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## **THE NUCLEAR STATUS AS AN ELEMENT OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN 2017 IN FRANCE**

The article describes and analyzes the main messages of the French presidential election campaign candidates in 2017 on the issue of positioning France as a nuclear state. The author proves that today this question needs profoundly studying, given the special position of France in the geopolitical space, its role in Euro-Atlantic security environment and paying attention to growing number of security threats in the world.

In terms of increasing instability and taking into account disintegration tendencies in Europe the nuclear issue remains crucial in the world of 21st century. It is possible to define the views and sympathies of the majority of France's population on nuclear weapons issue, based on analysis candidates' for the presidency political programs; to form ideas about the judgments of political opinion leaders; to identify the main trends in the development of France's foreign policy, and its internal defense policy, which is closely related to the security of the region. It is proved that today the nuclear issue of France has not lost its relevance among the population, it remains controversial and it has an impact on the state security strategy aimed at implementing its national interests.

**Keywords:** nuclear status, disarmament, nuclear deterrence, France, presidential elections 2017 in France.

The reality of the end of the XX century had led to the fact that in 1995-1996 the then French president Jacques Chirac decided to conduct so-called "last" six nuclear tests indispensable for France. This decision caused fierce disputes over advisability of such initiatives that looked anachronistic. Today, due to the emergence of complex warfare practiced all over the world, it should be noted, that on all continents, statements confirmed the increase in international relations tension were made; it is a new diplomacy challenge caused by the need to control nuclear weapon.

In the world of XXI century, a high-level implementation of security policy is a guarantee of sustainable development and the existence of all states in the international arena. Nuclear weapons issue remains an important component of security assurance in the Euro-Atlantic security environment. Today, France is the third largest nuclear-weapon Member State in the Western Europe that can boast of relative independence on this issue <sup>1</sup>.

That is why today, after the resonant decision of the United Kingdom to withdraw from the European Union, in terms of instability in the world, the issue of nuclear status of France is becoming increasingly important and it also requires a detailed study. The system of modern international relations is characterized by a number of new trends related to the development of globalization processes and the integration of the countries of the world and, in the contrast, disintegration and increasing instability in the international arena. The development of new technologies has led to the emergence of new more advanced types of weapon; nevertheless, the concept of "Unconventional Deterrence" when the weak actor deters stronger, by possessing nuclear weapons has become topical.

The main postulates of France's deterrence model were: 1) the equalizing and disjunctive force of nuclear weapons; 2) the proportionality of deterrence; 3) "sanctuarization" (or "extension of untouched territory") of the national territory of a nuclear state policy that appeared in 1976, under conditions of an acute economic meltdown. The France's economics lag from the Federal Republic of Germany significantly reduced the importance of French nuclear potential and the strategic advantage of France in Europe. The key element of the French model of containment was the concept of "critical threshold

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<sup>1</sup> Nuclear Weapons: Who Has What at a Glance. *Arms Control Association* <<https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Nuclearweaponswhohaswhat>>.

of aggressiveness”, that is, a set of strategic and political factors, in the presence of which conflicts reach the stage when it became possible and necessary to use nuclear weapons.

Today, France continues to make significant strides in the international arena in asserting itself as a regional leader, its special place in the modern system of international relations attracts considerable attention of the international community, and therefore the study of the preferences of its citizens in the choice of the country’s leader must be studied more carefully. Since the presidential candidates reflect the opinion of the population and express the political views of their voters, the revision of the French defense doctrine from the point of view of the candidates is highly important, in order to understand the relevance of the issue of nuclear status in a society.

Creating of France as an attractive image in the world, as well as a comprehensive perception of reputational potential realization, is one of the priority directions of French foreign policy. Establishing itself as an independent and substantive state that can provide security not only to itself but also to all the countries of the European Union is a characteristic feature of France’s foreign policy tradition.

On May 14, 2017, Emmanuel Macron has officially installed as President of France. On the same day, his predecessor François Hollande handed him over keys to the “nuclear suitcase”. As a centrist, europhile and Atlanticist, Emanuel Macron will most likely not change France’s foreign policy priorities and will remain it one of the key actors in the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance precisely because of its defense potential<sup>1</sup>.

In order to determine the present importance of the nuclear status of France in the modern world, first of all, it is necessary to analyze the attitude of its leaders to this issue. Conforming to the leading French figures, as it reflected in the statement made at the International Court of Justice in 2005, the possession of nuclear weapons is an indispensable measure for the protection and security of the world, and above all, for the permanent members of the UN Security Council<sup>2</sup>.

Undoubtedly, the issue of the nuclear status of France could not be ignored on the presidential elections 2017. We propose to analyze key messages on nuclear weapons question in order to better understand the priorities of France foreign and domestic policies. Candidates are given in order pursuant to the number of votes received during the first round of the presidential elections 2017.

Jecque Cheminade, Solidarity and Progress party representative, received the lowest number of votes – 0,18%, that is 64,674 votes. In concordance with his program, the modernization of the two components of a nuclear weapon is necessary and extremely important during 2020-2030<sup>3</sup>.

Air component: Strategic Air Force consists of four squadrons equipped with 54 missiles of the improved air-ground missile system with nuclear warheads.

Underwater component: Strategic ocean forces must consist of four submarines with ballistic missile submarines, including those are permanently in the sea, such as the M51 rocket launcher, that lies at the heart of France’s ability to strike in response to a potential aggressor.

In his opinion, it is worth paying attention to develop a third-generation submarine ballistic missile system and a M51.3 ballistic missile, which will be equipped, scheduled for 2014-2019. It is that they will improve the range and better penetration of missile defense systems. Therefore, for a given candidate, the use of nuclear weapons is obvious and necessary to ensure the security of the state and the region. From the very beginning of his political career, Cheminade has followed persistent views on the need for nuclear energy, nuclear weapons and he has been supporting the idea of exponential development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, such as science progress.

Nathalie Arthaud is a Workers` Struggle face. In obedience to the results of the first round, she received 0,65% of the votes, that represents 231,149 preferences<sup>4</sup>.

If today she had had the authority of the President or the head of the military, then she would have asked for the immediate cessation of military intervention by France in the Middle East and in Africa.

<sup>1</sup> Emmanuel Macron est élu président de la République avec 66,1% des voix. *Le Monde* <[http://www.lemonde.fr/election-presidentielle-2017/article/2017/05/07/emmanuel-macron-est-elu-president-de-la-republique-avec-65-1-des-voix-estimation-ipsos\\_5123779\\_4854003.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/election-presidentielle-2017/article/2017/05/07/emmanuel-macron-est-elu-president-de-la-republique-avec-65-1-des-voix-estimation-ipsos_5123779_4854003.html)>.

<sup>2</sup> Handbook for parliamentarians to support nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament *futurepolicy.org Your online database of sustainable policy solutions*. <<http://www.futurepolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Chapter-5-Nuclear-Deterrence-and-Security-.pdf>>.

<sup>3</sup> La nucléaire que je défends. *Cheminade 2017*. <<http://www.cheminade2017.fr/Le-nucleaire-que-je-defends-1646>>.

<sup>4</sup> La nucléaire. *Le monde*. <<http://www.lemonde.fr/programmes/energie-1/le-nucleaire>>.

In her view, nuclear weapons are a constant threat, but also she notes that this is the proliferation of conventional weapons which are not less dangerous. According to Mrs. Arthaud, even if all the states of the United Nations accept a peace agreement, this will not protect people from wars, because local, regional wars have not stopped for a moment since 1945.

François Asselineau spokesman from the People's Republican Union party, received a support of 0,92%, expressed in 327 126 votes. Asselineau stated that the primary task for the newly elected president is to build a second aircraft carrier and immediately the third for the next ten years; to bring the number of French fleet's ballistic missile submarines to six units.

The answer to the challenges of the realities of the modern world is to develop a French anti-ballistic missile defense system in the outer and inner layers of the atmosphere (exo and endo-atmospheric missiles)<sup>1</sup>.

Philippe Poutou, as a representative of the New Anti-Capitalist Party, was able to gain 1,10%, obtaining 391,188 votes. Based on his program points, he advocates unilateral disarmament of France and the denunciation of all military agreements relating to the nuclear status of France, as well as all unions created on the basis of nuclear power. Poutou insists on immediate and wide-ranging nuclear disarmament, and consequently support to all initiatives aimed at this.

Moreover, the candidate confidently supports all initiatives aimed at achieving this objective. For example, Poutou asserts on the abolition of all budgets aimed at nuclear defense, a significant reduction of the military budget and, in general, the profound transformation of defense institution<sup>2</sup>.

Jean Lassalle, as an independent candidate was able to bypass four party candidates, that gave him 1,22%, i.e. 432 915 votes in support. However, perhaps because Lassalle was not a representative of any particular political direction, he was also the only one candidate who did not mention anything about nuclear status of France in his own election program<sup>3</sup>.

Nicolas Dupont Aignan embodied the movement "France Arise!" received support from 1 686 283 people, representing in 4,75% of total voices. Although he did not pay much attention neither to the defense, nor to the military issues, he firmly emphasized that the observance of nuclear deterrence at a high level of development and efficiency is a guarantee of French security<sup>4</sup>.

Benoit Amont, as a member of one of the largest parties in France, namely the Socialist Party, received 6,35%, with 2 253 454 votes. The socialist proclaimed that, in case if France retains the sovereignty and independence of its strategic decisions, deterrence will remain a necessity in the present realities. However, according to Amont, public debate on non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament should be conducted<sup>5</sup>.

As long as France plays a significant role in controlling nuclear weapons and restricting the proliferation of nuclear weapons, he would like to support any debate on the gradual ban on nuclear weapons. The most important condition, yet, remains France should be able to be a hindrance for countries that do not comply with international standards on security guarantees.

Nevertheless, at this stage, Amont does not focus on disarmament, but rather on modernization of nuclear weapons arsenal systems aimed at reducing the budget funds allocated for the production of nuclear weapons.

In his turn, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, "Unbowed France" party representative, gained 19,64%, i.e. 6,972,531 votes. As a left-wing politician, he was convinced nuclear deterrence would remain part of the France's protection in the absence of a multilateral disarmament agreement.

In the next five years of his possible presidency, in Mélenchon's opinion, the urgent task would be to return to changes in the doctrine of deterrence over several years, by means of support for NATO missile

<sup>1</sup> La question du nucléaire divise les candidats à la présidentielle. *France Inter*. <<https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/les-programmes-au-banc-d-essai/les-programmes-au-banc-d-essai-31-mars-2017>>

<sup>2</sup> Aurélie Delmas. Quel est le programme de Philippe Poutou ? *Libération*. <[http://www.liberation.fr/elections-presidentielle-legislatives-2017/2017/03/31/quel-est-le-programme-de-philippe-poutou\\_1559676](http://www.liberation.fr/elections-presidentielle-legislatives-2017/2017/03/31/quel-est-le-programme-de-philippe-poutou_1559676)>.

<sup>3</sup> Le projet de Jean Lassalle. <http://jeanlassalle2017.fr>. <<http://jeanlassalle2017.fr/le-projet-de-jean-lassalle/>>.

<sup>4</sup> Matthieu Jublin. Nucléaire: Quelle que soit la position des candidats, Elle leur coûtera cher. *Ici*. <<http://www.lci.fr/elections/presidentielle-2017-fermeture-centrale-nucleaire-quel-programme-des-candidat-melenchon-fillon-macron-le-pen-2029184.html>>.

<sup>5</sup> Christian Pierre. Présidentielle. Ce qu'ils pensent du nucléaire militaire? *Le peuple Breton* <<http://lepeuplebreton.bzh/2017/03/06/presidentielle-nucleaire-militaire/>>.

defense system directed primarily against Russia, that is contrary to the concept of deterrence defensive in its essence. By such theses Mélenchon emphasizes his belonging to French Communist Party views. Given the fact that France had previously left NATO, it would be necessary to continue this direction by terminating any support to the missile shield<sup>1</sup>.

If France does not abandon nuclear restraint unilaterally, then the initiation of an international conference on nuclear disarmament should become mandatory, the inception that ended with the collapse of the USSR, which exemplifies the abolition of the air component, should become mandatory.

Mélenchon also declared the rejection of the military base in Abu Dhabi is of highly importance the same as the denunciation of a secret defense agreement with the UAE, by which France provides protection of this state with its nuclear umbrella<sup>2</sup>.

François Fillon, a representative of the center-right political party Republicans, won 19,91% in the first round of elections, 7 067 529 votes of supporters. According to the views expressed by Fillon during his campaign, the next five years will be marked by many challenges: increasing of armed forces alertness; guaranteeing of a nuclear deterrence components maintenance; ensuring France's capabilities and potential advantages, as well as facilitating of the productivity of local production and technological bases of defense forces. All these tasks are necessary to complete, together with the adaptation of military conditions to the challenges and realities of current life. Giving the preference to reserve troops in contrast to using widespread and expensive voluntary service is also desirable and necessary over the next five years<sup>3</sup>.

Increasing of financial support for French defense is a prerequisite for France in the coming years. An audit of strategic forces and the launch of a strategic review at the beginning of every five years, as well as the preparation of a new law on military planning to be adopted in the first half of 2018, are inevitable. An implementation of financial needs monitoring in defense sector is vital to obligations assessment remaining from the socialist government that is also of utmost importance for Fillon as for the right-wing candidate.

The next significant step is the gradual increase of the defense budget over the five-year period to reach index of 2% of GDP. The defense spending should be increased by the end of the next "military planning law". These additional resources should be prioritized in order to strengthen operational capacity and modernization of deterrent forces, to further restoring consistency between opportunities, operational contracts and a budget course aimed at the state defense.

Maintenance and upgrading of the last mentioned remedies confirm a nuclear deterrence and they are constant. Support to the forces ensuring nuclear deterrence and the involvement of their modernization are the responsibility of the French President.

Marin Le Pen was probably the most odious candidate for this election, as a leader of the political party National Front. This year she received a significant 21,53%, that is 7 643 276 votes. Despite such significant support Marin Le Pen gave way to Macron in the second round too. However, Marin Le Pen represented the opinion of a large part of the French voters<sup>4</sup>.

Therefore, Le Pen suggested to increase the defense budget's mandate to 2% of GDP during the first year being a president, with a gradual increase to 3% at the end of the fifth year. These 2% minimum must be definitely notified in the Constitution. These remarkable efforts will include funding aimed at:

- the maintenance of a second aircraft carrier, called Richelieu, as a prerequisite for the permanent presence of French naval aviation in the sea;
- the ensuring the stability of nuclear deterrence;
- general increase in number of the French armed forces (quantity increase of planes, ships, tanks, armored vehicles) and equipment updates.

And finally, the greatest attention is now focused on the program of Emmanuel Macron, the youngest president of France, a former financier, the leader of the movement "Forward!", who received 23,75%

<sup>1</sup> Luc Melenchon sur le nucleaire. Présidentielle. *Le parisien*. <<http://videos.leparisien.fr/video/jean-luc-melenchon-sur-le-nucleaire-je-me-suis-trompe-15-04-2017-x5ifb3x#xtref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com.ua%2F>>.

<sup>2</sup> France's nuclear umbrella. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* <<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00963402.1986.11459372?journalCode=rbul20>>.

<sup>3</sup> Fillon et l'environnement: moins de normes et toujours autant de nucléaire. *Le point politique*. <[http://www.lepoint.fr/politique/fillon-et-l-environnement-moins-de-normes-et-toujours-autant-de-nucleaire-30-11-2016-2086855\\_20.php](http://www.lepoint.fr/politique/fillon-et-l-environnement-moins-de-normes-et-toujours-autant-de-nucleaire-30-11-2016-2086855_20.php)>

<sup>4</sup> Mark Cherki. Macron-Le Pen: profonds désaccords sur l'environnement. *Le Figaro*. <<http://www.lefigaro.fr/sciences/2017/04/26/01008-20170426ARTFIG00268-macron-le-pen-profonds-desaccords-sur-l-environnement.php>>.

of the votes, that is the support of 8 433 346 citizens. Macron declared the necessity to undoubtedly favor the nuclear disarmament for France. However, the process of disarmament can not unfold without taking into account the strategic conditions and imperatives of the security environment to which it will lead. That is why the most important task is to analyze the conditions of security and threats for France.

The French Republic should defend two additional priorities: the earliest possible entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons that will limit the qualitative development of nuclear arsenals and, secondly, the commencement of negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty<sup>1</sup>.

As stated by Macron, France has already been far ahead of other nuclear-weapon countries on its path to disarmament. Nevertheless, the republic today can not take part in negotiations on this issue without the participation of other nuclear powers that own it as well as it can not be involved in it. Hence, France's position is clear, but it is closely linked to external factors that affect not only its own security, but also the security of the entire region.

In the next five years, the newly elected president will promise to secure the implementation of the first two components of nuclear deterrence, that is, the above disarmament priorities. It is worth paying attention to the fact that the French President, while adhering to a clear line in the issue of disarmament, he quite rationally assesses the current realities of the world, paying considerable attention to it.

In international relations, nuclear weapon has three main areas of use: 1) providing the nuclear power with indelible guarantees of its independence and integrity; 2) mutual containment; 3) nuclear weapon gives an opportunity to weaker states to protect themselves more effectively. The third direction is classical and traditional for France nuclear doctrine.

Therefore, power thinking remains an important component of the French defense policy, regardless of who heads the state. Mutual deterrence on the basis of horriification stays a universal instrument of stability in opinion of the vast majority of French candidates. This allows us to conclude that the greater number of the population also upholds this view, as long as Macron was the only one candidate who proposed to reduce the nuclear share in defense, according to his program. Lassalle, Amont, Mélenchon and Poutou which campaigned for deprivation of nuclear status and as a result they did not receive adequate number of supporters, except Mélenchon who outstripped others by other plank; Cheminade, Dupont Aignan, Fillon and Le Pen advocated the modernization and development of French nuclear status.

The twenty-first century is called the era of nuclear renaissance, and that is why the defense policy of a European country possessing nuclear weapons is today a matter not only of its internal interests, but also of the whole world community.

Thus, the program of the newly elected President of France, Emmanuel Macron, fully coincides with the proclaimed functions of the largest military alliance of the Euro-Atlantic security environment, NATO. Key theses of the security policy of Macron, France, and hence Euro-Atlantic security region central pillars of the defense policy is to obtain a support for adequate military power and political solidarity for the purpose to curb aggression and other forms of pressure and protection of member countries territories of the organization in case of aggression as well as search for progress on the path to more stable international environment.

The question of the nuclear status of France, given its role in the Euro-Atlantic security region, deserves a great attention of the political leaders of the state. The resonance of this issue lies in the need to ensure the protection of a peaceful state in terms of growing global threats. Today, the problem of the nuclear status of France has not lost its relevance among the population; it also becomes the cornerstone of political programs of opinion leaders. Discussions about the French nuclear status are reflected in the process of the security strategy formation of the state, which is always aimed at realizing its national interests, protecting its integrity and ensuring the security of the region.

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