Staff dated 31 December 1952, cited in Caserta and Vial, "La Marine nationale, l'OTAN et la C.E.D.," 87.

⁸⁵³ Letter from Secretary of State for the Navy Jacques Gavini to General Edgard de Larminat dated 18 December 1952, cited in Caserta and Vial, "La Marine nationale, l'OTAN et la C.E.D.," 86-87.

⁸⁵⁴ On the demise of the EDC through the years 1952-1954, see Masson, *Histoire de l'armée française*, 389-390; Giles, *The Locust Years*, 177-185 and 218-229; Victor Gavin, "Power through Europe? The Case of the European Defence Community in France (1950-1954)," *French History* 23, no. 1 (1 March 2009): 78-87; and Rogelia Pastor-Castro, "The Quai d'Orsay and the European Defence Community Crisis of 1954," *History* 91, no. 3 (July 2006): 386-400.

⁸⁵⁵ Juin's status as Marshal of France and his employment in one of the top military posts in NATO made his statement against the EDC particularly striking.

accord himself, Mendès France called for a ratification vote on 30 August, which was defeated by 319 to 264 votes in the National Assembly.⁸⁵⁶ Thus was the accord thrown away, leaving the Anglo-Americans to regain the initiative in reinvigorating the defense of Europe.

Supported by US Secretary of State Dulles, British Foreign Secretary Eden convened in September a conference in London where the matter of German rearmament was finally settled.⁸⁵⁷ West Germany would acquire the authority of a sovereign state and set about reconstituting national armed forces integrated for the purpose of collective defense within both European and North Atlantic frameworks. Followed the Paris Conference of October 1954 where several agreements were concluded to resurrect the 1948 Brussels Treaty by allowing West Germany and Italy to join the Western European Union (WEU, an expanded version of the original Western Union), to accept West Germany in NATO, and to end allied occupation while allowing NATO troops to remain based on West German soil. Several restrictions were also put in place to contain the growth of German military might through the ban on developing weapons of mass destruction (nuclear, biological and chemical) and acquiring major armaments such as aircraft carriers and strategic bombers. These measures greatly eased the ratification process among the signatories, including France, and all of these agreements were in place by the following summer.

The Soviets and their satellites reacted quickly by adopting the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance – the founding document of the Warsaw Pact – on 14 May 1955.⁸⁵⁸ With this last building block, the framework which came to define the Cold War arena for the next three decades fell in place. By then, military assistance had largely overtaken economic aid in the West as the most effective means for the United States to sustain its containment policy and its strategy of deterrence. Combined with the resurgence of France's economy, the stage was set for French admirals to overcome the challenge of clashing visions within the Alliance and in Paris to achieve the revival they had sought since the war years.

SETTING THE PATH FOR A BLUE-WATER FLEET

The unraveling of the EDC, West Germany's adherence to NATO, and defeat in Indochina were concluding acts which followed in the wake of three earlier developments that fundamentally affected France and her North Atlantic allies: the enactment by the United States of the Mutual Security Act in 1951, the adoption of new force goals at the NATO Lisbon Summit

⁸⁵⁶ Fursdon, *The European Defence Community*, 296; and Jacques Kergoat, "Comment fut rejeté en 1954 le projet d'une Communauté européenne de défense [How the Project on a European Defence Community Was Rejected in 1954]," *Le Monde*, last updated 14 October 2005, www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2004/06/09/comment-fut-rejete-en-1954-le-projet-d-une-communaute-europeenne-de-defense_368211_3214.html.

⁸⁵⁷ Fursdon, *The European Defence Community*, 303-337; Jean Doise and Maurice Vaïsse, *Diplomatie et outil militaire: Politique étrangère de la France, 1871-2015* [Diplomacy and Military Instrument: The Foreign Policy of France, 1871-2015], 3rd ed. (Paris, FR: Éditions du Seuil, 2015), 533-534; and Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 124-128.

⁸⁵⁸ The English version of the original text of the treaty can be found in full in Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne (ed.), *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside Story of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991* (Budapest, BG: Central European University Press, 2005), 77-79. For a brief study, see Vojtech Mastny, "The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Warsaw Pact in 1955," in *Mechanisms of Power in the Soviet Union* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2000): 241-266.

in 1952, and eventual abandon by French governments of a military policy exceedingly focused on deploying a powerful *force aéroterrestre* on Europe's central front in favour of more balanced forces. This dynamic eventually allowed Admiral Nomy to formulate a renewed vision in the form of a proposed naval statute in 1952 that amalgamated alliance commitments and national aspirations to shape a credible blue-water fleet for the future despite continued disagreement over the roles, missions and instruments for the *Marine nationale*.

The militarization of American aid to Europe and other allies around the world, launched with the enactment of the Mutual Defense Assistance Act in 1949 and accelerated in the months which followed the start of the Korean War, was signed into law on 10 October 1951 by President Truman. Building up on recommendations first made by White House advisor Gordon Fray in Fall 1950 to amalgamate military and economic aid in support of the fight against Communism, the Mutual Security Act abolished the Economic Cooperation Administration, which had managed the Marshall Plan, as well as the Office of the Director of Mutual Defense Assistance, until then appointed under the authority of the Secretary of State. In their stead, a single authority – the Mutual Security Agency – would administer a unified program of military, economic and technical aid to "... assure that the defensive strength of the free nations of the world shall be built as quickly as possible on the basis of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid."⁸⁵⁹ The primacy of the military component within the programme was evident in the House appropriation for Fiscal Year 1951. Of the \$6 billion allocated to Western Europe (out of a worldwide total of \$7 billion), five went to military aid and only one to economic assistance.⁸⁶⁰

As before, the Americans attributed a large share of the European allocation to France. Secretary Acheson and Minister Schuman signed a bilateral agreement on 25 February 1952 which provided for, in various forms, the equivalent of 15% of France's 1.4 billion FF defence budget for the 1952 fiscal year.⁸⁶¹ In addition, the practice of providing direct military support to the fight in Indochina continued, with a commitment of \$150 million that year and a steady expansion until the conclusion of the Geneva Accords. By Summer 1954, the United States had disbursed an estimated \$2.6 billion in combined military and economic assistance to the French effort in Indochina and directly to the Associate States. The delivery of 150,000 tons of material included 1,800 combat vehicles, 30,887 transport vehicles, 361,522 small arms and machine guns, and about 500 aircraft. As Dien Bien Phu fell, the Americans were providing for 80% of

⁸⁵⁹ United States Government Publishing Office, "Mutual Security Act of 1951 (Approved 10 October 1951)," last accessed 22 October 2017. <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-65/pdf/STATUTE-65-Pg373.pdf>.

⁸⁶⁰ As with the previous Mutual Defense Assistance Program, the Mutual Security Act legislation needed to be renewed annually and appropriations approved by the House for each fiscal year. On the genesis of the Mutual Security Act and the Mutual Security Agency, see Lawrence S. Kaplan, *A Community of Interests: NATO and the Military Assistance Program (1948-1951)* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defence Historical Publication, 1980), 158-162; and Gérard Bossuat, *Les aides américaines économiques et militaires à la France (1938-1960): une nouvelle image des rapports de puissance* [American Economic and Military Assistance to France (1938-1960): A New Portrait of the Power Relationships] (Paris, FR: Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 2001), last accessed 22 October 2017, <http://books.openedition.org/igpde/2030>.

⁸⁶¹ Bossuat, *Les aides américaines*. The text of the accord can be found in United States Department of States, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954 – Volume VI – Western Europe and Canada (in two parts) – Part 2* (hereafter *FRUS Western Europe and Canada 1952-1954*) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986), 1171-1174.

the costs of the conflict.⁸⁶² As reflected at Table 13, naval transfers only amounted to a small fraction of the US commitment. Nevertheless, this support would play a crucial role in alleviating the material burden the conflict imposed on the *Marine nationale* – although not the human costs as it maintained an average of 10,000 sailors, marines and aviators in theatre after 1951 – while Admiral Nomy and his staff pondered plans to meet the ambitious goals agreed to by the Allies at the North Atlantic Council session held in Lisbon, Portugal on 20-25 February 1952.

Table 13 – US Naval Transfers to Indochina 1950-1953

French Fiscal Year	End-Items	Value (Millions FF)
1950	6 X Landing Ships Support Large (LSSL), 36 X Landing Craft Vehicles and Personnel (LCVP), 14 X Sea Otter Flying Boats	2,490
1951	6 X patrol craft, 1 X submarine chaser, 3 X Landing Ship Infantry Large (LSIL), 31 X Landing Craft Mechanized (LCM), 45 X LCVP, 1 X Maintenance Ship, 1 X Tanker Ship, 14 X Tugs 10 X Consolidated PB4Y-2 Privateer Patrol Planes	10,013
1952	27 X coastal patrol vessels, 6 X River Craft 2 X Landing Ship Vehicle (LSV), 1 X Landing Ship Dock (LSD) 1 X LSIL, 19 X LCM, 44 X LCVP, 24 X Assault Rafts 1X PB4Y-2 Patrol Plane, 12 X Grumman JRF5 Amphibian Planes	8,370
1953	1 X LSSL, 4 X LSV, 36 X LCM, 42 X LCVP, 48 X Assault Rafts 2 X PB4Y-2 Patrol Planes	11,314

Source: Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française*, 203, 231 and 247.

The Lisbon summit constituted an important milestone in NATO's history. Decisions taken at that time consolidated the organisation's peacetime infrastructures (with the adoption of a civilian secretary general and a permanent international staff, as well as consolidation of its various military commands), launched a first round of enlargement (with the inclusion of Greece and Turkey, as well as endorsement of a German military contribution through the EDC), and set ambitious national force goals for the long term.⁸⁶³ The urgency of the Soviet threat seemed to recede but its enduring nature became more potent, convincing NATO leaders to accept plans requiring growing forces at an even more ambitious pace.

⁸⁶² Masson, *Histoire de l'armée française*, 398; Elgey, *La République des Contradictions*, 509; and United States Department of Defense, *United States – Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967: A Study Prepared by the Department of Defense* ("The Pentagon Papers"), Volume 1 Chapter 4 "U.S. and France in Indochina, 1950-1956," (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1971), last accessed 22 October 2017, <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon/pent9.htm>.

⁸⁶³ For general discussions on the event and the specifics of what would become known as the "Lisbon Force Foals," see Ingo Trauschweizer, "Adapt and Survive: NATO and the Cold War," in *Grand Strategy and Military Alliances* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 172-174; and John S. Duffield, *Power Rules: The Evolution of NATO's Conventional Force Posture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 56-74. For contemporary statements, see Lord Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years, 1949-1954* (Utrecht, Netherlands: Bosch, 1954), 47-48; and NATO, *North Atlantic Council Ninth Meeting Final Communiqué – Lisbon, 20-25 February 1952*, last accessed 4 November 2017, <https://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c520225a.htm>.

The Council confirmed the commitment to build up a credible deterrent of conventional forces in Europe, bolstered by the American nuclear shield. At the time, the Soviets and their satellites were believed to have no less than 175 divisions west of the Ural mountains while General Eisenhower, as SACEUR, could only count on twenty-one, including those in reserve and/or subject to a lengthy mobilisation process at the start of the hostilities. In February 1952, NATO members promised to increase their ground forces to forty-one active divisions by 1954, with another forty-nine capable of mobilization within thirty days, supported by nearly 10,000 aircraft. Canada and the United States would provide eleven of those ninety divisions earmarked for service on the central front (i.e. excluding those of Greece and Turkey) while France, which had previously pledged ten, agreed to increase her obligation to thirty army divisions.

Within weeks, such grandiose goals proved clearly unachievable for the European Allies, at least along the timeline envisioned in Lisbon. In France, the National Assembly defeated a proposal at the end of February to raise income tax by 15% in order to fund an intermediate strength of twelve divisions in 1952. *Président du Conseil* Edgar Faure, who had just replaced René Plevin on 20 January 1952, resigned within days, to be replaced by Antoine Pinay.⁸⁶⁴ The latter could only secure a reduced budget and announced in March that he would aim to provide ten divisions to NATO within the year and raise this contribution to fifteen in 1953. Even then, the French army could only field a meager total of six French divisions for active service in Europe by December 1952 and the Pinay cabinet resigned that same month in the midst of a momentary downturn of the economy.⁸⁶⁵ The following government, headed by René Meyer, struggled to fund another four divisions in 1953 while military leaders committed additional forces to an all-out effort in Indochina for 1954, deciding on setting up an impregnable stronghold at Dien Bien Phu.⁸⁶⁶

Promoted forcefully by the Americans to urge the Europeans to take on a larger share of the Alliance's conventional deterrent, the force goals adopted in Lisbon proved still-borne. The economies of Western Europe, even with subsidies from the United States, just could not sustain such a dramatic buildup. Senior NATO military leaders – including US Army General Matthew Ridgway, who replaced Eisenhower as SACEUR in May 1952 – remained skeptical of the sincerity of the politicians who had agreed to these targets, believing instead that the goals had been merely accepted as the basis for future negotiations.⁸⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the NATO ministers had agreed to ambitious figures on the naval side as well, as reflected in MC 26/1 "Militarily Desirable Goals for Planning Purposes beyond 1954", the document they approved in Lisbon on 23 February 1952.

⁸⁶⁴ Elgey, *La République des Contradictions*, 317.

⁸⁶⁵ Duffield, *Power Rules*, 64. On the parliamentary tribulations of the Plevin, Pinay and Meyer governments in 1951-1952, see Elgey, *La République des Contradictions*, 23-98; and Christian Bougeard, *René Plevin: Un Français libre en politique* [René Plevin: A Free French in Politics] (Rennes, FR: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 1994), 227-246.

⁸⁶⁶ For penetrating analysis of the fateful decision to set up a fortified base in the Dien Bien Phu valley in November 1953, see Logevall, *Embers of War*, 381-386; and Jean-François Daguzan, "Dien Bien Phu: faute stratégique ou bonne idée qui a mal tournée? [Dien Bien Phu: Strategic Mistake or Good Idea Gone Bad?]," *La revue géopolitique* (23 November 2014), last updated 5 November 2017, <https://www.diploweb.com/Dien-Bien-Phu-faute-strategique-ou.html#nh1>.

⁸⁶⁷ Trauschweizer, "Adapt and Survive: NATO and the Cold War," 173.

As reported in a note from the *Conseil de la Marine*, this policy did not radically alter the fundamental tasks assigned to the French navy, defined as : a) the defence of the country's vital sea lines of communications (those linking the *métropole* with North and West Africa, as well as the arrival points in France of the Alliance's trans-Atlantic convoy routes); the defence of French harbours and naval bases, and their seaward access; and c) the provision of support from the sea to NATO ground and air forces operating in French zones of responsibility.⁸⁶⁸ As before, these missions entailed the provision by France of ASW hunter-killer groups, convoy escorts and coastal defence assets but in much larger numbers:

- 3 aircraft carriers;
- 4 cruisers;
- 31 fleet destroyers (*escorteurs de 1^{ère} classe*);
- 62 destroyer escorts (*escorteurs de 2^e classe*);
- 20 coastal escorts;
- 24 high seas minesweepers, 170 coastal minesweepers, 31 shallow-water minesweepers; and
- 10 operational submarines (i.e. not including those committed to the training role).⁸⁶⁹

This vision, an aggregate of 400,000 tons, entailed a dramatic demand for resources, especially when contrasted with the current state of the French navy, as illustrated earlier at Table 12. The fleet continued to shrink as old vessels were retired from service at a faster rate than new constructions and MDAP end-items could join the fleet. *Rue Royale* planners expected that 47,000 ton-worth of obsolete ships and submarines would be taken out of service in 1952-1954 and then another 121,500 tons by Summer 1958, while French industrial capacity had struggled to launch 10,000 tons of new constructions in 1950 and 1951.⁸⁷⁰ As well, the NATO figures did not include purely national requirements such as the defense of *Union française* territories or the provision of support to UN missions. Nevertheless, MC 26/1 offered a framework that Admiral Nomy intended to leverage quickly in order to obtain a formal commitment on the part of his political masters to accelerate the rejuvenation of the fleet.

This initiative on the part of the navy did not take place in a void as Nomy could leverage a third element, in addition to militarization of American aid and promotion of ambitious force goals by NATO, to bolster support for his plans. Even as France struggled to fulfill her army commitments on the European central front and in Indochina, a growing chorus of voices within the political class came to support increased allocations for the navy. Such voices were not entirely new. Ever since 1945, a number of elected representatives, in government and from the opposition, within the secrecy of cabinet debates and more public fora such as the National Assembly's defence and finance commissions, clamoured for France to rebuild her strength at sea. The debates over the aircraft carrier project *PA-28* and completion of *Jean Bart* had provided a venue for this argument. Typical was an emotional statement by Paul Anxionnax, from the Radical Party, during a session of the *Commission des finances* in March 1949: "Voices always rise after France's wars to critique the navy and declare it irrelevant. We have made this

⁸⁶⁸ *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CSM 5, Memorandum from Admiral Nomy titled *Programme naval* [Naval Programme], 12 July 1952.

⁸⁶⁹ *Idem*.

⁸⁷⁰ Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 200-201.

mistake on several occasions before, let us not make this same mistake again! Let us not fall into the same trap as Hitler when he ignored the council of his naval experts."⁸⁷¹ Close to more conservative circles, *Le Monde*'s naval analyst Edmond Delage also wrote in September 1949:

The last war marked the triumph of the nations which mastered the seas. Another war would likely lead to the same gigantic conflict between a country dominating the larger part of Eurasia and the Anglo-American sea powers. Even if the latter are called upon to assume the majority of the burden of naval tasks during such a conflict... they will welcome, as they did in 1939, a maritime contribution by allies such as the Netherlands and France. As well, a dispersed body such as the *Union française* cannot dispense for its internal security and the protection of its vital lines of communications with inadequate maritime forces. These two imperatives legitimize the need for a French navy, not as large as the one at the outset of the hostilities in 1939 but one which may be excessively diminished only at great peril to France and the Union.⁸⁷²

These voices could not overcome Ramadier's commitment to the defence of the Rhine in the late 1940s as a result of strategic uncertainties and economic realities but later developments led to a reassessment of the importance of seapower in France. Korea and Indochina demonstrated the value of the aircraft carrier, cruiser and destroyer in projecting fires and logistical support to forces ashore. Smaller units – minesweepers, fast patrol craft – proved essential to protecting one's freedom of movement at sea while interdicting that of the enemy and cutting off insurgents from their rear bases. Frigates and other escorts, which would soon be capable of operating helicopters in all weather, provided valuable flexibility in taking on the protection of carrier groups as well as that of transoceanic convoys. Whether fighting guerillas in Asia or the Soviets in Europe, amphibious operations would offer a unique ability to turn the main front on land and conduct supporting operations on the littoral flanks. More specific to the French context, a potent navy would also provide a valuable tool in peacetime, an argument that cut across the political divide. Whether Gaullist on the Right or Communist on the Left, voices proclaimed that any tool which allowed France to make her influence felt independently of the Anglo-Americans was a worthwhile investment. The year 1952 also proved rich in technical and operational developments that alleviated many of the strategic and doctrinal uncertainties which had undermined arguments put forward by navalists promoting the continued relevance of seapower in the nuclear age.

By then, virtually all elements that came to dominate the conduct of the Cold War at sea were coming into being, providing a clearer roadmap in defining future navies.⁸⁷³ Both the RN and the USN adopted the angled-deck and the steam-powered catapult to finalize the shape and capabilities of future carriers able to launch large jet aircraft capable of multiple missions.⁸⁷⁴ Trials using a painted outline took place onboard HMS *Triumph* in February 1952 and USS

⁸⁷¹ Archives nationales, 20060132-10 – *Séances de la Commission des Finances 1950 – 1960* [Sessions of the Finance Commission 1950 – 1960], minutes of the session held on 4 March 1949.

⁸⁷² Edmond Delage, "Bilan naval [Naval Assessment]," *Le Monde* (2 September 1949): 3.

⁸⁷³ For a succinct summary, see Norman Polmar, *Chronology of the Cold War at Sea, 1945 – 1991* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1998), 35-39.

⁸⁷⁴ Sheldon-Duplaix, *Histoire mondiale des porte-avions*, 108-111; and Thomas C. Hone et al., "The Development of the Angled-Deck Aircraft Carrier," *Naval War College Review* 64, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 69-72. The other British development the USN came to adopt was the Mirror Landing Aid.

Antietam emerged from an extensive refit in December with a deck angled to port. October witnessed the first flight of the Douglas A-3 Skywarrior, capable of conventional and nuclear long-range bombing missions, with follow-on variants fitted for airborne refueling and electronic warfare tasks.⁸⁷⁵ Two months later, the lead Grumman S2F Tracker took to the sky, the first carrier aircraft designed specifically to conduct ASW search and attack missions.⁸⁷⁶ The keel of USS *Nautilus*, the world's first nuclear-propelled submarine had already been laid down in June and the former WWII seaplane tender USS *Norton Sound* fired a Regulus guided missile off the coast of California in November, the first shipboard launch of a land-attack missile.⁸⁷⁷

The immediacy of the Soviet threat at sea also remained genuine. On 15 May 1952, the USSR commissioned the cruiser *Sverdlov*, the first major platform launched by that country since the Second World War, with thirteen more coming into service over the next three years.⁸⁷⁸ US Secretary of the Navy Dan A. Kimball announced during a press conference in Paris in October that the Soviet Union could deploy more than 300 submarines at the outset of a conflict, highlighting the very high risk posed to the allied transatlantic lines of communications.⁸⁷⁹ The announcement came on the heels of Exercise *Mainbrace*, the first such large-scale naval event conducted under the joint command of SACLANT and SACEUR. Unfolding in September off the coasts of Norway and Denmark with more than 200 vessels involved, this show of force demonstrated the importance of the maritime dimension of NATO's overall strategy.⁸⁸⁰ However, this emphasis also illuminated ongoing difficulties in rejuvenating France's navy.

While the *Marine nationale* deployed twenty ships for the event, there were only seven destroyer escorts, the balance consisting of smaller coastal minesweepers and patrol craft, a contribution reflective of its assigned maritime tasks within the Alliance but drastically limiting the influence of French admirals in shaping events at sea in the NATO context. Nevertheless, developments in 1952 seemed to provide renewed impetus as Admiral Nomy set about securing political support for a more structured renewal of the fleet. Former *secrétaire d'État à la Marine* Joannès Dupraz – an important voice within the *MRP*, the Centre-Right party which played an influential role in the formation of all government cabinets during the years of the Fourth Republic – set the tone in a June address to the National Assembly. Strikingly, he contrasted France's immediate strategy of alliance with the long-term need to create and maintain an

⁸⁷⁵ Bruce Cunningham, "History of the Douglas A3D Skywarrior – Part 2: Early Production Testing," *American Aviation Historical Society* 51, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 272-288.

⁸⁷⁶ Robert J. Kowalski and Tommy H. Thomason, *Grumman S2F/SF-2 Tracker – Part 1: Development, Testing, Variants and Foreign Users* (Simy Valley, CA: Ginter Books).

⁸⁷⁷ David K. Stumpf, *Regulus: America's First Nuclear Submarine Missile* (Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing, 1996), 84.

⁸⁷⁸ Bryan Ranft and Geoffrey Till, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: MacMillan Press, 1989), 99; and Lawrence Sondhouse, *Navies in Modern World Histories* (London, UK: Reaktion Books, 2004), 237-239. The Soviets also launched a range of smaller vessels at the time, including seventy Skorjiv-class destroyers completed in 1949-1953.

⁸⁷⁹ "Soviet Navy Has 300 Submarines, 4 Times Nazis' in '39, Kimball Says," *The New York Times*, 2 October 1952, last accessed 10 November 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1952/10/02/archives/soviet-navy-has-300-submarines-4-times-nazis-in-39-kimball-says.html>.

⁸⁸⁰ Dean C. Allard, "Strategic Views of the US Navy and NATO on the Northern Flank, 1917-1991," *The Northern Mariner/Le marin du nord* XI, no. 1 (January 2001): 13; and Geoffrey Till, "Holding the Bridge in Troubled Times: The Cold War and the Navies of Europe," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 2 (April 2005): 317.

independent French fleet built in France to uphold the country's sovereignty, preserve the sanctity of the *Union française* and promote French industries:

One can affirm that the great European and Atlantic coalition to which we belong is rich enough in naval resources and that France must tackle other priorities. But this language imposes severe limits. We have our own enduring responsibilities which we cannot abandon without ceasing to be a great nation. We have witnessed the ability of French dockyards and civilian shipyards to develop and build new prototypes. Are we willing to risk this capability? Our bases [at home and overseas] constitute strategic assets, are we willing to lower the flag flying over them? *Can we envisage being almost exclusively dependent on foreign material in ten years hence* to maintain the means to reach across the French Union and our other territories overseas? Today is the time to act as there is very little time left to correct this situation.⁸⁸¹ [Emphasis added]

FROM THE *STATUT NAVAL DE 1952...*

Ever since the war years, *Rue Royale* planners, as well as their army and air force colleagues, had been laboring under the strictures of defence funding provided in the form of *tranches annuelles*. These annual budgetary allocations varied from one fiscal year to the other and their details were the object of extensive debates in Parliament. Competing commissions of elected officials – including but not limited to the ones concerned with national defence, foreign affairs, and finances – all had a say in reshaping the budget proposals submitted by Fourth Republic cabinets before updated versions made their way to the National Assembly for a vote.⁸⁸² More public debates preceded such votes and often led to additional amendments before the ministries finally obtained their respective allocation and specific instructions for the implementation of the defence budget, most often well past the beginning of the fiscal year.

In the case of the navy, such instructions could go into much detail such as the work to be executed from year to year in completion of the battleship *Jean Bart* and the cruiser *De Grasse* (amending priorities from main armament to anti-air guns, propulsion systems to electronic sensors) or the on-again, off-again lay down of the ill-fated aircraft carrier *PA-28*. After 1949, this cycle of annual incertitude was compounded by introduction of direct American aid. Successive MDAP allocations – be they end-items or financial subsidies – were certainly welcome in France but they were also negotiated as yearly tranches, which could vary in nature and size. As well, the American and French fiscal years were offset by six months, only adding to the confusion. This greatly complicated planning for timely decommissioning of obsolete units, figuring out recruitment and manning goals, as well as prioritizing national allocations to support new constructions, refits and modernizations, the acquisitions of suitable spare parts and ammunition of the right caliber, etc. As a result of these challenges, French admirals longed to propose a long-term *statut naval* for adoption by the National Assembly.

The nature and significance of such a “naval statute” or a “naval bill” in this context is best presented by a French naval historian of the Fourth Republic, Philippe Strub:

⁸⁸¹ *Journal officiel de la République française* (11 juin 1952): 2810.

⁸⁸² Elgey discusses the role of parliamentary commissions under the Fourth Republic in *La République des Contradictions*, 110 while Quérel provides a succinct analysis of the influence of the parliamentary commissions on the defence budget in *Vers une marine atomique*, 141-145.

In theory, this act would fix qualitative and quantitative levels for the naval forces, the organization of their bases, as well as the organic and operational structures of their chains of command. It is based on general national policies approved by parliamentarians and must closely adhere to the military policy pursued by government. It must be adequate for the geography of the territories involved and reflect the economic and financial realities of the country.⁸⁸³

The adoption of a *statut naval* would secure endorsement by the National Assembly of stable financing in support of a coherent fleet for the coming decades. Past efforts had not fared well during the years of the Third Republic with the last statute enacted in 1912. Considered a great achievement at the time, it put an end to the long-running dispute that had divided the French navy into irreconcilable clans in the late nineteenth century. Infighting between those promoting the continued relevance of the capital ship and the revolutionaries of the *Jeune École* who sought to leverage innovations (such as the torpedo boat and then the submarine) to undermine Great Britain's supremacy at sea had resulted in a motley mix of vessels, a navy of disparate prototypes.⁸⁸⁴ But, enacted on the eve of the First World War, the vision of a balanced dreadnought navy proposed in the *Statut naval de 1912* was first suspended then abandoned altogether during the war years.⁸⁸⁵ Vice-Admiral Henri Salaün, head of the navy from 1924 to 1928, was next in attempting to push through Parliament a rational plan based on the lessons of the conflict and the treaty limits agreed to at the Washington Conference in 1922.⁸⁸⁶

The ambitious *Statut naval de 1924* never made it to the National Assembly for a vote during a period dominated largely by disarmament talks while many decried the absence of an enemy at sea. Nevertheless, the draft was circulated widely and endorsed by influential politicians who were already worrying about the future rearmament of Germany and the powerful

⁸⁸³ Philippe Strub, "La renaissance de la Marine française sous la Quatrième République, 1945-1956 [Renewal of the French Navy under the Fourth Republic, 1945-1956]," *Bulletin de l'Institut Pierre Renouvin* 1, no. 25 (2007): 197-198.

⁸⁸⁴ For an introduction to this controversial period in the history of the French navy, see Hugues Canuel, "From a Prestige Fleet to the Jeune École: French Naval Policy and Strategy under the Second Empire and the Early Third Republic (1852-1900)," *Naval War College Review* 71, no. 1 (Winter 2018): 102-110. Theodore Ropp and Arne Røksund each provide fuller treatments in *The Development of a Modern Navy – French Naval Policy, 1871-1904*, ed. by Stephen S. Roberts (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1987) and *The Jeune École – The Strategy of the Weak* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2007).

⁸⁸⁵ For a detailed study, see Philippe Masson, *Histoire de la marine – Volume 2 – De la vapeur à l'atome* [History of the French Navy – Volume 2 – From Steam to the Atom] (Paris, FR: Lavauzelle, 1992), 208-214, while Paul H. Halpern expands on the Mediterranean focus of the law in "French and Italian Naval Policy in the Mediterranean, 1898-1945," in *Naval Policy and Strategy in the Mediterranean – Past, Present and Future* (London, UK: Frank Cass, 2000), 81-82.

⁸⁸⁶ On Salaün, who oversaw the initial renaissance of the French navy in the interwar period, see Taillemite, *Dictionnaire des marins français*, 480-479; and École navale, "Parcours de vies dans la Royale: Henri Salaün (1866-1936) [Life Journeys in *La Royale*: Henri Salaün (1866-1936)]," last accessed 13 November 2017, http://ecole.nav.traditions.free.fr/officiers_salaun.htm. On France and the Washington naval conference of 1922, see the dated but still relevant works by Philippe Masson, "La politique navale française de 1919 à 1939 [French Naval Policy from 1919 to 1939]," *La Revue maritime* no. 252 (March 1968): 283-295; and Joel Blatt, "The Parity That Meant Superiority: French Naval Policy towards Italy at the Washington Naval Conference, 1921-22, and Interwar French Foreign Policy," *French Historical Studies* 12, no. 2 (Autumn 1981): 223-248.

Italian fleet in the Mediterranean.⁸⁸⁷ Navy minister Georges Leygues then ensured that the statute's key organizational and command and control components were implemented through a series of decrees in 1927 while its shipbuilding goals were mostly achieved through the following decade by shaping the annual budgetary tranches allocated to the *Marine nationale*.⁸⁸⁸ This last precedent was of particular interest to Admiral Nomy in 1952.

One could be skeptical of the National Assembly endorsing an ambitious and enduring naval shipbuilding programme that summer while the country was unable to meet the Lisbon Force Goals, the army struggled in Indochina, and differences remained over the form American military aid should take in the naval realm. The previous experience of Admiral Lemonnier had been telling. The former commander of the navy had discussed the need for a naval statute in 1945-1946 to guide the rejuvenation of the French fleet but the country's on-going economic difficulties and uncertainty over the future of seapower in the nuclear era greatly complicated the maturation of a viable long-term shipbuilding plan at that stage. Meanwhile, Fourth Republic founders adopted their predecessors' approach of planning defence expenditures in short-term annual tranches, seemingly making the adoption of longer-term funding statute overly complex.

Another opportunity seemed to arise in 1948-1949 with France embracing a strategy of alliance and the prospect of a large influx of direct military aid from the United States. At the end of July, Lemonnier circulated a draft statute which was formally endorsed by *Secrétaire d'État à la Marine* Dupraz as the proposed *Statut naval du 27 août 1949*.⁸⁸⁹ The document outlined the range of tasks assigned to the French navy under the three categories of a) those missions in case of aggression against a signatory of the Treaty of Brussels and the Atlantic Alliance; b) security missions within the French Union; and c) missions of a military, diplomatic, economic or scientific nature within a national or international framework. It then detailed the composition naval and air forces required to discharge those tasks:

- Heavy vessels:
 - 4 X aircraft carriers 80,000 tons
 - 2 X battleships 70,000 tons
 - 6 X cruisers 42,000 tons
- Light vessels:
 - 18 fleet destroyers 49,000 tons
 - 50 destroyer escorts 75,000 tons

⁸⁸⁷ Masson discusses the draft statute in *De la vapeur à l'atome*, 323-330 and underlines the parallels between the 1924 and 1952 draft statutes at page 505. The evolution of French shipbuilding projects in the post-Washington context of 1922-1931 are outlined by John Jordan and Robert Dumas in *French Battleships: 1922-1956* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 19-27.

⁸⁸⁸ The influence of George Leygues on the development of the French navy in the interwar period cannot be overstated. He served as navy minister from 1917 to 1920, 1925 to 1930, and again in 1932-1933, passing away in September of that year while still in office. He also served simultaneously as *Président du Conseil* and minister for foreign affairs in 1920-1921. A friend of François Darlan's father, Leygues played a large role in the former's rise through the ranks, leaving him in a position to eventually take over as commander of the navy in 1937. Taillemite, *Les hommes qui ont fait la Marine française*, 345-355 and "Georges Leygues 1917-1933: Une politique maritime pour la France [Georges Leygues 1917-1933: A Maritime Policy for France]" *Revue historique des Armées* 201 (December 1995): 31-42.

⁸⁸⁹ *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CSM 4 – Letter from the Naval General Staff to the Minister of National Defence, the Secretary of State for the Navy and the National Defence Staff, dated 29 August 1949.

- Small vessels:
 - 50 patrol craft 18,000 tons
 - 60 minesweepers 21,000 tons
 - An undetermined number of submarines 25,000 tons
- Riverine and amphibious forces:
 - Various types and numbers 20,000 tons
- Auxiliary vessels:
 - Transports, aircraft tenders, tankers, etc 100,000 tons
- *Aéronavale*:
 - 20 combat squadrons (approximately 400 aircraft)
 - 210 support and auxiliary aircraft
- Naval bases and secondary stations:
 - North Sea/Channel/North Atlantic Zone:
 - Brest, Cherbourg, Lorient, Casablanca, La Pallice
 - Mediterranean Zone :
 - Oran, Mers-el-Khebir, Toulon, Bizerte, Alger
 - South Atlantic Zone:
 - Dakar, Port-Étienne, Pointe-Noire
 - Indian/Pacific Ocean Zone:
 - Diego-Suarez, Saigon, Cam Ranh, Djibouti, Noumea, Bora-Bora

Proposing the goal of a combat fleet of 380,000 tons to be achieved within the following twenty years could have appeared reasonable, especially when compared with past ambitions (the 1924 statute outlined plans for a 700,000-ton navy) and taking into account that *Richelieu*, *Jean Bart* and *De Grasse* already made up 80,000 of those tons. Planners also assumed that MDAP transfers would provide for more immediate material needs while French industry set about building modern ships for the future. Objectives set for the *Aéronavale* remained those adopted in 1945 while the network of bases listed above reflected the current lay down, thus not constituting new requirements per se.

Nevertheless, the draft document fell victim to the considerable tensions that shaped discussions about French defence and economic policies in Fall 1949, especially given the continued focus on the defense of the Rhine at the time.⁸⁹⁰ Dismissed and seemingly bound to gather dust on a basement bookshelf at the *Rue Royale*, the draft 1949 *statut naval* was quickly retrieved by Nomy's staff three years later when another bone of contention between Paris and Washington arose in Spring 1952, this time on the subject of Off Shore Procurements (OSP).

OSP (funding by the United States of commercial production of military goods in Europe for use by the producing country or a third party within the Alliance) were one of three conduits of American aid under both the Mutual Defense Assistance Act and the Mutual Security Act.

⁸⁹⁰ Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française*, 147-155; and Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 83-86.

The other two – the delivery of end-items and the investments of US funds to develop and modernize Allied defence industries as Additional Military Production (AMP) – had thus far been privilege by the Americans as OSP could prove somewhat controversial at home. Many in Congress were particularly concerned whenever Washington contracted foreign firms to produce military goods in direct competition with domestic companies, regardless of the political objective of building up Allied defence industries for the purpose of common security. Despite such sensitivities, French governments militated throughout the year 1951 for disbursement of a greater share of American aid through OPS contracts, even if this course of action meant reductions in the delivery of end-items.

This pressure led to a bilateral agreement concluded on the margins of the Lisbon Conference in February 1952, whereby Secretary of States Dean Acheson committed the United States to negotiate contracts with French firms to the tune of \$200M in 1952.⁸⁹¹ On 6 May, Defence Minister René Pleven made a new demand for an additional \$616M to be spent on OSP during the following three years, a commitment the Americans proved reluctant to take on.⁸⁹² Bitter negotiations ensued, the rift quickly becoming public, and resolution could not be achieved until the following year. Once the Eisenhower Administration was in place, with John Foster Dulles installed as the new secretary of state, the parties agreed to a compromise accord, signed in April 1953 for \$230M in OSP contracts for 1953 and 1954.⁸⁹³

Beyond the dollar figures, the Franco-American dispute over OSP resulted from the fact that Washington wanted to maintain stringent control over the type of production subsidized through this conduit while Paris intended to use these contracts to develop and shape the defence industry in specific ways. Americans referred to Alliance needs and priorities as the main criteria but French leaders would not content themselves with the production of lower-end items such as uniforms, small-caliber ammunition and general-purpose wheeled trucks even if those were badly needed across NATO. Sophisticated production was also in high demand and Paris sought to leverage this opportunity to reinvigorate industries seeking to make inroads in the challenging (and highly profitable) fields of aeronautics, electronics and heavy vehicles such as tanks and tracked armoured personnel carriers.

The inclusion of 180 Sea Venom fighters in the Pleven submission of May 1952 highlighted these differences. The Americans had denied earlier requests from the *Marine nationale* to obtain US-built jets as end-items or the subsidization of research and development of a French prototype through AMP.⁸⁹⁴ As an alternative, French negotiators then insisted on the

⁸⁹¹ See note 66.

⁸⁹² Pleven's demands – to subsidize the building of 300 Dassault MD-452 Mystère II fighter-bomber jets, 80 Nord 2501 cargo planes, 118 artillery observation airplanes, 680 armoured reconnaissance vehicles, 835 tanks, and 150 British-designed Sea Venom jets for the navy – are summarized in a cable from the US ambassador in France to the State Department dated 8 May 1952 found in *FRUS Western Europe and Canada 1952-1954*, 1203-1205.

⁸⁹³ Bossuat, *Les aides américaines*. The April 1953 accord followed a visit to Washington by a French delegation led by prime minister René Mayer and foreign affairs minister Georges Bidault on 25-28 March, the first such high-level interaction with the new Eisenhower administration. Detailed records of these talks appear in *FRUS Western Europe and Canada 1952-1954*, 1327-1342.

⁸⁹⁴ A navalized version of de Havilland's Venom, the RN adopted the Sea Venom as its first all-weather jet interceptor in 1951 (the Sea Vampire had been the first British carrier jet). The Sea Venom could operate

merits of building the British aircraft under license in France as three previous domestic projects had already failed to produce a reliable carrier fighter jet.⁸⁹⁵ The United States eventually relented, agreeing to fund this transfer of technology and residual expertise to France.

In this context of tense Franco-US relations came another encouraging note for the *Rue Royale* planners in the form of a letter to the secretary of state for the navy from *maréchal* Alphonse Juin. Then employed as inspector general for the French armed forces, the army general – who was already uttering disparaging comments about the EDC – made an impassioned plea on behalf of the navy as an essential component of a sovereign France:

As much as satisfying the engagements taken within the context of the Atlantic Alliance, our naval programme must allow us to discharge, on behalf of the *Union française*, the duties required to uphold our position and independence in the world: maintaining order in our overseas territories, assist the Associated States, protect our lines of communications... It is appropriate that the next annual tranches reach the goal of 30,000 tons as deemed indispensable by the Naval General Staff to achieve the goals assigned.⁸⁹⁶

Endorsement from one of the most influential voices within the French army – even as the services were each vying for resources – proved timely. It addressed the draft naval statute Nomy submitted to his colleagues of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* that same day for their review before its endorsement by minister Jacques Gavini. An implied reference to the *Statut naval de 1924* seemed apparent in the intent outlined by Nomy in a cover note:

The time has come to update the August 1949 draft naval statute and determine the level of forces we must achieve in the coming years in terms of fleet and naval aviation. *Even if the results of this work may not be submitted for immediate approval in Parliament, it*

from WWII light aircraft carriers similar to the French *Arromanches*, *La Fayette* and *Bois-Belleau*, hence the interest of the *Marine nationale* for this type once it became clear that American jets would not be forthcoming. The OSP contract was assigned to the Société nationale des constructions aéronautiques du Sud-Est (SNCASE), which was already producing the jet fighter Mistral for the French air force, a licensed version of the British Vampire. The first SNCASE's licensed version of the Sea Venom, the Aquilon, entered service with the French navy in 1955. Ray Sturtivant, "De Havilland's Sea Venom...a Naval Twin Boomer," *Air International*, 39, no. 2 (August 1990): 81–90; Jérôme Baroë, *Cent ans d'Aéronavale en France* [One Hundred Years of Naval Aviation in France] (Rennes, FR: Éditions Ouest-France, 2010), 45; and Roger Vercken, *Histoire succincte de l'Aéronautique navale (1910-1998)* [A Brief History of the Naval Aviation (1910-1998)] (Paris, FR: ARDHAN, 1998), 89.

⁸⁹⁵ The *Marine nationale* launched a domestic carrier jet fighter programme in 1946, contracting three firms to conduct developmental work. The Société nationale des constructions aéronautiques du Centre (SNCAC) produced the NC.1080 but its first prototype crashed in April 1950, killing the test pilot. Nord-Aviation proposed the Nord 2200 but the plane proved too heavy and underpowered. L'Arsenal built three VG-90 test platforms but two crashed in 1950 and 1952, also resulting in the loss of the test pilots. All three projects had been abandoned by Summer 1952. AviationsMilitaires.net, "SNCAC NC.1080," last accessed 17 November 2017, <https://www.aviationsmilitaires.net/v2/base/view/Model/1534.html>; AviationsMilitaires.net, "Nord-Aviation Nord 2200," last accessed 17 November 2017, <https://www.aviationsmilitaires.net/v2/base/view/Model/1535.html>; AviationsMilitaires.net, "Arsenal VG-90," last accessed 17 November 2017, <https://www.aviationsmilitaires.net/v2/base/view/Model/1124.html>.

⁸⁹⁶ *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CSM 5, letter from Marshall Alphonse Juin to *Secrétaire d'État à la Marine* Jacques Gavini, 15 July 1952.

is necessary that the navy establishes the fundamental directive to guide the efforts we must undertake to rejuvenate the fleet.⁸⁹⁷ [Emphasis added]

The proposal did not propose a dramatic departure from the 1949 draft, instead updating only two core provisos. Article 2 dealt with the composition of the fleet, listing numbers and tonnage of vessels as well requirements for the *Aéronavale*. Article 4 addressed annual building plans, aiming to define eight annual tranches starting in 1953 for completion of the overall plan by 1960.⁸⁹⁸ The same missions and tasks remained laid down as Alliance, national and miscellaneous commitments while the network of bases and the requirement for improved shore infrastructures did not change. The CSM debated Nomy's proposal over two days of extensive discussions and minister Gavini approved the amended version on 19 July.⁸⁹⁹ Final composition of the fleet was similar to that proposed in 1949, with the main differences reflected in Table 14:

Table 14 – Draft 1952 Naval Statute – The French Navy in 1960

Category	Type of Units	No. of Units	Total Tonnage	Difference(s) from the 1949 Statute
Heavy Vessels	Capital Ships	2	70,000	Includes a note referring to potential replacements in the future.
	Aircraft Carriers	5	60,000	Increased number of units but decrease in tonnage (4 / 80,000 in 1949), although a note states that tonnage figure is tentative pending future Allied transfers.
	Cruisers	6	48,000	Same number of units but increased tonnage (6 / 42,000 in 1949) in view of extensive AA armament and sensors.
Light Vessels	Fleet destroyers	32	88,000	Large increase overall (18 / 49,000 in 1949).
	Destroyer escorts	73	90,000	Large increase overall (50 / 75,000 in 1949).
Small Vessels	Patrol Craft	80	16,000	Increased number of units, smaller tonnage (50 / 18,000 in 1949).
	Minesweepers	165	60,000	Large increase overall (60 / 21,000 in 1949).
	Submarines	16 to 20 (approx.)	18,000	Slight decrease in tonnage (25,000 in 1949).
Riverine and amphibious	Various	Various	20,000	No change.
Auxiliaries	Various	Various	70,000	Decrease in tonnage (100,000 in 1949).
<i>Aéronavale</i>	Combat Squadrons	21	389 planes	Slight increase (20 squadrons in 1949).
	Patrol Squadrons	28	84 planes	Slight increase.
	Transport Squadrons	2	24 Planes	No change.
Totals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 320 combat vessels of 470,00 tons (350 / 540,00 overall) • 497 airplanes and helicopters (including operational and training aircraft) 			

Fundamentally, this breakdown reflected the ambition to assemble, maintain and supply those air, surface and submarine elements necessary to generate a) autonomous task forces to

⁸⁹⁷ SHD, 3 BB 8 CSM 5, briefing note from Vice-Admiral Henri Nomy to *Secrétaire d'État à la Marine* Jacques Gavini, 12 July 1952.

⁸⁹⁸ *Idem*. The revised Articles 2 and 4 were annexed to the Nomy's briefing note.

⁸⁹⁹ SHD, 3 BB 8 CSM 5, approved minutes of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* session which took place on 15-16 July 1952, 19 July 1952.

discharge the dual roles of long-range strike and ASW hunter-killer missions – with each task force centered on an aircraft carrier, a capital ship or a cruiser dedicated to Anti-Air defence, as well as a retinue of smaller escorts and support vessels; b) fast and slow escorts to operate as national flotillas or within larger Alliance groups in support of local and transoceanic convoys; and c) amphibious and coastal defence forces for operations in the littoral and riverine environments. In other words, the proposed *Statut naval de 1952* outlined the detailed vision of a balanced and modern blue-water fleet capable of operating effectively in the nuclear era to discharge national and Alliance missions.

It reflected the NATO commitments agreed to in Lisbon (hence the increased number of escorts and coastal defence vessels as well as the continued ambition to form ASW hunter-killer groups) but also allocated vessels in all categories to domestic and *Union française* tasks. It took into account potential future developments (abandoning the term “battleship” but making room for some form of a follow-on capital ship and including initial references to the ship-borne helicopter), recent developments (AA cruisers, attack submarines), and enduring missions on the high seas, the littoral and inland from the shore.

A major change from the 1949 plan, however, was the emphasis on accelerating the pace of shipbuilding in France. Article 4 stated the requirement for eight annual tranches of 34,500 tons (30,000 of those dedicated to combat units). It admitted that each tranche would be adjusted based on annual variations in the amount of mutual assistance provided by the Allies – primarily the United States – but it underlined that French shipyards needed to provide the balance most urgently. Strickingly, it proposed that construction of an aircraft carrier in France be authorized to commence in 1954. The document outlined a detailed breakdown for 1953 and proposed average figures for following tranches as shown in Table 15. Thus laid out, the document provided a coherent plan to complete the rejuvenation of a viable Cold War navy by 1960. It remained to be seen whether this ambitious statute could be turned into reality.

Table 15 – Draft 1952 Naval Statute – Shipbuilding Tranches

	1953		Follow-on (average per year)	
	No. of Vessels	Combined Tonnage	No. of Vessels	Combined Tonnage
Heavy Vessels	1 x Cruiser	8,000	1 X Cruiser or Aircraft Carrier	8-to-12,000
T-47 Destroyers	4	11,000	2	5,500
E-50 Escorts	6	7,500	7	8,750
Coastal Escorts	-	-	4	1,300
Ocean Minesweepers	-	-	2	1,600
Coastal Minesweepers	10	4,000	8	3,200
Inshore Minesweepers	-	-	4	400
Submarines	2	1,200	1	1,000
Auxiliaries	To be determined	2,800	To be determined	4,500
Totals	23 (not including auxiliaries)	31,700 (combat) 34,500 (overall)	27 (not including auxiliaries)	29,750 (combat fleet with one cruiser) 33,750 (combat fleet with one carrier) 34,250 (overall with one cruiser) 38,250 (overall with one carrier)

... TO THE *PLAN BLEU DE 1955*

Existing records do not disclose whether Admiral Nomy and *Secrétaire d'État* Gavini had a plan to present the *Statut naval de 1952* for endorsement by cabinet and an eventual vote in the assembly, neither of which took place in the long run. Nor do they show how the draft document was circulated but the records of parliamentary commissions, debates in the *Assemblée nationale* and newspapers coverage indicate that the highlights, if not the details, became widely known within months.⁹⁰⁰ Either way, Gavini stated in January 1953, in a response to a query from a member of the Gaullist *RPF* in the National Assembly, that he would not seek the enactment of a long-term shipbuilding plan at that juncture given the ongoing cycle of negotiations with the Americans over military aid. But he did confirm that the guiding principles of the 1952 statute would shape successive allocations:

Defining the annual naval tranches of the defence budget is not done arbitrarily as the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* has already defined the composition of our future fleet, the one we must strive to achieve. However, it is not possible to plan in advance for a multi-year programme as, complimentary to such a plan, there is one element that we cannot control, which is what can be expected from the Americans on an annual basis. Only once this becomes known can we plan each tranche, while taking into account the most pressing needs of the nation... Nevertheless, let me assure you that the tonnage and composition of the target fleet are known and show us the objectives to achieve.⁹⁰¹

He proffered this statement during a parliamentary debate on the defence budget for 1953, a year that proved auspicious for the *Marine nationale*. Two key decisions had already been taken. Firstly, regarding cruisers, *De Grasse* would be completed for the anti-aircraft role, fitted with no less than sixteen 127-mm guns and twenty 57-mm guns mounted in twin turrets, putting an end to the recurring debate over the ship's main armament. A technical study was also nearing completion to serve as the basis for building a true postwar AA cruiser, the future *Colbert*.⁹⁰² Secondly, within days of approving the 1952 naval statute, secretary of state Gavini ordered the launch of another study to define a modern aircraft carrier, to be constructed in France and capable of launching jet and propeller aircraft in support of surface strike and ASW tasks.⁹⁰³ As for 1953, the defence budget approved in the National Assembly largely reflected the statute's proposed first tranche with funds allocated for one cruiser (the *Colbert*), five T-47 destroyers, two E-50 escorts, four minesweepers and two Narval-class submarines. Maintained were funds previously voted for completion of a) the Second World War-era battleship *Jean Bart* and cruiser *De Grasse*; b) twelve T-47s, four E-50s, seventeen minesweepers, and the first four Narval-class submarines; and c) conversion of the former Italian light cruisers *Chateaurenault* and *Guichen* to the ASW command role.⁹⁰⁴

⁹⁰⁰ Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française*, 235; and Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 216.

⁹⁰¹ *Journal officiel de la République française – Débats parlementaires* (27 janvier 1953): 439.

⁹⁰² John Jordan and Jean Moulin, *French Cruisers, 1922-1956* (Barnsley, UK: Seaforth Publishing, 2013), 226. The 127-mm guns, mounted in eight batteries of two, were of the same 5-inch standard caliber used by the USN for their heavy AA artillery. 57-mm converts to 2.24-inch caliber.

⁹⁰³ Gavini signed a *décision ministérielle* (a ministerial decree) to that effect on 28 July 1952. Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française*, 228; and *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CSM 5 – STCAN Briefing Note 611/440 "Programme d'un porte-avions [Aircraft Carrier Programme]," dated 10 April 1953.

⁹⁰⁴ *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CSM 5, response from the Naval General Staff to a query from the National Defence Commission of the National Assembly, 4 November 1953.

Admittedly, the National Assembly voted an allocation in 1953 short of that proposed in the 1952 statute, for 27,320 tons rather than the recommended 30,000 in combat units. But increased American aid made up the shortfall that year; naval allocations doubled in value from 19 billion FF in 1952 to 40 in 1953.⁹⁰⁵ OSP contracts placed with French firms in 1952-1953 would result in the delivery of an additional seven E-52A escorts, three coastal patrol craft, nine minesweepers and six large net tenders (at 700 tons each) by the end of 1955.⁹⁰⁶ End-item deliveries for that tranche included (at no cost to France) another thirteen minesweepers; fifty-four Corsair dive-bombers and ten Helldivers; sixteen Avengers, twenty-six Neptunes and six PV-2 Harpoon for ASW tasks; ten single-engine SNJ-4 aircraft for training; twenty larger SNB-5 transports; and four HUP-2 tandem helicopters (recognizable for their banana shape).⁹⁰⁷ By far, however, the biggest announcement that year was the United States agreeing to lend a second aircraft carrier to France.

French sailors had barely hoisted the Tricolour on board *La Fayette* in June 1951 when *Rue Royale* authorities expressed their wish for another USN carrier but to no avail during the remainder of the Truman presidency. Seeking to create an opening with President-elect Eisenhower, Admiral Nomy formally reiterated this request in a letter addressed to the head of MAAG France on 29 December 1952.⁹⁰⁸ Follow-on negotiations led to an agreement in Summer 1953, in great part as a result of the Eisenhower administration's early commitment to supporting France in repulsing the Communists in Indochina while reluctantly accepting a draw in Korea.⁹⁰⁹ Although the loan of the carrier would take place under the MDAP framework as an end-item for the purpose of mutual defence within the Atlantic Alliance, Washington authorised the vessel's deployment to the Far East in an agreement signed on 2 September 1953, which would come to an end either no later than six months after the end of the hostilities in Indochina or on 5 August 1958.

France took possession of the former USS *Belleau Wood* on 3 September in San Francisco, promptly renaming her *Bois Belleau*. The French crew then undertook three months of training in American waters before sailing for the *métropole* and arriving in Toulon – after a short stop in Bizerte to disembark an MDAP delivery of sixteen TBM Avengers – on 23 December.⁹¹⁰

⁹⁰⁵ Philippe Vial, "De la nécessité de l'aide, des inconvénients de la dépendance: le réarmement de la Marine sous la IV^e République [Of the Need for Assistance and the Drawbacks of Dependency: The Navy's Rearmament Under the Fourth Republic]," *Revue historique des Armées* 215 (June 1999): 28.

⁹⁰⁶ SHD, 3 BB 8 CSM 5, response from the Naval General Staff to a query from the National Assembly National Defence Commission, 4 November 1953; and Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française*, 244. The E-52A and B escorts were improved versions of the E-50 which had been inspired previously by the USN Cannon-class destroyer escorts. The E-52s carried the same weapons and sensors as the E-50s but their torpedo tubes and ASW mortars had been relocated for better seakeeping, tactical employment and manning by exposed personnel on the upper decks. Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 115.

⁹⁰⁷ Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française*, 247. These transfers did not include those destined for Indochina reflected previously in Table 13.

⁹⁰⁸ Moulin, *Les porte-avions La Fayette & Bois-Belleau*, 105.

⁹⁰⁹ On the American approach to Indochina in the early days of the Eisenhower administration, see Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, 369-371; and Logevall, *Embers of War*, 338-344.

⁹¹⁰ A sister-ship of *La Fayette*, *Bois Belleau* had also been laid in 1941 as a Cleveland-class cruiser but converted into a light aircraft carrier while still on the slip in 1942. Entering service in March 1943 and transferring to the Pacific Fleet in August, *Belleau Wood* spent the rest of the conflict operating against the Japanese. She suffered a bad *kamikaze* hit in October 1944 but returned to the fight in February 1945.

Placed on active service that same day, *Bois Belleau* soon proved an important force multiplier for the *Marine nationale*. Following extensive work-up training with her assigned aircrews in the first months of 1954, she set sail for Indochina in April but first stopped in Bombay to deliver to the Indian air force thirty-two French-built Dassault MD 450 Ouragan jet fighter-bombers. *Bois Belleau* eventually entered the Gulf of Tonkin on 3 May, too late to make a difference in the defence of Dien Bien Phu, which fell four days later. Nevertheless, the addition of a third aircraft carrier finally allowed *Rue Royale* planners to rotate these vessels for deployments overseas on a nearly continuous basis from then on.

Arromanches had already been in Indochina since September 1953 and she continued providing fire support to troops ashore until conclusion of the Geneva accords on 20 July 1954, while *Bois Belleau* completed a six-week overhaul in the RN dockyard in Hong Kong. Both carriers then commenced evacuating troops and civilians from North Vietnam until *Arromanches* departed for France in August.⁹¹¹ *Bois Belleau* completed her evacuation task in the north in September but continued discharging security missions off the coast of southern Indochina until November 1955. *La Fayette*, which had completed a first deployment to that theatre in March – June 1953, was in France for a lengthy refit (February – September 1954) as the hostilities came to an end but she would return for additional tours off South Vietnam in April – June 1955 and again in January – June 1956.⁹¹² These last deployments took place as the French presence came to an end in Indochina, replaced as they were by the Americans who quickly took a leading role in supporting the regime of President Ngo Dinh Diem, leader of the newly proclaimed Republic of Vietnam.⁹¹³

Paradoxically, the *Marine nationale* continued to prosper while Fourth Republic leaders confronted crisis after crisis in 1954, from the loss of Indochina to the EDC debacle and the beginning of a new insurgency in Algeria.⁹¹⁴ The naval budget tranches for that year and again in

Following additional sailings to repatriate troops after the war, the ship joined the Alameda Reserve Fleet in San Francisco Bay in January 1947, where she remained until her reactivation in 1953. Moulin, *Les porte-avions La Fayette & Bois-Belleau*, 89-107; and Timothy L. Francis, *Belleau Wood (CV-24) I 1943-1960*, Naval History and Heritage Command, last modified 24 February 2006, <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/b/belleau-wood-cv-24-i.html>.

⁹¹¹ Other vessels involved in the evacuation of North Vietnam in 1954 were the aircraft transport *Dixmude*, the cruisers *Montcalm* and *Gloire*, the colonial sloop *Francis Garnier*, and large amphibious vessels such as the LSTs acquired from the Allies. Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches*, 160-172; and *Les porte-avions La Fayette & Bois-Belleau*, 107-114. On the exodus of French and indigenous troops and civilians from North Vietnam in the aftermath of the Geneva agreements in 1954, see Logevall, *Embers of War*, 617-619 and 637-638; and Thévenet, (ed.). *La Guerre d'Indochine*, 222-224.

⁹¹² Moulin, *Les porte-avions La Fayette & Bois-Belleau*, 61, 63-64 and 65-67. *La Fayette*'s deployment to Indochina violated the terms of her lease but the Eisenhower administration elected to disregard this issue.

⁹¹³ The Geneva accords allowed for 75,000 French troops to remain based in South Vietnam. Diem, prime minister since June 1954, replaced former emperor Bao Dai as head of state following the referendum of 23 October 1955 and lobbied actively for their departure, determined to eliminate the legacy of colonialism in his country while turning to the Americans for economic and military support. The *Corps expéditionnaire français en Extrême-Orient* was formally disbanded on 28 April 1956, the day the last of its troops left Vietnam. Logevall, *Embers of War*, 650-651; and Masson, *Histoire de l'Armée française*, 410.

⁹¹⁴ For the conflict's beginnings, see Hugues Canuel, "French Counterinsurgency in Algeria: Forgotten Lessons from a Misunderstood Conflict," *Small Wars Journal* (March 2010): 2, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/389-canuel.pdf>; and Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria, 1954 – 1962*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: New York Review Books, 2006), 83-104.

1955 closely adhered to those proposed in the 1952 statute in terms of tonnage if not composition. The 1954 budget provided for 27,700 tons (one aircraft carrier, three sloops for Union service, four submarines) and that of 1955 for 29,700 tons (another aircraft carrier, one sloop for Union service, three escorts and three submarines). The astute observer would note that the inferior number of destroyers, escorts and coastal defence vessels in these two tranches resulted from a commitment of tremendous importance taken on by the successive governments of Joseph Laniel (June 1953 – June 1954), Pierre Mendès France (June 1954 – February 1955) and Edgar Faure (February 1955 – January 1956): the inclusion of a French-built aircraft carrier in each tranche.⁹¹⁵

The study launched in Summer 1952 by the navy's technical service led to a succession of proposals (labelled *PAX*, *PAX1* and *PAX2*) put before the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine*, which formally endorsed a final version, *PA-54*, in Fall 1953. This version reflected the ambitious vision of Admiral Nomy:

This is neither an escort carrier, nor an ASW hunter-killer group carrier. It is, rather, a light fleet carrier capable of providing a naval force operating within a larger allied fleet with fighter air defence as well as contributing strike support to an amphibious force ashore and deploying ASW assets when offshore.⁹¹⁶

The proposed platform included most of the innovations then developed by the American and British navies. *PA-54* proposed a potent vessel of 24,000 tons (later reduced to 22,000 tons), capable of a sustained maximum speed of 32 knots on two shafts, fitted with an armoured angled flight deck with two steam catapults and two elevators. These provided access to a hangar accommodating up to forty aircraft that could weigh as much as fifteen tons each while eight batteries of twin 57-mm AA guns (later changed to eight single 100-mm guns) provided self-defence.⁹¹⁷ The first *PA-54*, the *Clémenceau*, was included in the defence budget adopted on 16 March 1954.⁹¹⁸ Six months later, as the *CSM* debated the rationale for proposing a second one instead of additional destroyers and escorts for the 1955 tranche, Admiral Nomy pressed urgently for another "flat top":

Appreciating that escort forces are necessary, my preference remain for a second aircraft carrier... It is urgent to develop our carrier fleet as we may soon have to return *Bois Belleau* to the United States and we must absolutely maintain two aircraft carriers available for *Union française* tasks. I also believe that circumstances are more suitable now than at any other time to convince Parliament. The *Aéronavale* has the wind in its sails thanks to its performance in Indochina. Time may be pressing. If budget cuts loom ahead and if the naval tranche is reduced to, say, 20,000 tons, then we could no longer

⁹¹⁵ Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française*, 252.

⁹¹⁶ *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CSM 5 – Minutes of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* session held on 25 March 1953.

⁹¹⁷ *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CSM 5, "Caractéristiques du PAX [Characteristics of the PAX]." Minutes of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* session held on 25 March 1953. The 100-mm gun was still under development in 1953.

⁹¹⁸ *Journal officiel de la République française – Débats parlementaires* (16 March 1953): 900; Sheldon-Duplaix, *Histoire mondiale des porte-avions*, 114; and Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 274-283.

propose an aircraft carrier over that tonnage. Is this not the last year that we can expect its inclusion in the defence budget?⁹¹⁹

Nomy won the Council over to his argument and Secretary of State Henri Caillaet (in office from September 1954 to February 1955) persuaded his colleagues in the Mendès France government to include a second *PA-54* (the future *Foch*) in the 1955 budget. These achievements were significant for Nomy but he was also justified in expressing concerns about the future. Hostilities had come to an end in Indochina and the insurgency in Algeria had yet to prove as consuming in terms of military resources, perhaps prompting government to seek economies by lowering upcoming defence budgets. NATO authorities had already forfeited the Lisbon force goals as unachievable while the Eisenhower administration adopted the New Look Policy based on the doctrine of nuclear massive retaliation, introducing uncertainty in the frenetic build-up of conventional forces.⁹²⁰ And Nomy's staff also realized that French naval dockyards and private shipyards could not even keep up with the generous investments approved by the National Assembly and supplemented by the Americans OSP contracts, as reflected in the repeated delays in the delivery of vessels, submarines and aircraft during these years.

Battleship *Jean Bart* and cruiser *De Grasse* finally entered service on 1 May 1955 and 3 September 1956 respectively but only half of the twelve authorized T-47 destroyers joined the fleet by late 1956 and the five newly ordered T-53s would not arrive until 1958.⁹²¹ While the four E-50 escorts of the *Le Corse*-class entered service in 1954-1955, the bulk of the fourteen *Le Normand* E-52s would not sail before 1958, with the last one delivered in 1960.⁹²² Submarines *Andromède* and *Artémise* entered service in 1953 and 1954, followed by the six *Narvals* and four *Aréthuses* in 1957-1960 but the first of the *Daphnés* would not become operational before 1964.⁹²³ Meanwhile, the Second World War stocks of American and British ships, submarines and aircraft delivered during the hostilities and as end-items afterwards were unlikely to remain deployable for operations beyond the end of the decade. And the relentless decommissioning of obsolete units continued unabated.

A representative of the National Defence Commission reported to the *Assemblée nationale* in March 1954 that 11,200 tons of combat vessels would be struck that year, 85,000 tons in 1955-1958, and another 55,000 tons by 1960, arresting figures when the *Marine nationale* hoped to maintain a fleet of 360,000 tons in 1960.⁹²⁴ Also ominous was the possibility that the

⁹¹⁹ *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CSM 5 – Minutes of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* session held on 2 October 1954. By the terms of the initial contract, *Bois Belleau* should have been returned to the United States within six months of the end of the hostilities in Indochina. The Eisenhower administration, however, quickly agreed to French requests for extensions of the original lease in February 1956 and August 1958. Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches*, 106.

⁹²⁰ Lawrence Freedman, "The First Two Generations of Nuclear Strategists," in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 741-745; and Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1973), 401-405.

⁹²¹ Dumas, *Le cuirassé « Jean Bart » 1939-1970*, 73; Moulin, *French Cruisers*, 226; and John Jordan, "Surcouf – The French Postwar Destroyers – Part 1," *Warship IX*, no. 35 (1985): 153.

⁹²² Jean Moulin, "Les escorteurs rapides (Tomes 1 & 2) [Fast Escorts (Parts 1&2)]," *Marines – Guerre & Commerce* 42/43 (March/April 1996).

⁹²³ Huan and Moulin, *Les sous-marins français 1945-2000*, 102-105.

⁹²⁴ *Journal officiel de la République française – Débats parlementaires* (17 March 1954): 901-902.

Americans could demand the return of *La Fayette* without much notice, the continued challenge of maintaining sufficient quantities of spares and ammunition for the ships, submarines and aircraft of foreign origin, as well as the technical and training challenges that continued to plague the heteroclit French fleet. By March 1955, Admiral Nomy promulgated a new directive that addressed these developments as well as the most recent technical achievements at sea.

The document, eventually known as the *Plan bleu de 1955*, did not replace the proposed 1952 naval statute but updated composition of the future fleet, amended the expected timelines in terms of ships, submarines and aircraft production, and assumed the end of American direct assistance within the course of the next year.⁹²⁵ Nomy envisioned reaching the objective of a new fleet of 360,000 tons in 1963 (i.e. all vessels launched or completed after the Second World War) and assumed continued allocation of 30,000-ton annual tranches at least until 1961. The longer-term objective would be a *Marine nationale* composed of 450,000 tons in combat units, 20,000 tons in amphibious forces and 70,000 tons in auxiliaries, for a total of 540,000 tons of postwar French productions by 1970. It proposed a battle fleet (a *corps de bataille*) centred on three aircraft carriers (*Clémenceau*, *Foch* and a third one yet to be authorized by the National Assembly), supported initially by the battleships *Richelieu* and *Jean Bart*, both to be replaced in the long-run by additional AA cruisers. In addition to *De Grasse* and *Colbert*, these new cruisers would not only provide air defence but provide an offensive punch by taking on the role of “missile carriers.”

Another cruiser would be launched as a “helicopter carrier” with the peacetime role of training cadets of the *École navale* in replacement of the aging *Jeanne d’Arc*, launched in 1930. The document also ordered new studies to explore the use of nuclear propulsion for surface vessels and submarines, improved defences against the effects of atomic weapons at sea, anti-air and anti-surface missile know-how, as well as improving living quarters onboard ships for sailors and officers, and simultaneous reduction of crew size through adoption of new technologies. Other ships would be required for the specific roles of replenishment at sea, afloat support to submarines, and provision of fleet repair services underway. Lastly, the plan maintained its predecessor’s vision for an *Aéronavale* of twenty combat squadrons of embarked fighters and dive-bombers as well as carrier- and land-based ASW aircraft, all French construction by 1963.

Nomy expected that by then virtually all of the Second World War ships, submarines and aircraft built in France and those acquired through the Allies or as enemy war reparations would be decommissioned or, at most, serve as training platforms. The *Plan bleu de 1955* provided the outline of an operational fleet composed entirely of modern, postwar French constructions designed specifically to discharge national and Alliance missions within the framework of the Cold War divide and a close-knit *Union française*. In putting such a vision forward, based on an aggressive programme of domestic shipbuilding and modern aircraft production, Nomy sought to exploit a momentary window of opportunity he knew would not necessarily last given France’s long history of haphazard interest in her navy. What he could not forecast at the time were the coming upheavals and their potential impact on the French navy. From the escalating insurgency in Algeria to the humiliation at Suez and continued political unrest in the *métropole*, events at

⁹²⁵ SHD, 3 BB 8 CSM 7 – Various Records of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* [Superior Council of the Navy] 1955, “Directive pour le programme naval [Naval Programme Directive],” dated 14 March 1955. A succinct analysis can also be found in Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 337-344.

home and abroad eventually led to the downfall of the Fourth Republic itself and the return to power of Charles de Gaulle.

These developments would severely test Nomy's ability to achieve the objectives laid out in the *Plan bleu* along the timeline envisioned therein. Nevertheless, French admirals, and their successive Fourth Republic ministers, could reflect with pride on their success in laying out the foundations of a credible and modern blue-water fleet in the midst of complex geopolitical factors abroad and unmitigated popular angst at home at the dawn of the Cold War. By 1958, the fleet remained a heterogeneous assembly of vessels and aircraft of varied origins but a vibrant shipbuilding industry – as well as a wider defence sector engaged in the most advanced field of electronic sensors, guns, missileery and aviation – clearly showed France's capacity to regain her place as a seapower of influence, within the Atlantic alliance and beyond. Operationally, lessons learned from the Second World War, Indochina and Suez, as well as continued involvement in the Algerian fight and NATO training provided an eclectic mix of experience. French officers, sailors and naval aviators determined to implement them as quickly as they could be interpreted and updated to reflect the range of new technologies revolutionizing the conduct of war at sea at the time.⁹²⁶

And one particular technology loomed large in the navy's future. As General de Gaulle took the oath of office as the first president of the Fifth Republic on 8 January 1959, setting off once again to restore the grandeur of France, the French admiralty had already proposed exploring the last dimension of modern seapower that remained beyond the grasp of the *Marine nationale*. Although Nomy only referred to nuclear power as a potential means of propulsion for ships and submarines in the *Plan bleu*, a follow-on staff study in October 1955 pressed urgently for development and deployment at sea of French nuclear weapons in support of the Alliance and the pursuit of the national interest:

A navy that would renounce the atomic bomb would be out of the game, even for secondary missions in war and would have no value as an ally. It would be the same as those constabulary forces maintained by Portugal or Thailand. *The future of the navy is thus tightly bound with the policy government wishes to adopt with regards to nuclear weapons.*⁹²⁷ [Emphasis in the original]

⁹²⁶ Masson, *De la vapeur à l'atome*, 525; and Vial, Philippe and Jean-Benoît Cerino, "La Marine et le nouveau monde: l'enseignement de l'École de guerre navale face aux bouleversements du second après-guerre (1945-1956) [The Navy and the New World: Teachings at the Naval War College and the Turmoil of the Second Postwar Era (1945-1956)]." *Revue historique des Armées* 202 (March 1996): 106-122. For contemporary writings by French naval officers, see Pierre Barjot, *Vers la Marine de l'âge atomique* [Towards the Navy of the Atomic Age] (Paris, FR: Amiot Dupont, 1955) and Raymond de Belot, *La Mer dans un conflit futur: évolution de la stratégie navale* [The Sea in a Future Conflict: Evolution of Naval Strategy] (Paris, FR: Payot, 1958), *passim*.

⁹²⁷ SHD, 3 BB 8 CSM 7, naval staff study labelled "La situation de la Marine en 1957-58 vis-à-vis de ses missions [Status of the Navy and Its Missions in 1957-58]," 13 October 1955.

CHAPTER NINE

GOING NUCLEAR: BASES AND SUBMARINES

A loud klaxon rang stridently on board *Le Redoutable* as crewmembers of the nuclear-propelled, ballistic missile-carrying submarine rushed to their diving stations on Friday, 28 January 1972. Although the end of the work week ashore, that day marked the beginning of a new era for France and her navy. Heading out into the frigid waters of the winter Atlantic and leaving the rugged Brittany coast in her wake, the newest and largest submersible ever built in France was setting off on her first operational patrol. The *sous-marin nucléaire lanceur d'engins* (SNLE – SSBN, Sub-Surface Ballistic Nuclear) carried sixteen *MI MSBS* (*mer-sol balistique stratégique* – SLBM, Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile). Each could deliver a single nuclear warhead of 450 kilotons out to 2,500 kilometres.⁹²⁸ As *Le Redoutable* (“fearsome” or “dreaded”) set course for the Norwegian Sea from where her missiles could reach the Soviet heartland, the *Marine nationale* joined a very select club of navies which maintained part of their nation’s nuclear inventory hidden in the depths of the sea in the 1970s: those of the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom.⁹²⁹ Through silence and mobility, SSBNs provided the nearly invulnerable component of a credible and effective triad of deterrence which included long-range bomber aircraft and land-based ballistic missiles.

The lead vessel of her class, *Le Redoutable* could only maintain a periodic watch at sea by herself but five others joined her in subsequent years: *Le Terrible*, launched in December 1969 and commissioned in January 1973, as well as *Le Foudroyant*, *L’Indomptable*, *Le Tonnant* and *L’Inflexible* which entered service in 1974, 1976, 1977 and 1985 respectively. This aggregate eventually allowed the *Marine nationale* to maintain three SSBNs deployed in different patrol areas simultaneously in order to provide even more redundancy and credibility to the country’s nuclear deterrent. Commissioned in 1970, the Île Longue naval complex offered a suitable homeport for the entire class, a role which continues today in support of the four Le Triomphant SSBNs which succeeded the Redoutables starting in the late 1990s.⁹³⁰ An elongated and narrow peninsula sited across the roadstead from France’s main Atlantic base, Île Longue provides at once a remote location (in case of a nuclear accident) and access to the nearby Brest industrial complex, within reach of an airfield and a large road network (to transport missile components), with easy-to-secure sea and land approaches. It took five years to build the large infrastructure

⁹²⁸ At 9,000 tons submerged, *Le Redoutable* dwarfed previous French submarines. The *Daphnés* displaced 1,000 tons and the *Agostas* 1,500 tons. Even the earlier “cruiser-submarine” *Surcouf* was only rated at 4,200 tons. Jean-Marie Mathey and Alexandre Sheldon-Duplaix, *Histoire des sous-marins des origines à nos jours* [History of Submarines from the Origins to Today] (Paris, FR: Éditions E-T-A-I, 2002), 88-89; as well as Claude Huan and Jean Moulin, *Les sous-marins français 1945-2000* [French Submarines 1945-2000] (Rennes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2004), 72.

⁹²⁹ On the SSBN as a strategic concept, see Lisle A. Rose, *Power at Sea – Volume 3 – A Violent Peace, 1946-2006* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 48-63; and Philippe Masson, *La puissance maritime et navale au XX^e siècle* [Maritime and Naval Power in the Twentieth Century] (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2002), 324-327.

⁹³⁰ Yves Cariou, *FOST – Force océanique stratégique* [FOST – Oceanic Strategic Force] (Rennes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2013), 24-31; Bernard Jacquet, “La base opérationnelle de l’Île Longue, à quoi ça sert ? Comment ça marche ? [The Île Longue Operational Base: What Is Its Purpose? How Does It Work?],” last modified 29 December 2010, <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/marine/dossiers/l-ile-longue/la-base-operationnelle-de-l-ile-longue>.

needed to support operational *SNLEs*, conduct periodic maintenance on those in-between patrols, as well as look after their nuclear arsenal. The latter necessitated elaborate facilities to assemble the missile stages built in Bordeaux (650 kilometres to the south, inland from the Bay of Biscay) and mounting their warhead (assembled in Valduc, near Dijon) before loading them on board the submarines berthed in fully enclosed and hardened docks.

By the time *Le Redoutable* set off on her first operational patrol, another element required for an effective sea-based nuclear deterrent was also in place. In addition to construction of the submarine, the missiles and their base, the *Marine nationale* joined the national command and control infrastructure already set up to facilitate the immediate execution of presidential orders for a nuclear launch, either for the purpose of a first-strike warning or as a second-strike retaliation. The first air force squadron of Dassault Mirage IV jet aircraft had assumed the nuclear-ready status in October 1964, operating out of *Base aérienne 118* in Mont-de-Marsan in southwest France.⁹³¹ The *1^{er} Groupement de missiles stratégiques* (1st Strategic Missile Group) was established in 1968 to operate the S2 Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs) deployed in underground silos on the Plateau d'Albion, north of Marseilles, which became operational in August 1971.⁹³² The president of the French republic, as head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, exercised the nuclear executive authority for all elements through the *Poste de commandement* (PC, command post) *Jupiter* located in the official residence at the *Palais de l'Élysée*.⁹³³ In the case of the sea-based component of the nuclear triad, presidential orders would be relayed via the Very Low Frequency (VLF) transmitter – capable of reaching submerged submarines on patrol – located near the small community of Rosnay (halfway between Paris and La Rochelle).⁹³⁴

Le Redoutable's first operational deployment began on a frustrating note when an issue with the satellite navigation system "Transit" forced her to put into Brest for repairs within hours of leaving Île Longue. The problem was resolved overnight and the submarine resumed her transit to the Norwegian Sea for a 55-day patrol (typical patrols would eventually be lengthened

⁹³¹ Claude Carlier, "La genèse du système d'arme stratégique piloté Mirage IV (1956-1964) [Genesis of the Piloted Strategic Weapon System Mirage IV (1956-1964)]," in *Armement et V^e République, fin des années 1950 – fin des années 1960* [Armament and the Fifth Republic, Late 1950s – Late 1960s] (Paris, FR: CNRS Éditions, 2002), 215; and Jean Cabrière, "Le programme Mirage IV [The Mirage IV Programme]," *Institut de Stratégie Comparée*, last accessed 15 December 2017, http://www.institut-strategie.fr/ihcc_nucl_Cabriere.html.

⁹³² Philippe Masson, *Histoire de l'armée française de 1914 à nos jours* [History of the French Army from 1914 to Today] (Paris, FR: Librairie académique Perrin, 1999), 453; Jean Doise and Maurice Vaïsse, *Diplomatie et outil militaire: Politique étrangère de la France, 1871-2015* [Diplomacy and Military Instrument: The Foreign Policy of France, 1871-2015], 3rd ed. (Paris, FR: Éditions du Seuil, 2015), 617; and CapCom Espace, "Histoire de missiles... Le 1^{er} GMS du plateau d'Albion – La réalisation du 1^{er} GMS [A Story of Missiles... The 1st SMG of the Albion Plateau – Standing Up the 1st SMG]," last accessed 16 December 2017, https://www.capcomespace.net/dossiers/espace_europeen/albion_operationel.htm.

⁹³³ Jean Guisnel and Bruno Tertrais, *Le Président et la bombe – Jupiter à l'Élysée* [The President and the Bomb – Jupiter at the Élysée] (Paris, FR: Odile Jacob, 2016), 241-245; and Shaun R. Gregory, *Nuclear Command and Control in NATO: Nuclear Weapons Operations and the Strategy of Flexible Response* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 131-133.

⁹³⁴ Gregory, *Nuclear Command and Control in NATO*, 135; and Ministère des Armées, "La Force océanique stratégique de la Marine nationale [The Strategic Oceanic Force of the French Navy]," last modified 2 May 2017, <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/marine/operations/forces/forces-sous-marines/la-force-oceanique-strategique-de-la-marine-nationale>.

to 70 days, including deployments to the Eastern Mediterranean, within reach of targets in southern Russia and the Middle East).⁹³⁵ The blue crew was onboard as the *Marine nationale* adopted the USN model of alternate crews in order to maximize the time ballistic submarines spent at sea. Not that this time was the submarine's first extended deployment. Laid in 1964, launched in March 1967 and manned for trials in April 1968, *Le Redoutable* finally left Cherbourg in September 1970 for eventual commissioning in Île Longue. She conducted two submerged missile firings in May and June 1971 (one for each crew), followed by a "trial deployment" to the Norwegian Sea in July with four inert missiles embarked. The blue crew conducted this first trip that allowed for testing key equipment on board, as well as practice communications and launch procedures with *PC Jupiter* through the Rosnay transmission centre. The red crew conducted a similar cruise in the fall and the submarine was declared ready for operations on 1 December 1971.⁹³⁶

The Redoutable-class proved a remarkable technical achievement executed in great haste following Charles de Gaulle's momentous press conference of 14 January 1963 when he announced the decision to complete the nation's nuclear deterrent with ballistic missile-carrying submarines built and controlled by France alone. Standing up the *Force océanique stratégique* (*FOST* – Oceanic Strategic Force) came at an enormous price, however. Even enabled by some technical support from the Allies in the early days, growing tensions between the French and the Anglo-Americans through the 1960s meant that France bore the entire costs and resource commitments necessitated for further research, development, and construction of the submarines and their missiles. De Gaulle's renewed interest for the *Marine nationale* presented French admirals with a new paradox. *FOST* meant huge investments in the navy but dedicating so many resources to ballistic submarines alone gravely affected execution of the *Plan bleu de 1955*, Nomy's vision of an expeditionary fleet of aircraft carrier-centric *groupes d'intervention naval* and an eclectic mix of smaller conventional surface combatants and attack submarines. It remained to be seen how this legacy plan and the fleet it created could be conciliated with de Gaulle's drive for SSBNs.

Another dimension of the nuclear era impacted allocation of resources within the French navy. Bases needed to go underground in order to survive a nuclear exchange. While new technologies extended the autonomy of naval forces, the first decade of the Cold War also showed that blue-water fleets still required a worldwide network of support infrastructures to conduct independent operations and influence events in any given theatre.⁹³⁷ France could not

⁹³⁵ On the submarine's her first patrol, see Cariou, *FOST*, 22-23; and Vincent Groizeleau, "Le Redoutable, histoire d'une aventure technique, humaine et stratégique [Le Redoutable, History of a Technical, Human and Strategic Adventure]," *Mer et Marine*, last modified 27 March 2017, <https://www.meretmarine.com/fr/content/le-redoutable-histoire-dune-aventure-technique-humaine-et-strategique-0>. The latter includes lengthy reminiscences from the submarine's first commanding officer.

⁹³⁶ Cariou and Jean Touffait provide the genesis and conduct of the project in *FOST*, 15-21; and "La construction du Redoutable [The Building of Le Redoutable]," in *Armement et V^e République, fin des années 1950 – fin des années 1960* [Armament and the Fifth Republic, Late 1950s – Late 1960s] (Paris, FR: CNRS Éditions, 2002), 337-346.

⁹³⁷ For a detailed discussion, see Edward J. Marolda, "Les bases outre-mer de l'US Navy pendant la guerre froide [Overseas Bases of the US Navy during the Cold War]," in *Les bases et les arsenaux français d'outre-mer, du Second Empire à nos jours* [Overseas Bases and Dockyards, from the Second Empire to Today] (Panazol, FR: Charles-Lavauzelle, 2002), 362-373; and Robert E. Harkavy, *Bases Abroad: The Global Foreign Military Presence* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1989), 26-65.

have maintained an effective naval posture off the coast of Indochina for nearly a decade of combat operations without access to British drydocks in Hong Kong and Singapore, as well as commercial shipyards in Japan, to back up smaller repair facilities in Saigon.⁹³⁸ Bases were more complex than in the era of coal because of the requirement to harden installations against the effects of atomic blasts, whether direct strikes, remote electro-magnetic pulses (EMP), or long-lasting nuclear fallout. In this context, active defence means (fighter aircraft, ship- and ground-based missiles and gunnery) were limited in their ability to intercept the vectors carrying nuclear bombs, necessitating reliance on a limited number of passive measures to mitigate the inherent exposure of fixed bases.

The most effective was also the most expensive, namely burying installations in hardened bunkers capable of sustaining operations and accommodating personnel in the wake of a nuclear attack.⁹³⁹ However, *rue Royale* staff gave priority in the postwar years to reconstituting a modern fleet over rebuilding metropolitan bases destroyed during the Liberation as well as expanding and hardening those overseas, largely neglected during the war and in the late 1940s. Thus, any examination of the French navy's turn to the nuclear in the closing years of the Fourth Republic and the turbulent transition to the Fifth must include a long delayed look at the base question to understand fully the elements that affected rejuvenation of an autonomous fleet.

The coming end of allied support to rearmament of France further aggravated resource pressures. Despite a momentary pause in the immediate postwar years, assistance from Great Britain and the United States had remained essential to the recovery and expansion of French military strength since the agreement between de Gaulle and Churchill in London in August 1940 and that between Giraud and Roosevelt in Casablanca in February 1943. American aid, especially, had proven indispensable in rebuilding the French navy and the resurgence of a viable shipbuilding industry in France after the war. The militarisation of economic assistance after 1950 allowed French admirals to leverage the provision of foreign end-items and subsidies to meet short-term commitments while allocating national resources to building specific ship types, submarines and aircraft more closely aligned with the national interest at sea and the defence of the *Union française*. But this support had come at a cost, reflecting alliance priorities and imposing a tremendous supply and maintenance burden to look after the eclectic mix of prewar and WWII British, US, German, Italian and French assets that still made up the bulk of the fleet in the mid-1950s. Thus, before turning to the questions allied assistance, bases, and submarines in the nuclear era, it is timely to reflect on the state of the fleet as the nation witnessed the fall of one republic and the rise of another under Charles de Gaulle.

FALL OF A REPUBLIC, STATE OF THE FLEET

The Fourth Republic came to an end in May 1958, the result of a combination of sudden events and drawn out crises marked by instability in Parliament, inflation and budget shortages, social unrest at home, military quagmires in Indochina and Algeria, and international humiliation

⁹³⁸ Bernard Estival, *La marine française dans la guerre d'Indochine* [The French Navy in the Indochina War] (Rennes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2007), 166, 173, 199-200.

⁹³⁹ For a contemporary perspective on the vulnerability problem of military bases on land during the early Cold War period, see the April 1954 RAND Study R-266 by Albert Wohlstetter *et al.*, *Selection and Use of Strategic Air Bases*, last accessed 16 December 2017, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/reports/R0266.html>.

at Suez.⁹⁴⁰ The final blow followed the fall of another short-lived government defeated in the National Assembly, this time over the deepening Algerian crisis. Félix Gaillard, *Président du Conseil* since November 1957, resigned on 15 April 1958 in the wake of a cross-border raid by French air force bombers against an insurgents' safe-haven near the village of Sakiet in Tunisia. Resulting in severe collateral damage inflicted by a force of US-built B-26s transferred to France for use in Indochina (roughly eighty villagers killed and another 130 wounded), this major escalation of the fighting was roundly condemned by opponents and supporters of the French cause alike. Most worryingly, the United States also filed a public protest over the use of American aircraft in the attack and did not pre-empt an examination of the question at the United Nations, a blow to France's desire to avoid internationalising the conflict.⁹⁴¹

After nearly a month of mediation by *président de la République* René Coty, a new cabinet under Pierre Pflimlin was sworn in on 13 May. Pflimlin, president of the centre-right *Mouvement républicain populaire* (MRP, Popular Republican Movement), had expressed before his willingness to open direct talks with the rebellious *FLN* (*Front de Libération nationale*, National Liberation Front). Partisans of *l'Algérie française* immediately denounced his endorsement by the National Assembly. Within days, dramatic protests took place in Algiers where high-ranking officers appeared alongside demonstrators in a public gesture of contempt for the new government. Civilian and military protestors also joined hands in setting up a *Comité de salut public* (Public Salvation Committee) which refused to recognize the authority of Pflimlin. On 15 May, the Committee called for de Gaulle to assume power in Paris. The latter immediately expressed his willingness to return to the political arena if called upon to do so by the French government rather than by the insurrectionists alone.

Unsurprisingly, Pflimlin did not take up this "offer" and an awkward wait ensued. Dramatically, Foreign Legion paratroopers seized key positions in Ajaccio, capital city of Corsica, on 24 May, where they allowed another *Comité de salut public* to form in a move largely perceived as the prelude to a descent on Paris itself. On 27 May, de Gaulle made a powerful statement to convince the military to return to their barracks while reiterating his readiness to take on the mantle of the Republic. Pflimlin resigned the next day and Coty called on de Gaulle to form a government which was invested by the *Assemblée nationale* on 1 June. Two days later, Parliament voted a special law calling for a revision of the constitution. A draft document – largely reflecting de Gaulle's original vision of a strong executive presidency and reinstating an elected Senate to moderate the National Assembly – was endorsed with 82% support through a

⁹⁴⁰ Georgette Elgey sheds much light on these events in the last two volumes of her *Histoire de la IVe République: La République des Tourmentes, 1954 – 1959: Tome III – La fin* [History of the Fourth Republic: The Republic of Torments, 1954 – 1959 – Volume III – The End] (Paris, FR: Fayard, 2008), *passim*; and *Tome IV – De Gaulle à Matignon* [History of the Fourth Republic: The Republic of Torments, 1954 – 1959 – Volume IV – De Gaulle at Matignon] (Paris, FR: Fayard, 2012), *passim*. For shorter but valuable accounts, see Frank Giles, *The Locust Years: The Story of the Fourth French Republic, 1946-1958* (London, UK: Secker & Warburg, 1991), 297-365; Éric Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle* (Paris, FR: Gallimard, 2002), 578-628; and Jonathan Fenby, *The General – Charles de Gaulle and the France He Saved* (London, UK: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 376-414.

⁹⁴¹ "Editorial Note (Author Unknown)," United States Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960 – Volume VII – Part 2 – Western Europe* (hereafter *FRUS Western Europe 1958-1960*) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), 2; and Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria, 1954 – 1962*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: New York Review Books, 2006), 249-250.

referendum on 28 September 1958, and enacted on 4 October. The first parliamentary elections took place in two tours on 23 and 30 November, leading to the formation of a government under Michel Debré who officially replaced de Gaulle as *premier ministre* on 8 January 1959 since the new constitution had done away with the title of *président du Conseil*. That same day *le Général* assumed the presidency of the Fifth Republic following his election by the *Assemblée nationale* on 21 December for a mandate of seven years.

Seemingly returned to power on the strength of a prospective military coup for the purpose of restoring France's position in Algeria, de Gaulle maintained a guarded relationship with the armed forces. He intended to address a much larger concern, namely restoring France's position in the world.⁹⁴² Nevertheless, as in the darkest days of Summer 1940, the navy constituted one element that could make an important contribution to this project but de Gaulle's views on the role of the *Marine nationale* in the new era remained vague. Before his return to power, in correspondence with a serving admiral, he appeared diffident:

You communicated your concerns regarding the future of our navy. I read your letter with interest and share your perspective. But, as you know, I have currently no means of action.⁹⁴³

Once in power, de Gaulle's relationship with a flag officer corps largely made up of Darlan followers who waited for the North-African landings before rallying to the allied camp presented much potential for tension. However, the French navy had remained loyal to the government during the mutinous weeks of May 1958. No senior naval officer had joined the *Comités de salut publique*, nor was there a role for the navy in the Paris military putsch planned in army and air force circles.⁹⁴⁴ De Gaulle was also aware that few *pièdes noirs* joined the navy, so concerns with the loyalty of senior officers with Algerian roots or those who had served long tours with the *Armée d'Afrique* (even dedicated Gaullists such as General Jacques Massu) were not as potent. And within weeks, *le Général* was presented with striking examples of the navy's ability to support his agenda of autonomy within the Atlantic Alliance.

As the United States Sixth Fleet landed marines in Beirut to resolve the Lebanon Crisis of Summer 1958, de Gaulle learned that a French task group was already in theatre, on a routine deployment to the Eastern Mediterranean.⁹⁴⁵ Under the command of Vice-Admiral Albert Jozan,

⁹⁴² On de Gaulle's fraught relationship with the armed forces in the early days of the Fifth Republic, see Doise and Vaïsse, *Diplomatie et outil militaire*, 579-582; and Masson, *Histoire de l'armée française*, 441 and 447-449.

⁹⁴³ Letter from de Gaulle, 10 April 1958, cited by Pierre Castagnos in *Charles de Gaulle face à la mer* [Charles de Gaulle Facing the Sea] (Paris, FR: Atlantica, 2004), 345.

⁹⁴⁴ Philippe Masson, *Histoire de la marine – Volume 2 – De la vapeur à l'atome* [History of the French Navy – Volume 2 – From Steam to the Atom] (Paris, FR: Lavauzelle, 1992), 531; and Patrick Boureille, "La Marine et le putsch d'Algérie [The Navy and the Algerian Putsch]," *Revue d'histoire maritime* 14 (2011): 186. For contemporary views, see reports from the Toulon *préfet maritime* to Paris, dated 26 May and 10 June 1958, on the events that unfolded in Toulon and Corsica. Included are praises for one Commander Chouillet's contribution to maintaining public order in his capacity as the ranking naval officer in Ajaccio at the time. *Service historique de la Défense* [Defence Historical Service] (Vincennes, FR; hereafter *SHD*), MV 143 GG 2/1 – Fond Nomy.

⁹⁴⁵ The 1958 crisis occurred as the pro-western Hashemite dynasty in Iraq fell to a military coup by pro-Nasser forces on 14 July. Eisenhower decided on a military intervention in Lebanon to impose a political

the ships (cruiser *De Grasse* and three escorts, with a small force of *fusiliers-marins* embarked) were taking on supplies at the NATO naval facility in Souda Bay, Crete when de Gaulle issued a warning order on 15 July. Although he did not openly disagree with the American intervention in France's former League of Nations mandate, the newly installed *président du Conseil* instructed that the force be ready to sail for Lebanon and protect France's interests in the region.

He described the operation as one of presence, not one of intervention in Lebanese affairs. But he also emphasized that Jozan was to operate independently of the *Anglo-Saxons* – Great-Britain had also dispatched forces to buttress King Hussein in Jordan – and to limit interactions with USN units to the “customary courtesy visits” when alongside.⁹⁴⁶ The American intervention was short as the last of the US troops left Beirut on 28 October and Jozan's force did not get actively involved. Nevertheless, *le Général* could not have failed to notice how leveraging seapower allowed the United States to resolve quickly this first test of the “Eisenhower Doctrine.”⁹⁴⁷ As importantly from the Gaullian perspective, *De Grasse* and her escorts provided Paris with the means to make France's voice heard had he wished to do so at the very moment when the Republic was at its most impotent in the wake of the quasi-military coup of the previous weeks.

Also foreshadowing de Gaulle's interest in instruments of seapower was the correspondence he addressed to Eisenhower that same summer. On 11 August 1958, he warmly congratulated the American president for successful completion of the submerged transit from the Pacific to the Atlantic, under the Arctic ice cap, of USS *Nautilus*. The world's first atomic-powered submarine was the first vessel ever to have reached the North Pole. Launched as a top secret mission but widely publicized as soon as *Nautilus* emerged from beneath the ice, the deployment was somewhat of a propaganda stunt meant to lessen the sting felt in the US when the Soviet Union unexpectedly took the lead in the space and missile race in October 1957 by launching *Sputnik*, the first artificial satellite to orbit the Earth.⁹⁴⁸ *Nautilus'* feat also demonstrated the capability of a nuclear submarine to roam undetected for extended periods in all oceans of the world, with the potential to bring armed might – and, soon, nuclear armed might – right up to an opponent's shores. Again, de Gaulle would not have failed to notice that any nation capable of deploying such capability would acquire powerful leverage on the international scene, be it in time of peace or war.

solution on warring camps of pro-western Christian and pro-Nasser Muslim factions. Douglas Little, "His Finest Hour? Eisenhower, Lebanon, and the 1958 Middle East Crisis," *Diplomatic History* 20, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 27–54; and Édouard de Tinguy, "La crise libanaise de 1958 et l'intervention militaire américaine [The Lebanon Crisis of 1958 and the American Military Intervention]," *Revue d'histoire diplomatique* 4 (December 2007): 335-355.

⁹⁴⁶ Castagnos, *Charles de Gaulle face à la mer*, 347; and Sofia Papastamkou, "De la crise au Liban au mémorandum du 17 septembre 1958: La politique étrangère de la France entre deux républiques et une guerre [From the Lebanon Crisis to the 17 September 1958 Memorandum: The Foreign Policy of France Between Two Republics and a War]," *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* 3, no. 99 (2010): 79.

⁹⁴⁷ The policy authorized "... assistance and cooperation to include the employment of the armed forces of the United States to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of [pro-western Middle East countries], requesting such aid." The American Presidency Project, Dwight D. Eisenhower XXXIV President of the United States: 1953-1961, "Special Message to the Congress on the Situation in the Middle East January 5, 1957," last accessed 1 January 2018, www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=11007&st=&st1.

⁹⁴⁸ Castagnos, *Charles de Gaulle face à la mer*, 348.

This particular consideration was still in the future but Admiral Nomy could build on these initial impressions and reported proudly to his new commander-in-chief when de Gaulle assumed the presidency in January 1959. At the helm since 1952, Nomy had overseen a remarkable rejuvenation of the fleet on the way to achieve the vision outlined in the *Plan bleu de 1955* as reflected in Table 16 below. French admirals had wisely abandoned any idea of keeping battleships operational, or striving for some form of modern gun-carrying capital ship replacement. Instead, they had succeeded in convincing political authorities to fund the construction in France of the aircraft carriers, AA cruisers and fleet destroyers necessary for the continuous operation of alternating task forces by the mid-1960s. Escort and coastal forces neared the numbers required to meet basic Alliance and national convoy and harbour defence tasks. Potent (though aging) amphibious forces remained based in the *métropole* and in North Africa. The number of modern submarines was still quite low but a glut of new constructions would be ready for operation in the early 1960s.

Table 16 – Main French Fleet on 8 January 1959

(does not include oilers and auxiliaries, planes and submarine tenders)

Numbers of hulls per Category (Not including ships in reserve or used as floating barracks, schools, etc.)	In service, capable of combat in modern conditions	In service or in refit but obsolete	Under Construction / Completion / Modernization	Remarks
0 X Battleship	0	0	0	- <i>Richelieu</i> and <i>Jean Bart</i> in reserve as alongside training ships
5 X Aircraft Carriers	2	1	2	- <i>Arromanches</i> operational, retrofitted with angled-deck in 1958 to operate jet aircraft - <i>Bois Belleau</i> operational (but reclassified as aircraft transport in November 1959) - <i>La Fayette</i> in refit - <i>Clémenceau</i> and <i>Foch</i> under construction
1 X Aircraft Transport	0	1	0	- <i>Dixmude</i> operational (but placed in reserve in Toulon in September 1959)
4 X Cruisers	1	2	1	- <i>De Grasse</i> in service September 1956 - <i>Georges Leygues</i> operational but obsolete - <i>Jeanne d'Arc</i> employed as training ship for the <i>École navale</i> - <i>Colbert</i> to enter service in May 1959
20 X Fleet Destroyers	19	0	1	- 12 X T-47, all operational - 5 X T-53, all operational - 2 X former Italian cruisers refitted as modern ASW command destroyers - 1 X T-56 under construction for trials (missiles and new ASW armament)
26 X Destroyer Escorts	15	8	3	- 4 X E-50, all operational - 11 X E-52A, all operational - 8 X former US, operational but obsolete - 3 X E-52B, under construction
				- 3 X launched 1955, 4 X launched 1958 - 1 X French sloop on last training cruise

29 X Corvettes / Sloops / Coastal Escorts	7	11	11	- 1 X Italian sloop obsolete but adequate for <i>Communauté française</i> missions - 9 X prewar <i>avisos-dragueurs</i> , adequate for <i>Communauté française</i> and training tasks - 4 X sloop-escorts under construction - 7 X coastal escorts to enter service in 1959
110 X Minesweepers	110	10	0	- 15 X US Minesweepers Ocean transferred to France in 1954-1957 - 30 X US Minesweepers Coastal transferred to France in 1953-1954 - 6 X Canadian coastal minesweepers transferred to France in 1954 - 34 X coastal minesweepers built in France in 1952-1957 - 15 X British inshore minesweepers transferred to France in 1954-1955 - 7 X US YMS1-class, obsolete - 3 X ex-German M40-class, obsolete
53 X Coastal Patrol Craft	14	41	0	- 2 X German motor launches built in 1954 - 12 X motor launches built in Germany and France in 1956-1959 (similar to USCG 95-ft patrol boat) - 21 X British motor launches, obsolete but adequate <i>Communauté française</i> tasks - 18 X US submarine chasers, obsolete - 2 X US motor launches, obsolete in Tahiti
29 X Submarines	5	12	12	- <i>Narval</i> (1957), <i>Marsouin</i> (1957), <i>Dauphin</i> (1958) and <i>Requin</i> (1958), all in service. <i>Espadon</i> and <i>Morse</i> to enter service in 1960 - <i>Aréthuse</i> (1958) in service. <i>Argonaute</i> , <i>Amazone</i> , <i>Ariane</i> to enter service 1959-1960 - <i>L'Andromède</i> and <i>L'Artémis</i> (laid in 1939, 1940; commissioned in 1953, 1954) used for training and experimentation - <i>La Créole</i> , <i>L'Africaine</i> , <i>L'Astrée</i> (laid in 1939-1940, completed in 1949-1950), operational but obsolete - Former U-boats <i>Roland Morillot</i> , <i>Millé</i> , <i>Laubie</i> , employed for training and experimentation. <i>Blaison</i> and <i>Bouan</i> to be taken out of service Summer 1959 - <i>Le Saphire</i> and <i>La Sultane</i> , obsolete RN S-class submarines, on loan for training - 7 X Daphné-class under construction, four more would be laid in 1961-1965
Amphibious	Various platforms and tonnage: 1 X Landing Ship Dock (LSD), 6 X Landing Ship Tank (LST), 1 X Landing Ship Medium (LSM), 5 X <i>bâtiments de débarquement de chars</i> (built and launched in France 1958-1960), and a variety of smaller landing craft			
Totals	173 223,700 tons	68 86,630 tons	30 104,700 tons	

Another accomplishment was timely drawdown of obsolete units coordinated despite uncertain delivery times for new vessels and aircraft as a result of uneven productivity in French shipyards and disparate annual aid tranches from the Allies. This challenge was a particular concern in terms of personnel but Nomy's staff succeeded in maintaining the number of qualified officers, sailors, aviators and *fusiliers-marins* to operate the ships, submarines, *Aéronavale* squadrons and amphibious units needed to meet requirements during a complex transition period, a challenge that other Western navies did not always meet successfully.⁹⁴⁹ Despite rapid technical modernization in the 1940s, ships of the Cold War still required large crews to operate the complex weapons, sensors and engineering plants on board. Even confined alongside as a floating barrack, *Jean Bart* necessitated more than 300 sailors to look after her various systems. Aircraft carrier *Clémenceau* would embark a crew of 2,000 and cruiser *De Grasse* 900, while the newer *Colbert* still needed 600 men and the *T-47* destroyers 350 each. Indeed, the drastic personnel cuts to naval ranks promoted by successive defence ministers of the Fourth Republic never materialized, even after the Indochina War, where a third of the navy's deployable aviators, sailors and *fusiliers-marins* had found themselves rotating after 1950.⁹⁵⁰ Manning demands for that theatre were simply replaced by the personnel requirements for the growing Cold War navy – including the remainder of the twenty squadrons the *Aéronavale* longed to stand up in time to crew *Clémenceau* and *Foch* as well as a planned third carrier – and conducting combat operations off Algeria.

Though different from that in Indochina, the navy's contribution in North Africa also made a difference. The absence of inland waterways and the existence of an elaborate network of airfields negated the need for riverine forces and aircraft carriers.⁹⁵¹ However, the lengthy coastline required the commitments of numerous ships and shore-based aircraft to intercept ships and boats of all sizes trying to bring in weapons and supplies to *FLN* bands roaming in the interior, or to their rear-camps in Tunisia and Morocco. By the late 1950s, an average of twenty combatants (cruisers, destroyers, frigates and sloops), augmented by numerous smaller patrol and amphibious craft operating closer inshore, kept watch over these waters, ably supported by three squadrons of modern US-built Lockheed P-2 Neptune maritime patrol aircraft, as well older Lancasters, PB4Y-2 Privateers and PBY-6 Catalinas.⁹⁵² The navy seized 1,350 tons of military equipment during the course of the war, the year 1959 proving particularly successful as three important shipments were captured on board large merchant vessels: *Lidice* (581 tons of arms including 12,000 rifles and 2,000 machine-guns), *Diesboch* (200 tons of explosives) and *Trigito*

⁹⁴⁹ An personnel challenges in the USN and the RN in the 1950s, see George W. Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power – The U.S. Navy, 1890-1990* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 365; and Eric J. Grove, *Vanguard to Trident: British Naval Policy since World II* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1987), 264.

⁹⁵⁰ Masson, *De la vapeur à l'atome*, 516; and Philippe Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique: la marine française (1945-1958)* [Toward a Nuclear Navy: The French Navy (1945-1958)] (Paris, FR: LGDJ, 1997), 133. Masson lists the losses of the *Marine nationale* in Indochina as 98 officers, 183 chiefs and petty officers, and 816 enlisted personnel.

⁹⁵¹ *Bois Belleau* was the sole exception, her aircraft having conducted a number of sorties to support troops ashore in February-March 1958. Jean Moulin, *Les porte-avions La Fayette & Bois-Belleau* [Aircraft Carriers La Fayette and Bois-Belleau] (Nantes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2000), 119; and Roger Vercken, *Histoire succincte de l'Aéronautique navale (1910-1998)* [A Brief History of the Naval Aviation (1910-1998)] (Paris, FR: ARDHAN, 1998), 116.

⁹⁵² Masson, *Histoire de l'armée française*, 425 ; and Vercken, *Histoire succincte de l'Aéronautique*, 117.

(300 submachine guns and 3 million cartridges).⁹⁵³ The *Marine nationale* was also present ashore, with naval troops guarding harbour infrastructure along the coast while commandos deployed alongside army units in the interior, often supported by shore-based helicopters and fighter bombers from the *Aéronavale* (US-built Corsairs and the Aquilon jets made in France). This footprint grew even wider in 1957-1958 when the *1^{ère} Demi-brigade des fusiliers-marins* (1st Half-Brigade of Marines, roughly three battalions) took over two military sectors, one west of Oran and one east of Algiers.⁹⁵⁴ Quickly pacifying zones known for their active support to the *FLN*, the naval troops succeeded in keeping the insurgents out of their areas of responsibility for the remainder of the conflict.

Highlighting such institutional successes in the *métropole* and operational contributions in Algeria hardly meant that all was well with the *Marine nationale* when de Gaulle returned to power. The total construction figure at Table 16 can be particularly misleading as the bulk of the tonnage was taken up with two large aircraft carriers and the cruiser *Colbert*, which had already been launched but had not yet entered service. The balance represented those escorts and submarines that remained on the slips to complete the programmes approved before the fall of the Fourth Republic. The 1958 naval allocation only authorized funds to build small coastal patrol boats and amphibious vessels for immediate service in Algeria, and the first de Gaulle defence budget in 1959 was limited to one new project, a 5,000-ton logistical support ship.⁹⁵⁵ These allocations fell far short of the annual 30,000-ton tranches necessary to implement Nomy's *Plan bleu* by 1963. Fulfilling the capability to deploy one combat-ready *groupe d'intervention naval* at all times (let alone two, one for alliance tasks and one for national or *Communauté française* missions) necessitated a third aircraft carrier and a third cruiser, neither of which had yet been funded by the National Assembly. Straining under the combined weight of the Algerian conflict and France's budding nuclear ambitions, defence budget planning grew even more complicated as the flow of aid from overseas came to an end.

END OF ALLIED ASSISTANCE

The termination of aid from the United States did not result from a single decision such as had occurred at the end of the Second World War when President Truman abruptly canceled Lend-Lease. Instead, transfers just petered out over the last few years of the 1950s. As late as

⁹⁵³ Bernard Estival, "The French Navy and the Algerian War," in *France and the Algerian War 1954-62: Strategy, Operations and Diplomacy* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002), 84; and Jean Kessler, "La surveillance des frontières maritimes de l'Algérie 1954-1962 [Surveillance of Algeria's Maritime Borders 1954-1962]," *Revue historique des Armées* 187 (June 1992): 94-101.

⁹⁵⁴ One was described as the Nédroma-Nemours sector (Nemours is known today as Ghazaouet) and the other circumscribing the towns of Milia, Philippeville and Bougie (respectively El Milia, Skikda and Béjaïa today). France, Archives nationales [National Archives] (Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, FR; hereafter Archives nationales), 20060132-6 – *Séances de la Commission de la Défense nationales et des Forces armées 1959 – 1960* [Sessions of the National Defence and Armed Forces Commission 1959 – 1960], Statement by *ministre des Armées* (Minister for the Armies) Pierre Guillaumat to the National Defence and Armed Forces Commission during the session held on 30 October 1959. See also Masson, *De la vapeur à l'atome*, 528-531 ; and René Bail, *DBFM: Demi-brigade des fusiliers marins* [HBM: Half-Brigade of Marines] (Nantes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2007), *passim*.

⁹⁵⁵ Archives nationales, 20060132-6, Statement by *délégué ministériel pour la Marine* (Navy Ministerial Delegate) Le Bigot to the National Defence and Armed Forces Commission during the session held on 5 November 1959.

1960, *Bois Belleau* – by then relegated to the transport role – could still stop in Norfolk, Virginia to hoist on board AD-4 Skyraiders and T-28 Trojan propeller-driven ground-attack aircraft for transfer to the French air force. However, stocks of WWII-era equipment still worthy of consideration for employment in Europe in the 1960s had been exhausted and modern weapon systems once offered at no cost, such as the ship-borne RIM-24 Tartar surface-to-air missile, became available only through cost-sharing arrangements or purchase at full price.⁹⁵⁶ Tensions over strategy, command relationships, basing rights and integration of West German forces tested NATO after the mid-1950s. Relations between Washington and Paris worsened following the EDC debacle and the Suez crisis, not to mention the fighting in Algeria. While the Eisenhower administration condoned the French effort in Indochina, it refused to support France's approach in North Africa.⁹⁵⁷ The American president and his advisers became convinced that the *Vietminh* were puppets of Moscow and Beijing in 1953-1954 but they grew skeptical of the Communist credentials of the *FLN* thereafter. If anything, they believed that the conduct of the French military in Algeria badly undermined American efforts to counter the growing Soviet influence amongst the numerous countries then gaining their independence across the developing world.

Such opposing views did not make for positive exchanges in terms of American support to French rearmament after 1954. Washington argued for Paris to reinforce its conventional forces in West Germany and decrying the employment of US material to wage a colonial fight in North Africa. These bilateral tensions also took place in a context where the Eisenhower administration reassessed the value of direct assistance for the rearmament of its European allies in the late-1950s as their economies grew ever more vibrant. The Mutual Security Agency set up under the 1951 Mutual Security Act had become the Foreign Operations Administration (FOA) in 1953 while Congress continued passing appropriations that favoured military aid over economic assistance. Nevertheless, Eisenhower instructed in June 1955 that the authority to execute each aspect be split again by abolishing the FOA and establishing the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) under the Secretary of State while the Department of Defence resumed its role in leading the provision of military assistance.⁹⁵⁸ Economic aid regained in importance but Washington targeted allies and friendly regimes beyond Europe for the remainder of Eisenhower's second mandate, a trend which continued with the arrival of John F. Kennedy at the White House. A provision of the Foreign Assistance Act enacted in September 1961 disbanded

⁹⁵⁶ Moulin, *Les porte-avions La Fayette & Bois-Belleau*, 124 ; and *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CSM 13, "Rapport au Conseil supérieur de la Marine – Question no. 3 – Mémoire de présentation des conversions de T-47 Tartar [Report to the Superior Council of the Navy – Question No. 3 – Memorandum on the Conversion of T-47 Tartar] (dated 12 August 1960)," presented during the session held on 14 September 1960. In July 1958, MAAG France proposed the transfer for free of Tartar launchers to assist with the conversion of four T-47 fleet destroyers into advanced AA escorts. The USN indicated in May 1960 that the four batteries were still available but only for purchase, a transaction which was completed the following year.

⁹⁵⁷ Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 246-247; Miloud Barkaoui, "Managing the Colonial *Status Quo*: Eisenhower's Cold War and the Algerian War of Independence," *The Journal of North African Studies* 17, no. 1 (2012): 125-141; and Ali Tablit, "The United States and the Algerian War," *Kadhaya Tarikhia* 5 (March 2017): 1-25.

⁹⁵⁸ The American Presidency Project, Dwight D. Eisenhower XXXIV President of the United States: 1953-1961, "74 - Letter to Secretary Dulles Regarding Transfer of the Affairs of the Foreign Operations Administration to the Department of State, 15 April 1955," last accessed 3 January 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=10454>; and United States Agency for International Development, "USAID History," last modified 8 December 2010, https://web.archive.org/web/20111009131110/http://www.usaid.gov/about_usaid/usaidhist.html.

the ICA and stood up, in its stead, an independent authority with an expanded mandate of assistance overseas, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which continues its effort today.⁹⁵⁹

This renewed focus on economic assistance and foreign aid, occurring just as relations between Washington and Paris turned increasingly tense, led to reduction of large-scale transfers of military equipment as end-items, and provision of direct subsidies to the French armed forces as well as to state-owned and private firms involved in the defence sector. Gradual transition to more tailored bilateral offers of assistance in specific domains followed. This new form of collaboration meant fewer dollars but remained appreciated by the European recipients. Insights into previous scientific research and technical advice, and transfer of complex electronic systems as well as rare metals and refined material (such as plutonium), would provide an ability to “kick start” national efforts in the demanding fields of advanced sensors and weapons, jet propulsion and missilery, and, of vital importance, atomic research. Meanwhile, restoring the navy’s bases in the immediate postwar years continued to bear heavily on the minds of French admirals well into the Cold War.

BASES AND SHORE INFRASTRUCTURE

All western fleets went through retrenchment after 1945 and then rapid expansion once the Cold War set in. The experience of the *Marine nationale*, however, was unique given the formidable obstacles ashore that compounded the challenges at sea. Wartime had ruined the network of bases and shore infrastructures established at home and overseas since the mid-nineteenth century.⁹⁶⁰ German sabotage and allied bombing proved particularly devastating during the Liberation. Key facilities – piers and jetties, floating and graving docks, hangars and machine shops, fuel and ammunition depots – in metropolitan bases such as Toulon, Brest and Cherbourg were destroyed. The approaches and roadstead of larger civilian ports and naval bases were encumbered by all sorts of wrecked vessels, either destroyed by allied mining and aerial bombing, or sunk by the withdrawing Germans in shallow and narrow transit points to prevent harbour traffic. Scuttling alongside by French crews had left large ships blocking access to many of the most important jetties.⁹⁶¹ The destruction did not only affect the military establishments as it extended to the surrounding cities which provided the industrial, commercial and lodging hubs

⁹⁵⁹ Andrew David and Michael Holm, "The Kennedy Administration and the Battle over Foreign Aid: The Untold Story of the Clay Committee," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 27, no. 1 (2016): 66-67; and USAID, "USAID History."

⁹⁶⁰ B. Rossignol and R. Le Borgne, "Reconstruction, restructuration et modernisation des bases navales (1944-1949) [Reconstruction, Restructuration and Modernisation of Naval Bases (1944-1949)]," *Revue historique des Armées* 220, no. 3 (September 2000): 99-102; and M. Battesti, "Les points d'appui de la flotte française de la première moitié du XIX^e siècle jusqu'à la Première Guerre mondiale [Bases of the French Fleet from the Early XIXth Century to the First World War]," in *Les bases et les arsenaux français d'outre-mer, du Second Empire à nos jours* [Overseas Bases and Dockyards, from the Second Empire to Today] (Panazol, FR: Charles-Lavauzelle, 2002), 11-30.

⁹⁶¹ Briefing notes on the current status and the scale of the rehabilitation effort required in each of the metropolitan naval bases and those overseas are attached to the report provided by the *rue Royal* staff in May 1945 titled "Note pour le ministre. Objet: politique générale des bases [Note to the Minister. Subject: Bases General Policy]." SHD, 3 BB 8 CSM 1 – Various Records of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* [Superior Council of the Navy] 1945-1946.

necessary to support the ships, submarines and aircraft operating from these locations – as well as the crews, civilian workers and their families living in the surrounding areas.

Though less extensive, grave damage also afflicted those bases overseas that laid in the path of allied armies, such as Casablanca and Mers el-Kébir. Otherwise, neglect left a dire legacy in locations that suffered episodic combat or years of relative isolation (Saigon, Diégo Suarez in Madagascar, Martinique). The Allies dedicated tremendous resources and manpower to rehabilitate certain bases in newly rallied territories (Dakar in the Atlantic and Nouméa in the Pacific were each turned into important logistics and communications hubs) and along their line of advance, such as Bizerte and Ajaccio.⁹⁶² But allied operational needs took priority over restoring the infrastructure needs of the French navy. When confronted with widespread destruction in Cherbourg at the end of June 1944, American authorities focussed their effort on the commercial port in order to open an additional supply route for the armies advancing inland rather than rehabilitating the vast complex of dry docks and repair facilities found in the adjacent naval dockyard.⁹⁶³ Ironically, the most modern naval installations in France were those built by the German occupier to base U-boats on the Atlantic coast, such as in Saint-Nazaire and La Rochelle. Lorient, in particular, became the site of an impressive array of hardened submarine pens that resisted allied bombings until the garrison surrendered on 10 May 1945.⁹⁶⁴ Most of those locations scattered along the Bay of Biscay only made a marginal contribution to the postwar rehabilitation effort, however. *Rue Royale* authorities could ill-afford to maintain such a large number of facilities dispersed on the periphery of the country, unlike the Dutch who made use of former German bunkers for basing their own coastal forces.

Nevertheless, the challenge did not dissuade French admirals from entertaining ambitious goals in the heady days of victory. Just as Lemonnier outlined a grand plan in Spring 1945 to reconstitute a fleet and an *Aéronavale* of the first rank, his staff championed a parallel effort to rejuvenate a worldwide network of naval bases and airfields to support the navy's presence across the breath of the colonial empire. A first report provided to the *ministre de la Marine* on 19 March 1945 proposed a network centred on eight primary bases and eleven secondary ones. Each type of establishment was defined as:

⁹⁶² United States Army, Marcel Vigneras, *United States Army in World War II – Rearming the French* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1957), 377-378; Department of the Navy, Bureau of Yards and Docks, *Building the Navy's Bases in World War II: History of the Bureau of Yards and Docks and the Civil Engineer Corps, 1940-1946 – Volume II – The Advance Bases* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1947), 76-85, 90-91, 118-119, 195-208, 221-228; and Philippe Vial, "Un impossible renouveau: bases et arsenaux d'outre-mer, 1945-1975 [An Impossible Renewal: Overseas Bases and Dockyards]," in *Les bases et les arsenaux français d'outre-mer, du Second Empire à nos jours* [Overseas Bases and Dockyards, from the Second Empire to Today] (Panazol, FR: Charles-Lavauzelle, 2002), 233-234.

⁹⁶³ Visit by the author to the Cherbourg naval base 2 August 2013; and Steven J. Zaloga, *Cherbourg 1944: The First Allied Victory in Normandy* (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2015), 86-89.

⁹⁶⁴ Philippe Vial and A. Balvay, "Les administrations militaires et la reconstruction civile: l'exemple de la Marine nationale [Military Administrations and Civilian Reconstruction: The Example of the French Navy]," in *Les reconstructions en Europe. 1945-1949* [Rebuilding in Europe, 1945-1949] (Brussels, BE: Complexe, 1997), 128-131; Gordon Williamson, *U-Boat Bases and Bunkers 1941-45* (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2003), 42-57; and Lars Hellwinkel, *Hitler's Gateway to the Atlantic: German Naval Bases in France 1940-1945* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2014), *passim*.

Primary base: A base which can provide security, logistical support and repair to local units as well as visiting task forces and large convoys. It includes both a military port [to accommodate operational units separately from any adjacent commercial harbour] and a dockyard [with the necessary industrial hub to support ship building and third-line repair]. Maritime prefects will be headquartered in primary bases.

Secondary base: A position that can only provide reduced security, logistical support and repair to lesser task groups and smaller convoys. It does not have its own military port or dockyard [often sharing existing commercial facilities]. Some installations may be partially manned and equipped in peacetime, requiring augmentation – including resources from the private sector – in wartime.⁹⁶⁵

Three primary bases would be retained in the *métropole* (Brest, Cherbourg and Toulon), two in North Africa (Mers el-Kébir and Bizerte), one on each flank of Africa (Dakar on the Atlantic and Diégo Suarez in the Indian Ocean) and one in Indochina (Cam Ranh, on the coast of Cochinchina instead of the less accessible one in Saigon, located inland and upriver). Secondary bases would be distributed far and wide: Boulogne (on the Channel), Lorient (in the Bay of Biscay), Ajaccio, Algiers, Casablanca, Beirut (in the Levant), Fort-de-France (in the Caribbean), Pointe-Noire (in today's Republic of Congo, roughly halfway between Senegal and South Africa), Djibouti (at the mouth of the Red Sea), Nouméa (in the Southwestern Pacific) and Bora Bora (in Polynesia, nearly halfway between Australia and South America). This selection showed at once prescience in terms of current conditions and concerns for the coming nuclear era, and unrealistically high expectations with regards to the future of the *Union française* and the country's ability to finance such developments.

Proposed while the Provisional Government was still in power, the vision was certainly Gaullian in its ambition. It presumed an orderly return of territories that had slipped out of French control during the war (Lebanon and Indochina) as well as a long-term presence in dependencies where insurrections would soon erupt (Madagascar, North Africa). It acknowledged lessons of the Second World War and the dawn of the atomic age by putting forward Mers el-Kébir and Bizerte as France's main operational bases in the Mediterranean. Both locations were sited on rocky soil next to large mountains that offered much potential for the construction of vast subterranean facilities. Toulon would be retained in a support role in terms of shipbuilding and maintenance thanks to its twelve dry docks and surrounding industrial hub but its operational role of hosting the battle fleet would migrate to North Africa. This move could occur once an appropriate shore infrastructure was developed in Algeria and Tunisia, providing not only hardened facilities capable of continuing operations once the Cold War had gone hot and nuclear but, as well, the ability for France to continue fighting if the Soviets overwhelmed the *métropole* as the Germans had done just five years earlier.⁹⁶⁶ Brest (with fifteen dry docks)

⁹⁶⁵ *CEMGM Rapport au Ministre sur la réorganisation des bases françaises* [Chief of the General Naval Staff Report to the Minister on the Reorganization of French Bases] no. 155 E.M.G/4 TS 19 March 1945. Cited in Philippe Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française sous la Quatrième République (1945-1956) – La Quatrième République a-t-elle eu une ambition navale pour la France?* [Renewal of the French Navy under the Fourth Republic (1945-1956) – Did the Fourth Republic Have a Naval Ambition?] (Paris, FR: Université Paris I, 2006), 262.

⁹⁶⁶ For contemporary views, see Raoul Castex, "Aperçus sur la bombe atomique [Overview of the Atomic Bomb]," *Revue de Défense nationale* 10 (October 1945): 31-39 and "L'Afrique et la stratégie française [Africa and French Strategy]," *Revue de Défense nationale* (May 1952): 523-534; as well as Pierre Barjot,

retained its central role as the main *arsenal* on the Atlantic coast and studies were launched to explore the potential of the surrounding area to accommodate an underground complex of communications facilities, machine shops, as well as fuel and ammunition storage. Cherbourg, with ten dry docks and a long history of ship and submarine construction, would be retained in a role similar to that of Toulon, focussed on building and refitting vessels while operations in the Atlantic would be conducted out of Brest.

Vice-Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu turned this staff report into a draft policy on bases in April, submitted for discussion at the pivotal session of the Superior Council of the Navy held on 11 July 1945.⁹⁶⁷ It was part of a series of ambitious measures – creation of a twenty-squadron *Aéronavale*, completion of the battleship *Jean Bart*, refitting the old *Commandant Teste* as an aircraft carrier, ordering studies for new cruisers, destroyers and submarines – which Navy Minister Louis Jacquinot endorsed later in the summer. However, all such initiatives eventually foundered upon the harsh economic realities then facing the Provisional Government. In Fall 1945, de Gaulle had already cut his proposed defence budget dramatically but the newly elected Constituent Assembly still challenged these figures, favouring increased provisions for civilian reconstruction over military expenditures. The General left government in frustration and his 200 billion French Francs (FF) defence appropriation was slashed to 141B in 1946, with only 20B allocated to the navy.⁹⁶⁸ One naval estimate stated that the rejuvenation of bases alone would necessitate an investment of 100B and a later report placed that figure at 220B.⁹⁶⁹ By July 1947, merely 14B FF had been expended for work on naval bases since the end of the war. However, these expenditures had only provided for dredging and clearing obstacles from harbours and roadsteads as well as repairing some waterfront facilities, leaving no funding available to expand existing installations (Mers el-Kébir, Fort-de-France, etc.) or develop new ones (Cam Ranh, Pointe-Noire, etc.).⁹⁷⁰ This progress did not bode well for the ambitious vision outlined two years before, especially as more defence funds had to be diverted to the fight against worsening insurgencies in Madagascar and Indochina.

The hard decision came at the session of the Superior Council of the Navy held on 9 July 1947 as a result of the complex circumstances then facing the French admiralty in addition to combat operations overseas.⁹⁷¹ The Treaty of Dunkirk had been signed with Great Britain in March but did not include provisions for peacetime assistance as the Brussels Pact and the NATO

"Bizerte, port anti-atomique et nouveau Gibraltar de la Méditerranée centrale [Bizerte, New Anti-Atomic Harbour and New Gibraltar of the Central Mediterranean]," *Revue de Défense nationale* (August-September 1952): 144-160 and *Vers la Marine de l'âge atomique* [Towards the Navy of the Atomic Age] (Paris, FR: Amiot Dupont, 1955), 185-188.

⁹⁶⁷ SHD, 3 BB 8 CMS 1, Minutes of the Superior Council of the Navy session held on 11 July 1945.

⁹⁶⁸ Philippe Masson, "La marine française en 1946 [The French Navy in 1946]," in *De Gaulle et la Nation face aux problèmes de défense 1945-1946* [De Gaulle and the Nation in the Face of Defence Problems, 1945-1946] (Paris: Plon, 1983), 51.

⁹⁶⁹ SHD, 3 BB 8 CSM 1, Briefing note dated 30 May 1945, "Élaboration du Statut naval [Formulation of the Naval Statute]." The 220B figure appeared in note authored by Rear-Admiral Roger Wietzel, dated 25 June 1947, "Politique générale des bases [Bases General Policy]." SHD, 3 BB8 CSM 2 – Various Records of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* [Superior Council of the Navy] 1947.

⁹⁷⁰ SHD, 3 BB8 CSM 2, Wietzel, "Politique générale des bases," 18; and Philippe Vial, "La Marine, un concentré des contradictions nationales [The Navy, A Concentrate of National Contradictions]," in *L'année 1947 en France* [The Year 1947 in France] (Paris, FR: Presses de Sciences Po, 2000), 277.

⁹⁷¹ SHD, 3 BB 8 CMS 2, Minutes of the Superior Council of the Navy session held on 9 July 1947.

framework later would. Premier Ramadier had expelled the Communists from Cabinet in May, scrapping *tripartisme* at the cost of a new wave of social unrest and worker strikes, badly affecting productivity in naval dockyards and commercial shipyards alike. Completion of *Jean Bart* and other unfinished vessels found relatively intact at war's end had barely progressed, refitting *Commandant Teste* as an aircraft carrier was abandoned, no new warship had yet been launched, and industry proved unable to sustain the rejuvenation of naval aviation. Maintaining their focus on rebuilding the fleet and growing the *Aéronavale*, French admirals and Minister Jacquinot accepted to suspend most work on the navy's shore infrastructures for the time being. Dwindling resources would provide for urgent work and necessary maintenance in most establishments but they limited new investments to Brest and Mers el-Kébir. Interest in these two ports showed the strategic primacy of the Atlantic and Mediterranean lines of communications for the *Marine nationale*. The abandon of earlier ambitions regarding Bizerte, Dakar, Diégo Suarez and Cam Rahn was telling.

Dakar anchored the southern end of the Atlantic line to French Africa, and offered a jumping off point for forces pushing into the southern Atlantic or moving to Indochina around South Africa.⁹⁷² Diégo Suarez held the potential to support power projection into the Indian Ocean and provide a way station along both routes to France's possessions in Asia and the Pacific (via the South Atlantic or the Suez Canal).⁹⁷³ Cam Rahn could have grown into a central hub in the Pacific, key to holding Indochina but also ideally positioned for further power projection, nearly equidistant between Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies, and within reach of Australia, China's mainland, Korea, Japan, the Soviet Far East and French Polynesia.⁹⁷⁴ Most striking, however, was the reversal on Bizerte. Virtually no progress had taken place in overseas establishments since 1945 but an important part of those few resources that could be spared at the time had been directed to the Tunisian base.⁹⁷⁵ An outpost overlooking the eastern approaches to Algeria and southern France, Bizerte also stood athwart the central Mediterranean choke point between North Africa and Sicily and could support the projection of naval forces to the Bosphorus, the Suez Canal, and the Middle East.

This location made it contentious among those in attendance at the *CSM* session of 9 July 1947. Geography both served and undermined Bizerte. Though nothing but a small fishing port

⁹⁷² Jean-André Berthiau, "L'arsenal de Dakar de 1945 à 1980 [The Dakar Dockyard from 1945 to 1980]," in *Les bases et les arsenaux français d'outre-mer, du Second Empire à nos jours* [Overseas Bases and Dockyards, from the Second Empire to Today] (Panazol, FR: Charles-Lavauzelle, 2002), 336-338.

⁹⁷³ *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CMS 2, Minutes of the Superior Council of the Navy session held on 9 July 1947; and Guy Pérès, "La DCAN de Diégo-Suarez (1968-1975) ou une entreprise originale de co-auto-développement franco-malgache [The Diégo-Suarez *DCAN* (1968-1975) or a Unique France-Madagascar Shared Self-Developing Enterprise]," in *Les bases et les arsenaux français d'outre-mer, du Second Empire à nos jours* [Overseas Bases and Dockyards, from the Second Empire to Today] (Panazol, FR: Charles-Lavauzelle, 2002), 347-348.

⁹⁷⁴ Cam Ranh presented a great possibility as a primary base due to its geography but it would necessitate a large investment to fulfill that potential. While drydocks and some form of industrial hubs already existed in Dakar and Diégo Suarez, only basic facilities could be found in Cam Rahn, isolated as it was from any urban centre. *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CSM 1, "Note pour le ministre. Objet: politique générale des bases," May 1945 (exact date unknown); and Michel Jacques, *La marine française en Indochine de 1939 à 1956 – Tome V – avril 1953-mai 1956* [The French Navy in Indochina from 1939 to 1956 – Volume V – April 1953-May 1956] (Paris, FR: Service historique de la marine, 1992), 132-133.

⁹⁷⁵ Vial, "Un impossible renouveau," 238.

in the 1880s, partisans of the *Jeune École* had already highlighted its potential to host a squadron of torpedo boats.⁹⁷⁶ This prospect grew manifold in 1897 when the French dredged a 2,400-metre canal from the sea port to an immense lake inland, twelve kilometres in diameter with depths of nine to twelve metres, thus capable of accommodating the largest vessels of the fleet. The lake also sat at the foot of majestic mountains protecting it from gunfire to seaward, offering large open spaces on its periphery to accommodate widespread facilities onshore (including a vast airfield and an hydroplane ramp), and laying within a short distance of the industrial and manpower resources found in nearby Tunis. However, while dominating the central Mediterranean sea lines of communications, it also sat exposed to air and ground attacks should the Soviets seize Italy or unleash a sweeping offensive from the Levant and across the Suez Canal in a bid to occupy North Africa.

As concerning was Bizerte's Achilles heel, its narrow canal which an opponent could mine or block from seaward, bottling up any vessels found in the lake at the outset of a conflict. This element played a key role in shaping the admiralty's recommendation to suspend new investments in the Tunisian base and instead direct savings to Mers el-Kébir, at least until France could afford to augment her defence budget substantially.⁹⁷⁷ Paradoxically, the Algerian base was much less capable of supporting the fleet at the time as infrastructure work had only began in the years immediately preceding the Second World War, progressing haphazardly thereafter.

Located on the western side of the bay of Oran, Mers el-Kébir was identified in 1928 by local businessmen as a viable alternative to relieve some of the commercial traffic clogging that port, the second largest city in Algeria and the busiest harbour on the Mediterranean coast of French North Africa. Admiral Darlan picked up on this idea in the 1930s and promoted Mers el-Kébir as a location of choice to create a new base rather than try enlarging those already in existence but severely constricted in downtown Oran and Algiers.⁹⁷⁸ As valuable as Bizerte's position overlooking the east-west traffic across the central Mediterranean was, the north-south line of communications between the *métropole* and Africa would continue as the primary axis of strategic importance to France, before and after the Second World War.⁹⁷⁹ If a choice had to be

⁹⁷⁶ Damien Cordier-Féron, "La base navale stratégique de Bizerte (1943-1963) [The Strategic Naval Base of Bizerte (1943-1963)]," *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 54, no. 213 (2004): 39; and Frédéric Saffroy, "Bizerte dans l'entre-deux-guerres: grandeur ou décadence? [Bizerte During the Interwar Period: Greatness or Decay?]" in *Les bases et les arsenaux français d'outre-mer, du Second Empire à nos jours* [Overseas Bases and Dockyards, from the Second Empire to Today] (Panazol, FR: Charles-Lavauzelle, 2002), 126.

⁹⁷⁷ *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CMS 2, Minutes of the Superior Council of the Navy session held on 9 July 1947; and Cordier-Féron, "La base navale stratégique de Bizerte," 47. Another concern that played a role was the constant and expensive dredging operations required to maintain the necessary depth of the canal and the lake, both the subject to heavy silting in this sandy environment. Saffroy, "Bizerte dans l'entre-deux-guerres," 139.

⁹⁷⁸ French authorities had actually identified Mers el-Kébir's potential as a naval base as far back as 1898 but funds failed to materialize as Bizerte took priority in the Mediterranean at the turn of the century. Pascal Venier, "Défense impériale et politique des points d'appui de la flotte (1898-1905) [Imperial Defence and Fleet Support Points Policy (1898-1905)]," in *Les bases et les arsenaux français d'outre-mer, du Second Empire à nos jours* [Overseas Bases and Dockyards, from the Second Empire to Today] (Panazol, FR: Charles-Lavauzelle, 2002), 106-108.

⁹⁷⁹ John Jordan, "France: The Marine Nationale," in *On Seas Contested: The Seven Great Navies of the Second World War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2010), 1-5; and Philippe Quérel, "La Marine

made, French admirals remained committed to dominance over the western Mediterranean, at the expense of the more developed Tunisian outpost.

Mers el-Kébir certainly possessed key attributes to anchor French seapower in the Middle Sea and its Atlantic approaches.⁹⁸⁰ Equidistant between Gibraltar and Algiers, a two-day sail to Marseilles in one direction and Casablanca in the other, the site layed less than an hour's drive from the commercial and industrial hub of Oran. A mountainous formation nearby offered protection to the open roadstead against the prevailing north-westerly winds, elevation and space to place an extensive network of anti-air defences and coastal gun batteries, as well as a geology favourable to digging underground facilities. The vast and shallow bay provided room to anchor a large fleet of warships without interfering with the commercial traffic proceeding to and from Oran. Realizing that potential, however, would necessitate time and funding that France could ill-afford, be it in the late 1930s or the late 1940s. Approved by the National Assembly in 1934, construction work did not begin until 1936 and proceeded at a slow pace. An important drawback of the open bay was the requirement to build a 2,500-metre combined jetty and breakwater in water depths of 25 to 35 metres to shelter the waterfront and the anchorage therein.⁹⁸¹ By the time Germany invaded France, a 900-meter stretch of the mole was in place but the infrastructures and coastal defences necessary to assume the role of a primary naval base were still lacking.

These shortcomings showed dramatically in June 1940, when French partisans of an early armistice undermined the case of those pleading to continue the fight from North Africa by pointing out the want of suitable facilities and stores to support the fleet in Mers el-Kébir, and again in July when the Royal Navy's Force H entered the bay without opposition and obliterated the ships of Admiral Gensoul's *Force de raid*.⁹⁸² Vichy authorities continued to direct the meagre resources then available to develop the base slowly in 1940-1942, an effort which accelerated under the Allies in 1943-1945.⁹⁸³ By the end of the hostilities, the mole had reached a length of 1,600 meters and the adjacent airfield was improved while storage space ashore for dry goods, ammunition and fuel had been considerably expended. Nevertheless, much work remained to build machine shops, dig dry docks, install coastal defence batteries, as well as

entre l'O.T.A.N. et l'Union française au début des années 1950 [The Navy between NATO and French Union at the Beginning of the 1950s], " *Revue historique des Armées* 201 (December 1995): 44-45.

⁹⁸⁰ SHD, 3 BB 8 CMS 2, Minutes of the Superior Council of the Navy session held on 9 July 1947; and Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française*, 329-331.

⁹⁸¹ Philippe Lasterle, "La genèse de la base de Mers el-Kébir (1928-1945) [Genesis of the Mers el-Kébir Base (1928-1945)]," in *Les bases et les arsenaux français d'outre-mer, du Second Empire à nos jours* [Overseas Bases and Dockyards, from the Second Empire to Today] (Panazol, FR: Charles-Lavauzelle, 2002), 166-186; and Dominique Barjot, "Le rôle des entrepreneurs et ingénieurs des travaux publics dans la réalisation des bases et arsenaux d'outre-mer [The Role of Entrepreneurs and Public Works Engineers in the Building of Overseas Bases and Arsenal]," in *Les bases et les arsenaux français d'outre-mer, du Second Empire à nos jours* [Overseas Bases and Dockyards, from the Second Empire to Today] (Panazol, FR: Charles-Lavauzelle, 2002), 204-205.

⁹⁸² On Mers el-Kébir and the Armistice, see Masson, *De la vapeur à l'atome*, 403; and Jean Meyer and Martin Acerra, *Histoire de la Marine française des origines à nos jours* [History of the French Navy from the Origins to Today] (Rennes, FR: Éditions Ouest-France, 1994), 350 and 357.

⁹⁸³ Lasterle, "La genèse de la base de Mers el-Kébir (1928-1945)," 186-188 ; and Isabelle Laporte, "Mers el-Kébir après Mers el-Kébir (1940-1945) [Mers el-Kébir after Mers el-Kébir (1940-1945)]," *Revue historique des Armées* 223, no 2 (June 2001): 71-80.

complete the breakwater and other fixed positions to seaward. Investments continued in the immediate postwar years but slowed down as a result of the *CSM* decision of 9 July 1947 to sacrifice base work for the sake of the fleet, although Brest and Mers el-Kébir remained a priority for the allocation of the few funds available as confirmed at the session of 9 September 1947.⁹⁸⁴

The emergence of the Soviet threat in Europe resulted in increased defence budgets in the following years but, even then, the proportion allocated to naval bases fell well short of the requirements expressed by *rue Royal* planners. They sought 6B FF in 1949 but only received 3.16B for that purpose.⁹⁸⁵ The conundrum continued into the early 1950s until reprieve appeared possible under the aegis of the NATO Infrastructure Programme, the follow-on to an initiative first discussed by the five nations that joined the Brussels Pact in 1948. In addition to building up ground forces to face down a potential offensive by the Soviet Union across Germany, signatories agreed to stand up integrated air defences across Western Europe. The bulk of the work required for this pressing requirement – thirty new airfields, one combined headquarter complex and thirty-four communications centres – would take place in France and the Netherlands, given their geographic position, but the two countries could not afford the £32 million necessary to complete this effort.⁹⁸⁶ In 1949, the Western Union powers accepted to share these costs as they contributed to the common defence, a concept adopted by NATO when the Atlantic Treaty came into force that same year.

NATO took over this initial commitment – known as the “First Slice” – and follow-on infrastructure investments remained focused on the air defence effort. The Second Slice supported the construction of an additional thirteen airfields, extension of eight existing airfields and fifty-three communications projects for an estimated £79 million. In September 1951, Washington and Ottawa agreed to participate in the cost-sharing scheme as their air forces would also operate in Europe. This influx proved essential to fund the Third Slice (fifty-three new airfields and ten headquarters, twenty-seven extensions, and improvements to fifty-eight communications facilities for £152 million). The 1952 Lisbon Summit resulted in dramatically increased infrastructure needs to take into account standing up SACLANT as well as the accession of Greece and Turkey. New training airfields and the demands of fuel-hungry jets during high-tempo operations also required improved port terminals in Europe, new pipelines from harbours to airfields, and increased fuel storage facilities on the coast and further inland.

Initial estimates put the Fourth Slice at a staggering £182 million but the rapid stifling of ambitions which followed Lisbon led to a reviewed figure of £80 million in December 1952.⁹⁸⁷ That year NATO leaders also realized that infrastructure work required long-term planning and commitment, and that common needs existed beyond the realm of air defence. The Fifth Slice approved in December 1953 became the first instalment of a three-year programme, which

⁹⁸⁴ *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CMS 2, Minutes of the Superior Council of the Navy session held on 9 September 1947.

⁹⁸⁵ *Idem*; and Vial, "Un impossible renouveau," 239.

⁹⁸⁶ Lord Ismay, *NATO: The First Five Years, 1949-1954* (Utrecht, Netherlands: Bosch, 1954), 114; and NATO, Comité de l'Infrastructure Committee, *50 Years of Infrastructure – NATO Security Investment Programme is the Sharing of Roles, Risks, Responsibilities, Costs and Benefits*, last accessed 3 February 2018, <https://www.nato.int/structur/infrastruc/50-years.pdf>, 16 and 23. The Western Union Defence Organization adopted the British pound to cost common infrastructure commitments, a practice which continued in NATO until the 1960s.

⁹⁸⁷ Ismay, *The First Five Years*, 115-116; NATO, *50 Years of Infrastructure*, 23-24.

included for the first time funding for navies. NATO Secretary General Lord Ismay wrote in 1954:

About 26 naval projects are under construction for the use of naval forces. These consist mainly of storage facilities for oil, fuel lubricants and ammunition at naval bases. Nor have the needs of SACLANT been overlooked. He is being provided with fleet facilities, maritime airfields for his naval air forces, and a chain of stations providing navigational aids in the Eastern Atlantic giving his naval forces coverage in that area.⁹⁸⁸

The *Marine nationale* needed those funds badly. By then, Mers el-Kebir was the only French naval base where extensive work on new infrastructures continued, with the remaining funds allocated for limited improvements to existing facilities in Brest and Bizerte, and nothing but basic maintenance in remaining locations at home and overseas. From 1951 to 1953, the *Marine nationale* expended 38.8B FF on infrastructure work, divided as follows: Mers el-Kébir 47.5%, Brest 19.2%, Toulon 8.6%, Bizerte 8.3%, Lorient 3.4%, La Pallice 2.8%, Cherbourg and Dakar 2.7% each, Saigon 1.9%, Casablanca 1.7% and Diégo Suarez 1%.⁹⁸⁹ Seven other establishments received no infrastructure funding during these three years, managing maintenance through reallocations within their budget. Even in Saigon, then the sole naval base located in an active theatre of war, the commander planned to dedicate his entire slice of the 1954 infrastructure money to river dredging instead of work on the base itself, while any ambition of building new facilities in Cam Rahn had been abandoned.⁹⁹⁰

Such figures stood in stark contrast to the overall navy budget, 151B francs for the year 1952 alone. This allocation left less than 10% for infrastructure work as Admiral Nomy and his staff continued to focus on rejuvenating the fleet and expanding the *Aéronavale* during that period.⁹⁹¹ Reprieve on the bases front was forthcoming nevertheless. France's national interests and Alliance strategy merged with regards to North Africa, as outlined by *général des armées* Augustin-Léon Guillaume in November 1953:

The defense of the Western Europe peninsula... can only be achieved by controlling its maritime approaches in order to maintain secure access for the troops and material from overseas, especially from the gigantic American arsenal. Given the distances involved, transport fleets need maritime way stations. Nature has happily placed two such relay points which can shoulder the defence of Europe: Great Britain and French North Africa. These two flank guards, protected by their own maritime approaches, can indeed play the role of defensive bastions or offensive springboards in relation to the European theatre... Nobody would contest the advantages accrued by Great Britain: dispatching maritime forces to the Northern and Central European theatres of operations, providing a fixed logistical platform, and supporting strategic aviation. All things being equal, these characteristics apply to North Africa as well: a maritime base for allied operations in the Mediterranean... and a dominating platform for air elements dedicated to maritime

⁹⁸⁸ Ismay, *The First Five Years*, 124.

⁹⁸⁹ Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française*, 288.

⁹⁹⁰ Archives nationales, C//15601 – *Séances de la Commission de la Défense nationales 1953 – 1954* [Sessions of the National Defence Commission 1953 – 1954], minutes of the National Assembly National Defence Commission held on 3 March 1954.

⁹⁹¹ Strub, *La renaissance de la marine française*, 185; and Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique*, 151.

control as well as long-range flying operations. Such would be the value of North Africa for the Atlantic Alliance in another world war.⁹⁹²

Two years later, Admiral Pierre Barjot wrote:

Tomorrow, to avoid a nuclear Pearl Harbor, our fleet must disperse, not remain concentrated in one port. Concentration in Toulon almost led to its capture from the land on 27 November 1942. Today, Mers el-Kébir as a Toulon replica, the roadsteads of Hyères [east of Toulon] and Sfax [south of Tunis], the Bizerte Lake, and the port of Bougie [200 kilometres east of Algiers] all offer possibilities for dispersion, as well as the potential for mobility and ubiquity essential to maintain control of the Western Mediterranean so vital to France and the free world.⁹⁹³

It followed that, just as quickly as Bizerte had lost its priority in the late 1940s, French and allied admirals expressed renewed interest in that base in the mid-1950s. Despite the vulnerability of the lake canal, its location fitted well in the context of the nuclear threat and the Alliance's strategy of forward defence.⁹⁹⁴ Tunisia should no longer end up on the frontline within days of a Soviet advance into Western Europe and across Egypt as NATO committed to holding Italy and preventing an enemy thrust into the Levant. These assumptions turned Bizerte from an exposed defensive outpost to an offensive stronghold from where allied ships, submarines and air bombers could sally forth to strike against the soft underbelly of the Warsaw Pact. Admiral Barjot grandly described the Tunisian position as an "extraordinary combination of Pearl Harbor and Gibraltar."⁹⁹⁵ As the Alliance's interest in the Mediterranean grew, NATO authorities queried Paris in 1953 about developing air and naval facilities across French North Africa, from Morocco to Tunisia. The Americans were particularly interested in transit airfields for nuclear bombers, installing early-warning systems, pre-positioning fuel and ammunition stockpiles, as well as supporting anti-submarine patrols in the region. Discussions led to a momentous decision on 25 March 1954 when France authorized NATO to access "... bases in the Maghreb, Bizerta and Sfax in particular, in recognition that such deployments were integral to wider alliance plans for European and Mediterranean defence."⁹⁹⁶

Allied requests for access to France's North African bases were not one-way demands, formulated as they were while negotiations over an addendum to the 1952 Fourth Slice and the upcoming Fifth Slice of the NATO Infrastructure Programme took place. These tranches, approved respectively in April and December 1953, included the first financial contributions from several allies to the rejuvenation of French naval bases.⁹⁹⁷ As shown at Table 17, subsequent

⁹⁹² Augustin-Léon Guillaume, "L'importance stratégique de l'Afrique du Nord [The Strategic Importance of North Africa]," *Revue de défense nationale* 108 (November 1953): 423-424.

⁹⁹³ Pierre Barjot, *Vers la Marine de l'âge atomique* [Towards the Navy of the Atomic Age] (Paris, FR: Amiot Dupont, 1955), 198. He commanded the Mediterranean Fleet at the time of publication.

⁹⁹⁴ Vial, "Un impossible renouveau," 253 ; and Quérel, "La Marine entre l'O.T.A.N. et l'Union française," 51-52.

⁹⁹⁵ Pierre Barjot, "Bizerte, port anti-atomique et nouveau Gibraltar de la Méditerranée centrale [Bizerte, Anti-Atomic Harbour and the New Gibraltar of the Central Mediterranean]." *Revue de défense nationale*, (August-September 1952): 147.

⁹⁹⁶ Martin Thomas, "France's North African Crisis, 1945-1955: Cold War and Colonial Imperatives," *History* 92, no. 2 (April 2007): 231-232.

⁹⁹⁷ Ismay, *The First Five Years*, 116-118.

tranches also provided subsidies for the *Marine nationale*, including the eighth, ninth and tenth slices approved as a single-three-year plan in 1957. These sums were significant, especially the first two approved in 1953. They provided an important boost to French ambitions regarding their bases even as ships and submarine construction, as well as aircraft acquisition, kicked into high gear, severely straining the navy's budget.

Table 17 – NATO Infrastructure Programme Allocations to the French Navy

Slices (Approval)	Projects	Allocations (Billion French Francs)
Fourth Slice Addendum (April 1953)	Bizerte: underground ammunition magazines and fuel tanks, waterfront jetties	5.197
	Mers el-Kebir: underground ammunition magazines and fuel tanks, waterfront jetties	6.079
	Lartigues (near Oran): upgrade to NATO standards of existing <i>Aéronavale</i> base	3.183
	Nîmes-Garons (southern France): new <i>Aéronavale</i> base	2.118
	Cherbourg-Maupertuis (near Cherbourg): new <i>Aéronavale</i> base	2.320
	Total	18.897
Fifth Slice (December 1953)	Bizerte: Fuel tanks	1.135
	Mers el-Kebir: Ammunition/fuel storage	1.625
	Oran: Electric generation station	0.572
	Brest: HQ and radio station, LORAN station	0.556
	Lann-Bihoue (near Lorient): upgrade to NATO standards, navigational aids	1.808
	Total	5.696
Sixth Slide (December 1954)	Bizerte: Fuel tanks	2.184
	Mers el-Kebir: Fuel tanks	2.280
	Alger: Radio station	0.171
	Casablanca: Radio station	0.105
	Total	4.740
Seventh Slide (1956)	Algiers: Radio station	1.167
Eight Slide (April 1957)	Brest: Underground ammunition magazines	0.444
Ninth Slide (April 1957)	Mers el-Kebir: Headquarters improvements	0.360
	Oran: Tropospheric radio station	0.340
	Total:	0.700
Tenth Slide (April 1957)	Lann-Bihoue (near Lorient): various upgrades	0.137

Total		31.781
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Source: Philippe Vial, "De la nécessité de l'aide, des inconvénients de la dépendance: le réarmement de la Marine sous la IV^e République [Of the Need for Assistance and the Drawbacks of Dependency: The Navy's Rearmament Under the Fourth Republic]," *Revue historique des Armées* 215 (June 1999): 30.

Leveraging this new opportunity, Admiral Nomy published in November 1953 an update to his proposed *Statut naval de 1952*, which had neglected base work.⁹⁹⁸ He added a new section about shore infrastructure and incorporated that discussion in the follow-on *Plan bleu de 1955*. In contrast to the contentious debates that continued between French and NATO authorities with regards to the missions and types of vessels and aircraft best suited for the *Marine nationale*, France's position on naval bases met the Alliance's focus on the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Brest, Toulon, Mers el-Kebir and Bizerte remained as primary bases, the latter passing ahead of Dakar in terms of precedence. The Senegal establishment, along with Cherbourg and Diégo Suarez, reverted to the rank of secondary bases. Other secondary locations were limited to Lorient and Saigon. Others (La Pallice, Casablanca, Fort-de-France, Djibouti, Nouméa and Papeete) appeared as mere *points d'appui* or "points of support", minor establishments with capacities limited to logistics and basic repair tasks. Boulogne, Ajaccio, Beirut, Pointe-Noire and Cam Ranh did not appear in the policy despite their inclusion as potential bases in previous documents.⁹⁹⁹ The commonality of purpose boded well as France contemplated a more orderly and suitably financed development of her naval bases and maritime airfields.

These propitious circumstances did not last however. The three-year infrastructure plan adopted by NATO in April 1957 showed dramatically reduced funding, reflective of increasing doubts in allied capitals – particularly in Washington – as to the sagacity of directing more Alliance money to French projects. One could argue that the overall needs of the *Marine nationale* had shrunk following the withdrawal from Indochina and the consolidation of some establishments in the *métropole*, presenting the potential to redirect the savings to other bases.¹⁰⁰⁰ NATO ambitions also endured regarding North African installations but much work remained to allow these bases to meet the full extent of allied and French needs in the region. Worse, the very future of their ownership appeared at risk as the thirst for independence grew across the *Union française*. The 1956 accord that ended the protectorate in Morocco allowed France and the United States to maintain military installations in the country as King Mohammed V threw his lot with the western camp. Nevertheless, the Americans elected that same year to start relocating naval forces from Port Lyautey to Rota, Spain and the *Marine nationale* abandoned Casablanca in 1961.¹⁰⁰¹ Tunisia also achieved independence in 1956 and the accord included a clause that

⁹⁹⁸ SHD, 3 BB 8 CSM 5 – Various Records of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* [Superior Council of the Navy] 1951-1953, "Exposé de l'amiral Nomy, chef d'état-major général de la Marine: la politique navale française [Report by Admiral Nomy, Chief of the General Staff of the Navy: French Naval Policy]," dated November 1953.

⁹⁹⁹ A vague reference was made to the possibility of work resuming "after the end of the hostilities in Indochina" to make Cam Rahn a primary base. *Idem*, and Vial, "Un impossible renouveau," 300.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Completing the evacuation of Indochina in 1956, the navy based its Pacific forces in Nouméa until 1971. They have since moved to Papeete, Polynesia where they remain today. Vial, "Un impossible renouveau," 263; and France, Ministère des armées, État-major des armées, "Les forces armées de Polynésie française [The Armed Forces in French Polynesia]," last modified 20 September 2016, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/ema/forces-prepositionnees/polynesie-francaise/dossier/les-forces-armees-de-polynesie-francaise>.

¹⁰⁰¹ Vial, "Un impossible renouveau," 268; and Marolda, "Les bases outre-mer de l'US Navy," 364-365. While the USAF established a Strategic Air Command base in Casablanca in support of B-52 nuclear

allowed France to maintain control of Bizerte. However, Prime Minister (and soon-to-be President) Habib Bourguiba publicly set about rolling back this aspect of the entente in 1957, further shaking the confidence of NATO authorities that the base would remain accessible in the long term.

They were right to worry. The February 1958 bombing of *FLN* camps in Tunisia provided Bourguiba with grounds to raise the pressure on Bizerte dramatically and NATO announced in 1960 that it would no longer fund infrastructure work in that location.¹⁰⁰² Matters reached a breaking point in Summer 1961 when Bourguiba ordered a military siege of the base to force its evacuation. De Gaulle denounced the ultimatum and the Tunisian army launched an assault on 19 July, leading to violent clashes with the French garrison, reinforced with the dramatic drop of hundreds of airborne troops and the arrival of the aircraft carrier *Arromanches* offshore.¹⁰⁰³ France succeeded in maintaining its hold on Bizerte after three days of continuous fighting that resulted in 630 dead and more than 1,500 wounded on the Tunisian side in contrast to less than thirty deaths and one hundred injured among the French.¹⁰⁰⁴ The victory of Vice-Admiral Maurice Amman, commander of the besieged forces, proved short-lived. Subject to intense pressure at the United Nations and in the media – especially from the United States as newly-installed President John F. Kennedy was anxious to defuse the crisis and keep Tunisia an ally of the West – de Gaulle eventually relented as Bourguiba did not wish to conclude any form of long-term leasing arrangement with France. The last French forces departed Bizerte on 15 October 1963, leaving Mers el-Kebir as France's sole naval base on the south shore of the Mediterranean.

The future of that base was far from certain, however. Algeria had achieved independence the previous summer following conclusion of the Évian Accords on 18 March 1962.¹⁰⁰⁵ While granting sovereignty to Algeria, the treaty permitted France to maintain control over the Mers el-Kébir enclave through a renewable fifteen-year lease, as well as access for an unspecified period to oil fields, the army missile range in Colomb-Béchar (next to the Morocco border), and the air force nuclear testing facility near Reggane, an isolated oasis far south in the Sahara Desert. Nevertheless, even designated a *base stratégique interarmées* (joint strategic

bombers, the USN operated Naval Air Facilities Port Lyautey to support surface vessels as well as Neptunes maritime patrol aircraft dedicated to the anti-submarine role. Port Lyautey eventually grew into the largest USN station in Europe and Africa with the basing of the AJ-1 Savage aircraft, the first naval medium bomber designed specifically to carry the atomic bomb. Paolo E. Coletta, "Port Lyautey," in *United States Navy and Marine Corps Bases, Overseas* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), 236-240.¹⁰⁰² Vial, "Un impossible renouveau," 263; and Cordier-Féron, "La base navale stratégique de Bizerte," 56.¹⁰⁰³ As it turned out, aircraft from the *Arromanches* did not take part in the fighting but *Aéronavale* Corsairs and Aquilon fighter-bombers based in Bizerte did. *Arromanches* headed a task group that included the cruiser *De Grasse* as well as destroyers *La Bourdonnais*, *Kersaint*, *Maillé-Brézé* and *Chevalier Paul*. They remained off Bizerte until mid-August. Jean Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches* [Aircraft Carriers *Dixmude* and *Arromanches*] (Nantes, FR: Marines Éditions, 1998), 192; and Vercken, *Histoire succincte de l'Aéronautique*, 118.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Cordier-Féron, "La base navale stratégique de Bizerte," 58-59; Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 474-475; El Machat Samya, "La crise de Bizerte, 1960-1962 [The Bizerte Crisis, 1960-1962]," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 87, no. 328-329 (2000): 299-326; and Patrick-Charles Renaud, *La bataille de Bizerte (Tunisie) 19 au 23 juillet 1961* [The Battle of Bizerte (Tunisia) 19 to 23 July 1961] (Paris, FR: L'Harmattan, 1996), *passim*.

¹⁰⁰⁵ United Nations, "No. 7395. Exchange of Letters and Declarations Adopted on 19 March 1962 at the Close of the Évian Talks, Constituting an Agreement Between France and Algeria. Paris and Rocher Noir, 3 July 1962," in *Treaty Series – Treaties and International Agreements Registered or Filed and Recorded with the Secretariat of the United Nations* 507 (1965): 25-99, last accessed 10 February 2018, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publications/UNTS/Volume%20507/v507.pdf>.

base) in July 1962, doubts arose as to the long-term viability of Mers el-Kébir.¹⁰⁰⁶ Waterfront facilities were 95% completed and underground excavations far advanced by then but more investments were due to install the remaining equipment necessary to make the base truly capable of continuing its operation in a nuclear environment, such as heavy blast doors and complex ventilation systems, as well as alcoves to be dug into the coastal cliffs at sea-level to protect submarines. Another strain on resources resulted from the reduced perimeter defined during the Évian negotiations. It forced abandonment of the neighbouring air force base in La Sénia and the *Aéronavale* airfield in Lartigue, necessitating building an expensive runway and new air force support facilities within the enclave.

Meanwhile, the last naval aviation squadrons left Algerian soil. The *Marine nationale* had largely given up the base, even relinquishing command to an army officer in April 1964, when it lost its “strategic” designation.¹⁰⁰⁷ By Fall 1965, authorities at the *rue Royale* had resolved themselves to a much reduced base framework in the post-colonial era as laid out in a lengthy journal article by a serving flag officer.¹⁰⁰⁸ Brest and Toulon remained as the only primary bases while Cherbourg, Lorient, Dakar and Diégo Suarez retained their secondary status.¹⁰⁰⁹ Mers el-Kébir, however, was reduced to a *point d’appui* (point of support) alongside La Pallice, Fort-de-France, Nouméa and Djibouti. Boulogne, Le Havre, Bordeaux, Marseille, Ajaccio and Papeete would be known as *ports de relâche*, “ports of call” literally but better translated as “auxiliary stations” where the navy maintained just enough installations and supplies to sustain a limited number of vessels deployed on local operations. Despite its humble classification, the Tahitian facility of Papeete was in the midst of a huge expansion in view of its coming role in support of the *Centre d’expérimentation du Pacifique* (CEP – Pacific Experimentation Centre).¹⁰¹⁰ The CEP, then under construction on the Polynesian island of Mururoa, was destined to replace the nuclear testing facilities in Reggane.

In contrast to the French navy’s rapid disengagement from Mers el-Kébir after 1962, the interest of the army and the air force for the Algerian base remained strong. It provided essential rear support for their Saharan facilities, especially the *Centre saharien d’expérimentation militaire* (CSEM – Saharan Military Experimentation Centre) where a first atomic device exploded on 13 February 1960.¹⁰¹¹ Even before the end of the Algerian War, however, French

¹⁰⁰⁶ On Mers el-Kébir after Évian, see Vial, “Un impossible renouveau,” 268-270; Delaporte, “La base française de Mers el-Kébir,” 323-331; and Masson, *De la vapeur à l’atome*, 531-532.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Major-General Jean-Auguste-Victor Barlier took command. Delaporte, “La base française de Mers el-Kébir,” 327.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Rear-Admiral Yves de Bazelaire, “La Marine et ses bases: première partie [The Navy and Its Bases: Part One],” *Revue de défense nationale* 240 (November 1965): 1672-1682; and “La Marine et ses bases: deuxième partie [The Navy and Its Bases: Part Two],” *Revue de défense nationale* 241 (December 1965): 1865-1877.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Madagascar and Senegal achieved independence in 1960 but France retained military installations in both countries. Vial, “Un impossible renouveau,” 270-273; Berthiau, “L’arsenal de Dakar,” 340-344; and Pérès, “La DCAN de Diégo-Suarez,” 348-350.

¹⁰¹⁰ France, ECPAD Agences d’images de la Défense, “Le centre d’expérimentation du Pacifique (1963 – 1974) [The Pacific Experimentation Centre (1963 – 1974)],” last accessed 14 February 2018, http://archives.ecpad.fr/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/2013_CEP_Dossier.pdf; and Bernard Dumortier, *Atolls de l’atome: Mururoa & Fangataufa* [The Atomic Atolls: Mururoa & Fangataufa] (Rennes, FR: Marine Éditions, 2004), *passim*.

¹⁰¹¹ Pierre Jarrige, “CSEM – Reggan Centre Saharien d’expérimentations militaires [CSEM – Reggan Saharan Military Experimentations Centre],” last accessed 15 February 2018, <http://chezpeps.free.fr/0/Jarrige/PDF/75-CESM-CEMO-1.pdf>; and Charles Ailleret, *L’aventure atomique française – Souvenirs et réflexions* [The French Atomic Adventure – Reminiscences and Reflections] (Paris, FR: Grasset, 1968), 226-238.

authorities had resigned themselves to abandoning the *CSEM*, hence the herculean work underway in the remote islands of the Pacific. The Reggane facility closed in 1967 and the last French forces evacuated Mers el-Kébir on 31 December 1968 as a first nuclear test had already taken place at the *CEP* on 2 July 1966.¹⁰¹²

The *Marine nationale* had led the building of the Polynesian centre. For the first time since the 1904 *Entente cordiale* with Great Britain, French admirals no longer pursued the security of the Mediterranean line of communications between France and North Africa as their overriding strategic priority. De Gaulle assigned them a new task, deploying nuclear weapons at sea in support of the national strategy of “deterrence of the strong by the weak.” Even more quickly than Nomy had to abandon the ambition of maintaining a worldwide network of elaborate bases in the 1950s, his successor – Admiral Georges Cabanier, appointed on 1 July 1960 – tackled the new vision of sea power *le Général* would champion in the coming decade.

NUCLEAR DETERRENCE, NUCLEAR SUBMARINES

The rise of Admiral Cabanier to the top *Marine nationale* post marked both continuity and exception for the postwar navy. Like Lemonnier and Nomy who served lengthy tours as *chef de l'État-major de la Marine* – seven and nine years respectively (1943-1950 and 1951-1960, split by the very short tenures of Battet and Lambert) – Cabanier would remain in place for eight years, overseeing the navy's fortunes as it joined the nuclear age. But his appointment broke with tradition for two reasons. He was the first submariner to move in the *rue Royale* highest office since Admiral Georges Durand-Viel in 1931-1936.¹⁰¹³ And he was the first “true” Free French promoted to that post since the reunification of 1943 (Admiral Battet had waited until the North African landings before joining the *FNFL* while the others rallied to Giraud).

Born in 1906, Cabanier entered the *École navale* in 1925 and transferred to the submarine service in 1932. A lieutenant in 1934, he quickly rose to command the submarine minelayer *Rubis* in 1938. Ordered to join a British flotilla operating out of Scotland in early 1940, Cabanier distinguished himself during successful mine-laying operations in the North Sea and off the Norwegian coast. The RN seized *Rubis* in July but soon returned it to Cabanier as he convinced the majority of his crew to join the Free French movement and resume operations at the side of the Allies, the first unit in the UK to do so, which earned high praise from de Gaulle.¹⁰¹⁴ Promoted to the rank of lieutenant-commander in January 1941, he left *Rubis* to join the staff of Captain d'Argenlieu, Free French High Commissioner in the Pacific. After a brief stint at *FNFL* headquarters in London and a promotion to commander in 1943, he returned to the Pacific in 1944 to take command of the armed merchantman *Cap des Palmes*, then serving with the USN 3rd Fleet on convoy escort missions in the Solomon Islands.¹⁰¹⁵

¹⁰¹² Delaporte, "La base française de Mers el-Kébir," 329-331.

¹⁰¹³ Another submariner, Rear-Admiral Gabriel Auphan, served as head of the Vichy navy in 1941-1942 but he was of little influence, serving as he did under Darlan.

¹⁰¹⁴ Georges Cabanier related his experience in the submarine *Rubis* in *Croisières périlleuses* [Perilous Cruises] (Paris, FR: Presses de la Cité, 1969), *passim*.

¹⁰¹⁵ *Cap des Palmes*, a banana carrier, had seen the Americans install 6-inch guns, torpedo tubes, depth-charges, 20-mm Oerlikon AA pieces, as well as a modern suite of radar and sonar sensors in 1943. She operated out of Purvis Bay in the Solomon until Cabanier relinquished command in March 1945. D. Ignatieff, "Présence dans le Pacifique des navires de la France libre [Presence in the Pacific of Free French Ships]," *Bulletin de la Société d'Études historiques de la Nouvelle-Calédonie* LXXVII (2001): 49-53; and À la mer, "Cap des Palmes – bananier [*Cap des Palmes* – Banana Carrier]," last accessed 25 February 2018, <http://alamer.fr/index.php?NIUpage=35&Param1=177>.

A member of the French legation dispatched to San Francisco for the founding of the United Nations in 1945, Cabanier returned to France to take command of the *École navale* as a captain and transferred to the training cruiser *Jeanne d'Arc* in 1947. He went to Washington as naval attaché in 1949, became a rear-admiral in 1951 and served on the French joint defence staff in 1953-1954 before his dispatch to the Far East to command naval forces in southern Indochina until 1955. Back in France, Cabanier joined the personal staff of the minister of defence for one year, earning a promotion to vice-admiral and taking command in late 1956 of the Toulon-based *Groupe d'action anti-sous-marin* (GASM, the ASW action group which had just returned from Suez). As soon as he took power in June 1958, de Gaulle recalled Cabanier to Paris to work in his military cabinet and made him the commander of the navy when Nomy reached retirement age in 1960.¹⁰¹⁶ The archives and de Gaulle's personal recollections tell little as to why *le Général* selected that admiral for the post but a review of these career milestones shows that Cabanier's background fitted squarely with the Gaullian agenda at the time. A Free French of the first hour who remained an avowed Gaullist after the war, a proven sailor with a solid track record in staff appointments, Cabanier had experience working with the Americans and his submariner background would greatly assist future discussions with Washington. As relevant, perhaps, were his lack of attachment to Algeria and his limited experience with NATO.

By Summer 1960, de Gaulle had already launched the process that would lead in 1966 to France's withdrawal from the military organization, though not the political alliance.¹⁰¹⁷ He likely did not seek such a dramatic result from the outset but a succession of incremental steps led him there.¹⁰¹⁸ In a 17 September 1958 correspondence to President Eisenhower – copied to British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan – de Gaulle proposed important changes to NATO's structures and areas of responsibility in order to better reflect French interests. Most controversial was the suggestion of tripartite directorate where the United States, Great Britain and France would decide "... on political questions affecting world security and ... put into effect strategic plans of action, notably with regard to the employment of nuclear weapons."¹⁰¹⁹ As Washington and London showed little enthusiasm for this idea, and in the wake of ten years of bitter negotiations over the attribution of a major Mediterranean allied command continuously denied to France, de Gaulle decided in March 1959 to take his naval forces in that region out of NATO control.¹⁰²⁰ In May, he denied the Allies access to French soil for the storage of nuclear

¹⁰¹⁶ Taillemite, *Dictionnaire des marins français*, 81; and France, Musée de l'Ordre de la Libération, "Georges Cabanier," last accessed 16 February 2018, <https://www.ordredelaliberation.fr/fr/les-compagnons/163/georges-cabanier>.

¹⁰¹⁷ To be more exact, de Gaulle withdrew French forces from the NATO integrated military command structure but France remained committed to the collective defence of the Alliance. France Diplomatie, "France and NATO – France's Role in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)," last accessed 17 February 2018, <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/defence-security/france-and-nato>.

¹⁰¹⁸ The debates continue today between those who believe de Gaulle was already set to leave NATO when he came to power in 1958 and others arguing that he only got there gradually. Masson provides succinct views from both perspectives in *Histoire de l'armée française*, 458-460 but the archives, including a lengthy 1959 statement from his prime minister outlining the president's approach to the Alliance, seem to support the gradualist perspective. Archives nationales, 20060132-6, Statement by Prime Minister Michel Debré to a joint session of the Foreign Affairs Commission and the National Defence and Armed Forces Commission held on 8 September 1959.

¹⁰¹⁹ "Letter from President de Gaulle to President Eisenhower (17 September 1958)," *FRUS Western Europe 1958-1960*, 81-83. The document in the original French in Charles de Gaulle, *Lettres, notes et carnets (juin 1958 – décembre 1960)* [Letters, notes and diaries (June 1958 – December 1960)] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1985), 82-84.

¹⁰²⁰ An English version of the original French notification to NATO appears in "Telegram From the Mission at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and European Regional Organizations to the Department

devices, forcing the United States to redeploy nine USAF squadrons (two hundred aircraft) out of the country.¹⁰²¹ France's Permanent Representative to NATO announced in November 1962 that troops repatriated from Algeria to the *métropole* were not earmarked for service under the Alliance.¹⁰²² De Gaulle then removed all French forces from the Atlantic and Channel commands in June 1963.¹⁰²³ By the time he took this last decision, *le Général* had virtually given up on NATO as irremediably subservient to the Anglo-American dominion, especially as the two nuclear powers refused to agree to his conditions for further cooperation in the development of atomic weapons.

Though central to the Gaullian narrative today, the estrangement had begun before his return to power. Worsening relations between France and *les Anglo-Saxons*, especially the United States, after the exhilarating days of signing of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949, cannot be ascribed to any single event. Successive crises contributed to the rising tensions. Discord continued over priorities in provision of allied support to French rearmament and Eisenhower refused to engage militarily to save Dien Bien Phu. The drawn-out demise of the *CED*, Washington's tacit support to decolonisation and its public criticism of France's approach in Algeria also played a role. These cumulative disagreements, capped by dramatic confrontation during the Suez Crisis, led an increasing number of Fourth Republic leaders to doubt the political commitment of the United States to the French ally. As concerning, growth of the Soviet atomic arsenal – in numbers and reach – caused many in the *métropole* to turn skeptical of the American military guarantee resting as it did on nuclear deterrence.¹⁰²⁴ Although simplistic, asking whether the United States would sacrifice New York for Paris provided potent symbolism for those advocating that France acquires atomic means of its own.

of State (dated 6 March 1959)," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960*. Volume VII Part 1. *Western European Integration and Security; Canada* (hereafter *FRUS Western European Integration 1958-1960*) (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), 420-421.

¹⁰²¹ "Letter From President de Gaulle to President Eisenhower (dated 25 May 1959)," *FRUS Western Europe 1958-1960*, 229-231. In de Gaulle's words, France could not "... consent to nuclear weapons being stored on her territory and used from there unless she herself has complete and permanent control over them."

¹⁰²² Francis A. Beer, *Integration and Disintegration in NATO: Processes of Alliance Cohesion and Prospects for Atlantic Community* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1969), 87; and Frédéric Bozo, "De Gaulle, l'Amérique et l'alliance atlantique. Une relecture de la crise de 1966 [De Gaulle, the United States and the Atlantic Alliance. A Second Look at the 1966 Crisis]," *Vingtième Siècle, revue d'histoire* 43 (July-September 1994): 60.

¹⁰²³ Marie-Pierre Rey, *La tentation du rapprochement: France et URSS à l'heure de la détente (1964-1974)* [The Temptation of Reconciliation: France and the USSR at the Time of Détente (1964-1974)] (Paris, FR: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1991), 15; United States, Department of State, Office of the Historian, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963 – Volume XIII – Western Europe and Canada* (hereafter *FRUS 1961-1963*), "Circular Telegram From the Department of State to Certain European Missions (dated 15 June 1963)," last accessed 18 February 2018, <https://history.state.org/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v13/d272>; and "Telegram from the Embassy in France to the Department of State (dated 20 August 1963)," last accessed 18 February 2018, <https://history.state.org/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v13/d273>.

¹⁰²⁴ On the decreasing credibility – real or perceived – of the US deterrent through the 1950s, see Albert Wohlstetter, *The Delicate Balance of Terror*, RAND Paper P-1472 (1958), last accessed 19 February 2018, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/papers/P1472.html>; Bernard Brodie, *Strategy in the Missile Age*, RAND R-335 (15 January 1959), 173-222 and 264-304; Beatrice Heuser, *NATO, Britain, France and the FRG: Nuclear Strategies and Forces for Europe, 1949-2000* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 3-18; and Peter J. Roman, *Eisenhower and the Missile Gap* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), *passim*.

In that regard, the Gaullian myth is again not quite correct in attributing all credit to the General for turning his country into a nuclear power. He could not have achieved that goal without the efforts undertaken during the years of the Fourth Republic. That being said, there is no doubt that de Gaulle understood the potential of the atom early on. He created the *Commissariat à l'énergie atomique* (CEA – Atomic Energy Commission) in October 1945 to "... pursue scientific and technical research on the use of nuclear energy in various domains of science, industry and national defence."¹⁰²⁵ Admittedly, the first decade of the commission's work was primarily dedicated to civilian use and in December 1953 Minister of National Defence René Plevin still stated that "... regarding [military] atomic research we cannot yet engage in a purely national effort given the sums this would necessitate."¹⁰²⁶ Nevertheless, interest in military application grew in the early 1950s, leading to the stand up in December 1952 of the Army's Special Weapons Command under Colonel Charles Ailleret, "... no more than a nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) protection command at the beginning, but soon to become a real "nuclear think-tank."¹⁰²⁷ Earlier, in July, during parliamentary debates over a bill sponsoring an ambitious five-year plan for development of a civilian nuclear industry, parties from the Left tried to include an amendment preempting use of these facilities for military purpose in the future but the motion was defeated in the National Assembly.¹⁰²⁸ CEA administrator Pierre Guillaumat and Colonel Ailleret launched informal talks the following year to develop greater links between their two organizations.¹⁰²⁹ Political authorities endorsed this bureaucratic initiative in October 1954 with creation of a joint Atomic Commission-Ministry of Defence committee. Two months later, *Président du Conseil* Pierre Mendès France took the fateful step of standing up a secret military division within the CEA, funded from the defence budget and headed by army General Jean Crépin.¹⁰³⁰ Its immediate tasks were to study the requirements for building an atomic bomb and develop options for submarine nuclear propulsion.

The second goal was not entirely new. The 1952 five-year plan had already mandated the Atomic Commission to build two nuclear submarines but the project had languished among

¹⁰²⁵ Archives nationales, "Ordonnance n° 45-2563 du 18 octobre 1945 instituant un commissariat à l'énergie atomique [Ordonnance no. 45-2563 of 18 October 1945 Establishing an Atomic Energy Commission]," *Journal officiel de la République française* (hereafter *JORF*) (31 Octobre 1945): 7065. On the early days of France's nuclear programme, see Heuser, *NATO, Britain, France and the FRG*, 93-95; Bruno Tertrais, "« Destruction assurée »: The Origins and Development of French Nuclear Strategy, 1945-1981," in *Getting Mad: Nuclear Mutual Assured Destruction, Its Origins and Practice* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), 52-55; and Claude Chartier, "La genèse de l'armement atomique français: l'œuvre de la Quatrième République [The Genesis of French Atomic Weapons during the Fourth Republic]," *Historiens et Géographes* 99, no. 397 (March 2007): 289-295.

¹⁰²⁶ Archives nationales, C//15601 – *Séances de la Commission de la Défense nationales 1953 – 1954* [Sessions of the National Defence Commission 1953 – 1954], minutes of the session on 28 December 1953, 41.

¹⁰²⁷ Tertrais, "« Destruction assurée »," 53. See Ailleret, *L'aventure atomique française*, 79-123 for these early days.

¹⁰²⁸ Guisnel and Tertrais, *Le Président et la bombe*, 22-23; and Dominique Longin, "Genèse de l'armement nucléaire français [Genesis of French Nuclear Armament]," *Revue historique des armées* 262 (2011): 3.

¹⁰²⁹ Ailleret, *L'aventure atomique française*, 140.

¹⁰³⁰ The decision followed a pivotal inter-ministerial conference led by Mendès France on 26 December 1954. *Ibid.*, 143; and Guisnel and Tertrais, *Le Président et la bombe*, 24. The proceedings remain a matter of contention today as no official minutes or records were kept at the time and Mendès France later sought to underplay his influence during these events, growing diffident in the 1960s over the legitimacy of the country's nuclear deterrent. On the premier's role, see Georges-Henri Soutou, "La politique nucléaire de Pierre Mendès France [The Nuclear Policy of Pierre Mendès France]." *Relations internationales* 59 (Fall 1989): 317-330; and André Bendjebbar, *La bombe atomique et deux Républiques, 1939-1969* [The Atomic Bomb and Two Republics (1939-1969)] (Paris, FR: Le Cherche-Midi, 2000), 169-194.

competing priorities. The *Marine nationale* endorsed this initiative even though it was meant to support scientific research and development of civilian industry rather than providing operational platforms for the navy.¹⁰³¹ But French admirals remained of two minds about the future of nuclear propulsion, certainly conscious of its potential but equally concerned with its great cost and the impact it could have on the rejuvenation of the surface fleet and the *Aéronavale*. The subject was first brought to the attention of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* in 1947, acknowledged but without follow-up action.¹⁰³² By the early 1950s, a concerted effort was underway to grow the submarine arm and debates arose whether future plans should focus on nuclear or conventional propulsion. Among others, Nomy and Lemonnier promoted the former while Pierre Barjot and Paul Ortoli militated for the latter, this dissonance delaying a decision as the council remained a consensual body charged with providing unified views to the minister.¹⁰³³ A compromise was eventually reached in 1955 with the decision to pursue a first nuclear-propelled submarine for service in the navy – implying abandonment of the earlier *CEA* initiative of two submersibles for civilian research – while maintaining the current emphasis on the construction of diesel-electric platforms, the Narval/ Aréthuse/Daphné-class mix already approved by the National Assembly.

Though the result of a compromise and despite the fall of the Mendès France government in February, authorities pursued the new plan aggressively.¹⁰³⁴ Leveraging the exploratory work of a *CEA*-navy liaison committee formed in April 1954, the *rue Royale* quickly provided a detailed proposal, which was approved on 20 May 1955 by the government of Edgar Faure – who by and large continued the nuclear programme launched by his predecessor.¹⁰³⁵ On 24 June, Cherbourg was selected as the building site, a budget of 16BB FF authorized, and *ingénieur général de 1^{ère} classe* (vice-admiral) Roger Brard took charge of the *Groupe des bâtiments à propulsion atomique* (*GBPA* – Nuclear-Propelled Vessels Group), the office established within the naval staff to lead the project, designated *projet Q-244*. However, Brard soon faced insurmountable technical challenges in this endeavour.

French engineers had explored two modes of technical propulsion for ships and submarines, one fueled by enriched uranium and the other relying on natural uranium that required heavy water as a coolant (hence the 1952 ambition to build two submarines, one of each type). *USS Nautilus*, in service since January 1955, used the former in a relatively small but highly efficient reactor. France, however, did not have the means to produce enriched uranium nor access to foreign sources as the US Atomic Energy Act of 1946 (the McMahon Bill) ruled out

¹⁰³¹ Submarines were only one element of an ambition plan to explore nuclear propulsion for large merchant ships and military surface vessels. Béatrice Failles, "Pierre Mendès France et la construction de l'arme atomique. Une responsabilité collective, un défi personnel [Pierre Mendès France and the Building of the Atomic Bomb. A Collective Responsibility, a Personal Challenge]." *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* 63-64 (July-December 2001): 138; and Maurice Vaïsse, "Le Q-244, le premier sous-marin atomique français [Q-244, the First French Atomic Submarine]" *Revue historique des armées* 3 (September 1990): 36.

¹⁰³² *SHD*, 3 BB8 CSM 2, November 1947 briefing note (actual date unspecified).

¹⁰³³ Vaïsse, "Le Q-244, le premier sous-marin atomique français," 37 ; and Cariou, *FOST*, 12.

¹⁰³⁴ Mendès France lost a vote of confidence in the *Assemblée nationale* on 5 February 1955. The vote concerned his North African policy but also represented cumulative dissensions in the assembly over his domestic and economic policies. Giles, *The Locust Years*, 234-243; and Michel Winock, "La chute de Pierre Mendès France [Pierre Mendès France's Fall]," *L'Histoire* 68 (1984): 6-19.

¹⁰³⁵ 3 BB 8 CEM 13 – Various Records of the *Comité des Chefs d'état-major* [Chiefs of Staff Committee] 1955, minutes of the sessions held on 21 and 30 March 1955; and Maurice Vaïsse, "La filière sans issue: Histoire du premier sous-marin atomique français [The Problem with No Solution: History of the First French Atomic Submarine]," *Relations internationales* 59 (Fall 1989): 336-337.

sharing nuclear research and transfer of fissile material, even with close allies for fear of proliferation or misuse.¹⁰³⁶ As sources of natural uranium existed in France and heavy water could be obtained from Norway, the Brard team resigned themselves to fit *Q-244* with the much larger reactor this mode of nuclear propulsion necessitated. But significant engineering issues remained. The machinery just could not be made to fit in a hull of a practical and affordable size. In two years, the design evolved to a point that the submarine's planned tonnage nearly tripled from 2,500 tons to 6,500 tons, compared to the *Nautilus*' 4,000 tons. The expected costs rose to equal those that would allow for the construction of one enrichment plant that could provide the enriched uranium needed for a range of other military needs, making the single submarine project increasingly contentious outside navy circles. Although the short-lived government of Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury (June to September 1957) approved continued work on the submarine, de Gaulle put the project on hold soon after coming to power in Summer 1958.¹⁰³⁷

Not that *le Général* had abandoned his nuclear ambitions. While still isolated in the political wilderness, he claimed his support for a French atomic bomb during a widely-covered press conference in April 1954: "France needs a defence system which is of course proportioned to her resources and associated with those of her allies but also autonomous and balanced. France needs to be a nuclear power."¹⁰³⁸ Two years later, on 2 April 1956, he received the visit of French air force Colonel Pierre Gallois, from the NATO New Approach Group. SACEUR himself, USAF General Lauris Norstad, tasked Gallois to brief, separately, then-Prime Minister Guy Mollet and de Gaulle on the work of the group charged with developing the Alliance's nuclear strategy.¹⁰³⁹ But Gallois also used the opportunity to expose *le Général* to his own ideas about the atomic bomb in terms of France's national security, which he had been reflecting upon since the end of the Second World War. Gallois himself later stated that he first drew inspiration from an article published in 1945 by retired Admiral Raoul Castex who referred to the *facteur égalisateur* (the strategic equalizer): "Just like a strong nation, a weak one will have nuclear weapons, in fewer number perhaps, but numbers matter little given the great power of individual devices."¹⁰⁴⁰

¹⁰³⁶ The Atomic Energy Act established the United States Atomic Energy Commission as a successor to the Manhattan Project to ensure that nuclear research and production continued under civilian control in the postwar era while outlawing the release of American nuclear information, technology and fissile material to foreign powers. Jan Melissen, "The Restoration of the Nuclear Alliance: Great Britain and Atomic Negotiations with the United States, 1957-1958," *Contemporary Record* 6, no. 1 (1992): 72-80; and Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France – Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998), 60-62.

¹⁰³⁷ Cariou, *FOST*, 12; Vaisse, "Le Q-244, le premier sous-marin atomique français," 41-46 ; and Jacques Chevallier, "La genèse de la propulsion nucléaire en France [The Genesis of Nuclear Propulsion in France]," *1899/1999, un siècle de construction sous-marine*, last modified 9 April 2004, www.sous-mama.org/la-genese-de-la-propulsion-nucleaire-en-france-blog-254.html.

¹⁰³⁸ Cited in D. Mongin in *La Direction des applications militaires au cœur de la dissuasion nucléaire française – De l'ère des pionniers au programme simulation* [The Military Applications Directorate at the Heart of French Nuclear Deterrence – From the Pioneers Era to the Simulation Programme] (Paris, FR: CEA DAM, 2016), 19.

¹⁰³⁹ The New Approach Group was formed in August 1953 by Nordstad's predecessor, US Army General Alfred Gruenther, to "... devise the "New Approach" and the new concepts that were needed for the defence of NATO Europe." Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, Morris Honick, *The New Approach, 1953-1956* (Brussels, BE: SHAPE, 1979), viii. See also Saki Dockrill, *Eisenhower's New-Look National Security Policy, 1953-61* (London, UK: Macmillan Press, 1996), 98-99.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Raoul Castex, "Aperçus sur la bombe atomique [Overview of the Atomic Bomb]," *Revue de Défense nationale* 10 (October 1945): 34. Gallois first referred to Castex' influence in "L'affaire de Berlin ou la peur de la bombe [The Berlin Affair or the Fear of the Bomb]," *La Nef* 27 (April 1959): 28.

This statement embodied what became known as France's nuclear strategy of *dissuasion du faible au fort*, the deterrence of the strong by the weak, a strategic version of the naval revolution proposed by the *Jeune École* a century earlier. The weaker power did not need a deterrent comparable to that of the stronger enemy. It only needed the capacity to inflict greater damage than the opponent was willing to endure in comparison to the gains the latter sought to obtain by force. France could not compete with the superpowers in absolute terms but it could assemble an instrument of sufficient size to maintain a sort of asymmetric or proportional deterrence.¹⁰⁴¹ In a seminal 1960 treatise, Gallois outlined the characteristics that would come to shape de Gaulle's *force de frappe* (strike force) in the years ahead:

Nuclear bombs and their vectors – be they aircraft or missiles – must, first of all, escape annihilation from an enemy first strike that uses surprise and an inherent superiority in numbers. This force must then be able to penetrate the opponent's air defences. It is necessary that such retaliatory strike can be launched nearly automatically in case of an attack and that the enemy be convinced that no political hesitations, moral concerns or fears of follow-on strikes will prevent the launch of such a counter-attack. Lastly, ... the "quantity of destruction" that can be inflicted once the strike force reaches its targets must nullify the gains the aggressor is seeking to achieve through his offensive. Naturally, what counts is that the aggressor country – or its government rather – reaches this conclusion [before launching a first strike].¹⁰⁴²

One must not overestimate the influence of Gallois over de Gaulle.¹⁰⁴³ *Le Général* did not call Gallois to his side when he came to power and the strategist grew isolated from the military elites in the 1960s. His early influence turned stale compared to that of rising practitioners and theoreticians such as Ailleret and Colonel Pierre Buchalet (a later head of the CEA's military division) as well as army generals André Beaufre and Lucien Poirier.¹⁰⁴⁴ These minds expanded on Gallois's vision to embrace the morality of the first and second strike options, in both the tactical and strategic realms. They inspired de Gaulle to refer to a *force tous azimuts*, an "all-round force." This concept signified that France's deterrent was not aimed at one specific enemy (i.e. the USSR) but provided defence against any threat, which could include the United

¹⁰⁴¹ Succinct analysis of Gallois' ideas appear in Philip H. Gordon, *A Certain Idea of France – French Security Policy and the Gaullist Legacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 57-59; and François Géré, "P.M. Gallois, stratège et pédagogue de la dissuasion nucléaire [P.M. Gallois, Nuclear Deterrence Strategist and Teacher]," *La revue géopolitique* (4 February 2017), last accessed 25 February 2018, <https://www.diploweb.com/P-M-Gallois-stratège-et-pédagogue-de-la-dissuasion-nucléaire.html>.

¹⁰⁴² Pierre Marie Gallois, *Stratégie de l'âge nucléaire* [Strategy in the Nuclear Age], 2nd ed. (Paris, FR: François-Xavier de Guibert, 2009), 151-152. The original Calmann-Lévy edition appeared in 1960.

¹⁰⁴³ Géré, "P.M. Gallois, stratège et pédagogue de la dissuasion nucléaire"; Gordon, *A Certain Idea of France*, 58; and Raymond Aron, *Le grand débat – Initiation à la stratégie atomique* [The Great Debate – Initiation to Nuclear Strategy] (Paris, FR: Calmann-Lévy, 1963), 134-135.

¹⁰⁴⁴ François Géré introduces the latter two in "André Beaufre et l'Institut français d'Études stratégiques 1902-1975 [André Beaufre and the French Institute of Strategic Studies 1902-1975]," *La revue géopolitique* (9 May 2015), last accessed 25 February 2018, <https://www.diploweb.com/Andre-Beaufre-et-l-institut.html>; and "Général Lucien Poirier: une œuvre stratégique majeure [General Lucien Poirier: A Major Legacy on Strategy]," *La revue géopolitique* (17 May 2016), last accessed 25 February 2018, <https://www.diploweb.com/General-Lucien-Poirier-une-oeuvre.html>. They published their initial thoughts on nuclear strategy in André Beaufre, *Dissuasion et stratégie* [Deterrence and Strategy] (Paris, FR: Armand Collin, 1964), *passim*; and Lucien Poirier, *Des stratégies nucléaires* [Of Nuclear Strategies] (Paris, FR: Hachette, 1977), *passim*.

States even if left unsaid.¹⁰⁴⁵ But these developments had yet to come. Gallois was the first French writer to reach widely beyond military circles to discuss strategy in the atomic age. His musings did much to shape the political and public debate in the late 1950s as France became an active nuclear power, even as her navy continued struggling to master the power of the atom.

Projet Q-244 was floundering at the dawn of the Fifth Republic but other elements of the secret Mendès France initiative had progressed remarkably fast, especially in the wake of the Suez Crisis. A new protocol was signed on 30 November 1956 between the nuclear commission and the military to clarify respective responsibilities in building a first atomic bomb. Funding was approved for a plutonium extraction facility as well as a uranium enrichment plant. Dassault Aviation took on the design of the Mirage IV long-range jet capable of delivering gravity bombs at supersonic speeds while longer-term studies in ballistic missile technology gained renewed attention. In addition to approving continued work on *Q-244* in July 1957, the Bourgès-Maunoury government passed a second five-year nuclear programme (doubling its budget) and approved Reggane as the atomic test site. Work around the Saharan oasis commenced in November and Ailleret, now a general, was appointed in February 1958 to oversee the first series of tests ahead of their approval. On 11 April, *président du Conseil* Félix Gaillard (who had shepherded the first five-year plan through the National Assembly in 1952), ordered completion of all preparations to allow detonation of an atomic device in 1960 but stopped short of formally ordering the test.¹⁰⁴⁶ His government was defeated within days over the bombing of *FLN* camps in Tunisia and de Gaulle took power two months later.

Though not the father of France's atomic bomb, de Gaulle decisively ventured where previous *présidents du Conseil* did not dare. As put succinctly by professor Bruno Tertrais, historian of the French nuclear programme, de Gaulle made two fundamental determinations: "the decision to test, build, and sustain an *operational* deterrent; and the decision to have a fully *independent* deterrent, not only in terms of use, but also in terms of procurement, planning, and operations."¹⁰⁴⁷ He put the first question to rest quickly once briefed on the extent of the secret work of the previous years. On 22 July 1958, he ordered a first atomic test to take place no later than the end of March 1960 and, on 22 September, made public the existence of a military division within the Atomic Commission, establishing through prime ministerial decree the *Direction des applications militaires* (*DAM* – Directorate of Military Applications) under General Buchalet.¹⁰⁴⁸ De Gaulle then confirmed the requirement for the delivery of fifty Dassault Mirage IV two-seater bombers between 1963 and 1967 (another twelve configured for strategic reconnaissance were ordered in 1964).¹⁰⁴⁹ Ironically, the Mirage IV decision also showed that de Gaulle may not have been determined to pursue independence at all cost yet. Engineers realised

¹⁰⁴⁵ Charles Ailleret, "Défense "dirigée" ou défense "tous azimuts" ["Directed Defence" or "All-round Defence"]," *Défense nationale* 23 (December 1967): 1923-1932; and François Géré, "Charles Ailleret, stratège français [Charles Ailleret, French Strategist]," *La revue géopolitique* (14 February 2016), last accessed 25 February 2018, <https://www.diploweb.com/Charles-Ailleret.html#nb52>.

¹⁰⁴⁶ For these developments, see Mongin in *La Direction des applications militaires*, 36-39 and "Genèse de l'armement nucléaire français," 6-8; Tertrais, "« Destruction assurée », 55-56; and Chartier, "La genèse de l'armement atomique français," 293-295.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Tertrais, "« Destruction assurée », 55. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Ailleret, *L'aventure atomique française*, 301; Mongin, "Genèse de l'armement nucléaire français," 9; and Marcel Duval, "Les décisions concernant l'armement nucléaire: pourquoi, comment, quand? [Decisions Concerning Nuclear Weapons: Why, How, When?]," in *Armement et V^e République, fin des années 1950 – fin des années 1960* [Armement and the Fifth Republic, Late 1950s – Late 1960s] (Paris, FR: CNRS Éditions, 2002), 297.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Carlier, "La genèse du système d'arme stratégique piloté," 201; and Cabrière, "Le programme Mirage IV."

in 1958 that French industry had not yet achieved the maturity necessary to produce a jet engine capable of the high performance required of the supersonic plane, thus the decision to acquire engines from the American firm Pratt & Whitney, to be built under license in France.¹⁰⁵⁰ And the United States also appeared open to greater collaboration with some of its allies as shown by the government's willingness to endorse this transfer of jet engine technology, even knowing that the Mirage IV could eventually become an atomic-bomb delivery vehicle.

A greater precedent occurred on 2 July 1958 when Congress amended the McMahon Bill of 1946, already modified in 1954 to facilitate the development of civilian nuclear industry. The new act allowed sharing information as well as transfer of fissile material and related equipment to other countries for military purposes, provided that such nations had already made substantial progress in the development of atomic weapons while "... participating with the United States pursuant to an international arrangement by substantial and material contribution to the mutual defense and security."¹⁰⁵¹ This set the stage for signing the next day the UK-US Mutual Defense Agreement which codified bilateral cooperation between the two powers, including the sale to Great Britain of one complete submarine propulsion plant and the uranium needed to fuel it for a period of ten years.¹⁰⁵² Eisenhower's determination to repair relations in the wake of Suez extended to France as Secretary of State John Foster met with de Gaulle in Paris on 5 July to offer a similar level of cooperation in the nuclear realm:

We would be prepared to see French forces fully trained in the use of [US nuclear] weapons and French equipment adapted to deliver them. This would be done in the context of NATO and NATO strategy. It was also our intention to assist, if so desired, in the development of atomic propulsion for French submarines.¹⁰⁵³

Though he immediately made an issue of the matter of control over nuclear weapons stored on French soil, de Gaulle also affirmed his interest in renewed collaboration. He dispatched a team to the United States in February 1959 with an ambitious agenda: negotiate the immediate purchase of a nuclear-propelled submarine using current US technology, obtain enriched uranium to fuel a French prototype atomic propulsion reactor to be tested in a facility ashore before fitting in a future class of submarine, as well as discuss additional nuclear cooperation with the other services, including visits to American test sites.¹⁰⁵⁴ By then, however, the spirit of conciliation had already faded on both sides. The Eisenhower administration continued demurring over de Gaulle's September 1958 proposal of a NATO triumvirate and Congress did not support Dulles' offer of nuclear cooperation. *Le Général* elected to withdraw the fleet from NATO control in the Mediterranean on 7 March 1959, dramatically constraining his team's ability to extract concessions from the Americans. They succeeded in securing a deal

¹⁰⁵⁰ Cabrière, "Le programme Mirage IV "; and Jean Forestier, "Le Mirage IV, arme de précocité [The Mirage IV, A Precocious Weapon]," in *Armement et V^e République, fin des années 1950 – fin des années 1960* [Armament and the Fifth Republic, Late 1950s – Late 1960s] (Paris, FR: CNRS Éditions, 2002), 198.

¹⁰⁵¹ United States Government Publishing Office, "Public Law 85-479 – An Act to Amend the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 as Amended (Approved 2 July 1958)," last accessed 28 February 2018, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-72/pdf/STATUTE-72-Pg276-2pdf>.

¹⁰⁵² United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America for Co-operation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes (3 July 1958)," last accessed 28 February 2018, <http://treaties.fco.gov.uk/docs/pdf/1958/ts0041.pdf>.

¹⁰⁵³ "Memorandum of Conversation – The Secretary's Talk with General de Gaulle in Paris, July 5, 1958," *FRUS Western Europe 1958-1960*, 56.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Vaïsse, "La filière sans issue," 343; and Duval, "Les décisions concernant l'armement nucléaire," 300-301.

on 7 May but fell quite short of their original goal, especially when contrasted with the terms obtained by the British the previous year. The agreement only provided for the sale of 440 kilos of enriched uranium, which use was restricted to fuelling a land-based prototype submarine propulsion plant for a period of ten years.¹⁰⁵⁵ Such ambivalent result marked the final break between de Gaulle and Eisenhower over nuclear cooperation. In a 25 May 1959 letter to the US president where he announced that he would deny the Alliance the use of facilities in France to store atomic weapons, *le Général* also declared bitterly:

Obviously the question would appear quite differently if you made it possible for us to take advantage of your own achievements. But America intends to keep her secrets vis-à-vis France. This compels us to discover them ourselves and at a tremendous cost... The consequences which might result from any unilateral action which you might undertake in this area... [lead us] to adopt, insofar as possible, certain measures on our own behalf as safeguards.¹⁰⁵⁶

The decision to detonate a first atomic bomb and to acquire Mirage IV strategic bombers operationalized France's *force de frappe*. De Gaulle was now ready to ensure its independence. He outlined his vision in a widely publicized address on 3 November 1959 at the *École militaire*:

The defence of France must be French... It ensues that we must, obviously, develop in the coming years a force capable of acting on our behalf, one which can be called a *force de frappe* capable of deployment at any time and anywhere. At the heart of this force will be atomic armament... And, since potential opponents will eventually be able to destroy France from anywhere in the world, our force must be capable of reaching anywhere in the world.¹⁰⁵⁷

To sustain this effort, de Gaulle abandoned the Fourth Republic's practice of voting the defence budget through annual tranches in favour of five-year *lois de programmation militaire* (military programming acts), the first of which covered the 1960-1964 period. Appropriating 5.44 per cent of the country's gross domestic product in 1960 alone (still a considerable figure for a western country by 1960s standard), the programme placed the *force de frappe* at the centre of the defence budget.¹⁰⁵⁸ Introduced to Parliament in July 1960, the first plan proved highly controversial in both the *Assemblée nationale* and the Senate. Debates lasted through the Fall with Communists and Socialists opposed to a French nuclear deterrent altogether while the centre-right *MRP* militated in favour of developing such armament within the NATO framework.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Vaïsse, "Le Q-244, le premier sous-marin atomique français," 45-46 ; Guisnel and Tertrais, *Le Président et la bombe*, 68; and "Editorial Note (Author Unknown)," *FRUS Western Europe 1958-1960*, 212. A first delivery of thirty kilos of enriched uranium reached France in April 1960.

¹⁰⁵⁶ "Letter From President de Gaulle to Eisenhower (25 May 1959)," *FRUS Western Europe 1958-1960*, 230.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Digithèque MJP, "Charles de Gaulle – Allocution à l'École militaire, 3 novembre 1959 [Charles de Gaulle – Address to the *École militaire*, 3 November 1959]," last accessed 2 March 2018, <http://mjp.univ-perp.fr/text/degaulle03111959.htm>.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Jean Guisnel, "Le budget de la défense en déclin depuis... soixante ans! [The Defense Budget in Decline for... Sixty Years!]," *Le Point* (14 March 2013), last accessed 2 March 2018, http://www.lepoint.fr/editos-du-point/jean-guisnel/le-budget-de-la-defense-en-declin-depuis-soixante-ans-14-03-2013-1640131_53.php; and Patrice Buffotot, "Les lois de programmation militaire en France: un demi-siècle de programmation [Military Programming Acts in France: Half-a-Century of Programming]," *Revue électronique de l'Université de Nice* 4 (15 July 2016), last accessed 2 March 2018, <http://revel.unice.fr/psei/index.html?id=1060>.

Nevertheless, the final version passed on 8 December still largely reflected de Gaulle's priorities by allocating resources for a range of projects:¹⁰⁵⁹

- Weaponization of the crude atomic device first tested at Reggane on 13 February 1960;¹⁰⁶⁰
- Acquisition of Dassault Mirage IV and their supporting Boeing KC-135 Stratotankers;¹⁰⁶¹
- Development of ground-based ballistic missiles;¹⁰⁶²
- Construction of a uranium enrichment plant;¹⁰⁶³
- Study of a ballistic-missile carrying submarine;
- Building a prototype nuclear submarine propulsion plant onshore; and
- Construction of an experimental submarine to test sub-surface-launched ballistic missiles.

The last three items proved the death of *project Q-244* but also marked the dawn of a renewed research effort in a different direction for the *Marine nationale*.¹⁰⁶⁴ Abandoning the natural uranium/heavy water combination for good, French authorities tackled, in two cautious stages, the challenge of developing an entirely new means of submarine propulsion using enriched uranium. First, a newly-designed prototype would be built in a shore facility to conduct extensive testing. Only then would a second plant be approved for construction and installation in a submarine of the next generation. Though sponsored by the CEA, a sailor led the project. *Ingénieur général* Jacques Chevallier had already been assigned the task, assembling a team to progress research in that area since Spring 1959. Following the approval of the first *loi de programmation militaire*, construction commenced on the *prototype à terre (PAT – Onshore Prototype)* at the *Centre d'études de Cadarache*, located at the confluence of the Verdon and

¹⁰⁵⁹ Archives nationales, "Loi de programme no. 60-1305 du 8 décembre 1960 relative à certains équipements militaires [Programme Law no. 60-1305 of 8 December 1960 for Some Military Equipment]," *JORF* (10 December 1960): 11076; Mongin in *La Direction des applications militaires*, 54-55 ; and Buffotot, "Les lois de programmation militaire en France."

¹⁰⁶⁰ For contemporary (if somewhat bombastic) French views on the event, see Ailleret, *L'aventure atomique française*, 363-383; and ina.fr, "La bombe française: le jour J à Reggane [The French Bomb: D-Day in Reggane]," *Les Actualités françaises* (17 February 1960), last accessed 2 March 2018, <http://www.ina.fr/video/AFE85008600>.

¹⁰⁶¹ Forestier stated that the United States government supported the purchase by France of the twelve Boeing aircraft despite Franco-American tensions as it made up for an order canceled by the USAF in 1962. Maurice Vaisse, "Débat [Debate]," in *Armement et V^e République, fin des années 1950 – fin des années 1960* [Armament and the Fifth Republic, Late 1950s – Late 1960s] (Paris, FR: CNRS Éditions, 2002), 222.

¹⁰⁶² A project led by a military group dedicated to the study of ballistic missiles (the *Groupe des engins balistiques*) and a state-private industrial partnership (the *Société pour l'étude et la réalisation d'engins balistiques*) had already been formed to build future shore- and sea-based missiles. Mongin, "Genèse de l'armement nucléaire français," 9; and Pierre Usunier, "Les vecteurs sol-sol balistiques stratégiques [Strategic Ballistic Ground-to-Ground Vectors]," *Institut de Stratégie comparée*, last accessed 2 March 2018, http://www.institut-strategie.fr/ihcc_nuc1_Usunier.html.

¹⁰⁶³ The Pierrelatte military complex, in southeastern France, which operated from 1964 to 1996. It has since been dismantled. Mongin, "Genèse de l'armement nucléaire français," 9; and Directions des applications militaires, "Pierrelatte: l'usine d'enrichissement de l'uranium [Pierrelatte: Uranium Enrichment Plant]," last accessed 2 March 2018, <http://www-dam.cea.fr/missions/docs/Pierrelatte.pdf>.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Archives nationales, 20060132-6, Statement by *ministre des Armées* (Minister for the Armies) Pierre Guillaumat to the National Defence Commission during the session held on 30 October 1959; and *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CEM 19, Statement by Admiral Cabanier to the National Defence Commission during the session held on 3 October 1960.

Durance rivers, sixty kilometres north-east of Marseilles. Success followed quickly. On 9 April 1962, a small test reactor achieved criticality and in February 1963 the main components of the actual prototype reactor were assembled in place. *PAT*, built to the same dimensions and technical requirements than those to be achieved on board a future submarine, achieved criticality on 14 August 1964 and ran at full power ten days later. The prototype completed a continuous run from October to December that year, the period equivalent to a round-the-world, 70-day patrol.¹⁰⁶⁵ France had a working and proven submarine nuclear propulsion plant in hand. Next was an actual nuclear submarine.

Q-244 had been designed as an attack submarine armed with conventional torpedoes. Some visionaries conceived of her as a stepping stone towards the design of a future missile-carrying submersible but many others believed that capability far too advanced for development by the *CEA* and the *Marine nationale* on their own.¹⁰⁶⁶ The US Navy commissioned its first SSBN to great success – USS *George Washington* on 30 December 1959 – but the Soviet experience with the infamous *K-19* the following year also showed the challenges of operating such a complex platform.¹⁰⁶⁷ By 1961, the French navy did not yet have a serviceable submarine nuclear-propulsion plant, an advanced navigation system for extended underwater cruising and accurate ballistic targeting, a working submarine-launched missile, nor a nuclear warhead that could fit such a missile. Research and development work had commenced in each of these areas but France was unlikely to assemble and operationalize all four elements in one deployable platform for another decade at least.¹⁰⁶⁸ Unless the Americans would provide a shortcut if de Gaulle accepted it as supporting his effort to restore France's grandeur rather than undermining it.

Newly-installed President Kennedy seized upon a concept introduced in the closing days of the Eisenhower administration. As much a political gesture as a military initiative, the proposal for the creation of a Multilateral Force (MLF) sought to give European partners a more active role in the Alliance's nuclear deterrent.¹⁰⁶⁹ Mixed multinational NATO crews would sail in USN and European ships and submarines armed with American ballistic missiles. The nuclear warheads would remain under US control but European authorities could be part of the decision-making cycle prior to launch and European sailors would participate in execution of nuclear strikes at the behest of NATO. The concept did not prove viable in the long run. Admirals on

¹⁰⁶⁵ Chevallier, "La genèse de la propulsion nucléaire en France," 286-289; Duval, "Les décisions concernant l'armement nucléaire," 301; Cariou, *FOST*, 13-14; and André Gempp, "La mise en place et le développement des sous-marins nucléaires [Design and Development of Nuclear Submarines]," *Institut de Stratégie comparée*, last accessed 3 March 2018, http://www.institut-strategie.fr/ihec_nu1_Gempp.html.

¹⁰⁶⁶ *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CEM 17, "Fiches sur les études de la Marine [Briefing Note on Navy Studies] (dated 1 June 1956)." This note, listing a range of studies on new weapons systems and sensors, already stated the requirement to investigate the potential of a submarine-launched, nuclear-tipped missile but it was not a policy paper or nor an executive order to do so.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Mathey and Sheldon-Duplaix, *Histoire des sous-marins*, 84-87; and David Miller, *The Illustrated Directory of Submarines of the World* (St. Paul, MN: MBI Publishing, 2002), 402-410.

¹⁰⁶⁸ *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CEM 20, "Étude relative aux hypothèses d'armement nucléaire stratégique [Study of Strategic Nuclear Armament Hypothesis] (10 November 1961)," submitted in preparation for the *Comité des Chefs d'état-major* (Chiefs of Staff Committee) session held on 13 November 1961.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 613-615; and Evgeny Kustnetsov, "Le projet de Force multilatérale de l'OTAN [The NATO Multilateral Force Project]," European University Institute, last modified 6 July 2016, https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1999/1/1/937a5818-7fea-47da-944e-11114da4e0a3/publishable_fr.pdf. For fuller treatments, one may consult James B. Solomon, *The Multilateral Force: America's Nuclear Solution for NATO (1960-1965)* (Annapolis, MD: Trident Scholar Project, 1999), *passim*; and Andrew Priest, *Kennedy, Johnson and NATO: Britain, America and the Dynamics of Alliance, 1962-1968* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), *passim*.

both sides of the Atlantic deemed it impracticable and many European politicians feared it would awaken ghosts that had laid dormant since the end of the EDC saga in 1954.¹⁰⁷⁰ But it also gave rise to a more immediate idea, that of the United States providing nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles to equip British and French submarines.

By the late 1950s, Great Britain had built up a small nuclear deterrent of gravity bombs carried in obsolete Valiant bombers. Efforts to produce a land-based medium-range ballistic missile – the Blue Streak – failed and the project was cancelled in April 1960 due to cost overruns and concerns over the vectors' vulnerability to a Soviet first strike.¹⁰⁷¹ At that point, British aviators were already interested in the American air-launched nuclear-tipped missile Skybolt, then under development, to equip the newer Vulcan bomber. However, Washington cancelled that project in early December 1962 for budgetary reasons, focussing resources on the land-based Minuteman and the submarine-launched Polaris missiles as deterrents of choice.¹⁰⁷² This unilateral decision, announced with little warning, left Great Britain without a viable option to renew its strategic forces in the coming decade, precipitating the short-lived but momentous "Skybolt Crisis."

President Kennedy agreed to meet with Prime Minister Macmillan in the Bahamas that same month and, following three days of discussions, the two leaders signed the Nassau Agreement on 21 December.¹⁰⁷³ In part due to the same aristocratic charm displayed by Admiral of the Fleet Earl Louis Mountbatten during the negotiations that led to signing the UK-US Mutual Defense Agreement in 1958, the British clinched another unprecedented deal. The Americans agreed to supply new Polaris missiles, launch tubes, re-entry bodies, and fire-control systems to equip five submarines embarking sixteen SLBMs each. Great Britain would design and operate the submarines (incorporating the previously-transferred US propulsion technology), as well as provide the actual nuclear warheads. British crews would operate them but as part of the proposed NATO MLF, with SACEUR providing targeting plans and SACLANC exercising operational control while the submarines were on patrol, unless reassigned by the prime minister to independent tasks when "... supreme national interests are at stake."¹⁰⁷⁴ Despite this clause, many denounced the agreement, underlining that Great Britain acquired a modern, viable and credible nuclear deterrent but at unacceptable cost in terms of national sovereignty and military

¹⁰⁷⁰ Colette Barbier, "La Force multilatérale dans le débat atomique française [The Multilateral Force in the French Atomic Debate]," *Revue d'histoire diplomatique* 107, no. 1 (1993): 55-89; and Helga Haftendorn, *NATO and the Nuclear Revolution: A Crisis of Credibility, 1966-1967* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1996), 115-145.

¹⁰⁷¹ C. N. Hill, *A Vertical Empire: The History of the UK Rocket and Space Programme, 1950-1971* (London, UK: Imperial College Press, 2001), 69-116. Richard Moore claims that the RAF's ambivalence towards unmanned vectors and hopes for a new high-performance bomber also played a role in the project's demise in "Bad Strategy and Bomber Dreams: A New View of the Blue Streak Cancellation," *Contemporary British History* 27, no. 2 (June 2013): 145-166.

¹⁰⁷² Edward Kaplan, *To Kill Nations – American Strategy in the Air-Atomic Age and the Rise of Mutually Assured Destruction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2015), 204-206; and Ken Young, "The Skybolt Crisis of 1962: Muddle or Mischief?" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 27, no. 4 (December 2004): 614-635.

¹⁰⁷³ Jan Melissen, "Pre-summit Diplomacy: Britain, the United States and the Nassau Conference, December 1962," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 7, no. 3 (September 1996): 652-687; and Michael Middeke, "Anglo-American Nuclear Weapons Cooperation After the Nassau Conference: The British Policy of Interdependence," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 2 no. 2 (Spring 2000): 69-96.

¹⁰⁷⁴ The American Presidency Project, John F. Kennedy XXXV President of the United States: 1961-1963, "554 – Joint Statement Following Discussions with Prime Minister Macmillan – The Nassau Agreement December 21, 1962," last accessed 10 March 2018, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=9063>.

autonomy. Macmillan bravely couched it as continuance of the two countries' special relationship of interdependence rather than subservience. This interpretation meant little for de Gaulle, and American advisors were unsure how he would react when Kennedy cabled a letter from Nassau which included an offer to "... consider a similar agreement with you, should you so desire."¹⁰⁷⁵

Secretary of State Dean Rusk charged US Ambassador Charles E. Bohlen in Paris to convey the profound meaning of this proposition, recognizing a new reality in Franco-American relations in return for a renewed commitment to the Atlantic Alliance:

The principal objective of your initial exchange will be to impress on the French that the decision to offer them the Nassau proposals represents a major turning point in United States policy. It implies a willingness to recognize France as a nuclear power and to bring substantially to an end the exclusive quality of the US-UK relationship... At the same time it must be made apparent to the French that the offer cannot be considered apart from the principles of Nassau, which are founded on the propositions of interdependence and indivisibility of Western defense and which include, as an essential element, the creation of a multilateral force, the assignment of that force of missile systems provided under the Nassau proposals and an equitable sharing of the burden of the conventional defense.¹⁰⁷⁶

De Gaulle dismissed these terms when he met with the ambassador on 4 January 1963:

We are not favourable to the concept of integrated forces. We believe that our atomic force must be a national force. We want to keep our hands on our bombs. We cannot entrust them to others nor share their employment as the stakes are too high. The position of the American government with regard to its own nuclear weapons is identical to our own, which is perfectly natural.¹⁰⁷⁷

Then came the memorable press conference of 14 January 1963 when de Gaulle unleashed, as recalled by US Under Secretary of State George Ball, "... the "thunderbolts" that struck at the heart of Kennedy's Grand Design for an Atlantic partnership."¹⁰⁷⁸ In less than one hour of seemingly unscripted questions and answers with reporters, he closed the door to Great Britain's application to the European Economic Community and celebrated a renewed spirit of reconciliation and cooperation with West Germany in a Europe growing independent of the Anglo-American dominion. As curtly, *Le Général* announced his refusal to join the Multilateral Force and professed his continued commitment to an independent *force de frappe*. It would be built in France, operated by the French military and controlled from Paris under presidential authority.¹⁰⁷⁹ Within weeks, he confirmed the central role the *Marine nationale* would assume at

¹⁰⁷⁵ Lettre from Kennedy to de Gaulle, dated 20 December 1962, cited in Sebastian Reyn, *Atlantis Lost: The American Experience with De Gaulle, 1958-1969* (Amsterdam, NL: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 153.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *FRUS 1961-1963*, "Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in France (dated 1 January 1963)," last accessed 10 March 2018, <https://history.state.org/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v13/d262>.

¹⁰⁷⁷ De Gaulle statement to US Ambassador Bohlen on 4 January 1963, cited in Roussel, *Charles de Gaulle*, 740.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Quoted in Reyn, *Atlantis Lost*, 159.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Fondation Charles de Gaulle, "Conférence de presse du 14 janvier 1963 [Press Conference 14 January 1963]," last accessed 18 March 2018, <http://fresques.ina.fr/de-gaulle/fiche-media/Gaullle00085/conference-de-presse-du-14-janvier-1963-sur-l-entree-de-la-grande-bretagne-dans-la-cee.html> and Foreign Ministry, "Press Conference on January 14, 1963," in *Major Addresses, Statements, and Press Conferences of*

the heart of France's nuclear deterrent. The urgency of assembling an effective sea-based component as part of a credible and redundant nuclear triad showed in the number of initiatives launched nearly simultaneously to achieve this goal.

In March 1963, even as the components of the onshore nuclear propulsion prototype were still being assembled in Cadarache, instructions went out to Cherbourg to begin construction of two new submarines. *Projet Q-252* started from scratch and eventually led to the launch of the SSBN *Le Redoutable* in March 1967.¹⁰⁸⁰ *Projet Q-251*, more immediately, recycled elements of the failed *Q-244* hull which had laid dormant in Cherbourg to expedite the construction of a large conventional diesel-electric submarine commissioned for experimentation under the name *Gymnote*.¹⁰⁸¹ Launched in March 1964 and operational two years later, *Gymnote* provided the platform to test-launch the ballistic missiles then under development for arming *Le Redoutable*. For that purpose, construction of the *Centre d'essais des Landes* (south of La Rochelle on the Atlantic coast) had already been authorized in July 1962. The conversion of a civilian tanker into a telemetry vessel (*Henri Poincaré*) followed in 1964, as well as an agreement with Portugal in 1966 to install sensors in the Azores for tracking ballistic test missiles launched from the French coast over the Atlantic.¹⁰⁸²

Meanwhile, Parliament approved in December 1964 de Gaulle's second *loi de programmation militaire* for the period 1965-1970. It included funds for the completion of the first three SSBNs (*Le Redoutable*, *Le Terrible* and *Le Foudroyant*); development of the *MIMSBS* (SLBN missile) as well as completion of *Gymnote*, the Landes test range, and the Pacific Experimentation Centre; the Île Longue complex; the Rosnay VLS transmitter and its backup stations; as well as shore training facilities in Brest.¹⁰⁸³ The *Marine nationale* was going nuclear, whatever the cost to its conventional forces. The sea-based vectors would soon assume a central role in the Gaullian vision of a credible and independent strategic deterrent for France. Having launched this colossal effort, *le Général* proclaimed grandly in 1965 the fleet's rise to unprecedented prominence in the nation's defence: "The navy now finds itself, no doubt for the first time in history, at the apex of France's military power. And this will become a little truer every day in the future."¹⁰⁸⁴

General Charles de Gaulle, May 19, 1958 – January 31, 1964 (New York, NY: French Embassy, Press and Information Division, 1964), 214-218.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Cariou, *FOST*, 15; and Touffait, "La construction du *Redoutable*," 337.

¹⁰⁸¹ Cariou, *FOST*, 39-40; as well as Huan and Moulin, *Les sous-marins français*, 26-27.

¹⁰⁸² Cariou, *FOST*, 35-38; and CapCom Espace, "Histoire de missiles... Le 1^{er} GMS du plateau d'Albion – Centre d'essais des Landes [A Story of Missiles... The 1st SMG of the Albion Plateau – Landes Testing Centre]," last accessed 16 December 2017,

https://www.capcomespace.net/dossiers/espace_europeen/albion/centre_essai_landes.htm.

¹⁰⁸³ Christian Schmidt and Guy Vidal, "Le contexte économique et financier de deux premières lois de programme militaire [Economic and Financial Context of the First Two Military Programme Laws]," in *Armement et V^e République, fin des années 1950 – fin des années 1960* [Armament and the Fifth Republic, Late 1950s – Late 1960s] (Paris, FR: CNRS Éditions, 2002), 43-46. Three more SSBNs (*L'Indomptable*, *Le Tonnant* and *L'Inflexible*) were funded in 1970 under the third *loi de programmation militaire*.

¹⁰⁸⁴ President de Gaulle's address to the *École navale* class and staff, 15 February 1965, cited in Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages – Tome IV – Pour l'effort (Août 62 Dec. 65)* [Addresses and Speeches – Volume IV – For the Effort (August 1962 – December 1965)] (Paris, FR: Plon, 1970), 345.

CONCLUSION

"A FORCED COMPROMISE, THE LEAST BAD POSSIBLE"

Battleship *Richelieu* last put to sea on Sunday, 25 August 1968. By then, however, she was no longer a battleship, nor named *Richelieu*, nor capable of making way under her own power. A floating barrack immobilized in Brest since May 1956, authorities disarmed the ship on 30 September 1967 and decommissioned her on 16 January 1968, at which point her designation reverted to that of the original hull number *Q-432*. From thereon, her faith was sealed.¹⁰⁸⁵ A skeleton crew expeditiously went about landing all equipment worthy of refurbishing for use in other vessels and transferring ashore what little fuel remained on board, while powerful cranes removed the last of her massive 15-inch guns. Tugs then took her away from the naval base itself and anchored the vessel in nearby Roscanvel Bay as the admiralty launched the commercial bidding process to dispose of the former flagship.

Once the pride of the French navy, *Richelieu* did not leave in an apotheosis of *grandeur* on that August Sunday. Tugs took the rusting vessel in tow and slowly made their way out of Roscanvel with little publicity. Ironically, *Q-432* was bound for dismantling at the hands of Italian wreckers in the La Spezia shipyard of the Cantieri Navali Santa Maria company. A bitter end as the *Richelieu*-class was conceived in response to the construction in Italy of the 35,000-ton battleships *Littorio* and *Vittorio Veneto* in the mid-1930s. *Rue Royale* strategists had envisioned a future conflagration where a fleet engagement against the Italian *Regia Marina* would take centre stage in the Mediterranean. And yet, the class' lead-ship followed a dramatically different path through the Second World War and into peacetime. Escaping from Brest ahead of the German *blitzkrieg* in the midst of her acceptance trials, she fought the Allies at Dakar, completed an extensive modernisation in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, pummeled Japanese shore positions in Southeast Asia and supported the return of French forces to Indochina. Following the hostilities, *Richelieu* then engaged in the busy routine of the Cold War, an endless succession of national and allied exercises in European waters and showing the flag overseas.

The history of her sister-ship *Jean Bart* proved even more anti-climatic following a harrowing escape from Saint-Nazaire under the bombs of *Luftwaffe* aircraft while still under construction. The ship layed stranded in Morocco throughout the war and was badly damaged by the Allies at Casablanca; repair and completion work dragged on during the postwar years. *Jean Bart* only became fully operational in 1954, the highlight of her career limited to engaging Egyptian shore positions during the ill-fated Suez expedition, following which authorities placed her in reserve after barely four years of active service. She joined *Richelieu* in the role of floating barrack but in Toulon, where she remained throughout the 1960s. Decommissioned as *Q-466* on 10 February 1970, former *Jean Bart* shared the fate of her predecessor in falling to the acetylene torches of ship breakers, in France at least, finding herself towed away on 24 June to the Brégaillon yard of the Société des chantiers navals vallois, just outside the Toulon naval base.¹⁰⁸⁶

¹⁰⁸⁵ John Jordan and Robert Dumas, *French Battleships: 1922-1956* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 208; and Robert Dumas, *Le cuirassé Richelieu 1935-1968* [Battleship Richelieu 1935-1968] (Bourgen-Bresse, FR: Marines Éditions, 1992), 60.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Robert Dumas, *Le cuirassé « Jean Bart » 1939-1970* [Battleship Jean Bart 1939-1970] (Rennes, FR: Marine Éditions, 1992), 76.

In an ironic twist, *Richelieu* spent her final months in French waters rusting away at anchor next to Île Longue, which formed the eastern shore of *la baie de Roscanvel*. Since the previous August, hundreds of workers and heavy machinery were busily turning the once quiet pastoral land into a modern fortress of the nuclear age, the future home of France's *Force océanique stratégique* (FOST – Oceanic Strategic Force).¹⁰⁸⁷ De Gaulle had personally identified the site in 1965, a direct follow-up to the momentous decision announced at the press conference of 14 January 1963 to turn the country's budding deterrence force of Mirage IV bombers into a nuclear triad. This milestone provides a suitable juncture to draw conclusions on the merits and weaknesses, successes and failures of France's quest to develop an independent naval policy within a strategy of alliance through the two decades which followed the humiliating Armistice of June 1940. Such an assessment must start with a portrait of the French fleet and the *Aéronovale* when *le Général* made his dramatic announcement, starting with the ships at Table 18 below.

Table 18 – Main French Fleet on 14 January 1963

(does not include floating barracks, repair ships, submarine tenders, and small auxiliaries)

Numbers of hulls per Category	In service and modern	In service but obsolete	Under Construction	Remarks
0 X Battleship	0	0	0	- <i>Richelieu</i> and <i>Jean Bart</i> in reserve as alongside training/barrack ships
2 X Aircraft Carriers	1	0	1	- <i>Clémenceau</i> in service 22 November 1961 - <i>Foch</i> to enter service 15 July 1963
1 X Helicopter Carrier	1	0	0	- <i>Arromanches</i> also retains a limited capacity to launch/recover aircraft for training/experimentation in peacetime
1 X Cruiser Helicopter Carrier	0	0	1	- The future <i>Jeanne d'Arc</i> , to enter service in 1964 as a training cruiser (peacetime) and helicopter carrier (wartime)
3 X Cruisers	2	1	0	- <i>De Grasse</i> , AA cruiser in service 1956 - <i>Colbert</i> , AA cruiser in service 1959 - <i>Jeanne d'Arc</i> , training cruiser until 1964
Frigate	0	0	1	- <i>Suffren</i> , AA missile frigate laid in 1962, will enter service in 1967
18 X Fleet Destroyers	18	0	0	- 12 X T-47, entered service 1955-1957 - 5 X T-53, entered service 1957-1958 - 1 X T-56, entered service 1962
23 X Destroyer Escorts	18	5	0	- 4 X E-50, entered service 1955-1956 - 11 X E-52A, entered service 1956-1958 - 3 X E-52B, entered service 1960 - 5 X US Cannon-class DEs, to be decommissioned in 1964
30 X Sloops / Coastal Escorts	17	7	6	- 9 X Commandant Rivière-class <i>avisos-escorteurs</i> (sloop-escorts), 3 entered service 1962 and 6 more under construction

¹⁰⁸⁷ Yves Cariou, *FOST – Force océanique stratégique* [FOST – Oceanic Strategic Force] (Rennes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2013), 24-28; and France, *Marine nationale*, Geneviève Emon Naudin, "L'Île Longue: quelle histoire! [Île Longue: What a History!]," last modified 29 December 2010, <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/marine/dossiers/l-ile-longue/l-ile-longue-quelle-histoire>.

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 X Le Fougueux-class coastal escorts, entered service 1954 - 11 X L'Adroit-class coastal escorts, entered service 1957-1959 - 1 X Italian sloop, obsolete but adequate for <i>Communauté française</i> missions - 4 X prewar <i>avisos-dragueurs</i>, employed for training tasks in the <i>métropole</i> - 2 X prewar <i>avisos-dragueurs</i>, employed for <i>Communauté française</i> patrolling
100 X Minesweepers	94	6	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 15 X US Minesweepers Ocean transferred to France in 1954-1957 - 30 X US Minesweepers Coastal transferred to France in 1953-1954 - 34 X coastal minesweepers built in France in 1952-1957 - 15 X British inshore minesweepers transferred to France in 1954-1955 - 6 X obsolete RCN Bay-class used for <i>Communauté française</i> patrolling
56 X Coastal Patrol Craft	12	6	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 X German motor launches built in 1954 - 10 X French motor launches built in Germany and France in 1956-1959 - 6 X US submarine chasers, obsolete, soon to be decommissioned - 1 X La Combattante-class, laid in 1961 to enter service in 1964
24 X Submarines	10	4	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 6 X Narval-class entered service 1957-60 - 4 X Aréthuse-class in service 1958-60 - <i>L'Andromède</i> and <i>L'Artémis</i> (laid in 1939, 1940; commissioned in 1953, 1954) used for training/experimentation until 1965-67 - Former U-boats <i>Millé</i> and <i>Roland Morillot</i> employed for training/experimentation, decommissioned July 1963 and 1967 - 9 X Daphné-class under construction (7 to enter service 1964 and 2 in 1966, 2 more ordered in 1965 to enter service in 1969-70) - Experimental submarine <i>Gymnote</i> to be launched in 1964, in service 1966
14 X Large Amphibious	11	2	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 6 X modern Landing Craft Utility (LCU), built in France, entered service in 1958-59 - 5 X modern Landing Ship Tank (LST) built in France, entered service in 1959-60 - 1 X WWII Landing Ship Dock (LSD) - 1 X WWII Landing Ship Tank - 1 X Landing Platform Dock (LPD) <i>Ouragan</i>, laid down in 1962, commissioned in 1965 - Plus a large variety of smaller landing craft

13 X Replenishment Vessels	6	4	3	- 2 X modern naval tankers in service (<i>La Seine, La Saône</i>) - 4 X militarized civilian oilers (<i>Berry, La Charente, Isère, Verdon</i>) - 4 X obsolete oilers in service (<i>La Baisse, Lac Chambon, Lac Tchad, Lac Tonle Sap</i>) - 2 X logistical support ships under construction (<i>Rhin and Rhône</i> , with three more to follow in) - 1 X militarized oiler under construction (<i>Aber Wrac'h</i>)
Totals	190 297,130 tons	35 57,050 tons	24 78,930 tons	

As for the *Aéronavale*, it had surpassed, by then, the long-sought objective of growing into a versatile body of twenty squadrons, as first envisioned in 1943. As of 1 January 1963, there were only nineteen such formations (*flotilles*) but all were fighting units equipped with increasingly modern aircraft while support missions were attributed to a retinue of additional auxiliary units, *escadrilles* or flights in British parlance.¹⁰⁸⁸ Two squadrons were not operational in 1963 but only as a result of their on-going transition to the subsonic jet fighter-bomber *Étendard IV* designed for carrier operations. French firm Dassault delivered ninety aircraft of that type between 1961 and 1965, and those of the first tranche had already joined another squadron embarked on *Clémenceau*.¹⁰⁸⁹ One squadron still flew the first-generation jet *Aquilon* (based on the British *Sea Venom*) and two others the even older propeller-driven *Corsairs* (flying out of Bizerte) but plans were already afoot for their conversion to the American supersonic air superiority fighter jet Vought F-8 *Crusader* starting in 1965.¹⁰⁹⁰

While the *Crusader* provided for air defence and the *Étendards* could carry strike missions against surface targets at sea and ashore, the fixed-wing propeller-driven BR 1050 *Alizé* handled anti-submarine warfare tasks. Designed and produced by Breguet Aviation, these versatile aircraft equipped with various sensors and carrying torpedoes or depth charges in their primary role could also mount rockets and bombs under their wings to strike at enemy ships and eventually took on early warning tasks.¹⁰⁹¹ Three squadrons flew the *Alizé* and another three handled Sikorsky HSS-1 helicopters, rounding out French carrier aviation. Initially designed as anti-submarine warfare platforms, the Sikorsky also carried out utility missions to transport

¹⁰⁸⁸ Roger Vercken, *Histoire succincte de l'Aéronautique navale (1910-1998)* [A Brief History of the Naval Aviation (1910-1998)] (Paris, FR: ARDHAN, 1998), 102-105; as well as Jean Moulin, *Les porte-avions Dixmude & Arromanches* [Aircraft Carriers *Dixmude* and *Arromanches*] (Nantes, FR: Marines Éditions, 1998), 230-258 and *Les porte-avions La Fayette & Bois-Belleau* [Aircraft Carriers *La Fayette* and *Bois-Belleau*] (Nantes, FR: Marines Éditions, 2000), 197-209.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Eventually replaced by the Super *Étendard*, the last of the *Étendard IV* were withdrawn from service in 1991. Dassault Aviation, "Etendard," last accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.dassault-aviation.com/fr/passion/avions/dassault-militaires/etendard/>.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Eric Stijger, "Aéronavale Crusaders," *Air International* 45, no. 4 (October 1993): 192-196.

¹⁰⁹¹ Breguet delivered seventy-five *Alizé* to the *Aéronavale* and another twelve to the Indian navy. AviationsMilitaires.net, "Breguet Br.1050 *Alizé*," last accessed 19 April 2018, <https://www.aviationsmilitaires.net/v2/base/view/Model/267.html>; and Greg Goebel, "The Breguet *Alize* & Fairey *Gannet*," *AirVectors*, 1 October 2017, <http://www.airvectors.net/avalize.html>.

personnel and supplies – between ships at sea and in support of troops fighting ashore as they had done in Algeria – as well conduct search-and-rescue and fly as plane guard during carrier operations, standing ready to recover air crews ejecting from their planes in case of mishaps.¹⁰⁹²

The focus on carrier-borne aircraft did not leave shore-based units wanting. Six squadrons flew the Lockheed P2 Neptune maritime patrol aircraft. Though originally designed during the Second World War and first flown operationally by the USN in 1947, this American plane remained a platform of choice among western navies well into the 1970s for the conduct of long-range anti-submarine warfare. France received thirty-one P2V-6 airframes in the early 1950s under the terms of the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP) and another thirty-four more advanced P2V-7 later in the decade.¹⁰⁹³ MDAP also provided for ten P5M-2 Marlin flown by another squadron out of Dakar. Though modern – a postwar design delivered to France in 1959 – these were the last flying boats operated by the French navy, which promptly returned them to the United States in 1964 as more Neptunes joined the air fleet.¹⁰⁹⁴ Many more obsolete aircraft were left in the *Aéronavale*, such as C-47 Dakota transports, TBM Avenger torpedo planes, and a few seaplanes. But all of them were either on their way out or employed in support and training capacities, leaving the most modern airframes available to deploy overseas on operations and patrol the seaward approaches to the *métropole* from a robust network of bases.

In addition to the more well-known bases that harboured the fleet, the *Marine nationale* maintained a network of shore infrastructure dedicated to the *Aéronavale*.¹⁰⁹⁵ At its heart were six locations which hosted operational squadrons of fixed-wing and rotary aircraft. The *base d'aéronautique navale de Hyères* – outside Toulon – was the home of French naval aviation on the shores of the Mediterranean and, by 1963, two squadrons of Alizés ASW aircraft and two more operating Étendard and Aquilon fighters flew from there to rejoin their assigned carriers when deploying for operations and exercises. Hyères was also home to the *École de l'aviation embarquée* (carrier aviation school), which trained air crews and flight deck personnel for their duties at sea.¹⁰⁹⁶ Nearby Toulon as well were Saint-Mandrier – once a seaplane base but hosting three helicopter squadrons in 1963 – and, further inland, Nîmes-Garons serving four squadrons of fixed-wing Alizés and Neptunes.¹⁰⁹⁷ On the Atlantic side, near Lorient on the Bay of Biscay,

¹⁰⁹² Netmarine, "Sikorsky S.58 (H34 ou HSS)," last accessed 19 April 2018, <http://netmarine.net/aero/aeronefs/hss/index.htm>.

¹⁰⁹³ French Fleet Air Arm, "P2V-6/-7 (P-2H) Neptune," last accessed 20 April 2018, www.ffaa.net/aircraft/neptune/neptune_fr.htm; as well as Jerry Scutts, "Tractable Turtle: The Lockheed Neptune Story: Part 1," *Air International* 48, no. 1 (January 1995): 42–46 and "Tractable Turtle: The Lockheed Neptune Story: Part 2," *Air International* 48, no. 2 (February 1995): 80–87.

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Aéronavale & Porte-avions*, "Martin P5M-2 Marlin," last modified 2 May 2012, <http://aeronavale-porteavions.com/viewtopic.php?t=2103>; and French Fleet Air Arm, "P5M-2 Marlin," last accessed 20 April 2018, <http://www.ffaa.net/seaplanes/marlin/marlin.htm>.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Vercken, *Histoire succincte de l'Aéronautique navale*, 105.

¹⁰⁹⁶ France, *Marine nationale*, "Base d'aéronautique navale de Hyères [Hyères Naval Aviation Base]," last accessed 21 April 2018, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/marine/organisation/forces/aeronautique-navale/bases-d-aeronautique-navale/ban-hyeres/base-d-aeronautique-navale-de-hyeres>; and Netmarine.net, "La base d'aéronautique navale d'Hyères Le Palyvestre [Hyères Le Palyvestre Naval Aviation Base]," last accessed 21 April 2018, <http://www.netmarine.net/aero/bases/hyeres/index.htm>.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Netmarine.net, "L'Aéronautique navale à Saint-Mandrier [Naval Aviation in Saint-Mandrier]," last accessed 21 April 2018, <http://www.netmarine.net/aero/bases/stmandrier/index.htm>; Vincent Groizeleau,

Lann-Bihoué grew into the major base for fixed-wing maritime patrol aircraft while Karouba in Bizerte and Bel-Air in Dakar still provided an operational footprint in North and West Africa.¹⁰⁹⁸

Supplementing the operational bases were an assortment of stations and auxiliary establishments that provided a wide range of services. Fréjus-Saint-Raphaël and Cuers-Pierrefeu, both located east of Toulon, had lengthy runways that accommodated jet fighters, transport aircraft and helicopters of all types engaged in support, training and experimentation roles.¹⁰⁹⁹ A former seaplane base outside of Brest offered a home to newly formed helicopter squadrons in Lanvéoc-Poulmic while the navy maintained small transport hubs on the outskirts of Paris (at Dugny-Le Bourget) and in Corsica at Aspretto, near Ajaccio.¹¹⁰⁰ Outside of the *métropole*, the

"Saint-Mandrier: De la base aéronavale au chantier de réparation de yachts [Saint-Mandrier: From Naval Aviation Base to Yacht Repair Shipyard]," *Mer et Marine*, last modified 18 April 2013, <https://www.meretmarine.com/fr/content/saint-mandrier-de-la-base-aeronavale-au-chantier-de-reparation-de-yachts>; French Fleet Air Arm, "Base d'aéronautique navale de Nîmes-Garons [Naval Aviation Base Nîmes-Garons]," last accessed 21 April 2018, http://www.ffaa.net/naval_stations/nimes-garons/nimes-garons_fr.htm; and France, Marine nationale, "Base aéronautique navale de Nimes-Garons [Naval Aviation Base Nimes-Garons]," last modified 19 September 2014, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/marine/patrimoine/histoire/la-marine-d-hier/bases-de-l-aeronautique-navale/ban-de-nimes-garons>.

¹⁰⁹⁸ French Fleet Air Arm, "Base d'aéronautique navale Lann-Bihoué [Naval Aviation Base Lann-Bihoué]," last accessed 21 April 2018, http://www.ffaa.net/naval_stations/lann-bihoue/lann-bihoue_fr.htm; France, Marine nationale, "Base d'aéronautique navale de Lann-Bihoué [Naval Aviation Base Lann-Bihoué]," last modified 24 January 2018, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/marine/organisation/forces/aeronautique-navale/bases-d-aeronautique-navale/ban-lann-bihoue/base-d-aeronautique-navale-de-lann-bihoue>; Milguerres, "B.A.N Karouba," last modified 14 January 2013, <http://milguerres.unblog.fr/b-a-n-karouba/>; Jean-Jacques Turlot, "Karouba, base aéronavale oubliée... Ou le repère des Corsair de la bataille de Bizerte [Karouba, Forgotten Naval Aviation Base... Or Den of the Battle of Bizerte Corsairs]," *Aviatik 68*, last accessed 21 April 2018, <http://www.aviatik68.fr/aerobulle/8/5.pdf>; Aéronavale & Porte-avions, "B.A.N. Dakar and co...," last modified 2 March 2012, <http://www.aeronavale-porteavions.com/viewtopic.php?t=2032>; and Poste des Choufs, "Généralités – Du début de la guerre d'Indochine à la fin de la guerre d'Algérie [Generalities – From the Start of the Indochina War to the End of Algeria]," last accessed 21 April 2018, http://www.postedeschoufs.com/aeronavale/1946_1962/1%20Generalites/generalites.htm.

¹⁰⁹⁹ French Fleet Air Arm, "Base d'aéronautique navale Fréjus-Saint-Raphaël [Naval Aviation Base Fréjus-Saint-Raphaël]," last accessed 21 April 2018, http://www.ffaa.net/naval_stations/st-raphael/st-raphael_fr.htm; and Aéronavale & Porte-avions, "B.A.N. Cuers-Pierrefeu," last modified 17 April 2012, <http://www.aeronavale-porteavions.com/viewtopic.php?f=111&t=2077>.

¹¹⁰⁰ France, Marine nationale, "Base d'aéronautique navale Lanveoc-Poulmic [Naval Aviation Base Lanveoc-Poulmic]," last modified 24 January 2018, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/marine/operations/forces/aeronautique-navale/bases-d-aeronautique-navale/ban-lanveoc-poulmic/bases-d-aeronautique-navale-lanveoc-poulmic>; French Fleet Air Arm, "Base d'aéronautique navale Lanvéoc-Poulmic [Naval Aviation Base Lanvéoc-Poulmic]," last accessed 21 April 2018, http://ffaa.net/naval_stations/lanveoc-poulmic/lanveoc-poulmic_fr.htm; France, Marine nationale, "Établissement d'aéronautique navale de Dugny-Le Bourget [Naval Aviation Establishment Dugny-Le Bourget]," last modified 2 December 2014, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/marine/patrimoine/histoire/la-marine-d-hier/bases-de-l-aeronautique-navale/eau-dugny-le-bourget>; Vincent Groizeleau, "L'Aéronautique navale fait ses adieux à l'établissement de Dugny [Naval Aviation Bids Farewell to the Dugny Establishment]," *Mer et Marine*, last modified 4 July 2011; <https://www.meretmarine.com/fr/content/laeronautique-navale-fait-ses-adioux-letablissement-de-dugny>; Aéronavale & Porte-avions, "B.A.N. Aspretto, l'Aéronavale en Corse [Naval Aviation Base Aspretto, the *Aéronavale* in Corsica]," last modified 18 February 2012, <http://aeronavale->

navy operated small aviation outposts in New Caledonia (Nouméa-Tontouta), Madagascar (Diégo Suarez-Andrakaka), Algeria (Lartigue, south of Oran) and Senegal (Dakar-Ouakam), although the latter two were turned over to local authorities later in 1963 and 1964.¹¹⁰¹ Wrapping up this survey of shore establishments was the *Centre-école de l'Aéronautique navale* (naval aviation school centre).¹¹⁰² Located in Rochefort, on the Biscay coast, the school provided instruction to most non-flying personnel – mechanics, electronic technicians and weaponeers – charged with servicing fixed-wing and rotary aircraft as well as their weapons, in bases ashore and ships at sea.

For an observer unaware of the level of ambition entertained by French admirals in the later years of the Second World War and immediately after the end of the hostilities, Table 18 and this snapshot of the *Aéronavale* may present an impressive portrait. By 1963, Nomy and Cabanier had largely succeeded in eliminating from the fleet most of the US, British, German and Italian wartime transfers, as well as older prewar French constructions. And those still present were adequately employed on experimentation, training and *Communauté française* patrolling duties, freeing up new builds for Alliance and national tasks in the complex setting of the Cold War. These assets provided *Rue Royale* planners with the ability to assemble a powerful *Groupe d'intervention naval* in time of crisis for NATO or in defence of purely French interests, part of the larger *Force interarmées d'intervention immédiate* (*FIII* – Immediate Intervention Joint Force) that the three services were instructed to create in 1962.¹¹⁰³ Whenever called upon to deploy on operations, its naval element would center on either aircraft carriers *Clémenceau* or *Foch*, supported by AA cruisers *De Grasse* or *Colbert*, and escorted by a retinue of modern and well-armed fleet destroyers, smaller escorts and mine warfare elements.

This force could operate with an amphibious group and submarines overseas while a large number of escorts and minesweepers remained available to discharge convoy escort and coastal defence duties in European waters and across the *Communauté française*. The new

porteavions.com/viewtopic.php?t=2011; French Fleet Air Arm, "Base d'aéronautique navale Aspretto [Naval Aviation Base Aspretto]," last accessed 21 April 2018, http://www.ffaa.net/naval_stations/aspretto/aspretto_fr.htm.

¹¹⁰¹ Poste des Choufs, "Généralités" and Aéronavale & Porte-avions, "B.A.N. Dakar and co..."; France, Marine nationale, "Base aéronautique navale de Tontouta [Naval Aviation Base Tontouta]," last modified 17 September 2014, <https://www.defense.gouv.fr/marine/patrimoine/histoire/la-marine-d-hier/bases-de-l-aeronautique-navale/ban-de-tontouta>; French Fleet Air Arm, "Base d'aéronautique navale Tontouta [Naval Aviation Base Tontouta]," last accessed 21 April 2018, http://www.ffaa.net/naval_stations/tontouta/tontouta_fr.htm; Suzanne Reutt, "Histoire – Cap Diego: le « porte-avions » du nord de Madagascar [History – Cape Diego: “Aircraft Carrier” of North Madagascar]," *La Tribune de Diego et du nord de Madagascar*, last modified 18 September 2011, <http://latribune.cyber-diego.com/histoire/493-histoire-cap-diego-le-l-porte-avions-r-du-nord-de-madagascar.html>; Aéronavale & Porte-avions, "B.A.N. de Lartigue," last modified 6 March 2012, <http://aeronavale-porteavions.com/viewtopic.php?f=111&t=2043>. Tontouta in New Caledonia remains in operation today but Andrakaka was retroceded to Madagascar in 1975.

¹¹⁰² Vercken, *Histoire succincte de l'Aéronautique navale*, 102; and Aéronavale & Porte-avions, "B.A.N. de Rochefort sur Mer," last modified 26 September 2012, <http://www.aeronavale-porteavions.com/viewtopic.php?f=102&t=2239>.

¹¹⁰³ Minutes of the meeting of the *Comité des Chefs d'état-major* (*CEM* – Chiefs of Staff Committee) held on 29 March 1962. *Service historique de la Défense* [Defence Historical Service] (Vincennes, FR; hereafter *SHD*), 3 BB 8 CEM 21 – Various Records of the *Comité des Chefs d'état-major* [Chiefs of Staff Committee] 1961-1962.

carriers allowed the French navy to enter the jet age fully, embarking a potent mix of assets for strike, air defence and anti-submarine missions. Modern shore-based maritime patrol aircraft extended the surveillance and strike range of forces at sea against hostile ships and submarines. Even the old *Arromanches* came to symbolise a new era, her conversion to the helicopter carrier role providing the ability to make a powerful impact in the littoral by projecting and supporting a force of *fusiliers-marins* and commandos ashore, as well as providing humanitarian assistance in response to natural disasters. The inclusion of a new category in Table 18 – replenishment vessels – also showed that Admiral Cabanier and his staff had seized upon the importance of logistics at sea, especially given the shrinking network of French bases around the world.

Additional acquisitions later in the 1960s eventually allowed the French fleet to conduct underway replenishment operations at high speed. Such complex evolutions needed to occur regularly, regardless of heavy weather and often under the threat of enemy attacks, as learned by American carrier task force commanders in the Pacific War, lessons which the *Marine nationale* neglected in the immediate postwar era. As well, not listed at Table 18 are those various vessels which allowed the French navy to discharge another range of responsibilities in peacetime that were necessary to support operations in times of crisis or hostilities. These ships were mostly older, slower, smaller than the fighting units boasted about by proud admirals but they often embarked state-of-the-art equipment manned by an eclectic mixed of naval and civilian specialists with unique and highly valuable skills. They provided the hydrographic surveying, diving support, weather forecasting and mobile repairs services necessary for a navy aspiring to conduct autonomous operations around in the world.

The 1963 fleet even bears a favourable comparison with that of 1939, when the *Marine nationale* was at its most powerful since Napoleon III's naval buildup in the mid-nineteenth century. In terms of numbers and tonnage, Darlan's navy dwarfed that of Cabanier with 300 vessels displacing more than 745,000 tons, hence the deadly race between Churchill and Hitler as to who would control those ships and submarines after the fall of France. And yet, an important part of that tonnage was taken up by obsolete battleships and heavy cruisers. The focus on a confrontation with the Italians within the narrow span of the Mediterranean shaped newer builds in the interwar period. This fixation resulted in faster and more heavily armed units but without the autonomy, carrier aviation and fleet train capabilities which became hallmarks of the war at sea during the conflict and dominated naval strategy in the atomic age. The French lagged behind *les Anglo-Saxons* in terms of radars, sonars and electronic warfare in 1939, as well as in anti-air and anti-submarine weapons and tactics, and only allied assistance prevented the gap from becoming much larger during the war years.

French admirals of the early Cold War succeeded in overcoming many of these shortcomings. They decried the lack of shipbuilding in the immediate postwar years but this involuntary pause allowed them (and their Anglo-Americans colleagues) to reflect more extensively on the lessons of the Second World War. They also had time to include in-depth studies on the impact of the atomic factor at sea. The burst of naval construction that started in the early 1950s produced vessels and aircraft of much greater quality and durability than what could have been built in the mid-1940s. Completed along her prewar design, *Richelieu* was obsolete in 1945 and, had French authorities accepted to expedite the completion of cruiser *De Grasse* immediately after the war, the latter would have proven as ill-adapted to the new realities

of the Cold War era. And yet, armed for long-range anti-air defence ten years later, *De Grasse* joined a rejuvenated fleet that included modern platforms fitted with some of the most advanced technologies France, Great Britain and the United States could produce in terms of engineering plants, weapons, and sensors.

As good as the material state of the fleet was, so were the surface sailors, submariners, naval aviators, *fusiliers-marins* and commandos of the *Marine nationale*. Cabanier and his fellow senior officers had fought throughout the years of the Second World War, at least in the case of those who rallied to the Gaulle after the Armistice. Even those who waited on the sidelines while loyal to Pétain spent the last two years of the conflict engaged in renewed convoy battles and large-scale amphibious operations with the Allies. They observed the effects of new tactics and learned the intricacies of the complex equipment transferred from the United States after the conclusion of the Anfa Accord. By and large agreeing to put their conflicting wartime allegiances aside after the defeat of Germany, officers and sailors of both camps then united to fight successive insurgencies where they developed unique skills in littoral and riverine warfare. They had missed the American experience of carrier warfare in the Pacific but continued participation in large-scale NATO exercises in the 1950s exposed them to all aspects of war at sea in the nuclear age. Though a political and strategic blunder, the Suez experience provided an impetus for France's admirals to review doctrine and training for the conduct of joint operations in the littoral and power projection ashore in cooperation with the other services.

Recognised within the Alliance as effective staff planners ashore and aggressive warriors at sea, French naval officers also proved themselves as innovators in close cooperation with the country's defence industry. By the early 1960s, the *Marine nationale* was ready to enter the missile age and develop the technologies that would come to mark the later years of the Cold War at sea. Both battleship *Jean Bart* and cruiser *De Grasse* were considered for extensive renovations that would have seen their main gun armament replaced by batteries of anti-ship and anti-air missiles but these proposals proved too expensive.¹¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, frigate *Suffren* and fast patrol boat *La Combattante*, both under construction in 1963, served as test beds for the validation of the anti-aircraft missile *Masurca* (*MARine SURface Contre-Avions*) and, later, the development of the famed *Exocet* ship-killer.¹¹⁰⁵ Submarine *Gymnote* not only conducted the first firings of the *MI MSBS* ballistic missile but also supported evaluation of other advanced submarine systems, including the first French attempts at inertial navigation.¹¹⁰⁶ Variable-depth sonars (VDS) would soon be deployed at sea and escorts fitted with a flight deck and hangar facilities to accommodate a helicopter in order to improve the range and effectiveness of these small vessels in detecting and fighting enemy submarines.¹¹⁰⁷

¹¹⁰⁴ Dumas, *Le cuirassé « Jean Bart »*, 54-56; as well as John Jordan and Jean Moulin, *French Cruisers, 1922-1956* (Barnsley, UK: Seaforth Publishing, 2013), 158 and 227.

¹¹⁰⁵ Netmarine.net, "Frégate *Suffren*," last accessed 22 April 2018, <http://www.netmarine.net/bat/fregates/suffren/index.htm> and "Patrouilleur *La Combattante*," last accessed 22 April 2018, <http://netmarine.net/f/bat/combatan/>.

¹¹⁰⁶ Minister Messmer to the National Defence and Armed Forces Commission, 15 February 1962. France, Archives nationales, 20060132-8 – Séances de la Commission de la Défense nationale et des Forces armées 1961 – 1962 [Sessions of the National Defence and Armed Forces Commission 1961 – 1962].

¹¹⁰⁷ Vercken, *Histoire succincte de l'Aéronautique navale*, 96-98; and Jérôme Baroë, *Cent ans d'Aéronavale en France* [One Hundred Years of Naval Aviation in France] (Rennes, FR: Ouest-France, 2010), 47-58.

However, in contrast to these qualitative developments, French admirals remained aware that quantity provided an edge of its own in naval warfare. In that fundamental aspect, they failed to achieve the goals established by Chief of Staff Nomy in 1952 and 1955. As in the case of Table 16 which included deceptive construction numbers for 1959, Table 18 showed an impressive figure of 79,000 tons in new ships and submarines soon to join the fleet. But these numbers included the last of only two aircraft carriers (*Foch*), and cruiser *Jeanne d'Arc* which would be a one-for-one replacement for her predecessor to be employed mainly as a training platform. The ground-breaking fast patrol craft *La Combattante* and submarine *Gymnote* were trial vessels rather than actual fighting units. The six Commandant-Rivière sloop-escorts and the nine Daphné submarines were welcome additions but they replaced older vessels soon to go out of commission as well as the four modern Aréthuse-class submersibles, which had proved a flawed design. The first-of-class LPD *Ouragan* and three new replenishment ships brought badly needed capabilities to the fleet. Most worryingly for Cabanier, though, de Gaulle's first five-year defence plan for the period 1960-1964 did not include a third aircraft carrier or a third AA cruiser and limited funding for ships to the refit of five existing escort vessels to embark the French Malafon ASW system and another two to assume the AA role with the fitting of General Dynamics RIM-24 Tartar surface-to-air missile.¹¹⁰⁸

Nomy only succeeded in securing the first two (in 1956 and 1957) of the annual 30,000-ton building tranches he estimated necessary to make the *Plan bleu de 1955* a reality by 1963. The day-to-day burden of the Algerian War and the commitment to develop the atomic bomb in the following years greatly limited the ability of all three services to acquire modern conventional armament systems in sufficient numbers. For *rue Royale* planners, this reality meant that the fleet could not always dispatch a high-readiness *Groupe d'intervention navale* without much warning – let alone two, one for NATO and one for national tasks. Given the vagaries of planned refits and unforecasted maintenance issues, they could not guarantee that at least one aircraft carrier and one AA cruiser would be available to join a suitable retinue of escorts to deploy without notice should a crisis arise in Europe or further afar in the world. And even if such a pair were indeed available to respond to a particular flare up, Admiral Cabanier would be hard pressed to deploy a similar force somewhere else, or ensure a continuous rotation of carriers and cruisers to maintain a single, self-sustaining force deployed for any more than one year in a given theatre.

In this light, the *Marine nationale* in 1963 could be judged harshly for a navy which aspired to make an important contribution to the defence of the Alliance and the *métropole* in Europe, and project France's influence overseas through worldwide reach. French admirals never quite resolved the inherent tensions which arose in the 1960s between the development of an effective expeditionary fleet and the launching of a credible sea-going nuclear deterrent. De Gaulle himself put the matter to rest by unflinchingly favouring the latter in the two *lois-programmes* promulgated during his presidency and abandoning the country's integration in NATO. This realignment of priorities shocked many in the navy, just as it did in the other services where senior army and air force officers also denounced the rise of the *force de*

¹¹⁰⁸ Netmarine.net, "Missile porte-torpille Malafon [Torpedo-Carrying Missile Malafon]," last accessed 22 April 2018, <http://www.netmarine.net/f/armes/malafon/index.htm>; and Minutes of the meeting of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* (CSM – Superior Council of the Navy), 14 September 1960. *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CMS 13 – Various Records of the *Conseil supérieur de la Marine* [Superior Council of the Navy] 1960.

frappe.¹¹⁰⁹ For them, the development of nuclear weapons could only come at an unacceptable cost to the conventional military capabilities of the country. They also believed that leaving the Alliance's integrated military structures severed invaluable access to the doctrinal and technical know-how of the Anglo-Americans and the aggregated benefits of working and training with much larger fleets, air wings and armies in realistic scenarios.

And yet Cabanier presided over this transition without complaint, at least publicly. There would be no "revolt of the admirals" under de Gaulle, just as there had been none during the years of the Fourth Republic. In late 1958, Admiral Nomy elaborated a draft update to his *Plan bleu de 1955* outlining the composition of the fleet for 1970 wherein he underlined the importance of the number three to maintain a single capacity available for deployment at sea, hence the demand for a minimum of three aircraft carriers, three AA cruisers, etc. Referring to this plan in a September 1961 report addressed to the *ministre des Armées*, Cabanier admitted that prevailing budgetary constraints placed such ambitions beyond reach:

I remind you of the circumstances which hamper the achievement of the [1958] vision. Thus, my staff used another volume of forces – a volume which I have said in the past is a forced compromise, the least bad possible between needs based on a rational assessments of the missions assigned [to the navy] and the financial considerations outlined hereafter – to revise the [Nomy draft]. This provides us with a minimum plan better suited to the current situation.¹¹¹⁰

Neither a third aircraft carrier nor a third AA cruiser would be built in France during Cabanier's tenure as he accepted, instead, the immediate requirement to fund construction of three SSBNs (the other three were only funded in the 1970s). Within two years, the decision to purchase Crusader jet fighters from the United States negated the option of building a third Suffren-class frigate.¹¹¹¹ Philippe Quérel completed his study of the Fourth Republic's naval policy with a chapter titled "L'expansion brisée [Broken Growth]" and the very last sentence in Philippe Masson's magisterial history of France's navy decried the propensity of the French nation to turn its back on the sea.¹¹¹² Such ominous formulas give a rather negative connotation to Cabanier's reference to "a forced compromise, the least bad possible." Nevertheless, however bleak his perspective may have been at the time, can these words not be used today – with the

¹¹⁰⁹ Philippe Masson, Philippe, *Histoire de l'armée française de 1914 à nos jours* [History of the French Army from 1914 to Today] (Paris, FR: Librairie académique Perrin, 1999), 454-455; and Michel L. Martin, *Warriors to Managers: The French Military Establishment since 1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 39-52.

¹¹¹⁰ 3 BB 8 CEM 19 – Various Records of the Comité des Chefs d'état-major [Chiefs of Staff Committee] 1961, Letter from Admiral Cabanier to the Secretariat of the Chiefs of Staff Committee titled "Révision du plan naval à long terme – Perspectives et implications d'un 2^e plan quinquennal [Navy Long-term Plan Review – Perspectives and Consequences of a 2nd Five-Year Plan]," 5 September 1961.

¹¹¹¹ Étienne Taillemite, *Histoire ignorée de la Marine française* [Unknown History of the French Navy], 3rd ed. (Paris, FR: Perrin, 2010), 609-610; and SHD, 3 BB 8 CMS 12 – Various Records of the Conseil supérieur de la Marine [Superior Council of the Navy] 1959, minutes of the session held on 23 November 1959.

¹¹¹² Philippe Quérel, *Vers une marine atomique: la marine française (1945-1958)* [Toward a Nuclear Navy: The French Navy (1945-1958)] (Paris, FR: LGDJ, 1997), 335-390; and Philippe Masson, *Histoire de la marine – Volume 2 – De la vapeur à l'atome* [History of the French Navy – Volume 2 – From Steam to the Atom] (Paris, FR: Lavauzelle, 1992), 546.

unfair advantage of hindsight – to describe as a success France’s quest for an independent naval policy within a strategy of alliance since the 1940 armistice?

From the forlorn Muselier in London to the newly rallied Michelier in North Africa, from Lemonnier once back in Paris to his Cold War successors, was there any way to succeed but by shaping the least bad compromises forced on them by dire national circumstances and exacting allied requirements? The only admiral who dealt with French political authorities from a position of strength after June 1940 was Darlan. He controlled a powerful fleet, the only potent military force still available to the Vichy regime to exercise some form of leverage in its dealing with the Axis and the Allies. But, even then, the *Forces de haute mer* were already on life support, with the formulation of naval policy under Pétain limited to maintaining a few select units in operations. Any thoughts of modernisation or rejuvenation remained in stasis until France could perhaps find its place in a new European order led by a victorious Germany. Defeatism led to collaborationism under *le Maréchal* and the fleet commander refused to follow Darlan to Algiers in November 1942. Thereafter, officers and sailors could only seek honour through abnegation by scuttling their ships and submarines in Toulon, a bitter end to a controversial episode of rare supremacy by the navy over the military affairs of a diminished France.

Another admiral thought himself in a position of strength vis-à-vis his political leader but de Gaulle proved Muselier wrong. The retired “swashbuckler” and the younger acting brigadier grieved together in the wake of Operation *Catapult* and the catastrophe at Mers el-Kébir in July 1940. The commander of the nearly still-birtherd *Forces navales françaises libres* then showed his strength in quickly setting about building up a small but effective force of ships and submarines in close – if often tense – collaboration with the British. Within weeks, vessels put to sea and started making a fighting contribution to the allied cause while serving the political ends of “the leader of all Free Frenchmen, wherever they may be.” Both were supremely dedicated to their cause but, whenever conflict arose between these two fiery personalities, de Gaulle easily gained the upper hand over the politically inept sailor. Muselier vastly overestimated his following within the ranks of the Free French navy and among the British. When he sought support from both in March 1942, forcing them to make a choice between de Gaulle and himself, he should not have been surprised that they backed *le Général*.

That Muselier lost his post over personal differences with de Gaulle was regrettable as the first *FNFL* commander left quite a professional legacy behind. He promoted some ill-thought schemes in Summer 1940, such as crewing the obsolete, manpower-intensive battleship *Courbet* and seeking a direct agreement with the Royal Navy that would have made the *FNFL* a foreign naval legion rather than a fleet serving Free French interests. And one cannot ascribe to him the promulgation of an actual naval policy or a strategy during this turmoil, beyond the ambition to crew as many ships and submarines as quickly as recruitment and training of new sailors would allow. And de Gaulle, not Muselier, negotiated the August 1940 accord with Prime Minister Churchill that secured active political support for his movement and instituted the collaborative framework that shaped the growth and employment of the Free French military forces – including its navy – in subsequent years. Nevertheless, Muselier must be recognized for the large role he played in the application of the agreement’s clauses. He was involved in several precedents in terms of allied naval cooperation which defined new command and control practices as well as matters of logistics and maintenance, combined training, and coordinated operations. These

procedures endured through the remainder of the conflict, and returned during the Cold War when the Atlantic Alliance was resurrected to face down the perceived expansionism of the Soviets and their Warsaw Pact allies.

Six ad hoc practices came to shape the Anglo-Free French naval relationship and were later adopted anew by the Americans once they committed to aid the former Vichy fleet, and again when they contributed to the rejuvenation of the navies of their European allies during the Cold War. The most pressing measure provided for the refurbishment through allied means of those existing French units that could make an immediate and effective contribution to the fight during the war and the military effectiveness of the Alliance in peacetime in later years. Allied means ranged from work undertaken in British and American dockyards in the 1940s to the provision of modern US equipment for installation in French shipyards directly subsidized by Washington in the 1950s. Secondly, the senior partners transferred older ships, submarines and aircraft, and new constructions directly to France and, later, to the other European allies for armament by local crews. Thirdly, the extremely rapid pace of technological evolution at sea during the war and through the 1950s necessitated that Great Britain and the United States continue providing for the modernisation of vessels and aircraft under the French flag and that of the European allies on a recurring basis. Be it in time of war or peace, one-time transfers were not enough, nearly constant upgrading had to follow, regardless of the financial costs and the tremendous burdens imposed on already busy naval dockyards and civilian shipyards.

Such technical advancements also necessitated, as a fourth measure, that the crews of the subordinate allies benefit from training provided directly by the larger powers. RN and USN technical schools specialized in the increasingly complex matters of naval and aeronautical engineering, electronic warfare, and weapon maintenance opened their doors to European candidates while pilots and sailors attended hands-on training in other establishments to master the skills and intricacies of air operations and evolving tactics at sea. British and American instructors were also attached to French schools in North Africa and France while some officers and sailors of the *Marine nationale* served with UK and US units to observe first-hand the conduct of operations underway. Fifthly, from the 1940 Churchill-de Gaulle exchange of notes – which guaranteed British funding to the Free French for the duration of the war – to the Mutual Defence Assistance Program of the Cold War, the Anglo-Americans agreed to supply direct logistical and financial support to their allies. And lastly, they laid the foundations of the command and control arrangements that continue today. They facilitated the employment of ships, submarines, aircraft and personnel under the operational control of another country while remaining under the national command of their own, at last resolving the long-standing problem of “coordinating one nation’s naval, air, and land forces with those of other nations.”

In that perspective, Muselier’s tour proved quite successful in leveraging these precedents to assemble the “good, workable little fleet” necessary for de Gaulle to lay a credible foundation for his claim to legitimacy as national leader and military commander in the early stage of the war. In the eighteen months which followed Operation *Catapult*, Muselier resumed control of one battleship (though obsolete), two large destroyers, five sloops and five submarines of French origin, and acquired eight RN corvettes. An eclectic mix of French and British armed merchant cruisers and trawlers, motor torpedo boats, and coastal defence craft, completed this small but effective and combat-proven force, supplemented by small detachments of naval aviation and

formations of *fusiliers-marins*. But this was a far cry from the admiral's original ambition to take control of the several dozens of warships and the more than one hundred merchant vessels flying the French flag which had found refuge in British territories in 1940. By 1942, his fleet symbolized the first of many least bad compromises forced on French admirals by their Anglo-American partners, and their own political masters in the following decades. Muselier did not select the vessels he wished to take back, he received those that the Admiralty was willing to part with. Bringing these units into service depended as much on the availability of British yards as the Free French capacity to recruit and train new sailors. Acquisition of modern Flower-class corvettes did not result from Muselier's lobbying effort but rather from the RN wish to avoid dedicating scarce resources to repairing and modernising obsolete French ships for which no spares and ammunition could be found in England.

The initial deal struck between Darlan and US Army Major General Mark Clark immediately after the North African landing, and the open-ended commitment of Roosevelt to rearming Giraud's forces in early 1943 seemed to place Vice-Admiral Félix Michelier on firmer footing. Particularly symbolic was the early refit of battleship *Richelieu* in the United States, of major significance to the French but considered of little relevance by the Americans in terms of a making an effective fighting contribution to the Alliance. However, both Michelier and his successor André Lemonnier soon faced increased reluctance by the USN to accept French priorities for modernisation work in American shipyards. While light cruisers *Montcalm*, *Gloire*, *Georges Leygues* and *Émile Bertin* were all modernised in the United States in 1943, Admiral Ernest King steadily refused pleas from Lemonnier for heavier and older cruisers to access American shipyards for the same purpose in 1944. The USN clearly wished for the French navy to focus on local escort and coastal defence duties in North and West Africa rather than lose themselves in grandiose visions of a rejuvenated blue-water navy.

Ironically, direct US support to the *Marine nationale* reached a crest that year, supplemented by smaller-scale but continued deliveries of British material to the former *FNFL* group still based in England. From August 1943 to the following summer, the newly reunited *Marine nationale* grew in strength dramatically with the import of six US Cannon-class destroyer escorts, six UK River-class frigates, four RN submarines (including one captured from the Italians), thirty-two US patrol craft and fifty US submarine chasers, as well as thirty minesweepers from the USN and another ten from the RN. Numerous fighters and patrol aircraft also provided the basis for the renaissance of the *Aéronautique*. Meanwhile, both Washington and London continued to provide direct financial and logistical support to the French navy, kept their schools open to French sailors, aviators and submariners, provided refit and repair services to French vessels already in service in American and British dockyards, and dedicated valuable resources to rehabilitating and often expanding shore infrastructures, in the colonies first and then in the *métropole* itself after the Liberation. Deliveries of amphibious craft followed in 1945 as the British and the Americans – though with great reluctance in the latter case – facilitated the return of French military forces to Indochina.

The differences between Washington and Paris over Indochina were inherently political. Divergent views about the place of France in the postwar world and the American approach to former colonies in general paralleled the increasingly bitter dialogue between the Anglo-American navies and the role French admirals aspired to in planning the rejuvenation of their

fleet in the closing months of the war. Lemonnier and his colleagues were grateful for the aid provided in rebuilding France's seapower and they acknowledged the symbolism of appointing Rear-Admiral Auboyneau in Fall 1944 to command the Flank Force in the Mediterranean, the only allied naval task force placed under a French admiral during the war. But symbolism went both ways. The Flank Force was little more than a shore bombardment element of little relevance deployed in a forgotten theatre. Simultaneously, the Americans turned down the offer of a French naval group to join the forces closing in on the Japanese home islands, hence confining *Richelieu* to the Indian Ocean until Summer 1945. They also refused to provide additional opportunities to modernise large French vessels in their shipyards. French submarines benefitted from refits in the United States but strictly for the purpose of employing them in the training of surface forces, not operational deployments. As symbolic was their stance on the subject of aircraft carriers which were continuously denied to the French, with the exception of the former HMS *Biter*, a tired and obsolete converted escort carrier, transferred in August 1945 to serve under the French flag as *Dixmude*.

The Truman administration continued the policy of its predecessor regarding the French navy. Provision of financial and material support, as well as transfer of ships and aircraft, was guided by allied wartime needs, not postwar ambitions on the part of the *rue Royale* staff. The latter reluctantly accepted the prevailing approach and, even before the end of the hostilities, plans were afoot to shape a truly national naval policy that would provide France with a blue-water fleet worthy of a continental power with worldwide interests. United Nations commitments replaced direct allied assistance as the Provisional Government did not seek a peacetime alliance. The continued rejuvenation of the French fleet depended on political support in France but de Gaulle and then his Fourth Republic successors faced a complex array of conflicting demands and priorities in rebuilding civilian infrastructure in the *métropole*, resuming control over the territories of the *Union française* and appropriating resources between the three military services. Although no political authority dared asking "what good will a navy be to us now," the grandiose naval plans of 1945 were quickly set aside. Instead, the wartime transfer of *Dixmude*, the modernisation of obsolete cruisers and the acquisition of humble escorts and coastal defence vessels suddenly assumed their full meaning as another form of least bad forced compromise.

Dixmude – soon joined by *Arromanches* on loan from the British – provided an essential platform to maintain the basic skills and procedures necessary to shape the future *Aéronavale*. Older French ships refitted in British and American yards transported and supported the forces dispatched from Europe to the former colonies. *Fusiliers-marins* and commando troops still donning US uniforms and carrying weapons provided by the United States fought native insurgencies in Madagascar, Indochina and Algeria, supported by WWII aircraft that proved better suited for that purpose than the first jets then under development in France. American and British-built minesweepers made a pivotal contribution to clearing the coasts of France and North Africa, allowing free and secure access to the ports needed to receive the material needed to rebuild the country's infrastructures and export manufactured goods from rejuvenated industrial hubs. Small but new escort and coastal defence vessels received from North America and Great Britain played a key role in the *métropole* and across the *Union française*, discharging important security duties, and training the next generation of French officers and sailors who went on to crew and eventually command the Cold War ships, submarines, air squadrons and *fusiliers-marins* regiments of the next two decades.

Transferred allied equipment and older French units modernised in British and North American shipyards during the hostilities provided the essential means for the French navy to bridge the gap in a peacetime world devoid of allies. France lacked the resources to rejuvenate its fleet independently during those years but the gradual return to a strategy of alliance in 1947-1948 provided French admirals with a new combination of threats and opportunities. The moment of greatest danger came in 1948-1949 when defense minister Paul Ramadier sought to implement a new military policy facilitated by the return of the Atlantic Alliance. France could focus its strained financial and material resources to build up a powerful *corps aéroterrestre* dedicated to the defence of the Rhine, pre-positioned in Germany and arrayed for the protection of the country's vulnerable eastern border against a Red Army offensive across the central European plain. Assembling such a powerful military force on the continent implied that France accepted leaving the defence of its sea lines of communications to the Anglo-American navies. Ironically, pressure from the United States and the United Kingdom prevented this potential eclipse of French sea power.

Political authorities in Washington and London indeed looked to France to assume the largest share of a future land battle across the Rhine. However, their admirals did not seek the burden of local escort and coastal defence duties in the waters of Western Europe, extending to French sea lines of communication to North and West Africa. Their perspective on mission specialization among the Alliance's navies assigned responsibility for defending transoceanic convoys and striking at the enemy ashore to the USN, with support from the RN, and both needed the continental navies to look after their own coasts and local convoys. Ramadier's overly simplistic *défense du Rhin* doctrine faded from view and French admirals enthusiastically set about negotiating new terms for allied assistance, a prospect heightened by the start of Korean War in June 1950. The execution of this renewed aid programme relied on Second World War procedural and technical precedents, which laid the foundations for the highly efficient distribution of material, training and financial support through the following decade. But these precedents also gave rise to bitter tensions similar to those which had often soured naval relations between France and the Anglo-American powers during the previous hostilities.

The importance of allied assistance to the renewal of the *Marine nationale* through the 1950s cannot be overstated. Based on a file prepared by Admiral Nomy's staff in 1960, Philippe Vial provided this following summation of foreign contributions to the French fleet which remained in service as of 1 October 1959.¹¹¹³ They had been received in the form of direct transfers at no cost, on-going leases, sales of vessels in total or part of their equipment, subsidisation of refit/modernisation/construction, and off shore procurements:

- One German U-boat transferred from UK in 1946 for research and experimentation;
- One German sea plane tender transferred from UK in 1946 for *Union française* tasks;
- Two German ships transferred from US in 1948 for hydrographic surveying;
- Two remaining RN S-class submarines on loan for training (out of the original four);
- Four aircraft carriers (*Dixmude, Arromanches, La Fayette, Bois Belleau*);

¹¹¹³ Philipp Vial, "De la nécessité de l'aide, des inconvénients de la dépendance: le réarmement de la Marine sous la IVe République [Of the Need for Assistance and the Drawbacks of Dependency: The Navy's Rearmament Under the Fourth Republic]," *Revue historique des Armées* 215 (June 1999): 34-35.

- Eight US Cannon-class destroyer escorts (joining six others in service since WWII);
- Fifteen ocean-going minesweepers (MSO) built in the US;
- Thirty coastal minesweepers (MCO) built in the US;
- Six Bay-class coastal minesweepers built in Canada;
- Fifteen inshore minesweepers (MSI) built in Great Britain;
- Thirty-four coastal minesweepers (MCO) built in France;
- Three submarine chasers (PC-461-class) built in France;
- 55% of the completion costs of cruiser *De Grasse*;
- 39% of the construction costs of the twelve T-47 fleet destroyers;
- 39% of the construction costs of the five T-53 fleet destroyers;
- 46% of the conversion costs of two Italian cruisers as ASW command destroyers;
- 25% of the construction costs of the four E-50 destroyer escorts; and
- 50% of the construction costs of the fourteen E-52 destroyer escorts.

A 1959 note from the navy's *État-major général* also clearly illustrated the importance of assistance from the United States in rejuvenating the *Aéronavale* at the dawn of the Cold War.¹¹¹⁴ In early 1948, only tired British Seafires Mk III fighters and American SBD Dauntless dive-bombers were available to fly off *Dixmude* and *Arromanches*. Later that year, Great Britain agreed to provide more recent Seafires Mk XV but *rue Royale* planners considered this acquisition a gap measure as French naval aviation was about to embark on a decided course of "Americanisation" starting in 1949. Numbers are telling regarding the number of US aircraft acquired through various means (direct transfers, loans, purchases, subsidized constructions) during the following ten years: 110 Helldiver dive-bombers, 139 Hellcat fighter-bombers, twenty-five ex-Marine Corps AU-1 Corsairs and ninety-four of the more modern F-4U7 variant built specifically for delivery to France, 126 TBM Avenger torpedo-bombers converted for ASW patrolling (plus twenty-seven received from Great Britain for spare parts), as well as two Sikorsky S-51 and nineteen Piasecki HUP-2 utility helicopters. Shore-based naval aviation also benefitted greatly during that same period with the delivery of twelve PB4Y Privateers derived from the B-24 Liberator bomber for long-range surveillance and ground support, thirty-one P2V-6 and thirty-four P2V-7 Neptunes maritime patrol aircraft, twenty Grumman JRF5 Goose and ten Martin P5M Marlin amphibians, 122 SNJ Texans (thirty of them built in Canada) and forty-five Beechcraft (of two variants, JRB-4 and SNB-5) used for training, as well as six Lockheed PV-2 Harpoon and one DC-3 Dakota for transport missions.

Cold War allied assistance finally allowed Admiral Nomy to lead the fleet and the *Aéronavale* on a path of simultaneous qualitative and quantitative growth. Had the era of least bad forced compromises come to an end? Not quite. As in the days of the Second World War, the ambitions of French admirals vying to create a blue-water navy clashed with allied naval priorities largely shaped by the USN, with the support of the RN. *Rue Royale* demands for the provision of fleet aircraft carriers and large, fast destroyers to form the nucleus of task groups capable of discharging the full range of carrier operations – shore and surface strike, air defence, ASW – repeatedly met with polite but firm rebuffs. American insistence that France grow its

¹¹¹⁴ *SHD*, 3 BB 8 CMS 12, Amendment no. 3 (dated 6 October 1959) to *EMG/BAA* Briefing Note no. 18, "Principaux aéronefs américains livrés depuis 1945 [Main American Aircraft Delivered Since 1945]," dated 1 January 1956.

forces at sea as well as the *corps aéroterrestre* in Germany certainly assisted Admiral Nomy – and his immediate predecessors Battet and Lambert – in dealing with political authorities in France to shape a more balanced policy in the wake of Ramadier’s doctrine of defence of the Rhine. However, it failed to support a narrative behind the rejuvenation of a larger multi-purpose naval force, reiterating once again that France ought to focus its effort at sea on the missions of local convoy escort and coastal defence.

Pentagon planners accepted that the *Marine nationale* faced circumstances different than that of her continental neighbours, such as Belgium and Italy (and the Netherlands once they let go of the Dutch East Indies in 1949). The French fleet divided its ships, submarines and aircraft between two maritime fronts (the Atlantic and the Mediterranean) and maintained more extensive sea lines of communications to North and West Africa, as well as *Union française* territories well beyond NATO’s area of responsibility. US military chiefs also adhered to the White House view of the fighting in faraway Indochina as part of the larger containment of Communism. The provision of material assistance to the French navy made allowance for these specific needs. MDAP deliveries of smaller and slower escorts, coastal patrol craft and minesweepers were supplemented by two light aircraft carriers and different types of aircraft that allowed for the conduct of anti-submarine operations in European waters but could easily be adapted to provide air support to troops ashore in theatres further afield. Additional Military Production (AMP) funds subsidized production in French yards of large fleet destroyers of the T-47 and T-53 types. Loan of old British S-class submarines made a considerable contribution to the ASW readiness of the surface fleet but also served as training platforms for the next generation of French submariners even though the USN repeatedly refused to transfer, loan or sell modern submarines to France for operational employment.

The debate over aircraft carriers and submarines was representative of another compromise forced on the French navy by the Allies. They provided the means needed by the *Marine nationale* to meet its Alliance commitments in the North Atlantic and the Mediterranean but nothing further, with the notable exception of Indochina, an experience not repeated in Algeria even though that territory was officially included in the NATO AOR until 1962. But it also showed Nomy’s ability to make this compromise another “least bad one” as previous naval commanders had succeeded doing since 1940. Allied assistance filled genuine needs. Nomy and his colleagues welcomed direct transfers and subsidies provided to the navy and French shipbuilding industry. They did not allow disagreements with their Anglo-American counterparts to undermine that effort within the strategy of alliance pursued by Fourth Republic political leaders. Instead, they framed a naval policy which secured national resources – financial and material – for the production of those remaining means necessary for the fleet to resume its status as an effective blue-water force capable of autonomous operations in all three dimensions of the maritime domain (below, on, and above the surface), in European waters and around the world.

Nomy’s draft *Statut naval de 1952* and *Plan bleu de 1955* achieved just that. The first document exploited the ambitious goals adopted by NATO leaders in Lisbon and the second built upon the growing diffidence of French cabinets towards the American ally after the mid-1950s. Both plans laid out visions of a future navy which efficiently mixed continued allied acquisitions and necessary national allocations. Both proposals included a compromise of sorts, namely annual building tranches of 30,000 tons. Nomy secured inclusion of the first two in the 1956 and

1957 defence budgets, thus launching the construction of two aircraft carriers designed and built in France at long last. That he could not repeat this success in 1958 was ominous.

The 30,000-ton targets rested in part on three key assumptions: allied assistance was set to continue, hostilities in Algeria would soon come to an end, and the quest for an atomic bomb did not involve the navy at this early stage. All three proved flawed just as de Gaulle returned to power. The *CED* saga, the rearmament of West Germany, the Suez crisis, the American Congress' increasing reluctance to fund European armies and defence industries, and France's constant bickering about its roles and proper place within NATO formed a background of increasing strains that drove the Eisenhower administration to end direct aid to European allies by 1960. Though brought to power by a quasi military coup in order to resolve the Algerian question, de Gaulle realized that a quick solution was nowhere in sight. If anything, he needed to increase the commitment of economic and military resources to the Algerian departments in order to achieve conditions that would allow for an acceptable peace on both sides. And, of most impact on the future development of the country's conventional forces, especially the navy, the leader of the Fifth Republic took two fateful decisions in quick succession: operationalize an independent *force de frappe* and grow the nuclear deterrent into a full nuclear triad.

Nomy spent his last two years in command of the *Marine nationale* accepting that the implementation of his 1952 and 1955 plans were delayed as a result of the increase in defence funding directed to Algeria and atomic research. The end of allied assistance compounded the issue but he believed that peace in North Africa would provide an opportunity for his successor to resume course towards a balanced, aircraft carrier-centric expeditionary fleet by 1970. However, within a year of taking charge at the *rue Royale*, Cabanier had already accepted another forced compromise, the least bad possible perhaps but a significant concession nevertheless, agreeing to a further delay in the construction of a third aircraft carrier. Two years later, de Gaulle's decision to pursue the construction of ballistic nuclear submarines in France irremediably crippled the naval staff's original vision. The third carrier project was set aside indefinitely. Acquisition of additional American aircraft showed the continued inability of French industry to provide for all *Aéronavale* needs in the coming years, even forcing cancellation of a third AA cruiser in 1965. And yet the French president proclaimed that same year that the navy stood at "the apex of France's military power."

Such dissonance often results from the varied interpretations forced compromises can give rise to, especially as perceived by contemporary observers. On the one hand, the fractured history of the *Marine nationale* after the Armistice – a navy at war with itself, its allies and its government – can be derided as a succession of broken dreams, misplaced ambitions and betrayals by perfidious partners overseas and an ungrateful nation at home. No one commander, from Muselier to Cabanier, ever achieved in full the elaborate visions outlined through the years. On the other hand, hindsight also shows their remarkable ability to shape the compromises forced on them by allied military leaders and national political figures through the years. Securing such least bad arrangements allowed them to progressively rebuild the fleet and the *Aéronavale* with a rare singularity of purpose, effectively forging an independent naval policy within a strategy of alliance through the terrible ordeal of the Second World War and the arduous renaissance of the following decades.

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