

Franco-American relations

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General de Gaulle wanted to recast the relationship between the United States and Europe. The global geopolitical situation had changed considerably between 1945 and 1960. In the 1960s, the threat of world war was receding, and the United States no longer held the monopoly on the nuclear protection of the West. De Gaulle even wondered whether the United States really would use nuclear weapons to defend Western Europe. He felt the need to reconsider the relationship between the Old Continent and America, especially since he no longer felt the American nuclear umbrella to be reliable. Accordingly, France pursued a national nuclear policy and developed its own nuclear arsenal.

The United States was reviewing its strategy at the same time, moving to a graduated response approach from a strategy of massive reprisals. Any conflict between the superpowers would now be played out in Europe, not on the territory of the belligerents. France was determined not to be governed purely by the decisions of the President of the United States in issues relating to the defence of national territory.