

YEAR OF DISCORD:
FRENCH-US RELATIONS, APRIL 1973-JUNE 1974

By
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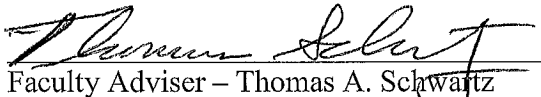
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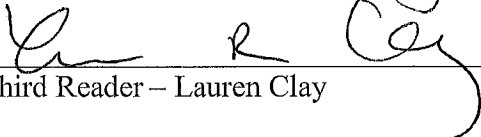
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BEGINNING AT THE END OF A DISCORDANT YEAR

French Foreign Minister Michel Jobert's final confrontation with his rival, American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, would take place on American soil. His plane touched down at Dulles International Airport on the evening of February 10, 1974. Jobert was in Washington at the invitation of the American President, Richard Nixon. Both France and the United States faced a global economic crisis as the spot price for crude oil quadrupled to 10 dollars per barrel.¹ The Arab states curtailed their refining operations to protest American support for Israel during the Yom Kippur War in October. On the agenda for this meeting between the US, Japan, and the European Community (EC) was the formation of a consumer organization that could make OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) back down from its blackmail. Nixon and Kissinger also hoped the Washington Energy Conference would give American newspapers new headlines and offer a respite from the intense media scrutiny of the Watergate Scandal, which had preoccupied American politics since the summer of 1973.

Jobert must have arrived in Washington fatigued. The first stage of his flight had brought him from Baghdad, where he was trying to buy France privileged access to oil.² His layover in Paris had been only two hours: just enough time to check in with his wife and inquire about the deteriorating health of President Georges Pompidou, who was slowly and painfully succumbing

¹ "Crude Oil Price History Chart," accessed 8 February 2015, <http://www.macrotrends.net/1369/crude-oil-price-history-chart>. This is about 50 dollars per barrel in real prices using the CPI inflation number with a base of the most recent month.

² Mary Kathleen Weed, *L'Image publique d'un homme secret: Michel Jobert et la Diplomatie Française* (Paris : Éditions Fernand Lanore, 1988), 170.

to bone cancer.³ During the preceding days, Kissinger had prepared for the conference by explaining his negotiating position to the Harvard, Princeton, and Yale Clubs in Washington, D.C.⁴ This choice points to one of the many common points that Michel Jobert and Henry Kissinger shared. After serving in World War II, both men were educated in their countries' most elite institutions for government and political science—l'Ecole Nationale d'Administration and Harvard University.⁵ Both diplomats were born outside the borders of the states they would represent at the Washington Energy Conference. Jobert, born in Meknès, Morocco, would grow up a "Pied-Noir"; Kissinger, born in Fürth, Germany, a Jewish-American immigrant.⁶ Both took an unusual route to reach the top spot in their countries' foreign ministries by serving as special assistant to the President first. In spite of these similarities in their backgrounds, however, Kissinger and Jobert found it impossible to agree during their respective terms in office.

The Washington Energy Conference proved to be no exception. Kissinger remembered it as "a strange event."⁷ The conference was meant to be "a meeting of allies, but it had something of the character of a clash of adversaries."⁸ Jobert came with instructions from his President and a mandate from the EC Council of Ministers to veto any consumer organization, but the French ambassador advised him not to make waves: "Kissinger is ready to cede many points in order to make the Conference of Washington a success for President Nixon on American soil."⁹ Instead, Jobert shot challenging words at everyone—the Americans as well as his European colleagues, who seemed poised to give into US demands and abandon the approach to solving the Oil Crisis that the French had devised. According to the NBC evening report on 12 February, "France

³ Ibid.

⁴ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1982), 906.

⁵ Weed, *L'Image publique*, 170.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 905.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Weed, *L'Image publique*, 171. « Kissinger est prêt à céder sur de nombreux points afin de faire de cette conférence de Washington un succès pour le président Nixon sur le sol américain. »

remained apart throughout today's session, rebuffing all efforts by its European colleagues to reach a common position on how to continue the work of this conference."¹⁰ Jobert himself later admitted, "There were some difficult moments, some outbursts of rage, some excessive words."¹¹

Kissinger felt that he was conciliating towards the French Foreign Minister during the Conference. At lunch on the second day, 12 February, he seated Jobert in the place of the guest of honor, on his right. In addition, he agreed to meet in private at 4:00 that afternoon, at his French counterpart's request.¹² This gave Jobert a chance to propose a compromise. "I even suggested, in a tête-à-tête with Henry Kissinger, two solutions to get the conference through the rough patch that he had driven it into."¹³ The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and its existing committees could coordinate cooperation among the oil consuming nations if the US would allow the Washington Energy Conference to end in indecision. Kissinger learned that "France would welcome a continuation of the Washington conference in OECD's Paris headquarters but would not pledge itself in advance to an agreed outcome."¹⁴ In his memoirs, the Secretary of State recognized that Jobert was offering a compromise: if the US would avoid embarrassing France at the conference, France would cooperate with the essential aspects of the American energy design.¹⁵ Kissinger wrote, "It was a tempting proposal, but it also had the makings of a booby trap."¹⁶ Privately, he used stronger

¹⁰ Richard Valeriani. "NBC Evening News: Energy Conference, Washington, DC," Vanderbilt Television News Archive, record 475121, 02:00, 12 February 1974, <http://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu/program.pl?ID=475121>.

¹¹ Michel Jobert, *Mémoires d'avenir* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1974), 288. « Il y eut quelques scènes pénibles, des fureurs, des paroles excessives. »

¹² Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 917.

¹³ Jobert, *Mémoires*, 288. « Je suggérai même, dans un tête-à-tête avec Henry Kissinger, deux solutions pour sortir la conférence de la mauvaise passe dans laquelle il l'avait conduite. »

¹⁴ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 910.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 918.

language. He told his closest advisor Brent Scowcroft: “Actually, what they proposed would be quite tolerable if I trusted the sons of bitches.”¹⁷

As evidenced by Kissinger’s bitterness, the French Foreign Minister and the American Secretary of State mistrusted each other and, even more importantly, believed that their countries’ national interests were not aligned. Both leaders interpreted their disagreements at the Washington Energy Conference over how the Western Alliance should try to end the Oil Crisis in light of the previous months, which had been characterized by increasing tensions between France and the United States. In Jobert’s estimation, this conference was just “a new bid by the United States, along the lines of the Secretary of State’s 23 April speech, and the accords with the Soviets, to organize the Western camp as they liked and in alignment with their interests.”¹⁸ Similarly, Kissinger complained,

[The Washington Conference’s] purpose was to develop solidarity among the consumers, yet it meandered into the liturgical byways that had sidetracked the Atlantic dialogue for a year. Once again we found ourselves forced into a confrontation we did not seek...[Jobert] wanted to use energy—as he had used the Year of Europe—to create an identity for Europe, under French leadership, in opposition to the United States.¹⁹

Neither Jobert nor Kissinger was able to recognize his counterpart’s attempts to mend the relationship between France and the United States. Both believed that their diplomatic relations amounted to a zero sum game in which the other side was trying to take advantage of every circumstance, always at the expense of their side.

¹⁷ Telecon Kissinger/Snowcroft, 12 February 1974, 7:45 P.M., NPM, NSC, Kissinger files, Telecons, 24 in Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 129.

¹⁸ Jobert, *Mémoires*, 288. « une nouvelle tentative des Etats-Unis, dans la ligne du discours du 23 avril du secrétaire d’Etat, et des accords passés avec les Soviétiques, pour organiser le camp occidental à leur guise et en fonction de leurs intérêts. »

¹⁹ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 905.

It was a strange place for two allies to end up. The Franco-American relationship had become so adversarial that after the Washington Energy Conference, Kissinger boasted of having isolated the French and “broken the Community, just as I always thought I wanted to.”²⁰ Each country was so ossified in its respective position that even a personal entreaty from the President of the United States would have made no difference to the French Foreign Minister. Jobert recalled a moment during his meeting with Kissinger on February 12:

While we were talking, an aid came to bring him a paper. ‘It’s President Nixon asking if he had better not see you, to convince you,’ he said to me, laughing.

‘It’s up to you to judge if it’s possible,’ I responded.

[Kissinger:] ‘No, no, with him that would end very badly.’

[Jobert:] ‘Are you so sure that it is going to end well?’²¹

France and the United States did not arrive on this collision course by accident. The conference was the apex of a conflict that, ironically, had begun in April 1973 when Kissinger announced America’s intentions of improving relations with Europe. By this point, nearly a year later, it seemed like their alliance had simply become untenable.

This thesis offers a study of the bilateral relationship between France and the United States in the early 1970s that was previously missing in the historical literature. It follows the United States and France through arguably the most acute crisis in the history of their alliance. Tensions between France and the US escalated from April 1973 until late November. Although each partner blamed the deterioration of their relationship on different factors, as I show,

²⁰ Telecon Kissinger/Snowcroft, 12 February 1974, 5:45 P.M., NPM, NSC, Kissinger files, Telecons, 24 in Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 129.

²¹ Jobert, *Mémoires*, 288. « Pendant que nous parlions, un aide vint lui apporter un papier. ‘C’est le président Nixon qui me demande s’il ne devait pas vous voir, pour vous convaincre, me dit-il en riant. –A vous de juger si c’est possible, lui répondis-je. –Non, non, avec lui, cela finirait très mal. –Etes-vous si convaincu que cela finira bien ?’ »

disagreement really crystallized around three events: Kissinger's Year of Europe Speech, the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War, and the Yom Kippur War.²² The resentment brewing between the US and France had a personal dimension. Kissinger and Jobert, the real architects behind their nations' foreign policies, had an undeniably hostile relationship. In fact, after Jobert left the Quai d'Orsay in spring 1974, relations between France and the United States saw marked improvement. In June 1974, the Ottawa Declaration, which reaffirmed the necessity of NATO and redefined the alliance's mission, was emblematic of French-US reconciliation.

The general arc of this story is well-established in the historical literature.²³ Scholars agree that the Year of Europe Speech pronounced by Kissinger on April 23 touched off a very difficult period in French-US relations, which then gave way to reconciliation at some point in spring 1974 before the signing of the Ottawa Declaration. When this shift actually occurred—whether in February, as Frank Costigliola argued, or in June, as Daniel Möckli and Aurélie Gfeller maintain—is a matter for debate, however.²⁴ Most historians' explanations of the improvement in French-US in 1974 rely on personalities.²⁵ Michel Jobert and Henry Kissinger, each possessing extraordinary control over foreign policy in their respective countries in 1973, were so unfriendly that relations between France and the US suffered. Pompidou's death ushered in a new administration headed by President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Foreign

²² Alternatively, the "October War" or, to contemporaries in the American government and media, the "Mid-East War." The name "Yom Kippur War" refers to the Jewish holiday Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement because Egypt and Syria commenced their attack on Israel during the holiday. I have chosen to use this term even though scholars have pointed out that it seems to favor the Israeli side because it is the most common name for the war in both American and French sources.

²³ Frank Costigliola, *France and the United States: The Cold Alliance, 1940-1990* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 174-175. This is the seminal English-language text on French-US relations over the long term.

²⁴ Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 179. Daniel Möckli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War: Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the Dream of Political Unity* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 3, 321-322, 363. Aurélie Éliisa Gfeller, *Building a European Identity: France, the United States, and the Oil Shock, 1973-1974* (New York: Berhahn Books, 2012), 153-154.

²⁵ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 153, 198. Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 180-181. Luke A. Nichter, *Richard Nixon and Europe: The Reshaping of the Postwar Atlantic Alliance* (Unpublished manuscript, Texas A&M University, 2014), 179.

Minister Jean Sauvagnargues that was more amenable towards the United States. The change of government in France was the reason for the allies' return to a more cooperative relationship, according to this generally-accepted view.

Missing from the literature is a clear definition of what came between France and the United States in 1973 or an attempt to weigh the importance of different sources of tension. Historians of Anglo-American and German-American relations have taken on this type of project for 1973-1974. The alliance between Britain and the United States—commonly known as the “special relationship” because of the two countries’ shared language and culture and close nuclear cooperation—was also greatly tested in 1973.²⁶ Prime Minister Edward Heath’s plan to integrate Britain into the European Community required his government to privilege relations with Europe over the “special relationship.” Washington’s objection to this policy was the main source of tension in Anglo-American bilateral relations, although the exogenous crises of 1973 certainly compounded the effects of this disconnect between Britain and the US.²⁷ Similarly, historians agree that West German *Ostpolitik*, which translates as “Eastern policy” and involved normalizing diplomatic relations with East Germany, continued to complicate the German alliance with the United States, as did West Germany’s desire to remain within France’s and the EC’s good graces.²⁸

Recently, Gfeller’s study of French-US relations in 1973-1974, in the same vein as the literature on the US’s bilateral relationships with Britain and West Germany during this period,

²⁶ Catherine Hynes, *The Year that Never Was: Heath, the Nixon Administration and the Year of Europe* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2009). See especially Chapters 4-8. Niklas H. Rossbach, *Heath, Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special Relationship: Britain, the US, and the EC, 1969-1974* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 122-60.

²⁷ Rossbach, *Heath, Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special Relationship*, 4-5.

²⁸ Gottfried Niedhart, “U.S. Détente and West German *Ostpolitik*: Parallels and Frictions” and Fabian Hilfrich, “Western Germany’s Long Year of Europe: Bonn between Europe and the United States” in *The Strained Alliance: U.S. European Relations from Nixon to Carter*, ed. Matthias Schulz and Thomas A. Schwartz (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Soutou, Georges-Henri. *La guerre de Cinquante Ans: Les relations Est-Ouest 1943-1990*, (Paris : Fayard, 2001), 535-539.

analyzed the two allies' disagreements and how, apparently, they were resolved. She attributes the changing tenor of Franco-American relations essentially to an evolution in France's foreign policy.²⁹ Breaking with his former mentor Charles de Gaulle, who jealously guarded France's independence and was wary of "supranational" European institutions, French President Georges Pompidou built his foreign policy during the last year of his Presidency around empowering the European Community, Gfeller argues.³⁰ Even though according to Gfeller a US initiative, the Year of Europe, had inspired this reformulation of French policy, the United States objected to Pompidou's conception of the EC as a political as well as an economic actor that would be able to extend its influence in the Middle East and, more generally, pursue its own policies without always conforming to the American agenda.³¹ As Gfeller breaks down the essential differences between the two countries' goals, the French envisioned a "two-pillar Western world" while the Americans wanted transatlantic unity, which implicitly meant uncontested US leadership.³² This shift in French foreign policy coincided with a growing sense of European identity among French elites.³³ Pompidou's death, however, brought Giscard to power, who placed a higher premium on friendly relations with the US. The focus of French foreign policy shifted again towards improving the EC's political institutions and France's relationship with West Germany.³⁴ Gfeller's work still offers only a partial answer to the question of why French-US relations worsened in 1973 only to improve again the next spring. Because she situates herself firmly within a European context, she examines the alliance only from the French perspective

²⁹ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 195.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 196.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Aurélie Éliisa Gfeller, "Imagining European Identity: French Elites and the American Challenge in the Pompidou–Nixon Era," *Contemporary European History* 19 (May 2010), accessed 8 February 2014, doi:10.1017/S0960777310000056, 134, 136. Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 11, 13.

³⁴ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 198–199.

and, ultimately, approaches the bilateral relationship between France and the United as a subplot within the larger story of European political and economic integration.

My thesis avoids privileging either French or American accounts of this crisis period while challenging and complicating the traditional narrative that relies so much on the leaders' interactions. I argue that personalities alone cannot explain the tenor of diplomatic relations between the US and France in 1973-1974. France and the United States did reconcile in part because the new French leaders reconsidered Pompidou and Jobert's approach to foreign relations and reversed course. But it was also more complicated than that. In the end, I conclude that France and the United States reconciled in spring 1974 because the Oil Crisis shut down French attempts to assert leadership within the EC and to create an independent foreign policy agenda in concert with the rest of Europe. Before the October War, Europe's superior economic performance and the absence of serious external threats created a situation in which France could organize the Europeans against the United States. The Oil Crisis, however, brought American power into sharp relief. European (including French) dependence on the US for security had been a reality all along and was the missing piece in Jobert's calculations, but in Europe's time of need the Americans were able to leverage it to their advantage. This was not a story of changing strategic balance. Instead, as high oil prices squeezed all industrialized nations, the American strategic advantage in oil resources and influence over the Europeans and Arab oil producers became even more important.

In order to reach these nuanced conclusions, I chose a methodology that is unique among studies of bilateral relations. In the opening chapters of my thesis, I study official government documents and leaders' memoirs for evidence of how each country—first France, then the United States—understood and articulated their disagreements. The goal of this approach is to

immerse myself in each ally's perspective. In this way, I achieve a more thorough understanding of how each respective foreign secretary, as well as the ministry agents who kept him informed and put his policies in action, perceived his country's interests and strategic position. The benefit of my methodology is that I not only understand the strategic picture in 1973 and 1974, I also gain insight into French and American leaders' reactions and decisions. In 1974, Jobert failed to add up how the Oil Crisis would impact his foreign policy's chances for success in time to salvage aspects of his plan and avoid being isolated at the Washington Energy Conference in February. But having studied the French interpretation of American designs and the domestic political forces that guided Jobert and his President's decisions, I appreciate that cooperating with the United States would have been difficult for France in 1974. This approach to diplomatic history valorizes understanding the political actors' perceptions and decision-making just as much as understanding which side came out on top and why.

Chapter One shows that the period from April 1973 until late November was characterized by escalating tensions between France and the United States. From the French perspective, the Year of Europe initiated tensions. The Americans had hoped the Year of Europe would strengthen and reinvigorate the Western Alliance, but the French saw this as coded language for reasserting American leadership over Europe, a geopolitical outcome that Pompidou's Gaullist administration was determined to prevent. Détente was a second source of conflict as it stoked French fears that the US could no longer be depended on to defend Europe. The United States' apparent lack of urgency in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict also frustrated France. With their colonial history in the Middle East and North Africa, the French felt a cultural affinity with the Arabs and believed they had a superior understanding of the region.

Finally, French Foreign Minister Jobert's personal dislike of Henry Kissinger hurt the two countries' relationship during this period.

Chapter Two offers Washington's point of view on the reasons for Franco-American disagreement in 1973, which was naturally different from Paris' perception. The Nixon administration had not expected such a negative response to the Year of Europe and felt betrayed by Jobert, whose two-faced tactics stopped progress on the initiative, according to the Americans' characterization. European criticism of US support for Israel during the Yom Kippur War also angered the United States. Furthermore, public criticism from Europe strengthened the voices within American domestic politics that called for the US to pull back from many of its military commitments, including its troop commitments in Western Europe. It exasperated the Nixon administration that France seemed not to see or to deny this connection. The Watergate Scandal, from the American perspective, compounded each of these points of tension with France.

Chapter Three covers the transition back to pacific relations between the United States and France which followed their disagreements of 1973. The signing of the Ottawa Declaration, NATO's answer to Kissinger's call to redefine the Western Alliance in April, illustrated that hostilities between the US and Europe, and between the US and France, had been put to bed. A superficial explanation for this shift is that France's new leaders, President Giscard d'Estaing and Foreign Minister Sauvagnargues, were easier for Kissinger to deal with than Jobert and prioritized friendly relations with the US and West Germany more than their Gaullist predecessors had. The deeper issue in the spring of 1974 was that Jobert and Pompidou's plan to dissociate from the United States and build European solidarity had failed, and France needed to change course. French antagonism towards the US jeopardized American defense commitments

in Europe, whereas preserving common defense was a core interest for France. Thus, the old administration's design was flawed on a basic level. The French response to the Oil Crisis—pointing the finger at the United States and negotiating directly with the Arabs—also ran aground and alienated France's European allies. The Washington Energy Conference in mid-February was the moment when the Pompidou administration's failure became clear.

I. FRENCH PERSPECTIVES ON THE REASONS FOR DISCORD, APRIL 1973- NOVEMBER 1973

In his role as National Security Advisor, on April 23, 1973 Kissinger announced to the Associated Press that the United States' new focus was strengthening the Western Alliance. His speech heralded the end of an era. The bipolar world that emerged after World War II had given way to "new realities," which Kissinger defined for his audience:

Nineteen seventy-three is the year of Europe because the era that was shaped by decisions of a generation ago is ending. The success of those policies has produced new realities that require new approaches:

—The revival of Western Europe is an established fact, as is the historic success of its movement toward economic unification.

—The East-West strategic military balance has shifted from American preponderance to near-equality, bringing with it the necessity for a new understanding of the requirements of our common security...

—We are in a period of relaxation of tensions. But as the rigid divisions of the past two decades diminish, new assertions of national identity and national rivalry emerge.

—Problems have arisen, unforeseen a generation ago, which require new types of cooperative action. Insuring the supply of energy for industrialized nations is an example.¹

Kissinger's main point was that the political landscape was much more complex in 1973 than it had been at NATO's foundation in 1949. One could no longer speak of a bipolar world order because of Western European recovery, nor could one take comfort in America's nuclear advantage over the USSR or in its decisive bargaining power in the market for oil. The West needed to adjust to these changes and remain unified in spite of the fact that European countries

¹ "Address given by Henry A. Kissinger (New York, 23 April 1973)," *Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe*, accessed 16 March 2015, http://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/2002/9/30/dec472e3-9dff-4c06-ad8d-d3fab7e13f9f/publishable_en.pdf

were ready to assert themselves politically in the context of détente. Kissinger did not believe that this would be an easy task.

Inevitably this period of transition will have its strains. There have been complaints in America that Europe ignores its wider responsibilities in pursuing economic self-interest too one-sidedly and that Europe is not carrying its fair share of the burden of the common defense. There have been complaints in Europe that America is out to divide Europe economically, or to desert Europe militarily, or to bypass Europe diplomatically. Europeans appeal to the United States to accept their independence and their occasionally severe criticism of us in the name of Atlantic unity, while at the same time they ask for a veto on our independent policies — also in the name of Atlantic unity.²

He listed some of the Allies' disagreements: the United States wanted Europe to shoulder more of the cost of its defense, while Europe demanded greater political autonomy. Undaunted by these problems, Kissinger insisted,

The Atlantic nations must join in a fresh act of creation... This is why the President is embarking on a personal and direct approach to the leaders of Western Europe... His approach will be to deal with Atlantic problems comprehensively. The political, military, and economic issues in Atlantic relations are linked by reality, not by our choice nor for the tactical purpose of trading one off against the other. The solutions... must be addressed at the highest level... The United States has global interests and responsibilities. Our European allies have regional interests. These are not necessarily in conflict, but in the new era neither are they automatically identical... The Atlantic nations must find a solution for the management of their diversity to serve the common objectives which underlie

² Ibid.

their unity. We can no longer afford to pursue national or regional self-interest without a unifying framework.³

The 23 April speech launched the Year of Europe, which would continue to trouble the Western Alliance for the next fourteen months, and is the beginning point for this study. What is so fascinating about this speech is the accuracy with which Kissinger anticipated the problems which would emerge between the US and its European allies, in particular France, during the coming year: the implications of détente for security and burden-sharing, Europe's degree of independence from American foreign policy, and the vulnerability of the developed world's energy sources, among other issues. Equally fascinating, however, was that Kissinger apparently did not anticipate how poorly his call to "join in a fresh act of creation" would be received, especially by the French. Members of Kissinger's audience who were familiar with the politics of the Alliance would have quickly perceived some problems in his presentation. First, the White House, not the State Department, would manage the initiative. This was an unconventional way of dealing with the Europeans that bypassed traditional channels and created an incongruous system in which Kissinger, as National Security Advisor, would be negotiating with Foreign Ministers, who were really counterparts to the American Secretary of State. Also, whatever Kissinger claimed about linkage not being a negotiating tactic, the Europeans were bound to see it that way and object. They were also bound to object to his characterization of their interests as "regional," limited in scope compared with US interests.

Already it is clear that the positive message Kissinger intended the Year of Europe speech to communicate was not what the Atlantic allies heard. French-US relations from late April until early November of 1973 were characterized by similar points of disparity between one partner's intentions and the other's perceptions. This thesis seeks to dissect the most

³ Ibid.

important reasons why France and the US were at odds in 1973 from each angle, beginning with the French perspective in this chapter. Four key factors characterized French opposition to the United States. First, the French disapproved of the US's campaign to strengthen ties with Europe, which Kissinger enthusiastically pursued beginning in April and which the Quai d'Orsay estimated to be contrary to French and European interests. Second, the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War, signed by the US and USSR on June 22, 1973, estranged the two allies and made American commitment to European defense highly suspect from France's point of view. Third, France competed with the United States for influence within the Third World. Eager to leave behind its colonial past and find trading and political partners with developing countries, France instead found itself excluded from negotiations following the Yom Kippur War because other states valued friendship with the US over friendship with France. Finally, Jobert's personal mistrust of Kissinger increased antagonisms between the allies. With Jobert expecting to find an ulterior motive behind every American action, entente between France and the United States was virtually impossible.

The Year of Europe in Paris

The first source of French-American antagonism is counter-intuitive: why would US determination to make Europe the focus of its diplomacy in 1973 offend the French? The most immediate issue with the Year of Europe initiative, from the French point of view, was Kissinger's clumsy delivery. France and other European countries, predictably, did not respond well to Kissinger's calling the proposed redefinition of the Western Alliance's values and vocation a "new Atlantic Charter" since the original Charter was the brainchild of Winston

Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt during World War II.⁴ Even more offensive to French observers was Kissinger's distinction between Europe's regional interests as opposed to the United States' global interests.⁵ In his memoirs published a little over a year later, Jobert wrote that he considered the 23 April speech "an imprudent presentation of the American geopolitical strategy, confining Europe to its purely regional vocation and ordering the world around American power."⁶ This formulation belittled Europe's role in the world and especially stood out to France.

The circumstances surrounding the Year of Europe speech did not recommend it to the French, either. Jobert remembered receiving a message on 22 April which informed him that the American National Security Advisor would give an important speech the next day and that Washington would appreciate it if Paris would make a public statement of approval.⁷ It was not as if France was taken by surprise—Kissinger had broached the subject of a new Atlantic Charter with Pompidou in December 1972, though Jobert was skeptical that the President was ever receptive to the plan, as Kissinger later claimed.⁸ Instead, the Quai d'Orsay was peeved that Washington assumed that its European allies were at his beck and call. Jobert drily joked that the US must have believed that its relations with Europe were as utilitarian as the functioning of the telephone: "Basically, someone calls and you respond!"⁹ The French resented Washington "calling in a favor," and were even less enthusiastic about doing a favor for an American President weakened by scandal. Jobert believed that the Year of Europe speech was rushed and intended to distract the American public from Nixon's political troubles: "Henry Kissinger may

⁴ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 27.

⁵ Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 174-175.

⁶ Michel Jobert, *Mémoires de l'Avenir* (Paris : Bernard Grasset, 1974), 231. « Un exposé sans prudence de la géopolitique américaine, l'Europe confiné à sa vocation purement régionale et le monde s'ordonnant autour de la puissance américaine. »

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid. See also Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 21.

⁹ Ibid., 250.

well have said afterwards that the speech had been pronounced in haste because American domestic politics had its exigencies. The Watergate affair was already commencing its ravages.”¹⁰ The telegram lines between Washington and Paris buzzed with news of the developing Watergate Scandal through 1973; France was very aware of the domestic political scene in the US.¹¹ In short, to Jobert and the Quai d’Orsay, it looked like the Year of Europe was not really about Europe at all but about staging a sorely-needed diplomatic victory—executed with the same sort of dramatic effect as the *rapprochement* with Mao’s China or the end of the Vietnam War—for the sake of American domestic politics. France wanted no part in this performance.

These, however, were superficial objections to a new Atlantic declaration. On a deeper level, France estimated that Kissinger’s initiative was contrary to France’s national interests and to European interests. Jobert wrote, “This project seemed unrealistic to me first of all because it was unacceptable to us and because it stamped out any desire for Europe to exist on its own.”¹² Kissinger’s entreaties to renew the Atlantic Alliance were “unacceptable” from his perspective because foreign policy since the de Gaulle years—and especially since France’s withdrawal from NATO military command in 1966—focused on maintaining French independence and limiting as much as possible French responsibilities and obligations within the Western Alliance. The Year of Europe, which was designed to strengthen Atlantic ties, thus contradicted the Quai d’Orsay’s grand design.

With regard to the European Community, the French Foreign Ministry believed that proceeding with the United States in this effort would put the brakes on Europe’s political

¹⁰ Ibid., 231. « Henry Kissinger eut beau dire après que le discours avait été prononcé en hâte, parce que la politique intérieure américaine, où l’affaire du Watergate commençait déjà ses ravages, avait ses exigences. »

¹¹ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 27.

¹² Ibid., 237. « Ce projet me paraissait irréaliste parce qu’il nous était d’abord inacceptable et parce qu’il estompait toute volonté de l’Europe d’exister par elle-même. »

evolution. The Atlantic declaration would set the limits of European solidarity and unity.¹³ The US would have considerable influence over the demarcation of those limits, when it should be for Europe alone to decide. Jobert gained insight into the degree to which Europe had progressed toward political unity at his first Council of Foreign Ministers in Brussels at the beginning of June. While the EC effectively coordinated the members' economic policies and commerce, its political institutions were disorganized and weak: "The complexity of it is great," he wrote, "and the disorder as well. The sessions never begin on time, and the weariness of late nights and early mornings puts an end to them...The same subjects remain on the agenda for many years, and provoke the same discussions...The faults of the institution are so visible."¹⁴ The main problems with the EC were that it lacked a way to choose a single representative to speak for Europe in negotiations with outside nations like the United States, and the mechanism for developing common policies, the European Political Cooperation (EPC), was as yet untested.¹⁵ Jobert realized this and proposed to Pompidou that a rotation among the heads of state be established in 1973 to choose the de facto representative of the EC each year.¹⁶ This way, Europe could continue to develop its political institutions but, in the meantime, the region would become habituated to deciding on common policies and speaking for itself through a single representative.¹⁷ "Europe would have one voice and one face."¹⁸

Others within the Community shared this concern: the supporting documents from Council of Europe meeting on May 17 demonstrate that how to designate a spokesman for

¹³ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 38.

¹⁴ Michel Jobert, *Mémoires de l'Avenir*, 235. « La complexité en est grande et le désordre aussi. Les séances ne commencent jamais à l'heure, et la lassitude des nuits ou des petits matins y met fin...Les mêmes sujets sont à l'ordre du jour pendant plusieurs années, et provoquent les mêmes discours...Les défauts de l'institution sont si visibles. »

¹⁵ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 38 and Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 175.

¹⁶ Michel Jobert, *Mémoires de l'Avenir*, 253.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 253.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* « L'Europe aurait une voix et un visage. »

Europe was an important issue within the EC in spring 1973.¹⁹ Sir John Rodgers, the English rapporteur for the meeting, wrote that Europe was prepared to speak with one voice on commercial issues through the economic Commission, but the Community was still far from reaching the cohesion necessary to respond effectively to political and defense questions.²⁰ For these reasons, the French Foreign Ministry concluded that the moment for a major project redefining the Western Alliance was not right. Europe needed more time to progress along its own path toward political unity, without American interference. Beginning negotiations in 1973, before there was consensus among the European nations concerning who or what institution could speak for the region, would leave Europe divided vis-à-vis the Americans.

A second important reason why the French Foreign Ministry believed the Year of Europe was contrary to Europe's interests was that the United States would be able to bring its negotiating strengths to bear in the context of a summit that treated defense, foreign policy, and economic issues all at once.²¹ Quai-d'Orsay memoranda emphasized the danger in "the American desire to globalize the negotiations,"²² or in other words, its willingness "to treat all of the questions that are asked about them and Europe."²³ The French did not deny that a multifaceted approach to the alliance could have its merits, but in this instance, "globalization" of the negotiations would be inopportune and would permit the United States, under the veiled threat of reducing their participation in defense of Europe, to obtain from the community the

¹⁹ Sir John Rodgers, "Addendum au rapport sur les relations entre l'Europe occidentale et les Etats-Unis," 14 May 1973, MAE 91QO 727.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 174.

²² Internal memorandum titled "Réactions au discours de M. Kissinger," 14 May 1973, MAE 91QO 723. « La volonté américaine de globaliser les négociations. »

²³ Internal memorandum titled "Sujet de nouvelle Charte Atlantique," 14 May 1973, MAE 91QO 723. « Les Etats-Unis cherchent encore à traiter l'ensemble des questions qui se posent entre eux et l'Europe. »

most concessions possible in the commercial and fiduciary fields.”²⁴ “Globalization” was the Quai d’Orsay’s equivalent for “linkage,” one of the Nixon administration’s favorite negotiating strategies that had successfully elicited concessions from the Soviet Union and China.²⁵ In this instance, France feared that if it agreed to general negotiations with the United States so that defense, economic, and monetary issues were treated at the same venue, the US would be in a position to use linkage. The Americans, for example, could threaten to withdraw troops stationed in Europe in order to obtain economic concessions. Consequently, France wanted to keep each domain separate, rather than trying to solve every problem at once with a single declaration.

Despite Jobert’s vehement opposition to the Year of Europe, which became the French Foreign Ministry’s official position, it is important to note that reactions to the American proposal were not uniform throughout the EC or even within the Quai d’Orsay. The fact that some European governments were more positively disposed to the Year of Europe worried the French. One internal memorandum called attention to the fact that all of France’s partners “recognized the positive nature of such a project” and warned that the US might accentuate its influence over the Nine if France did not act decisively to shore up European solidarity.²⁶ For instance, West Germany was much less hostile to a new Atlantic Declaration than France. Writing in April prior to Kissinger’s Year of Europe speech, the French ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany, Jean Sauvagnargues, reported that his colleagues attached capital importance to preserving harmonious relations with the US and were on board with the

²⁴ Internal memorandum titled “Rencontre trimestrielle des Ministres des Affaires Etrangères français et allemand,” 4 June 1973, MAE 91QO 748. « ...estiment inopportune une 'globalisation' des négociations que permettrait aux Etats-Unis, sous la menace voilée de réduire leur participation à la défense de l'Europe, d'obtenir de la communauté le plus de concessions possible dans les domaines commercial et monétaire. »

²⁵ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 38.

²⁶ Internal memorandum titled “Rapports Europe-Etats-Unis,” no date given, MAE 91QO 723. « ...reconnaissent un caractère positif à un tel projet. »

American idea of an "Atlantic Summit."²⁷ West Germany favored talks with the US treating defense, foreign policy, and economic questions.²⁸ Britain's comment on the American initiative was similarly welcoming, with Prime Minister Edward Heath promising that the EC would determine a common response to Kissinger's proposals.²⁹ The Germans' and Brits' endorsement of the project in this case shows that, even though France aspired to be the voice of Europe, there was actually a whole spectrum of attitudes. Within the EC, different governments had different readings of how national and European interests could be either served or hurt by cooperating with the US on the Year of Europe.

Additionally, some within the French diplomatic corps did not share Jobert's negative opinion on the Year of Europe. Sending his immediate reactions to Kissinger's speech back to Paris, Jacques Kosciusko-Morizet, the French ambassador to the US, was pleased that Kissinger's ideas agreed with French thinking on many subjects.³⁰ The speech recognized Europe's status as an independent partner to the United States, the necessity of reestablishing a sustainable monetary and economic system, and the necessity of remaining vigilant and united in terms of defense, even during détente.³¹ Kosciusko-Morizet had his criticisms of the speech; for instance he sarcastically warned that, while Kissinger's "global approach did not signify that they would exchange companies of GI's for agricultural concessions," linkage did give the US a significant advantage in talks with Europe. Overall, though, the ambassador viewed the American attempt to strengthen the Western Alliance as a positive development.³²

²⁷ Sauvagnargues, telegram from Bonn to French embassies in European capitals, 4 April 1973, MAE 91QO 727.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Rossbach, *Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special Relationship*, 147.

³⁰ Kosciusko-Morizet, telegram from Washington to Paris, 23 April 1973, MAE 91QO 723.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid. « ...son approche globale ne signifie pas qu'on échangera des compagnies de GI's contre des concessions agricoles. »

There was enough diversity in responses to the idea of creating a new Atlantic declaration within Europe—and more importantly, enough determination on the Americans’ part—that the project was not “*définitivement enterré* (buried)” as France wanted.³³ Despite Jobert’s denunciations of the Year of Europe on September 11 at Copenhagen, the Nine Foreign Ministers decided to draft two declarations, a joint EC-US statement and a sweeping declaration on European identity.³⁴ Adding an additional layer of confusion, within NATO work began on a third declaration on Atlantic relations.³⁵ The European response to the American’s call was thus split between two documents and two institutions—the EC and NATO—that had overlapping, but not identical, memberships. French Foreign Ministry correspondence often referred to the Atlantic declarations “*à Neuf*” (of the Nine) or “*à Quinze*” (of the Fifteen) to draw clear distinctions between the simultaneous drafting processes. The complicated procedure worked to Jobert’s advantage. Splitting up the issues so that the EC declaration would cover the economic and political questions while the NATO would deal with defense helped to block the Americans’ linkage strategy.³⁶ Also, the decided apathy of the Europeans’ response defeated Kissinger’s purposes almost as well as a complete abandonment of the project would have done.

It was Danish Foreign Minister Knud Andersen’s task to present the EC draft declaration to the Americans at the end of September as the UN General Assembly was convened in New York.³⁷ It was a decidedly anemic paper, and Jobert noted with satisfaction that the Europeans remained faithful to their common policies throughout spring and summer of 1973 and during the UN General Assembly meeting at the end of September. He wrote, “Something was finally moving in the European conscience that the persistent pressures of American diplomacy had

³³ Internal memorandum titled “Sujet de nouvelle Charte Atlantique,” 14 May 1973, MAE 91QO 723.

³⁴ Jobert, *Mémoires*, 255.

³⁵ Gfeller, *Buidling a European Identity*, 58.

³⁶ Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 175.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 256.

perhaps unleashed despite its intentions. There was at least the conviction that Europe could not accept just anything, and that it would say so with one voice by formulating its own conclusions.”³⁸ To the French Foreign Minister, the Nine’s refusal to embrace the Year of Europe signified that Europe was focused on its own integration and independence. Ironically, the Americans’ overture provided the impetus for Europe to organize a common position against United States foreign policy. French leadership within the EC appeared secure just prior to the Yom Kippur War.

Détente and “Fausses Sécurités”

The second crucial source of conflict in the Western Alliance in 1973 was détente itself. A relaxation in the US-Soviet relationship endangered American commitments to Europe and raised big existential questions about the alliance. French concerns over détente, extensively analyzed in Quai-d’Orsay memoranda, certainly pre-date this period. Throughout the 1960’s, French confidence in the American nuclear guarantee eroded due to growing nuclear parity between the US and the USSR and due to "flexible response," which replaced “massive retaliation” as NATO’s official doctrine.³⁹ The French Foreign Ministry was suspicious of “the unwritten principles that govern American foreign policy”: namely that, in the event of Soviet aggression, it would not be worth it to the US to risk New York City for the sake of Paris.⁴⁰ American leadership within NATO and their discretion in determining the allies’ response to an attack left France exposed—she could be sacrificed to prevent a direct Soviet attack on US soil. This reasoning led France to develop its own nuclear force and to withdraw from the military

³⁸ Ibid. « Quelque chose bougeait enfin dans la conscience européenne, que les pressions insistantes de la diplomatie américaine avait peut-être déclenché contre son gré. Il y avait du moins la conviction que l’Europe ne pouvait accepter n’importe quoi, et qu’elle le dirait d’une seule voix, en formulant ses propres conclusions. »

³⁹ Internal memorandum titled “Rapports Europe-Etats-Unis,” no date given, MAE 91QO 723.

⁴⁰ Ibid. « Les principes non-écrits qui gouvernent la politique étrangère des Etats-Unis. »

arm of NATO. The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), culminating in May 1972 with the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, gave credence to these fears.⁴¹ The Quai d'Orsay recognized that the superpowers sought to stabilize their relations by limiting defensive nuclear weapons and through mutually assured destruction; more concerning was the creation of a permanent commission, which established a line of communication between the two superpowers.⁴² Taken to its extreme, this new transparency would enable the US and the USSR to manage any global crisis that appeared to challenge the equilibrium and would perpetuate the bipolar international political system that France hoped to transcend.⁴³ Additionally, although SALT only applied to the US and the USSR, France worried that the superpowers would try to suppress other countries' nuclear arsenals, like Britain's or its own, in future arms limitation talks.⁴⁴

The Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War, signed by the United States and the Soviet Union on June 22, 1973, increased French fears of superpower collusion and would color Jobert and the Quai d'Orsay's interpretation of the crisis that followed.⁴⁵ Jobert records how he understood the Agreement, which

in the lofty interest of preserving world peace, stipulated that the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. would consult one another in every situation likely to threaten peace and would come to an agreement about appropriate measures. When power is concentrated like that in the hands of two great countries, what could be more natural than them trying to avoid confrontation? But what could be more natural than everyone in the world being concerned about this *entente* and about the *arbitrages* (arbitration or refereeing of global affairs) that it implies? Neither

⁴¹ Internal memorandum titled "SALT : Rapports entre les Etats-Unis et l'URSS dans le domaine stratégique," 14 May 1973, MAE 91QO 723.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 160.

Nixon nor Brezhnev could have thought that such a text, which placed the whole world under their watch and in their calculations, would leave the other countries indifferent. They each took extreme care to refute the accusation that they organized—unconscious, perhaps, of their strength—a condominium.⁴⁶

Understandably, this was a truly alarming development to the French Foreign Ministry.

Afterward, France was hyper-aware of US-USSR cooperation, and the 22 June Agreement affected how it perceived two important events that were to follow in 1973: the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which was held in Helsinki during the first week of July, and the Yom Kippur War.⁴⁷

The shadow cast by the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War on the CSCE was apparent in Jobert's comments at Helsinki. He exhorted his European colleagues to be wary of "*l'apparence de la sécurité*" and to resolve never to trust in "*fausses sécurités*" or "*désarmement moral*," which weaken a state's independence and vigilance and lead to deceptions.⁴⁸ Pointing to the 22 June accords as an attempt at "*hégémonie mondiale*"⁴⁹ by the superpowers, Jobert insisted that Europe must not let its guard down just because of the relaxation of tensions between the US and the USSR: "Europe cannot be this special zone...where external forces would balance each other, a place allotted to these rivalries."⁵⁰ The region must not assume a passive role with regard to its own defense.

⁴⁶ Jobert, *Mémoires*, 241. « Dans la souci louable de préserver la paix mondiale, stipulait que les U.S.A. et l'U.R.S.S. se consulteraient sur toute situation susceptible de la menacer et conviendraient des mesures appropriées. Quand la puissance se concentre ainsi entre les mains de deux grands pays, quoi de plus naturel qu'ils essaient d'éviter l'affrontement ? Mais quoi de plus naturel que chacun dans le monde s'inquiète de cette entente et du sens des arbitrages qu'elle suppose ? Ni Nixon ni Brejnev ne pouvaient penser qu'un tel texte, qui plaçait le monde entier sous leur regard et dans leurs enjeux, laisserait les autres pays indifférents. Ils prirent l'un et l'autre un soin extrême à réfuter l'accusation qu'ils organisaient—inconscients peut-être de leur poids—un condominium. »

⁴⁷ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 29.

⁴⁸ Jobert, *Mémoires*, 246.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 248.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 247. « L'Europe ne peut être cette zone spéciale...où s'équilibreraient des forces extérieures, un lieu dévolu à ces rivalités. »

Jobert's speech alluded to the most important item on the CSCE agenda: Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR), Nixon and Brezhnev's plan to reduce troop numbers and conventional weapons in Central Europe. MBFR had preoccupied US-European relations throughout the spring and summer of 1973.⁵¹ The Americans liked the proposal since it was in the spirit of détente and decreased their commitments in Europe, which they had loudly complained for years did not contribute enough to its own defense. The French felt removed from this debate since they had maintained a national army since 1966 and had no intention of going back to being under NATO allied command. Nevertheless, the security of the Central European states bordering France indirectly affected France's own security.⁵²

Thus, the Quai d'Orsay fervently opposed MBFR for several reasons. First, France believed that American domestic politics were the real motivation behind MBFR. According to French reasoning, the Vietnam War's financial and moral consequences—depleted resources and a lack of confidence in political leaders—decreased Americans' willingness to accept commitments abroad.⁵³ Pressured by Congress and the American public to recall troops from Europe, Washington saw MBFR as a way of avoiding unilateral retreat and keeping its credibility intact.⁵⁴ Second, France disagreed with MBFR because reducing the sizes of the NATO and Warsaw Pact conventional armies would not necessarily increase European security because the Russian forces would retreat but remain on the continent, whereas Americans would retreat across the Atlantic Ocean.⁵⁵ The Soviet Union would still have the upper hand since it could mobilize a large army more quickly. Third, creating a "zone of reduction" in central

⁵¹ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 29.

⁵² Internal memorandum titled "Les Etats-Unis et OTAN : Problème du partage des charges," 14 May 1973, MAE 91QO 723.

⁵³ Internal memorandum titled "Rapports Europe-Etats-Unis," no date given, MAE 91QO 723.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Europe—West Germany and the Benelux countries—would divide Western Europe both geographically and politically.⁵⁶ The withdrawal of Soviet and American troops from central Europe might also lead to the reunification of East and West Germany.⁵⁷ France feared the prospect—a reunified Germany would be an unknown quantity, but history promised that it would be a powerful player in Europe. It is important to note that the French did not see a discrepancy in their policies of resisting American influence but supporting a continued American military presence in Europe. Jobert commented, “I am astonished to see...that there is a contradiction between the wish to maintain American troops in Europe...and the refusal of *arbitrages impérieux*...The United States are in Europe first and foremost for their interests.”⁵⁸ In other words, American ground forces served American as well as European interests. The prospect of MBFR was another example in which détente worked against Europe.

France’s fears of American-Russian entente were realized during the Yom Kippur War. The war began on 6 October as Egypt and Syria opened a two-front attack on Israel to protest the continued occupation of the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula, territories that Israel had taken during the Six Day War in 1967.⁵⁹ In the first days of the war, Egypt and Syria advanced on both fronts, aided by the element of surprise and massive shipments of Soviet weapons. As the situation continued to develop, Israel checked the Syrian advance but began to run low on ammunition and supplies as the outcome in the Sinai Peninsula remained uncertain. In light of these developments and the Soviet intervention, the Nixon administration began airlifting arms

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 28.

⁵⁸ Jobert, *Mémoires*, 268. « Je suis étonné de voir...qu’il y a une contradiction entre le souhait du maintien des troupes américaines en Europe...et le refus de l’arbitrage impérieux...Les Etats-Unis sont en Europe d’abord au nom de leur intérêt. »

⁵⁹ For a more detailed account see William B. Quant, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967* (Washington: Brookings Institute Press, 2005), 148-169 and Craig Daigle, *The Limits of Détente: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1969-1973* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 294-310.

and equipment to Israel on 13 October. Sustained by fresh supplies, Israeli forces successfully repulsed the Egyptians and crossed the Suez Canal on 16 October, but almost all of Western Europe boycotted the decision to re-supply Israel by forbidding American planes participating in the airlift to refuel at NATO bases or fly over NATO airspace. The airlift also provided the pretext for the Arab members of OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) to announce on 17 October a five-percent production cut and promised additional five-percent cuts per month until Israel withdrew to its pre-1967 borders. Several days later, the Arab oil producers instituted a total embargo of the United States and the Netherlands.

French permanent representative to the UN Louis de Guiringaud witnessed superpower *arbitrages* in numerous instances throughout the crisis. In the early days of the war, Guiringaud speculated whether the US decision to call for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council on 8 October had been cleared with the Soviets beforehand: "It is permissible to ask oneself if the question had not been the object of consultation between the two capitals."⁶⁰ He did not see any reason for the US to call the UN while Israel remained at a disadvantage on the battlefield, other than a desire to compromise with the USSR to control the situation.⁶¹ Later, in the days leading up to Kissinger's voyage to Moscow and the first ceasefire agreement, Guiringaud compared notes with the British representative, finding that "the Americans show themselves to be even more discrete—both with the Brits and with us...It is clear here that the representatives of the two champions of détente are hardly concerned with informing their two other partners

⁶⁰ Guiringaud, telegram from New York to all major embassies, 8 October 1973, MAE 499 INVA 1192. « Il est permis de se demander si la question n'a pas fait l'objet des consultations entre les deux capitales. »

⁶¹ Ibid.

from the four-participant consultation of their negotiations.”⁶² Washington’s negligence frustrated Paris.

Several days later, the US and USSR announced to the Security Council that a ceasefire had been arranged and agreed upon by the belligerent states during the course of Kissinger's meeting with Brezhnev.⁶³ Guiringaud noted the “obvious, placid, complacent and spectacularly discrete complicity between M. Malik [the Soviet ambassador to the UN] and M. Scali [the American ambassador].”⁶⁴ The dominant reaction in the room was shock, not relief.⁶⁵ Specifically referencing the 22 June Agreement, the French representative resented that the superpowers imposed on the parties an arrangement and simply invited the UN Security Council to sign off.⁶⁶ The Egyptian representative El Zayyat appeared baffled by his government's actions: he had not been informed or consulted about the decision.⁶⁷ After the surprise announcement, Guiringaud remarked, “several Arab delegations asked us...What is behind the Russo-American accord? Didn’t Kissinger and Brezhnev sign some secret protocols foreseeing a total settlement that would be imposed on the parties? We could only express to them our ignorance.”⁶⁸ He was embarrassed for his Arab colleagues to discover that France had been kept in the dark. These were all classic examples of the US and the USSR managing international crises between the two of them, just as France had feared after the superpowers signed the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War.

⁶² Guiringaud, telegram from New York to all major embassies, 19 October 1973, MAE 499 INVA 1192. « Les Américains se montrant encore plus discrets--avec les Britanniques comme avec nous...Il est clair que les représentants ici des deux champions de la détente ne se soucient guère d'informer sur leurs tractations leurs deux autres partenaires de la concertation à quatre. »

⁶³ Guiringaud, telegram from New York to all major embassies, 22 October 1973, MAE 499 INVA 1192.

⁶⁴ Ibid. « Une complicité évidente, placide, satisfaite et spectaculairement discrète entre M. Malik et M. Scali. »

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid. « Plusieurs délégations Arabes nous ont interrogés...qu'y a-t-il derrière l'accord Russo-Américain? Kissinger et Brejnev n'ont-ils pas signé quelques protocoles secrets prévoyant un règlement d'ensemble qui serait imposé aux parties? Nous n'avons pu que leur dire notre ignorance. »

The tense night of October 24-25—when the US and the USSR came to the point of nuclear alert and then resolved the situation among themselves, all without the international community’s knowledge or input—constituted the most egregious case of the kind of *arbitrages* that Jobert feared. During the conflict, “Europe was kept away from what was transpiring so close to her...the role of the international community was reduced to practically nothing.”⁶⁹ The calling of the UN Security Council, the “*ponts aeriens* (airlifts),” the ceasefire agreement, the nuclear alert, and, later, France and Britain’s exclusion from postwar diplomacy were all the result of superpower complicity or of American unilateral action.⁷⁰

The 22 June Agreement and fears that the US and the USSR were colluding to influence global politics touched a particular nerve within the French consciousness. Speaking to the UN General Assembly on 10 October, Jobert explained that France was particularly uncomfortable with outside powers having undue control over French security due to its experiences during World War II.

The past and geography have taught us lessons that we are not ready to forget. We are like a hunted animal...Illusions, then wars, more illusions, even more war, such has been our lot. From now on we rely upon ourselves, first of all, on our own efforts...It is about national independence, for a nation that does not want to be the plaything of planetary strategy.⁷¹

In the face of a Russo-American entente, the French Foreign Ministry decided that the only solution was to take its destiny into its own hands, relying on greater European unity and independence, rather than on an alliance with the US. From the perspective of France, the

⁶⁹ Internal memorandum titled “Pour le dossier du Sommet européen dès 14 et 15 décembre 1973,” 3 December 1973, MAE, 499 INVA 1192. « Europe était tenue à l'écart de ce qui se passait si près d'elle...le rôle de la communauté internationale était pratiquement réduit à rien. »

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Jobert, *Mémoires*, 262. « Le passé et la géographie nous ont enseigné des leçons que nous ne sommes pas près d'oublier. Nous sommes comme un gibier...Les illusions puis les guerres, encore des illusions, encore la guerre, tel a été notre lot. Désormais nous comptons d'abord sur nous-mêmes, sur notre propre effort...Il s'agit d'indépendance nationale, pour une nation qui ne veut pas être le jouet de la stratégie planétaire. »

Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War shook the Western Alliance to its core and jeopardized its entire existence. Since the alliance was originally conceived in opposition to the Soviet Union, was it even necessary in the context of relaxed relations between the US and the USSR? There is no documentary evidence that French diplomats reached such a dire conclusion, but we can imagine that some observers might have begun to believe that the United States and the Soviet Union *together* posed the greatest risk to France.

Competition for Influence in a “Vital Zone”

The third factor that generated conflict between France and the United States was competition for influence within the Middle East. In 1973, France still struggled with the Gaullist dilemma of how to leave its colonial history behind while still establishing France’s status and power among the nations. The French Foreign Ministry especially wanted to bring the Middle East within its sphere of influence because of the region’s location just to the south, because of its valuable oil resources necessary to the French economy, and because, for better or for worse, France had colonized much of North Africa and the Levant in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and retained contacts and knowledge of the local cultures in those regions. Explaining why French foreign policy seemed so pro-Arab, one French diplomat insisted, “the Middle East was more vital to Europe than it was to the United States.”⁷²

The French believed that they shared a cultural affinity with Arabs due to their colonial past. Jobert, for one, was born in 1921 in Meknès, Morocco and considered his childhood home “paradise.”⁷³ As a boy, he spoke Arabic, and retained some ability to speak it as an adult.⁷⁴

⁷² Puaux, telegram from Paris to Washington and to European and Middle Eastern embassies, 17 November 1973, MAE 91QO 748. « Le Proche Orient était une zone plus vitale pour l'Europe que pour les Etats-Unis. »

⁷³ Jobert, *Mémoires*, 21.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 20.

Once, in July 1974 during a press conference in Saudi Arabia, the interpreter translating Jobert's comments into Arabic apparently made an error. Jobert immediately interrupted and objected that the translator had misrepresented what he said.⁷⁵ His audience was unpleasantly surprised to learn that he understood Arabic.⁷⁶ Pompidou also often displayed his familiarity with Arab culture. For instance, during a May 1973 meeting with Hafez Ismail, Sadat's representative, Pompidou spoke of their countries' traditional friendship and the similarities of the lessons that France and Egypt had learned from history: "history has taught us that one cannot accept the conquest of territories by force."⁷⁷ He also promised, "France would be ready to assist [Egypt] in all things, other than suggesting military action."⁷⁸ Arabs educated in the French language—practically all of the intelligentsia in former French colonies—may have found the French easier to talk to than Anglo-Saxons or Russians for practical reasons, but leaders like Jobert and Pompidou were probably misguided when they presumed that they shared a similar background with their Arab counterparts or that France and the Arab states had learned the same lessons from history. The fact remained that France had been an imperial power, and it is hard to imagine that the Arabs did not resent this.

Surprisingly, sometimes the French cultural affinity with the Arabs seemed mutual, to a certain extent. Guiringaud related a story that took place during the Yom Kippur War:

Last night, 8 October, I dined with my Moroccan colleague, who invited me and about thirty Francophone, Arab, and European-African ministers and ambassadors to his residence. I found myself seated next to M. El Zayyat... The Egyptian minister repeated to me that his government expected nothing from the Security Council. As I inquired whether King Faisal had made arrangements in this regard

⁷⁵ Ibid., 285.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Compte rendu of Hafiz Ismail's audience with Pompidou, 16 May 1973, AN AG/5(2)/119, dossier 2. Egypte. « L'histoire nous a appris que l'on ne saurait accepter la conquête de territoires par la force. »

⁷⁸ Ibid. « La France serait prête à l'aider dans tous les domaines, sauf à lui conseiller une aventure militaire. »

[to organize an oil embargo directed against the West in case diplomacy failed] during the recent summit at Cairo, the minister responded positively, adding ‘It’s a secret, but for you...’⁷⁹

This may be one of the few instances when a French diplomat received privileged information in part because he shared a language and some cultural points of reference with an Arab diplomat. Of course, it is equally possible that El Zayyat was manipulating Egypt’s alleged cultural connections with France for his own ends or that he felt obliged to the French because of the pro-Arab position that they had maintained since the mid-1960s.

France wanted to capitalize on these—real or perceived—good relations with the Middle East to gain influence and access to trading partners in the region. Jobert’s overall strategy “was to develop a long-term policy opening the countries of the Middle East, like Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, and the emirates of the Gulf, traditionally turned toward Anglo-Saxon culture and commerce, to our manufacturers, our businessmen, our professors. It was necessary to establish a dialogue.”⁸⁰ The memoir and diplomatic sources show that France and Arab countries exchanged many state visits in 1973 to maintain this dialogue. Weapons sales were an important tactic for winning political leverage and clients for French defense companies. For example, in 1971 France sold its anti-aircraft defense system, Cobra, to Libya. Deliveries began in June

⁷⁹ Guiringaud, telegram from New York to Paris, Tel Aviv, and Cairo, 9 October 1973, MAE 499 INVA 1192. « J’ai diné hier soir, 8 octobre, chez mon collègue marocain, qui m’avait convié avec une trentaine de ministres et d’ambassadeurs francophones, arabes, africains européens. Je me suis trouvé placé à côté de M. El Zayyat...Le ministre Egyptien m’a répété que son gouvernement n’attendait rien du Conseil de Sécurité...Comme je m’enquerrais si le roi Fayçal avait pris des engagements à cet égard lors du récent sommet du Caire, le ministre m’a répondu positivement, ajoutant, 'c'est un secret, mais pour vous.' »

⁸⁰ Jobert, *Mémoires*, 284. « ...était de développer une politique à long terme, ouvrant les pays du Proche-Orient, comme l’Arabie Saoudite, l’Irak, le Koweït et les émirats du golfe, traditionnellement tournés vers la culture et le commerce anglo-saxons, à nos industriels, nos commerçants, nos professeurs. Il fallait établir un dialogue. »

1973.⁸¹ In 1973, Pakistan, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates were also interested in buying Cobra,⁸² and Saudi Arabia hoped to purchase several Mirage aircraft from France as well.⁸³

As a result of their privileged cultural understanding and transactional history with Arab states, the French believed that their assessments of the Middle East were superior to those of the Americans. Certainly, in the months before the outbreak of war in the Middle East, France was very concerned with the mounting tensions in the region, while the United States remained complaisant. During his visit to San Clemente, California in June, Jobert implored Nixon and Kissinger to take the Arabs' claims seriously and to pressure Israel to withdraw from occupied territories: "In vain, I tried to show him and President Nixon the gravity of the situation in the Middle East...but both of them seemed accustomed to incidents, incursions, and daily combat."⁸⁴ Internal Quai-d'Orsay memorandums during the spring and summer of 1973 were full of pessimistic analyses of the situation. One assessment criticized American leaders' lack of urgency when the situation in the Middle East could at any moment, by accident or by the deliberate will of one of the governments of the region, lead to a confrontation.⁸⁵ The fact that France recognized the real potential for another Middle East war before the United States left Jobert with a perverse sense of satisfaction when crisis hit in October.⁸⁶

Yet despite French expertise in the region and will to be involved, France was excluded from the postwar diplomacy. Since the Six-Day War, French foreign policy had consistently mandated that a final settlement in the Middle East be based on Resolution 242 and that

⁸¹ Telegram from Paris to Washington, 18 September 1973, MAE 91QO 765. France originally developed the Cactus anti-aircraft system, which contractors sold to South Africa. Crotale was the French Air Force's model, which was basically the same as the Cactus. Cobra was the third iteration, which was sold to Libya.

⁸² Telegram from Paris to Washington, 18 September 1973, MAE 91QO 765.

⁸³ D'Aumale, telegram from Paris to Washington, 19 September 1973, MAE 91QO 765.

⁸⁴ Jobert, *Mémoires*, 243. « En vain, j'essayai de montrer, à lui-même et au président Nixon, la gravité de la situation au Proche-Orient...mais chacun paraissait s'être habitué aux incidents, attentats, incursions et combats quotidiens. »

⁸⁵ Internal memorandum titled "Les Etats-Unis et la crise au Proche-Orient," 15 May 1973, MAE 91QO 723.

⁸⁶ Jobert, *Mémoires*, 259.

negotiations occur under the official auspices of the UN, which meant within the Security Council or perhaps mediated by a smaller group of Security Council permanent members. Jobert complained, “For years, the French government had believed in the virtues of consulting with the four powers (U.S.A., France, Great Britain, U.S.S.R.) to find a settlement in the Middle East. But neither the United States nor Israel wanted this.”⁸⁷ In May 1973, a Quai-d’Orsay study of American policy concluded that the US assigned only a secondary role to the UN in the resolution of the conflict.⁸⁸ Instead, the United States believed it was its job, possibly with Soviet cooperation, to lead the parties toward compromise.⁸⁹ Following the crisis, both the Israeli and Arab combatants accepted the American model rather than insisting on UN involvement. On November 11, Kissinger arranged a preliminary disengagement agreement and prisoner exchange at Kilometer 101 in the Sinai, and more substantial negotiations were planned for the Geneva Conference in late December—France was not invited.⁹⁰ Paris reacted bitterly:

We do not want to reduce the chances of progress towards peace, even if they are low. But, on the other hand, we consider that it is necessary for the Security Council—and consequently France as a permanent member—play the role... of settling international disputes... We attach, in effect, a great importance to the involvement of the Nine in the settlement and its implementation. Europe has close links to the Middle East and finds itself directly affected by the economic deterioration provoked by the Arab’s decisions on matters of petroleum.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Ibid. « Pendant des années, le gouvernement français avait cru aux vertus de la concertation à quatre (U.S.A., France, Grande-Bretagne, U.R.S.S.) pour trouver un règlement au Proche-Orient. Mais ni les Etats-Unis ni Israël n’en voulaient. »

⁸⁸ Internal memorandum titled “Les Etats-Unis et la crise au Proche-Orient,” 15 May 1973, MAE 91QO 723.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Jobert, *Mémoires*, 269.

⁹¹ Telegram from Paris to all major embassies, 13 December 1973, MAE 91QO 748. « Nous ne voulons pas, au surplus, même si elles sont faibles, réduire les chances d’un progrès vers la paix. Mais, d’autre part, nous considérons qu’il est nécessaire que le Conseil de Sécurité—et par conséquent la France en tant que membre permanent—joue le rôle...de règlement des différends internationaux... Nous attachons, en effet, une grande importance à ce que l’Europe des Neuf, qui a avec le Proche-Orient des liens étroits et se trouve d’ailleurs

After having carefully developed its connections to the Arab states and affirmed their rights to territories lost in 1967, most dramatically through the EC's 6 November declaration, France believed that it deserved a seat at the table in Geneva. The success of the American airlift to Israel, however, hurt France's chances of participating in postwar diplomacy. The airlift was a painful lesson on the advantages of alliance with the US. Thus, Egypt and Syria decided that friendship of the United States was more valuable than the friendship of France and agreed to leave the French out of the negotiations, even though they were sympathetic to Arab interests.

Kissinger "is a Politician, Above All Else"

Bad personal relations between the French and American foreign secretaries served as an additional irritant within the alliance, on top of the strategic causes of conflict between France and the United States in 1973. By all accounts, Presidents Pompidou and Nixon had a fairly cordial relationship.⁹² A letter from the French President to his American counterpart dated March 30, 1973 attests to this.⁹³ Pompidou was writing in response to a previous letter from Nixon congratulating his party's success in the parliamentary elections earlier that month.⁹⁴ He expressed very warm wishes for the coming year. Since 1972 was such an action-packed year in terms of foreign policy, Pompidou hoped that 1973 would be peaceful and focused on creating a strong Franco-American relationship that would reflect the personal relationship between Pompidou and Nixon and on resolving their countries' shared problems.⁹⁵ If these two Presidents had remained at the helm of French and American foreign policy during the next few

directement atteinte par la détérioration économique provoquée par les décisions arabes en matière de pétrole, soit associée au règlement et à sa mise en œuvre. »

⁹² Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 164.

⁹³ Letter from Pompidou to Nixon, 30 March 1973, MAE 91QO 723.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

months, perhaps the two nations could have resolved their differences in a less confrontational fashion. Instead, both men became more and more distanced from foreign policy—Pompidou consumed by his battle with cancer and Nixon with Watergate—leaving more discretionary power to their respective foreign secretaries. Unfortunately, Jobert and Kissinger did not have the same understanding, and their clashing personalities aggravated tensions between France and the United States.

Jobert's personal memoir is replete with evidence of his acrimonious relationship with Henry Kissinger. The man seemed to absolutely fascinate Jobert. In fact, in his memoirs, he cited almost four pages from an interview with a reporter from Radio-Luxembourg in which he analyzed Kissinger's psychology and character.⁹⁶ It is clear from this extract that Jobert believed that he understood Kissinger at a deep level, considering him a formidable opponent and even more, a personal rival. Jobert disliked Kissinger's influence over President Nixon, even prior to his nomination as Secretary of State. In fact, he rarely mentioned Nixon in his memoir, which shows that he believed the American President was so occupied with the Watergate Scandal that he placed US foreign policy almost completely in Kissinger's care. For instance, during the Reykjavik summit at the end of May, Jobert resented Kissinger's presence at Nixon and Pompidou's exchanges since he himself was confined to discussions with William Rogers, then US Secretary of State.⁹⁷ In another case, Jobert speculated that Kissinger had a hand in Gerald Ford's appointment to the Vice Presidency.⁹⁸ He was also annoyed by Kissinger's inflexibility and unwillingness to give up on initiatives that France opposed, like the Year of Europe: "He

⁹⁶ Jobert, *Mémoires*, 274.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 263.

was not a man to adjust his reasoning to accommodate someone else's, at least at that time. He had traced his route on the map and expected to follow it right to the end."⁹⁹

Jobert's main criticism of Kissinger, though, centered on the American diplomat's political ambitions. "It was said that he had the taste for stardom, that he was a foreign policy *prima donna*, but I believe that he was just interested in politics. He is a politician, above all else...He calculated like a politician."¹⁰⁰ Jobert professed to have enjoyed sparring with Kissinger and to have been very impressed by his intelligence and skills, but this was not a diplomat that he felt he could trust. "He makes the most out of what he has," Jobert observed, "in any case he does not show his hand...most certainly passionate, most certainly calculating, very organized."¹⁰¹ In the French context, these were serious attacks on Kissinger as a statesman. The Quai d'Orsay was a professional bureaucracy. To an even greater extent than the US State Department, the French diplomatic corps was expected to eschew personal ambition and party politics and work for the good of the Republic.

Interestingly, Jobert's criticism of Kissinger's political ambitions could easily be turned back on himself. Throughout his memoirs, Jobert presented himself as a disinterested civil servant and denied his personal political ambitions at every opportunity. This was consistent with the Quai ethic. There are clues even within his own writing, though, that Jobert had a more political bent than his colleagues and that he cared a great deal about his legacy. We see this in how the French Foreign Minister described his approach to his office. Installed in the Quai d'Orsay on 3 April, Jobert had formerly served as a member of Pompidou's cabinet and relished

⁹⁹ Ibid., 238. « Il n'était pas homme à plier son raisonnement à celui d'autrui, du moins à cette époque. Il avait tracé sa route sur la carte et entendait aboutir. »

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 275. « On a dit qu'il avait le goût du vedettariat, qu'il était une *prima donna* de la politique étrangère, mais je crois qu'il l'est plutôt pour la politique tout court. C'est un homme politique, avant tout...Il calcule comme un homme politique. »

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 276. « Il s'en sert du mieux qu'il peut, en tout cas il ne révèle pas son jeu...certainement passionné, certainement calculateur, très organisé. »

a chance to take the reins and make meaningful decisions on his own authority: “Now it was my turn to be an actor... Once a silent and invisible civil servant, I now needed to come to terms with the real world of noise and light.”¹⁰² Jobert saw his role as fundamentally creative and active; as Foreign Minister, “he must be political and not just manage the agents and follow affairs as they present themselves.”¹⁰³

Jobert’s career after leaving the Quai d’Orsay causes me to speculate that he had his sights set on a higher office, perhaps eventually the Presidency, even in 1973. In the 1974 Presidential elections, Jobert did not appear on a ticket, but he supported Gaullist candidate Jacques Chaban-Delmas, who had served with him in Pompidou’s cabinet as Prime Minister.¹⁰⁴ Jobert would have almost certainly have received high office had Chaban-Delmas won and would have become an obvious choice to represent the Gaullist party in future elections. Though his ploy did not work in 1974, Jobert successfully followed this pattern in 1981 when he switched his loyalties to the Socialist Party, endorsing François Mitterrand and earning himself the title of *Ministre du Commerce extérieur* (Minister for External Trade) in the process. Jobert had been an early Presidential candidate during that election, though he withdrew his name before the first round of voting.

These revelations help explain Jobert’s disliking of Kissinger. He might have written in his memoirs that he objected to statesmen mixing political ambitions with their work, but it is more likely that the French diplomat envied Kissinger’s influence and successes. Jobert probably came to see Kissinger as a rival not because of their differences, but because of the

¹⁰² Ibid., 228. « Maintenant, j’étais devenu acteur à mon tour... Au fonctionnaire silencieux et invisible que j’avais été il fallait se résoudre au bruit et à la lumière. »

¹⁰³ Ibid. « Qu’il doit faire de la politique et non pas seulement gérer des agents et suivre les affaires qui se présentent. »

¹⁰⁴ Douglas Johnson, “Michel Jobert: Independent French politician who served many masters,” *The Guardian*, 27 May 2002, accessed 30 March 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2002/may/28/guardianobituaries>.

similarities in their personalities and aspirations. Whatever the source of his animosity, Jobert's mistrust of the main communicator and director of American foreign policy prevented France and the US from communicating well or resolving their differences effectively during his term in office.

Of these four points of tension that divided France and the US in 1973, Jobert's objection to Kissinger was the most transitory and the least important. When Jobert left the Quai d'Orsay the next spring, the new administration warmed to the Americans, and poor communications between French and American leaders was no longer an obstacle to the alliance. *Détente*, however, was a quagmire. The defense questions that nuclear parity and *rapprochement* between the US and the USSR raised were, at least at this juncture, totally unsolvable. Kissinger's studies led him to conclude that, when nuclear war was at stake, it must ultimately be every man for himself.¹⁰⁵ War threatened utter destruction; the existence of the state always took precedence over alliance commitments. The truth that no one wanted to put into words in 1973 was that the US would avoid unlimited nuclear war with the Soviet Union at any cost, even at the cost of European security. Frank consultations between the superpowers lessened the potential for unlimited war but also increased the risk that the United States would sell out Europe.

The French understood that American security interests did not always align with their own, and in truth this fundamental mismatch in the realm of defense pervaded every disagreement between the two allies. It lay beneath France's objections to the Year of Europe. Why would France want to participate in a set of negotiations that would treat security questions and might further erode the protection that America offered? France fervently objected to

¹⁰⁵ Henry Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1957), 220-243-244.

MBFR and to the Nixon administration's insistence that Europe pay for American troops with favorable trade policies and loyalty to the American agenda. The knowledge that the US ultimately prioritized its own security over Europe's also pushed France to make a realistic assessment of its own interests. Carving out French spheres of influence in the European Community and in the Arab world could help France regain a measure of control over its own destiny. It is impossible to appreciate France's point of view in 1973 without understanding that it was inherently defensive.

II. AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES ON THE REASONS FOR DISCORD, APRIL 1973- NOVEMBER 1973

Conventional wisdom says that there are two sides to any story. This is even truer of diplomacy since different states, even if they are allies, have different national interests, different domestic pressures, and different interpretations of outside events. The foreign offices of each country also have incomplete information on their counterpart's motivations. French grievances against the US—most of which were strategic, but some of which stemmed from Michel Jobert's personal distrust of Henry Kissinger—made friendly relations impossible in the tumultuous months of April to October 1973. On the other hand, from the American perspective, France's behavior in 1973 was equally unacceptable.

Judging from the official record and Kissinger's reflections, the tensions in the US-French relationship leading up to and during the Yom Kippur War may be traced back to four root causes. The first was American disappointment, then sense of betrayal, after the Year of Europe failed to gain traction in 1973. The Americans expected an enthusiastic European response to the project and even expected France to advocate for the Year of Europe; they were shocked by Europe's ambivalence and French maneuvers to isolate the US. The second blow to US friendship with France was public French opposition to American decisions during the Yom Kippur War. The French and the rest of NATO did not behave as allies should, Washington complained. If allies cannot put aside their political differences for the sake of maintaining a common front during wartime, then it calls the alliance itself into question. A third root cause was France's lack of appreciation for domestic forces calling for the US to pull back from its foreign engagements, including its commitments to Europe. Every time France spurned the US, whether by rejecting the language of partnership during the Year of Europe negotiations or by

publicly criticizing American Middle East policy, American voters became less willing to maintain troops in Europe, and the State Department's job became more difficult. France was unable or unwilling to see this connection. Finally, the Watergate Scandal, though an internal crisis, had an indirect negative impact on US-French relations. The scandal forced the Nixon administration to go on the defensive, and the weakened President could not accept additional failures in the foreign policy arena. As a result, Washington was more determined to see its course through to the end and more resentful of French opposition than it normally would have been.

The Year of Europe in Washington

At the moment of Kissinger's April 23 speech, the US expected that the invitation to renew the Atlantic Alliance would be welcomed by their friends—it was not. France took the lead in frustrating the initiative's success, creating the first important point of tension in the Franco-American alliance. In the following months, France appeared to deliberately deceive the United States by initially endorsing the Year of Europe, then isolating the US from the other allies in order to promote France within the EC.

Perhaps the most sickening part of French betrayal was that it reversed the trend of warm relations with France that President Nixon had achieved during his first term. An admirer of General de Gaulle and sympathetic to France's commitment to its independence, Nixon had made it a point during his first term to improve relations with France.¹ He visited de Gaulle in 1969 and invited Pompidou to visit the United States the following year.² The French also showed signs of wanting a better relationship with the US, discretely arranging for Kissinger to

¹ N. Piers Ludlow, "The Real Years of Europe? U.S.–West European Relations during the Ford Administration," *Journal of Cold War Studies* vol. 15, no. 3 (2013): 139, accessed 3 February 2015, doi:10.1162/JCWS_a_00373.

² Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 163-164.

meet with the North Vietnamese in Paris.³ In fact, it was in this context that Henry Kissinger first encountered Michel Jobert—Jobert was then Pompidou’s assistant and in charge of organizing the secret talks.⁴ Kissinger remembered him as “the man we had approached for solutions to delicate problems that occasionally arose in Franco-American relations during Nixon’s first term.”⁵ As a result, the Franco-American relationship was in a better place in 1973 than it had been for over a decade, and the Americans trusted that the current French leaders, Pompidou and the newly-elected Foreign Minister Jobert, were reasonable and cooperative partners.

Most significantly, military cooperation between the US and France proceeded behind the scenes. France had withdrawn from NATO in 1966, but Nixon’s administration began considering assistance to France on military and nuclear issues in 1971.⁶ Historically, the US opposed the French *force de dissuasion*, but the new consensus was that France’s nuclear capability played into American strategy and served as a further deterrent to the Soviet Union in Europe.⁷ Kissinger privately assured the French Minister of the Armed Forces Robert Galley, “a strong France, no matter how difficult it may be sometimes, is in our interest—a strong France that is interested in its own defense.”⁸ By spring 1973, the United States was passing technical information to the French.⁹

³ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982), 129.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁶ Document 154: “National Security Decision Memorandum 104,” 29 March 1971, FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume XLI, Western Europe, NATO, 1969–1972, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v41/d154>. There is no evidence of nuclear cooperation between France and the United States in either Michel Jobert or Henry Kissinger’s memoirs because this information was still classified at the time of publication in both cases.

⁷ Rossbach, *Heath, Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special Relationship*, 91–92.

⁸ Document 313: “Memorandum of Conversation,” 31 August 1973, FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume E–15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973–1976: France, 1973–1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2/d313>.

⁹ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 36. Costigliola writes that nuclear cooperation between France and the US did not begin until after French Minister of Defense Robert Galley returned from his trip to Washington in September 1973. (See Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 160). However, Gfeller presents evidence that

The American-French collaboration was extremely secret—neither country’s foreign ministry was informed, but Kissinger and Jobert were aware since both began as Presidents’ special assistants.¹⁰ Admiral Thomas Moorer of the Joint Chiefs of Staff explained how US nuclear aid to France functioned to protect both countries legally: “The French are asking technical questions and we decide whether or not to give them the information.”¹¹ In return, France secretly agreed to contingency plans that would coordinate the *force de dissuasion* with the NATO nuclear force in the case of war.¹² Just prior to the Year of Europe announcement, the US was considering going further to offer the same nuclear aid to France as it already provided to Britain.¹³ A National Security study presented two alternatives, “the preservation of the UK ‘special relationship’ as the main vehicle for U.S.-European nuclear relations” or “the development of roughly equivalent nuclear relationships with the UK and France,” for the President’s consideration.¹⁴ The fact that the National Security Council was considering elevating France to Britain’s level in terms of friendship and cooperation with the United States is incredibly significant. For years, the British and Americans had enjoyed a “special relationship” that the French bitterly resented. This was the reason that France vetoed Britain’s application to join the Common Market, the EC’s precursor, in 1963.¹⁵ De Gaulle spitefully called Britain the Americans’ “Trojan Horse” which would have been sure to insert

weapons technology was discussed at Reykjavik in June, and I have sources (referenced in the following paragraph) that show that the US and France were exchanging information in March and April. Therefore, we must conclude that cooperation began prior to Kissinger’s Year of Europe speech.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Document 308: “Minutes of Senior Review Group Meeting,” 24 April 1973, FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume E–15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973–1976: France, 1973–1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2/d308>.

¹² Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 161.

¹³ Rossbach, *Heath, Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special Relationship*, 94-95.

¹⁴ Document 306: “National Security Study Memorandum 175,” 13 March 1973, FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume E–15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973–1976: France, 1973–1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2/d306>.

¹⁵ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 132.

Washington's prerogatives into the Common Market.¹⁶ The fact that Nixon's administration was thinking of placing the French on par with the British clearly showed the high value they placed on the Franco-American alliance. Naturally, the nuclear aid program increased American expectations that the French would support US foreign policy.

Also, France gave early indications that it would support the Year of Europe. In fact, Kissinger reflected that "the ill-fated Year of Europe was born in the office of the President of the French Republic."¹⁷ This was something of an overstatement; nevertheless Kissinger floated the idea of a project to reinvigorate Atlantic relations during a meeting with Pompidou on December 8, 1972.¹⁸ According to Kissinger's account, Pompidou expressed enthusiasm for the plan and told the *New York Times* a few days later that he supported consultations "at the highest level" to discuss the Atlantic Alliance's common goals.¹⁹ In early April, Kissinger spoke to French Ambassador Jacques Kosciusko-Morizet about the possibility of organizing a US-European summit before the end of the year. The Ambassador, acting on instructions from Paris, approved of the American approach.²⁰ He was given an advance copy of the April 23 speech and did not object to its content.²¹

Kissinger, at least, felt as though he had taken ample care to prepare France for the new orientation of US foreign policy. Indeed, it was already part of US State Department doctrine that any successful European initiative must begin with French support. Win over the French, strategists argued, and the rest of Europe will follow their lead due to France's crucial role within

¹⁶ Ibid., 12.

¹⁷ Ibid., 131.

¹⁸ Ibid., 130. Gfeller notes that planning within the NSC began in September 1972 and that Kissinger broached the subject with Foreign Minister Maurice Schuman before approaching the French President. (Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 21).

¹⁹ Ibid. See Chapter One, note 3. This is a fascinating example of Kissinger specifically responding to Jobert's *Mémoires de l'Avenir*. He contradicts his French counterpart's insistence that Pompidou did not pre-approve the Year of Europe.

²⁰ Ibid., 149.

²¹ Ibid.

the region. An internal memorandum drafted in preparation for the Tokyo round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), set for September 1973, pushed the France-first strategy: “Problems emerge within the EC context where they are magnified in importance and effect as [the French] influence the views of other EC members. This suggests that prior to the forthcoming multilateral trade negotiations, advance bilateral preparation and consultations with the French should be held if we are to expect a successful multilateral outcome.”²² In senior-level meetings, Kissinger indicated that he hoped to follow this formula in the Year of Europe negotiations. He insisted, “we do want a serious dialogue with the French on how they might respond to an initiative. After the initial reaction, we will require exploration with the various countries on how we might work it out.”²³ Even in August, when the project seemed to have completely stalled, he still believed, “if we can use the French and break their unity, we can deal with the Europeans,” and the Year of Europe could be salvaged.²⁴

The US expected French support because it believed that the Year of Europe gave France virtually everything it wanted: a pivotal role in the negotiation process that would cement French leadership in Europe and an American acknowledgement of Europe’s status as an equal partner with the United States. Nixon added his support to the initiative in a speech to Congress a few days after Kissinger’s announcement. According to the President’s analysis, “America had been the automatic source of political leadership and economic power. Now we needed new modes of action that would accommodate our partners’ new dynamism... Before, we were allied in containment of a unified Communist danger. Now...we had to decide together not only what we

²² Document 307: “Analytical Summary of a Study Prepared by the Ad Hoc Interdepartmental Group for Europe,” undated, FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume E–15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973–1976: France, 1973–1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2/d307>.

This document was not dated, but judging by the context, it was likely drafted in March or early April.

²³ Document 308: “Minutes of Senior Review Group Meeting,” 24 April 1973.

²⁴ Document 312: “Memorandum of Conversation,” 17 August 1973, FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume E–15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973–1976: France, 1973–1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2/d312>.

were against, but what we were for.”²⁵ From Washington’s perspective, Paris should have been overjoyed by this new attitude. Throughout the de Gaulle years, France chafed under US leadership of the Western Alliance and constantly demanded more decision-making power for itself and the other old Great Powers. De Gaulle also sought to overcome East-West divisions. Now, the Americans were stepping back somewhat from leadership, acknowledging that the gap between the US and Europe in terms of economic and political power had narrowed and inviting the Europeans to help renew the Atlantic Alliance in a more equal collaboration than ever before.

Looking back on 1973, Kissinger summarized American expectations for the Year of Europe and his confusion when these were disappointed:

We expected nothing so little as confrontation with France. We were quite prepared to come to a prior understanding with the French leaders about the Year of Europe; in fact, we preferred it that way. We were convinced that France’s unsentimental conception of the national interest would lead it to the same conclusion that we had reached that Western solidarity was crucial to European security and freedom. The assessment turned out to be badly mistaken. Before the year was out, we found ourselves embroiled with France in the same sort of nasty confrontation for which we had criticized our predecessors. The reasons for it are not fully clear to me even today. We were prepared to defer to France on procedures; we believed we were implementing ideas originally put forth by Pompidou. We did not mind if France used our initiative to enhance its role in Europe.²⁶

Kissinger insisted that he was surprised that the Year of Europe caused conflict with France. I do not believe that this extract speaks of a false naiveté. French leaders had not shot down the idea earlier, when Kissinger presented it to them in private, and the Nixon administration was

²⁵ Document 9: “President Nixon’s Fourth Annual Report to the Congress on U.S. Foreign Policy,” 3 May 1973, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXXVIII, Part 1, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1973–1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v38p1/d9>.

²⁶ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 163.

confident that it understood how to work with the French much better than their ‘predecessors.’ As a result, Kissinger and his President were not bracing for a fight as they launched the Year of Europe. (If Kissinger had expected confrontation, he probably would have reconsidered the provocative language of his speech.) The American leaders’ surprise put them at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the French, who, as we have seen, wanted the project to be put off or entirely scrapped.

Kissinger described the Year of Europe in his memoirs as a story of French betrayal. In this light, Jobert’s positive response to the initiative during the two diplomats’ first meeting on May 17 was merely a ruse. Acting in his new capacity as Foreign Minister, Jobert echoed Pompidou and Kosciusko-Morizet and offered his country’s support for a new Atlantic declaration. The Quai d’Orsay would begin working on a draft, and Kissinger should send an American draft for his review as soon as possible.²⁷ “Jobert left me with the impression that in the end he would not only go along but take the lead in shaping an outcome consonant with our objectives. All he asked was that he be permitted to play the leading role,” Kissinger remembered.²⁸ Based on Jobert’s advice, Kissinger agreed to allow France to mediate between the US and the Community and did not pursue direct talks with the EC: “To show our dedication to European unity we were asked to bypass European institutions, leaving it to France to shape the consensus.”²⁹ He claimed that the French wanted the Year of Europe to begin with bilateral talks, not with negotiations between the Community as a whole and the US.

In the next few weeks, though, Kissinger came to believe that Jobert was playing a double game. The smaller countries among the EC Nine began complaining that the US had ignored the EC to pursue bilateral negotiations.³⁰ Kissinger believed that Jobert was provoking

²⁷ Ibid., 164.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, 165.

³⁰ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 38.

the smaller countries by spreading it around that the US wanted to solve Atlantic issues “à *Quatre*” (between the US, Britain, France, and the FGR).³¹ From his perspective, it looked like a case of either deliberate dishonesty or extreme opportunism: “I cannot judge whether Jobert was playing a deep game from the beginning, or whether he gradually slid into a position beyond his intentions simply because the opportunity presented itself.”³² Of course, it was Jobert who had convinced Kissinger not to go straight to the Community but to let France do the talking for the Americans.

Unaware of these intrigues, Nixon and Kissinger approached the June summit meeting with France hopeful that some progress could be made on the Year of Europe. Kissinger sent a memorandum to the Quai d’Orsay ahead of his and Nixon’s arrival in Iceland, stating, “We would like to reach an understanding to begin the process of drawing up a set of principles of Atlantic relations.”³³ However, the French appeared to have arrived at the conference already determined that nothing of substance would be decided.

Kissinger met with Jobert a second time on May 30, but this time Jobert’s tone was very different: he attacked US motivations behind the project, “turning the Year of Europe into a wrestling match...He ascribed to us motives of nearly paranoid deviousness.”³⁴ Kissinger was surprised and disappointed—the Year of Europe was supposed to lead to frank consultations to redefine the Alliance. He had not planned for such a cynical French response. Kissinger remembered that “de Gaulle’s nightmare of a ‘super-Yalta’” seemed to resurface during his discussion with Jobert.³⁵ In his memoirs, he struggled to make sense of French fears. Had the

³¹ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 165.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 171.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 136. “Super-Yalta” was originally de Gaulle’s turn of phrase. (See Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 162.) It alluded to the 1945 Yalta Conference, where Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin discussed the postwar organization of Europe. In de Gaulle’s view, the deal handed Eastern Europe over to the USSR. “Yalta”

French Foreign Minister seen the Year of Europe as just a ploy to position the US well for upcoming Soviet talks? Did his counterpart believe that he wanted to divert European energies to this new Atlantic project to interrupt Europe's progress toward political unity?³⁶ Or perhaps they feared that he was twisting France's arm to resume full participation in NATO or to make trade concessions?³⁷

In the heads of state meeting, Pompidou was more amiable, but his complaints about the Year of Europe's procedural difficulties did nothing to advance the negotiations. His closing comments downplayed the Reykjavik summit's importance: "The expectations with which we came to these meetings have been fulfilled. First we did not try to decide anything. We exchanged details on a number of bilateral matters...I am convinced that this conference has not given birth to anything."³⁸ France was stalling, even though the French Foreign Ministry was supposed to be hard at work on a draft declaration. It was at this point that American disillusionment began to set in. American news coverage of Reykjavik captured the Nixon administration's discouragement: "The results appeared to fall short of what American officials had hoped for...Essentially the two presidents have agreed only to continue disagreeing until they can decide on the proper forum for ending their disagreement."³⁹

A week later, the French minister was even more intractable on the procedural issues of the Year of Europe. Kissinger complained that Jobert objected to every possible forum for continuing the negotiations. A general summit bringing together the EC heads of state and

subsequently became shorthand for any attempt by outside powers, especially the US and Soviet Union, to decide Europe's fate.

³⁶ Ibid., 140.

³⁷ Ibid., 173-174.

³⁸ Document 311: "Memorandum of Conversation," 1 June 1973, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973-1976: France, 1973-1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2/d311>.

³⁹ Richard Valeriani, "NBC Evening News: Iceland Talks," Vanderbilt Television News Archive, 470718, 01:30, 1 June 1973, <http://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu/program.pl?ID=470718>.

President Nixon would be impossible, he was told, since France did not want it to appear that Europe was at the Americans' beck and call. Yet more limited consultations between the US, France, Britain, and Germany would be sure to offend the smaller EC members.⁴⁰ Kissinger later reflected that Jobert out-maneuvered him during their June 8 meeting by convincing him to send an American draft declaration by month's end, when the two were slated to meet at San Clemente, the "Western White House."⁴¹

American trust in France seems to have been terribly misplaced in this case. After San Clemente, Jobert leaked to the other Europeans that France had had the first look at the US draft.⁴² Briefing the Europeans on French-US bilateral talks demonstrated French loyalty and also encouraged resentment toward the Americans who had not provided the same information to all the allies. Quai d'Orsay then dealt a final blow to the American initiative by rejecting the American draft out of hand on July 16 and lobbying to restrict negotiations on a new Atlantic Declaration to the EC.⁴³ At their July 23 meeting, the EC Foreign Ministers voted to exclude bilateral talks with the US on the Year of Europe. In the agreed-upon mechanism, termed the European Political Cooperation (EPC), the EC would draft its own declaration and send the acting President of the Council, then Danish Foreign Minister, to present it to the US.⁴⁴ This virtually cut the Americans out of the creation process on their own initiative and was much too cumbersome to lead to timely results. Also, since the Pompidou administration had resisted EPC since its formulation in 1970, accepting the procedure now looked opportunistic to Washington, as though the French were intentionally trying to make the Year of Europe negotiations as

⁴⁰ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 181.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 188 and Rossbach, *Heath, Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special Relationship*, 152.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 40.

difficult as possible.⁴⁵ The result was “to put the Year of Europe on ice for two more months and to cold-shoulder a Presidential visit.”⁴⁶ Kissinger’s frustration and sense of betrayal was palpable, not least because French treachery appeared senseless and completely contrary to the State Department’s predictions. As the Secretary of State lamented, “Confidential bilateral exchanges—first demanded by our allies as the *sole* acceptable procedure—was at an end...Jobert had ruthlessly used our effort to conciliate France as a device to isolate us...Jobert, backed by Heath, had had a free run at us because the possibility that the whole exercise might turn into a confrontation had simply never crossed our minds.”⁴⁷

The negotiations did drag along—Danish Minister Andersen delivered the EC draft declaration on September 25, though the project stalled in the next phase as the Americans and Europeans bickered over amendments to the text.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, the parallel negotiations within NATO were proceeding with less difficulty. By late September, the Europeans had a working draft that was acceptable to the Americans; ironically, it was composed by the French ambassador to NATO, François de Rose.⁴⁹ The Year of Europe ultimately ended with the Ottawa Declaration in June 1974, a recommitment to the Atlantic Alliance under the auspices of NATO. But for US foreign policy, it was a pyrrhic victory. France’s perceived betrayal and the arm-twisting that it took to bring Europe on board took the meaning out of an initiative originally designed to strengthen the alliance.

At this point, it is important to note that there are alternatives to Kissinger’s account of what happened during the Year of Europe. The Secretary of State interpreted France’s policy change from an insistence on bilateral negotiations to an insistence that the US use the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁶ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 188.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 189-190.

⁴⁸ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 60-61.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 61.

cumbersome EPC as a deliberate attempt to deceive him and confound the whole project. Without denying that the French wanted the Year of Europe dropped from the Alliance's agenda, Gfeller does not ascribe that degree of premeditation to French foreign policy. She argues that Britain and West Germany had wanted the EPC to handle the negotiations from the very beginning, but France continued to veto it in favor of bilateral action.⁵⁰ There was no French plan to initially adopt the bilateral route only to corner Kissinger later, Gfeller writes. France excluded the EPC out of fear that general EC-US negotiations would "divide and hence weaken the EC Nine" and would institutionalize the procedure.⁵¹ France did not want to initiate regular consultations between the Community and the US, believing this would make America a *de facto* EC member.⁵² Under pressure from Britain, the FGR, and the smaller states, Jobert and the Quai d'Orsay gradually came to the conclusion during the summer that EPC involvement did align with French strategy and could help to mobilize the region in opposition to US policy.⁵³ Therefore, Gfeller argues that the EC's decision in July to cut off bilateral talks with the US was not at the insistence of the French. The purpose of this chapter, however, is to identify the sources of conflict between the US and France. Kissinger believed that Jobert had deceived him, making France's actions during the Year of Europe a source of conflict from the American perspective, regardless of France's true intentions

France Ignored "the Proper Conduct of Allies" in the Middle East

After the saga that the Year of Europe had become by fall 1973, French opposition to US policies during the Yom Kippur War was taken as a second betrayal. Not only was France's

⁵⁰ Ibid., 40.

⁵¹ Ibid., 38.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 42.

abandonment during a crisis a psychological blow and especially concerning given French ambivalence toward Atlantic relations in the preceding months, but their protests actively worked against US efforts. From the American perspective, divisions in the Western Alliance emboldened radical Arab states and encouraged the Soviet Union to push its luck in the Middle East.

The Yom Kippur War was more a case of European “betrayal”—as Washington framed its allies’ actions—than specifically French “betrayal,” although Washington recognized France’s significant influence within European institutions. Two European actions publicly demonstrated opposition to US policy toward the Middle East. First, most of the allies forbid the US to use NATO bases or airspace during the war.⁵⁴ The USSR initiated an airlift to its allies Egypt and Syria on 10 October.⁵⁵ In response to the Soviet decision and to Israel’s desperate calls for more supplies and ammunition, the United States began its own full-scale airlift on 13 October.⁵⁶ Every NATO ally except Portugal and the Netherlands protested the American airlift, forcing US planes to travel more than 2,000 miles out of the way to deliver equipment to Israel and thus increasing the airlift’s financial cost.⁵⁷ Ironically, as Kissinger observed, “the Soviet Union had been freer to use NATO airspace than the United States, for much of the Soviet airlift to the Middle East overflew allied airspace without challenge.”⁵⁸ The second demonstration of European disapproval came after the war was over, at the EC Foreign Ministers’ meeting on November 6. The meeting’s outcome was a communiqué urging both sides’ immediate withdrawal “to the positions they occupied on 22 October,” followed by “the restoration in the Middle East of a just and lasting peace through the application of Security Council Resolution

⁵⁴ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 93.

⁵⁵ Quandt, *Peace Process*, 159.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁵⁷ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 709.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

No. 242.”⁵⁹ The recommendation was probably not far from the United States’ ultimate goals for a settlement in the region; the problem was its timing. Kissinger was at that moment en route to Cairo to try to push an interim agreement that would be palatable to both Egypt and Israel.⁶⁰ The US priority at that stage of postwar diplomacy was disengagement on the Sinai front, not perfect justice. Consequently, the European Foreign Ministers put their American counterpart in a difficult position and increased the chances that the Egyptians would reject a compromise. In these two instances, allies not only remonstrated against American policy, but also undermined it.

On one level, French and European criticisms of American decisions during the war were explicable to the United States. The allies did not share the Americans’ commitment to Israel and, especially in France’s case, had taken a more pro-Arab stance prior to the Yom Kippur War.⁶¹ Even Kissinger had to admit that European objections to the unilateral American nuclear alert on October 25 were defensible: “Abstractly, our allies were justified in their complaints. Realistically, we had little time and we had to balance serious considerations. Our eye was on an imminent Soviet military move...To be frank, we could not have accepted a judgment different from our own.”⁶² Even though it was strategically necessary to delay informing the Western allies of the alert until an hour before it took effect, the move was bound to upset the Europeans.⁶³ On another level, however, disagreements within the Western Alliances about US tactics in the Middle East were beside the point. Kissinger saw the root of the issue:

⁵⁹ “Joint statement by the Governments of the EEC,” 6 November 1973, *Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l’Europe*, http://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1999/1/1/a08b36bc-6d29-475c-aadb-0f71c59dbc3e/publishable_en.pdf.

⁶⁰ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 718.

⁶¹ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 87.

⁶² Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 713.

⁶³ *Ibid.* It was necessary to delay informing NATO allies of an imminent DefCon3 alert because the United States wanted Soviet intelligence to discover American alert procedures on their own. The alert was intended to deter the Soviets from invading the Sinai Peninsula to ensure the Israeli-Egyptian ceasefire. If a European ally of the US had

The deeper problem raised by the October war was the proper conduct of allies in an emergency when they sincerely disagree with one another either about causes or about remedies. Should they use the occasion of their partners' embarrassment to vindicate their own views? Or do they have an obligation to subordinate their differences to the realization that the humiliation of the ally who, for better or worse, is *most* strategically placed to affect the outcome weakens the structure of common defense?⁶⁴

In other words, it did not matter if, in principle, the French supported military aid to Israel, or a step-by-step approach to peace in the Middle East, or not. The essential question was whether the Western Alliance still shared the same core objectives in the Middle East.

Speaking to Republican and Democratic Congressional leaders at the White House about one month after the crisis, Kissinger summarized American objectives during the Yom Kippur War: assuring “a rapid ceasefire” and “put[ting] the U.S. in a position to have a major influence in a settlement.”⁶⁵ According to Washington's assessment, the alternative to US intervention was a longer and less manageable war in the Middle East and Soviet control over the postwar proceedings. Therefore, if France and the other allies' aims were stability and checking the expansion of Soviet influence, then they should have avoided sabotaging American policy and confined their criticisms of the tactics used to achieve the common goals to the internal mechanisms of the alliance. To the Americans, public European opposition implied one of two things: either the European leaders were acting irrationally to the detriment of their own core interests, or they were actually ambivalent about whether the Soviet Union or the United States managed the crisis in the Middle East.

told the Soviet Union about US operations before Soviet intelligence had a chance to detect the change, the message would probably have been delivered along with assurances that the US would never risk nuclear war, and the alert would have lost its potency.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 708.

⁶⁵ Document 22: “Minutes of a Bipartisan Leadership Meeting,” 27 November 1973, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXXVIII, Part 1, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1973-1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v38p1/d22>

The Risk of “a Fortress America”

Concurrent to the United States and France’s disagreements during the Year of Europe negotiations and the October war, two developments in US domestic politics aggravated tensions between the two allies. First, a large proportion of the American public, still demoralized by the horror of the Vietnam War, wanted the United States to play a more diminished role in the world.⁶⁶ This would require retreating from many of the US’s existing engagements abroad, including, perhaps, its treaty commitments to Europe. Kissinger captured the mentality of many Americans in 1973 during his April 13 speech at the Federal City Club in Washington:

As a nation, we have been shaken by the realization of our fallibility, and it has been painful to grasp that we are no longer pristine, if we ever were. Later than any nation, we have come to the recognition of our limits. In coming to a recognition of our limits, we have achieved one of the definitions of maturity, but the danger is that we will learn that lesson too well; that instead of a recognition that we cannot do everything, we will fall into the illusion that we cannot do anything.⁶⁷

This “Vietnam Syndrome” that Kissinger described endangered the Nixon Administration’s foreign policy. The President and the Secretary of State were certain that an assertive and engaged American foreign policy was not only their country’s duty, but also key in promoting peace and stability in the world—however, they were subject to American voters and their representatives. The Mansfield Amendment, which was defeated in the Senate in 1971, and the Jackson-Nunn Amendment, which passed in fall 1973, translated into law the American desire to

⁶⁶ Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 168.

⁶⁷ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 73.

reduce the American military presence in Europe.⁶⁸ The Democratic opposition introduced this legislation, but the idea that Vietnam proved that the US was no longer financially or morally equipped to support its former global mission crossed party lines. In the view of the White House and State Department, the rise of what could be termed “neo-isolationism” in the United States threatened all their accomplishments of the previous four years.

Nixon’s speeches during the spring of 1973, a few months after the Paris Peace Accords ended American involvement in the Vietnam War, revealed the extent to which he was compelled to defend US foreign policy. In March, during a televised speech to the nation, the President defended the defense budget, which represented “the lowest percentage of our gross national product that it has in 20 years.”⁶⁹ He insisted that though he would welcome further reductions, “we must never forget that we would not have made the progress toward lasting peace that we have made in this past year unless we had had the military strength that commanded respect.”⁷⁰ Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR)—the proposed US and Soviet withdrawals from Europe—also featured prominently in Nixon’s address. The President reminded his audience that the US would participate in talks on European security later in the year, but warned, “if prior to these negotiations we in the United States unilaterally reduce our defense budget, or reduce our forces in Europe, any chance for successful negotiations for

⁶⁸ Gerald Ford, “Message to the Congress Transmitting Final Report on the Balance of Payments Deficit Incurred Under the North Atlantic Treaty,” *The American Presidency Project, Public Papers of the President, Gerald R. Ford 1975, Book I*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=4940>.

Jackson-Nunn amended the Department of Defense Appropriation Authorization Act and took effect in the 1974 fiscal year. “Section 812 (the Jackson-Nunn Amendment) states that if our European NATO Allies fail to offset this deficit[, the difference between American and European expenditures on European defense], then U.S. troops in Europe must be reduced by the percentage of offset not provided.”

⁶⁹ Richard Nixon, Document 6: “Address by President Nixon,” 29 March 1973, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXXVIII, Part 1, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1973–1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v38p1/d6>.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

mutual reduction of forces or limitation of arms will be destroyed.”⁷¹ Addressing Department of Defense personnel in May, Nixon again underlined the importance of American engagement in the world:

We must continue to have a policy which commands respect throughout the world... We will stand by our treaty commitments wherever they are in the world. That, you see, is the language of peace rather than the language of bugging out of the world and turning to what people wistfully might think to be a fortress America.⁷²

The President’s comments in these examples showed his administration’s attitude toward the United States’ place in the world, but they also showed that many did support an inward-looking ‘fortress America.’

To the exasperation of Nixon and Kissinger, the French did not appear to understand or appreciate the severity of America’s “Vietnam Syndrome.” France did not see the connection between its actions and American voters’ willingness to commit US troops to Europe. Though France had assumed sole responsible for its national defense in 1966, it still depended on the US military presence to contain the Soviet Union and to secure its borders. The conflict centered on the fact that France wanted the US to be fully committed to European defense, but also wanted to shake off American political influence over Europe. From the American perspective, these goals were incompatible: without a demonstration of Europe’s goodwill towards the United States, the American public would be less and less willing to subsidize the region’s security. Correctly calculating that the presence of American troops in Europe was in the US’ interests, the French

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Richard Nixon, Document 12: “Remarks by President Nixon,” 24 May 1973, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXXVIII, Part 1, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1973-1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v38p1/d12>.

counted on the State Department and defense establishment to maintain the commitment.⁷³ They did not recognize or refused to admit that overt opposition to the US during the Year of Europe and the Yom Kippur War intensified the political pressure on Nixon, Kissinger, and other defenders of American involvement in Europe.

Calls for the US to retrench on its foreign policy had a secondary effect on French-US relations during this period. As the Americans reasoned, just as French criticism of American policy during the Yom Kippur War worked against the interests of European security, French defense strategy also decreased the United States' incentives to keep American ground forces in Europe. In 1973, France's contingency plan in the event of a Soviet invasion called for early deployment of nuclear weapons rather than a conventional response. In line with this strategy, the French defense establishment wanted to reduce its conventional forces. As American Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger explained in a top-secret meeting with the French Minister of the Armed Forces, the US objected to these changes to French military planning:

SecDef: The presence of US forces in Europe and the flexible response strategy calls for a credible conventional defense capability. Our Congress is in no mood to maintain a large conventional force in Europe if nuclear war is to occur quickly and the conventional defense option is not viable.

Galley: You must look at this from the European point of view. We believe that the nuclear deterrent is tied to a large presence of US troops in Europe.

SecDef: To maintain large US forces in Europe, which you want to stay and as you say are necessary for an effective deterrent, you must tolerate the conventional defense basis for their staying in Europe. The Congress will not tolerate \$2.5 billion annual expenses to maintain a large US military establishment in Europe if nuclear war is considered to occur early in hostilities...I hope you will recognize that if there is no consensus that

⁷³ Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 173.

conventional forces contribute to deterrence, they will be withdrawn in whole or in part.⁷⁴

From the American point of view, France's plan to rely more on its *force de frappe* and reduce conventional forces defeated the case that Nixon's administration was trying to make. Congress was bound to ask, if in the event of a Soviet attack France would immediately fire its warheads, what was the point of stationing American ground forces in Europe? It was another way in which French decisions undercut support for those in Washington who did recognize the importance of European security to US interests and heightened tensions between the United States and France.

Watergate's Foreign Policy Impact

Finally, the Watergate Scandal also magnified American and French disagreements in 1973. The scandal became an object of morbid fascination for both Americans and observers across the Atlantic. Many of the climaxes of Watergate coincided with important moments in US-French relations. President Nixon announced the resignations of Haldeman and Ehrlichman, his closest advisors, on April 30, just one week after Kissinger declared 1973 the Year of Europe.⁷⁵ On July 16, the day the Watergate Senate committee uncovered the White House taping system, the Quai d'Orsay rejected the American draft of a new Atlantic Declaration.⁷⁶ The infamy of the affair ensured that it would substantially impact American foreign relations.

Combined with French manipulations, Watergate ensured the failure of the Year of Europe. Years later, Kissinger remained convinced that

⁷⁴ John A. Wickham, Document 315: "Memorandum of Conversation," 25 September 1973, FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume E–15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973–1976: France, 1973–1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2/d315>.

⁷⁵ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 104.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

the Year of Europe might well have succeeded but for the way the scandal seeped into every nook and cranny of the project. A strong President at the height of his prestige, with an American consensus behind him, could have made a compelling case for the moral unity of the free nations. They would have been eager to share the limelight with him. As 1973 progressed, the opposite was the case.

Association with Nixon had become dangerous...Had not Nixon become a political liability to the European leaders, it is highly improbable that they would have been so insistently aloof.⁷⁷

Before the revelations of Watergate, Nixon was a great President for a world leader to be associated with. His administration presided over *rapprochement* with China and the Soviet Union and the end of a hated war, and Nixon was on track for another spectacular diplomatic victory through a state visit to Europe and a new Atlantic Declaration. If his popularity had remained intact, perhaps the Year of Europe could have overcome French resistance and still ended as a success.

In addition, Watergate demanded a more defensive American foreign policy than under normal circumstances. It was important for the United States to appear strong because the obvious truth was that the scandal hurt US credibility. A damaged President without the support of Congress or the American public was poorly placed to make guarantees—he might not be in office in a year's time. Not only was Nixon now a 'political liability,' the scandal also took a physical and psychological toll. He was no longer able to lead effectively. As Kissinger remembered, "The President lived in the stunned lethargy of a man whose nightmares had come

⁷⁷ Ibid., 193. See also a conversation between Kissinger and Brent Scowcroft, his assistant in the NSC, in which Kissinger expressed the same conviction that Watergate destroyed the Year of Europe's chances. Document 15: "Memorandum of Conversation," 3 August 1973, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXXVIII, Part 1, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1973-1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v38p1/d15>

true.”⁷⁸ He was simply “going through the motions of governing without the concentration, the attention, or the frenetic bursts of energy that had produced the achievements of his first term.”⁷⁹

The Nixon administration’s only option, however, was to completely deny any connection between Watergate and foreign relations. Kissinger explained, “Only a show of imperviousness would enable us to salvage anything.”⁸⁰ Since any admission of weakness would be taken as a sign that the United States could not remain functional throughout the crisis, Kissinger and his colleagues in the National Security Council simply could not accept a foreign policy defeat as long as Nixon remained in trouble. This motivated the US to stick with initiatives like the Year of Europe that they might have deferred or dropped in other circumstances: “European indifference should probably have caused us to postpone our initiative...But Watergate made us more persistent than prudent. Nixon knew that the very critics who charged him with putting forward the Year of Europe as a diversion would allege that its failure was due to his domestic difficulties.”⁸¹ Watergate also meant that, faced with a direct challenge like Brezhnev’s October 25 ultimatum, the US response had to be more aggressive, more decisive than it normally would have been. Nixon’s weakened position probably influenced the decision to put American forces in the Mediterranean on high alert.⁸² The scandal “imposed a style of diplomacy leaning toward the spectacular; a show of driving self-assurance that would cause potential adversaries to recoil from a challenge.”⁸³ Inevitably, the United States’ determination to see its initiatives through to the end and display strength in spite of the Watergate Scandal pushed it further toward conflict with France.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 105.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 106.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 125.

⁸¹ Ibid., 162,

⁸² Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 177.

⁸³ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 125.

Reflecting on the year, Kissinger later wrote, “It is characteristic of periods of upheaval that to those who live through them they appear as a series of haphazard events. Symptoms obscure basic issues and historical trends. The urgent tends to dominate the important.”⁸⁴ Comparing French and American thinking in 1973, it appears that an extraordinary positive feedback system was at work, damaging relations between the two allies. We saw in the first chapter how détente discredited America’s security guarantee, encouraging France to bolster its own security independently from the US by consolidating French leadership within the EC and cultivating relationships in the Middle East, a region that had long been important to France because of its proximity, oil, and colonial history. Kissinger underestimated France’s stake in these two regions and the extent to which he would run up against French core interests. On the other hand, “urgent” circumstances drove US policy: the need to score a foreign policy victory in the context of Watergate; the need to justify the continuing American military presence in Europe to the American people; the need to support Israel and win the proxy war in the Middle East. Completing the cycle, French hostility to US foreign policy wore away at the political will to maintain American troop commitments to Europe—an effect that neither the Pompidou nor the Nixon administration wanted—and made France’s position even more insecure. The situation as 1973 drew to a close was unsustainable.

⁸⁴ Document 19: “Address by Secretary of State Kissinger,” 8 October 1973, FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXXVIII, Part 1, Foundations of Foreign Policy, 1973–1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v38p1/d19>

According to the notes following this documents, Kissinger spoke at the Sheraton Park Hotel in Washington before the Third Pacem in Terris Conference.

III. FORCED RECONCILIATION, DECEMBER 1973-JUNE 1974

In light of the preceding events, the improvement of Franco-American relations in spring 1974 appears truly surprising. From the perspective of either Paris or of Washington, these two allies had wrenching differences to overcome with regard to both security and foreign policy. At every juncture—Kissinger’s Year of Europe speech in April, the drafting of parallel Atlantic and European declarations, the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War in June, the US’s decision to re-supply Israel in October—the French guarded the European Community’s unique identity (and France’s leadership within the Community) against American influence, while the United States worked at cross purposes to build Atlantic consensus and demand allied support for American policies. Kissinger’s impression of US-European relations in the spring, then, stands out: “The close relationship we had sought to achieve with formal declarations came about instead as a result of common necessity...Suddenly, key issues were handled easily; consultations were regular and intimate. Mid-1974 ushered in one of the best periods of Atlantic cooperation in decades.”¹ Apparently, the US and France recovered warm relations with remarkable alacrity after suffering through the tensest months in the Atlantic Alliance’s history to that point.

How did France and the United States manage to reconcile? The death of Georges Pompidou and Nixon’s resignation created an opportunity for both France and the United States to modify the tone of their relationship and the priorities of their foreign policy. Newly-elected politicians have the privilege of being able to change course in a way that their predecessors

¹ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 934.

could not have without significant embarrassment. Costigliola, Nichter, and Gfeller have all made this argument.²

This is only a partial explanation, however: Pompidou and Jobert's removal from the scene explains why a change of course was possible, but not why Giscard and Sauvagnargues believed France needed it. Basically, it was necessary for France to improve relations with the United States in the spring of 1974 because Pompidou and Jobert's strategy for bilateral relations with the US failed. Since the nation's security depended on an alliance with the United States, as French leaders sought to dissociate from the US on most issues, they actually hurt French interests. Additionally, the French Foreign Minister made tactical mistakes during the Oil Crisis which caused his country's foreign policy to fail. Jobert was so committed to finding a solution through an Arab-European dialogue that he failed to adapt his policy even when it became clear at the Washington Energy Conference that the US had a better bargaining position vis-à-vis the oil producers and that he had alienated the rest of the EC. At the same time, Kissinger did not give Jobert a chance to change his strategy gracefully. The American Secretary of State's rivalry with his French counterpart had become so bitter and personal in nature by the Washington Energy Conference that Kissinger wanted to see France cornered and defeated. In this way, Kissinger also lacked foresight. Humiliating the French was counterproductive to his goal of reinvigorating the Western Alliance. After France's intransigence during the Conference led to a dead end, the Giscard regime was left with the choice to break the Franco-American alliance—an unthinkable option—or change course.

New French and American Leaders

² Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 153, 198. Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 180-181. Nichter, *Richard Nixon and Europe*, 179.

The most basic explanation of the improvement in French-US relations is that Pompidou's death and Jobert's departure from office in April 1974 brought to power French leaders who were less inimical to the United States. Of course, new heads of state also took over in Britain, the Federal Republic, and the United States at nearly the same time. Edward Heath lost his election in March, and a domestic scandal forced Chancellor Willy Brandt to resign in May 1974.³ Although he remained politically crippled throughout the period from spring 1973 to summer 1974, President Nixon clung to office longer than his European counterparts, until his resignation in August 1974. As the previous chapters show, Michel Jobert and Henry Kissinger had a curious relationship defined by mutual mistrust—this was one source of conflict between France and the United States throughout the Year of Europe and following the Mideast crisis. Although it did not solve the structural problems that separated France and the US, Jobert's departure did ease relations between the two allies.

Jobert's unhelpfulness—and often his dishonesty—during the Year of Europe frustrated Kissinger, as we have seen. Helmet Sonnenfeldt, a senior staff member on the National Security Council, observed that Jobert "seemed to make a point of getting under Henry's skin; he studied his technique and set out to irritate him."⁴ After the Yom Kippur War, however, he became even more insufferable to the Secretary of State. It was one thing for France to sabotage US foreign policy during the Year of Europe; Kissinger believed that continuing to do so during the Oil Crisis had real consequences for the global economy and hurt the chances of peace in the Middle East.⁵ Kissinger found Jobert increasingly difficult to understand as 1973 wore on. He recalled an exchange with Jobert at the Quai d'Orsay on 19 December:

³ Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 180.

⁴ Quoted in Alistair Horne, *Kissinger: 1973, the Crucial Year* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 115.

⁵ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 896.

It pleased [Jobert] to pretend that his personal views differed from the policy that the national interest of his President imposed on him; he told me that he really agreed with our step-by-step approach to the Middle East. Unfortunately, as Foreign Minister of France he had to take a different position...I asked why it was in the interest of France that he should act against his personal convictions. France had to keep up appearances in the Mideast, he said...Jobert did not reveal his thinking.⁶

The purpose of this meeting was for Kissinger to brief Jobert on his preparations for the Geneva Conference, which was set to begin in two days and would focus on securing a disengagement agreement between Egypt and Israel. If Kissinger's memory of the conversation is accurate, Jobert's statements were highly unusual since in EC communiqués on 6 November and 15 December France had already publicly committed itself to a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East, instead of the American "step-by-step approach." Kissinger did not know if claiming that he privately disagreed with the policies he pursued as Foreign Minister was one of Jobert's negotiating strategies, but, regardless, its object escaped him.

Several months later, during a problem-solving session in the State Department, Kissinger, exasperated, claimed he did not know how his relationship with Jobert had become so ineffective.

I have just finished reading my conversations with Jobert during the last year. I wanted to try to understand why he keeps saying I treated him badly. We have been lecturing them for over a year with absolute consistency on these matters [the necessity of an Atlantic Declaration and the implications of the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War] and nothing has changed.⁷

⁶ Ibid., 728.

⁷ Document 52: "Memorandum of Conversation," 11 March 1974, FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume E–15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973–1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2/d52>.

Both examples show that the French statesman and his motivations were incomprehensible to Kissinger, and the two leaders were not capable of candid, rational discussion about their disagreements at this point.

In unguarded moments, Kissinger blamed his frustrations on Jobert, lashing out at the French diplomat with a venom he withheld when speaking about other European leaders.⁸ He had a habit of using the Foreign Minister as a sort of synecdoche for France, which illustrates the personal nature of their rivalry. For instance, in April 1974, just before Jobert left the Quai d'Orsay, Kissinger put in a call to Federal Reserve Chairman Arthur Burns, asking whether the Fed could do anything to damage Michel Jobert, essentially by hurting the French economy through foreign exchange markets. This was an amazing proof of how far Kissinger was willing to go to embarrass the French statesman. Burns refused Kissinger's request, which may not have been a serious one, but he wrote in his journal, "Henry at times strikes me as a madman; a genius, yes, but he has a lust for power--a good pupil of Nixon's and Haldeman's, or perhaps one of their teachers? What outrageous thinking on his part!"⁹ Kissinger accused Jobert of not being able "to separate personal relations from official disagreements."¹⁰ It seems he also found this difficult when it came to the French Foreign Minister. This extraordinary example, combined with Jobert's musings on Kissinger's political ambitions in Chapter One, shows that Jobert was not the only one of the two who was difficult to work with; it was probably the combination of their personalities that made their relationship so exasperating.

⁸ See especially Document 50: "Memorandum of Conversation," 5 March 1974, FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume E–15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973–1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2/d50>.

⁹ Arthur Burns, April 19, 1974, GRF, Papers of Arthur Burns, Handwritten Journals, 1969–1974, Box 1 quoted in Luke A. Nichter, *Richard Nixon and Europe: The Reshaping of the Postwar Atlantic Alliance* (Unpublished manuscript, Texas A&M University, 2014), 177.

¹⁰ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 913.

By all accounts, the narrow victory of centrist Giscard d'Estaing over the Socialist candidate François Mitterrand and the installation of a new Foreign Minister, Jean Sauvagnargues, immediately eased some of the tensions between France and the United States. Kissinger was relieved that "the new French government under the Presidency of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, with Jean Sauvagnargues as Foreign Minister, dealt with us in a new spirit."¹¹ Others in the State Department agreed. "Since Giscard d'Estaing's election as President in May, the tone and, to a lesser extent, the substance of US-French relations have improved markedly. Acerbic references toward US policies have been absent," replaced by "a more pragmatic, unemotional approach to our relations," according to one brief.¹² The US Embassy in Paris reported, "the death of President Pompidou and the French elections offer an opportunity to advance U.S. interests by putting relations with France and Europe on a better footing."¹³ The ambassador to France, John Irwin, even believed that "Sauvagnargues and Giscard are probably more disposed to work with the United States than any combination of president and foreign minister since the Fourth Republic."¹⁴

Sauvagnargues himself was happy to repeat the message that France's new leaders welcomed friendlier relations with the United States. On French radio, Sauvagnargues commented, "my own role was to get the train on the tracks," that is, to return to friendly

¹¹ Ibid., 933-934.

¹² Document 323: "Paper Prepared in the Department of State: Issues Paper for the Secretary's Briefing of the President," no date given (after Nixon's resignation), FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume E-15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973-1976, France, 1973-1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2/d323>.

¹³ Telegram from the American embassy in Paris to Secretary of State, "U.S.-European Relations," 8 May 8 1974, RMN, NSC, Box 680 quoted in Nichter, *Richard Nixon and Europe*, 178.

¹⁴ Telegram from the American embassy in Paris to Secretary of State, "Your Meeting in Ottawa with Foreign Minister Sauvagnargues," June 14, 1974, RMR, NSC, Box 680 quoted in Nichter, *Richard Nixon and Europe*, 179.

relations with France's Atlantic allies, the US and Germany.¹⁵ His appointment marked "the end of the most useless dispute in the world," he told *Le Monde*.¹⁶ This was not simply wishful thinking; the tone of communications between France and the United States measurably changed. Sauvagnargues avoided the kind of inflammatory language that Jobert tended to use, and he often ended discussions with an avowal of Franco-American partnership. In June, he assured Irwin: "We are friends and allies... I really do feel that all these discussions run into the category of artificial problems."¹⁷ In November 1974, Sauvagnargues wrote to Kissinger and assured him that further meetings would show that their respective positions on one of the most divisive issues between France and the US, how to prevent a repetition of the Oil Crisis, were easily reconcilable.¹⁸

Several facts of French politics explain why Giscard and Sauvagnargues were pleased to break with their predecessors' policy and make a closer relationship with the US a priority. First, Giscard's party was the moderately conservative Independent Republicans (Républicains indépendants or RI).¹⁹ This was the party in France that was most likely to be receptive towards rapprochement with the United States. Their opponents on the left and right—the Socialists and the Gaullists—had both taken an adversarial relationship with the US as one of their defining principles as well as a vital element of party rhetoric over the years.²⁰ Significantly, neither the newly-elected President nor his Foreign Minister were de Gaulle protégés as Pompidou had been; they represented "a new generation of politicians who are not direct heirs of de Gaulle and

¹⁵ Sauvagnargues, statement on radio channel *France Inter*, 21 June 1974, quoted in "La déclaration atlantique: 'la liberté de décision de la France est intégralement préservée,' affirme M. Sauvagnargues," *Le Monde*, 22 June 1974 in Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 162. « Mon rôle à moi a été de mettre la machine sur les rails. »

¹⁶ Jacques Ogliastro, *Le Monde*, June 20, 1974 quoted in Nichter, *Richard Nixon and Europe*, 176. « C'est la fin de la dispute la plus inutile du monde. »

¹⁷ Telegram from the American embassy in Paris to Secretary of State, "Meeting with Foreign Minister Sauvagnargues," June 7, 1974, RMN, NSC, Box 680 quoted in Nichter, *Richard Nixon and Europe*, 179.

¹⁸ "Message Pour M. Kissinger," 26 November 1974, MAE 91QO 723.

¹⁹ Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 180 and Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 154.

²⁰ Document 323: "Paper Prepared in the Department of State."

are therefore relatively uninhibited by Gaullist rhetoric and past positions.”²¹ This meant that the Giscard administration was less constrained by the de Gaulle tradition of taking a hard line against the United States. However, Giscard was not free to completely alienate the Gaullists. He had relied on the conservative right’s support during elections, and upon taking office, he did not dissolve the National Assembly, France’s legislative branch, to call for new elections.²² As the US State Department reported, the RI joined the Gaullists in a coalition government “dominated numerically by [Giscard’s] reluctant Gaullist supporters.”²³ Independent Republicans held only 55 out of the 490 seats in the National Assembly.²⁴ American officials correctly assessed that “Giscard can, in the long run, govern effectively only with Gaullist support” since “his own power base is small.”²⁵ Thus, reneging on the essential elements of French foreign and defense policy—like France’s maintenance of an independent nuclear force or its refusal to participate in NATO military command—was probably out of the question for Giscard, but within these broad outlines his administration was free to introduce new priorities for foreign relations and change the tone of its dealings with the US.

Not only did Giscard head a competing political party, he was also a personal rival of Georges Pompidou, meaning that he did not feel obligated to continue his predecessor's foreign policy and may have relished the chance to break with the past. Both men’s expertise was finance, and Giscard made it known while serving as Pompidou’s Minister of Finance that he planned to succeed his superior as President.²⁶ Pompidou, in turn, made his resentment towards

²¹ Telegram from the American embassy in Paris to Secretary of State, "Jacques Chirac, New Prime Minister of France," May 29, 1974, NARA, RG 59, CFPF quoted in Nichter, *Richard Nixon and Europe*, 179.

²² Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 155.

²³ Document 322: "Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon," 24 May 1974, FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume E–15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973–1976, France, 1973-1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2/d322>.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 911.

Giscard clear when he excluded him from high-level talks that the Finance Minister would normally have participated in—notably, the Washington Energy Conference.²⁷

Finally, Giscard and Sauvagnargues were probably more well-disposed towards the US on entering office because they had links to the United States and Germany and prioritized strengthening Atlantic relationships as a result. Giscard, for his part, was a fluent English speaker and had spent six months in the US as a young man, at the beginning of his career in finance.²⁸ He was often able to call on these language skills to ingratiate himself with his Anglo-American colleagues; for example, he delivered part of his election speech in English as a gesture of goodwill towards the US and Britain.²⁹ Sauvagnargues, in a similar vein, had connections to Germany. Like Jobert, he was also an issue of the French *grandes écoles* and thus of the same elite cadre of professional diplomats. However, he was a career German specialist whose most recent role was ambassador to the Federal Republic. Returning to France from his post in Bonn, Sauvagnargues was intimately familiar with his German colleagues' apprehension at being forced to choose between France and the United States in 1973 and early 1974, and his main critique of Jobert's foreign policy was that it introduced many difficulties into France's relationship with Germany, its most important bilateral relationship in his view.³⁰ Sauvagnargues' training and experience ensured that he would prioritize friendly relations with West Germany during his term, which necessarily meant avoiding outright conflict with the US. These details of Giscard and Sauvagnargues' background in politics help explain why they did not continue a French foreign policy which was damaging to Atlantic relations.

²⁷ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 153.

²⁸ Ibid. Giscard's fluency was relatively unusual among French statesmen at the time. Jobert, for instance, worked with an interpreter for most of his dealings with the United States. He spoke English with a heavy accent. For an example of Michel speaking English on American television, see John Hart, "NBC Evening News: Vance/European Trip," Vanderbilt Television News Archive 508953, 02:00, 21 February 1980, <http://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu/program.pl?ID=508953>.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 162.

In the US, the political situation had changed as well. Nixon, at times, had also irritated the French, and his departure created an opportunity for relations to improve. Even though he was distracted by Watergate and had, by the time of the Yom Kippur War, largely delegated foreign affairs to Kissinger, when Nixon did intervene directly in US-European relations during this period, he often offended France, going farther even than Kissinger dared in public denunciations of French policies. For instance, the French Ambassador to the United States warned that Nixon was prone to “facile demagoguery” and was a bit of a loose cannon since his “precarious situation leads him to use the pretext of foreign resistance to exploit, to his advantage, the nationalistic tendencies of public opinion.”³¹ Kosciusko-Morizet cited two examples of the American President’s bullying, his toast during the Washington Energy Conference on 11 February and his speech to the Executive Club of Chicago in March. According to the ambassador, both carried an aggressive message: “Europe depends entirely on the United States for its security and thus has to pay the price in the domain of economic and political ‘cooperation.’”³² Nixon admired Charles de Gaulle and had pursued a close relationship with France from the beginning of his Presidency, but his approach to foreign relations was singularly incompatible with the French approach. The French *Ministère des affaires étrangères* directed foreign policy in the traditional way, through a powerful bureaucracy; Nixon largely ignored his bureaucracy and ran foreign policy from the White House, preferring secrecy and dramatic initiatives, which the French mistrusted.³³ Thus, his resignation, although it occurred later in the summer, continued to ease tensions between the allies. Gerald Ford did not share his

³¹ Kosciusko-Morizet, "M. Nixon Relance la Querelle Transatlantique," 16 March 1974, MAE 91QO 748. « démagogie facile »...« sa situation précaire l'amène à prendre prétexte des résistances extérieures pour exploiter, à son avantage, les tendances nationalistes de l'opinion. »

³² Ibid. « L'Europe dépend entièrement des Etats-Unis pour sa sécurité et doit donc en payer le prix dans le domaine de la 'coopération' économique et politique. »

³³ Nichter, *Richard Nixon and Europe*, 144 and Rossbach, *Nixon and the Rebirth of the Special Relationship*, 33.

predecessor's political troubles or mercurial style and, lacking foreign policy experience, deferred to Kissinger without adding his own colorful commentary. Overall, Ford was a much easier President for the French to work with.

Inherent Contradictions within France's Strategy

New leadership probably would have improved relations between France and the United States under any circumstances, but France might not have moved so quickly to reconcile with the United States and dissociate from the Pompidou administration's policies if there had not been serious problems with their former strategy. It is helpful for the present analysis to review Pompidou and Jobert's priorities throughout 1973.³⁴ In view of the Soviet threat, the French had worked to keep US forces in Europe and to secretly enlist American military technology to improve their nuclear program. On the political front, France hoped to strengthen European unity and resist American interference in European politics, trade, and relations with the Third World. Throughout 1973, Pompidou and Jobert's goals had been essentially Gaullist: to establish French leadership over a coalition of European countries and Third World partners that would have the political leverage to balance America's power.

The Quai d'Orsay had sought to dissociate from the United States on political and commercial issues, but to keep their ally invested in European defense because the single most important rationale for an alliance between France and the United States was their common enemy and their need for mutual security. Ostensibly, French and American military cooperation was limited because France withdrew from NATO in 1966. In reality, since French conventional forces and nuclear arsenal paled in comparison to Soviet capabilities, France depended on US troops stationed in bordering states and the American "nuclear umbrella" nearly as much as it

³⁴ See especially Chapter One, page 4.

would have if it had remained within the NATO military structure. Equally, Europe was of the utmost geopolitical interest to the United States. Soviet incursions there would irreparably damage American credibility and would virtually mean losing the Cold War. The fact that the most contentious issues for both allies in 1973 were sins against mutual security (the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War from the French perspective and France's insensitivity to "Vietnam Syndrome" from the American perspective) demonstrates that this is what truly held the Franco-American Alliance together. Both Jobert and Kissinger acknowledged that security was central to the alliance between France and the United States, and more broadly between Europe and the United States. In his first address to National Assembly in April 1973, Jobert highlighted European insecurity and the region's reliance the United States militarily: "The Europe of the Nine is a disarmed Europe... With the exception of France, Europe does not have, in the realm of defense, its autonomy and it suffers on this account."³⁵ Similarly, Kissinger remembered that "common security" was the sole "objective not disputed by any ally even in the most intense controversies."³⁶ He also wrote, "The lifeblood of an alliance is the shared conviction that the security, in its widest sense, of each ally is a vital interest to the others."³⁷

Thus, there was a fundamental contradiction in the strategy that Michel Jobert put into action. Dissociating from the United States in all but the defense realm, Pompidou and Jobert's conception of European unity, if followed to the finish, would ultimately be impossible. At some point, it would weaken US commitment to the defense of Europe and would create an alliance that Americans would not continue voting to protect. It would be redundant to belabor the point here since Chapter Two demonstrated how France's hostility toward the US during the Year of

³⁵ Jobert, *Mémoires de l'Avenir*, 267. « L'Europe des Neuf est une Europe désarmée... la France mise à part, l'Europe n'a pas actuellement, en matière de défense, son autonomie et elle en souffre. »

³⁶ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 722.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 730.

Europe made it harder for the Nixon administration to defend its troop commitments against budget-conscious Congressmen. Kissinger's speech on 12 December to the Society of Pilgrims, an organization dedicated to strengthening Anglo-American ties, illustrates that this danger was at the forefront of American policymakers' minds. Kissinger warned, "In the United States over 40 Senators consistently vote to make massive unilateral reductions of American forces in Europe."³⁸ The Europeans who "have come to believe that their identity should be measured by its distance from the United States" just help them make a case for withdrawing from Europe.³⁹ Some within the Quai d'Orsay understood that "the danger of seeing the United States adopt an isolationist position was real."⁴⁰ Kosciusko-Morizet, the French ambassador, argued, "Europe needed to become aware of this and to bring its aid to the administration which sought to oppose this tendency."⁴¹ To the degree that American voters could be influenced by friendly or hostile relations with Europe, Jobert's efforts to assert French leadership in Europe at the expense of the United States made France more vulnerable. In other words, Jobert's mistake was letting other political goals blind him to France's core security interests. If circumstances changed so that it looked more likely that the US would retreat into isolationism, or if the European Community became so divided that their fears of American isolationism outweighed their desire for an independent political identity, France would be forced to give up its adversarial stance. The country was simply unable to do without an alliance with the US.

French Strategy During the Oil Crisis

³⁸ Ibid., 725.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Kosciusko-Morizet, "Echange de Vues a Neuf sur les Relations Europe-Etats-Unis," 20 March 1974, MAE 91QO 748. « Le danger de voir les Etats-Unis adopter une position isolationniste était réel. »

⁴¹ Ibid. « Il fallait que les Européens en fussent conscients et apportent leur aide à l'administration qui cherche à s'opposer à cette tendance. »

French foreign policy was plagued by this self-defeating aspect throughout 1973. However, for the first part of the year, that is, from the Yom Kippur War until the conference in mid-February, the French policy of intransigence toward the United States still yielded results. Once the warring states in the Middle East submitted to a ceasefire, the most important issue facing the Western Alliance was the Oil Crisis. On 16 October, six OPEC members in the Persian Gulf raised oil prices by 70 percent, from \$3.01 per barrel to \$5.12.⁴² The next day, OPEC also cut production by 5 percent, threatening additional 5 percent cuts per month until Israel withdrew from occupied Arab territory.⁴³ On 20 October, the Arab OPEC members added a complete embargo of the US and the Netherlands.⁴⁴ All the industrialized countries suffered from the sudden jump in oil prices, which created simultaneous inflation and recession, a painful phenomenon that economists had not seen throughout the postwar years.⁴⁵ The Oil Crisis also constituted a huge transfer of wealth from the industrialized consumers of oil to the producers. “From 1973 to 1974 the balance-of-payments deficit of advanced countries rose from \$7,279 million to \$22,530 million. The surpluses registered by oil producers, by contrast, increased from \$3.6 billion in 1973 to \$38.5 billion in 1974.”⁴⁶ The French said that the crisis marked the end of the “*trente glorieuses*”—the thirty years of recovery and prosperity that followed World War II.⁴⁷ The Quai d’Orsay’s answer to the Oil Crisis was to publically condemn American support

⁴² Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 872.

⁴³ Quant, *Peace Process*, 117.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁴⁵ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 8. The Oil Crisis created a supply shock by increasing the price and decreasing the supply of oil, an important input in many industries. It also created a demand shock—consumers saw their disposable income fall as gasoline prices rose, and the fear that the Oil Crisis inspired further decreased consumer spending. As these demand effects and higher oil prices cut into firms’ profits, firms’ demand for labor decreased and unemployment increased. Economists and policy-makers at the time were baffled; economic theory held that inflation rates and unemployment rates were inversely related (the Phillips Curve). Central banks were faced with a choice between “treating” inflation or unemployment. The United States and most Western European countries opted for reducing the money supply to deal with inflation, but this response also made the recession more acute.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

for Israel—ostensibly the reason why the oil-producing states chose to punish the West—and to offer the producers bilateral deals for oil.⁴⁸

Accordingly, the European Community dissociated from American foreign policy toward the Middle East on November 6.⁴⁹ Arab oil experts, responding on November 18, “rewarded” Europe by cancelling the additional 5 percent production cut for the month of December.⁵⁰ Feeling vindicated, Jobert berated the United States at the December 10 meeting of the North Atlantic Council with cutting criticism of détente and the US-Soviet Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War.⁵¹ A high-profile first attempt by the US to address the Oil Crisis, Kissinger’s Pilgrims speech on December 12, went largely ignored by the European Community, which concluded the Declaration on European Identity in Copenhagen two days later.⁵²

Also at the summit in Copenhagen, the EC went along with the French program for managing the Energy Crisis and received several Arab Foreign Ministers to discuss oil. The State Department took this as a direct affront. After months of procedural tangles during the Year of Europe, it was frustrating to watch the Arab ministers receive a privileged audience with the Community.⁵³ Also, France and the EC inserting themselves into the negotiations on the Middle East threatened to undermine the official peace process just days before the Geneva

⁴⁸ Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 178-179.

⁴⁹ See Chapter Two, page 50.

⁵⁰ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 879.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 723.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 726. During the Pilgrims speech, referenced on pages 76 and 77, Kissinger first invited the developed nations to create an Energy Action Group to manage the crisis. The Declaration on European Identity was basically the antithesis of the US-EC declaration that Kissinger’s Year of Europe speech motivated. It focused on defining Europe’s role vis-à-vis other countries, including the US. The clause on the United States reads: “The close ties between the United States and Europe of the Nine—we share values and aspirations based on a common heritage—are mutually beneficial and must be preserved. These ties do not conflict with the determination of the Nine to establish themselves as a distinct and original entity.” (“Declaration on European Identity,” Section II:14, Copenhagen, 14 December 1973, http://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1999/1/1/02798dc9-9c69-4b7d-b2c9-f03a8db7da32/publishable_en.pdf.)

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 727.

Conference.⁵⁴ Finally, it was insulting to the Americans to be fed a lie, particularly in light of Jobert's deceptions earlier in the year: the EC explained that the Arabs' arrival was a "surprise," but, in a highly unusual move, refused to brief the US on the proceedings.⁵⁵ Kissinger suspected Jobert of arranging talks between the Community and Arab ministers; a suspicion which Jobert's account proved correct.⁵⁶ On 25 December, meeting in Kuwait, OPEC voted to keep the embargo in place for the US, but to again "reward" Europe by increasing production by 10 percent.⁵⁷

The Nixon administration's decision on January 9 to hold an Energy Conference in Washington appeared to be only a minor setback for France. At the conference, representatives of the developed nations as well as the European Community and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) were to discuss solutions to the Oil Crisis and the creation of an International Energy Agency (IEA).⁵⁸ The other members of the EC Nine promptly accepted the Americans' invitation, but France initially refused to participate in any working group on oil that excluded the producers. In Brussels on December 11, after hearing Kissinger's brief on the Pilgrims Speech, Jobert remembered, "I said to him, with the greatest clarity, that France could not consent to this unless the producer states... were also associated

⁵⁴ The Geneva Conference began December 21, 1973. Israel, Egypt, Jordan, the US, the USSR, and the UN Secretary General participated and ultimately secured a disengagement agreement between Israel and Egypt, which was signed on January 18, 1974 (Quant, *Peace Process*, 140-141).

⁵⁵ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 898. Kissinger only found out about what happened during the meeting through unnamed European foreign officers, who spoke to him off the record and often without their superiors' knowledge (899).

⁵⁶ Jobert, *Mémoires de l'avenir*, 278. Jobert recounted that he began working on the goals and calendar for a Euro-Arab dialogue with Pompidou and the Foreign Minister of Tunisia in mid-December.

⁵⁷ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 889-890.

⁵⁸ France, the UK, the Federal Republic, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Canada, Japan, the EC, and the OECD were the original invitees. Eventually all the EC Nine insisting on sending representatives, so Walter Scheel, taking over for Danish Andersen as the President of the Council of Ministers, spoke both for Germany and the Community at large.

with it.”⁵⁹ For two months the French position remained firm, but on February 6, just days before the conference, Pompidou’s cabinet announced that the Foreign Minister would attend.⁶⁰ The French explained that Jobert would attend only out of politeness to his European colleagues, who asked him to join the EC contingent and preserve the “appearances of European cohesion.”⁶¹ In reality, Jobert only agreed to attend after the Council of Ministers adopted a common position that, if the Europeans adhered to it, would virtually guarantee that nothing concrete would come out of the conference. The Europeans agreed, “The Washington Conference could not resolve the concrete questions, in the absence of the producer countries; it could not transform itself into a permanent cooperative body. The Community...will have to reserve every liberty to negotiate and to contract with the producers.”⁶² Pompidou and Jobert felt satisfied that the Eight were on board with the French agenda and that Washington’s latest advance was effectively neutralized.

Consequently, leading up to the Washington Energy Conference in mid-February, France felt well-placed for continued success. The Quai d’Orsay’s handling of the Oil Crisis earned some concessions from the Arabs. The French were still able to convince their European partners to limit their communication with the United States and prioritize unity. By arranging a meeting between the Arab oil producers’ representatives and the European Community without Washington’s knowledge, Jobert got away with the same tactics he had employed during the Year of Europe to keep the US out of decision-making within the EC.

⁵⁹ Jobert, *Mémoires de l’Avenir*, 274. « Je lui dis, avec, avec la plus grand netteté, que la France ne pourrait y consentir que si les pays producteurs...y étaient également associés. »

⁶⁰ Ibid. 286.

⁶¹ Ibid. « les apparences de la cohésion européenne »

⁶² Jobert, *Mémoires de l’Avenir*, 286. « La conférence de Washington ne pouvait résoudre des questions concrètes, en l’absence des pays producteurs; elle ne pouvait se transformer en organisme de concertation permanente. La Communauté...devra garder toute liberté pour négocier et contracter avec les producteurs. »

Trouble, however, was brewing because France and the US's plans for dealing with the Oil Crisis were starkly different and bound to come into conflict. Pompidou and Jobert intensely disapproved of the Energy Conference and the Americans' objective of coordinating the consumers' response to the Oil Crisis. In October, Kissinger had warned Jobert that if the consumers remained divided, the oil-producing countries would be able to play one off of another: "You are nationalized in Algeria, and then our companies go in to take your place. We might be nationalized somewhere else, and we are replaced by others. We should discuss all of this with the consuming nations... We must get our house in order."⁶³ He meant that the oil-consuming nations faced a cartel. The oil producers could force American, French, and other allies' oil companies to compete with one another in order to assure themselves the best deal. In Kissinger's example, hypothetically, Algeria could nationalize France's extraction operations and bring in American oil companies willing to give Algeria a bigger cut of the revenues. At the same time, American companies could be kicked out elsewhere. As Kissinger saw it, the consumers had to build their own cartel to resist these manipulations. Not only would the West have to pay more for oil if they did not organize a boycott, but competing for oil could damage the Atlantic Alliance.

Kissinger's reasoning, though, contradicted the French Foreign Ministry's program for securing enough oil, which involved appeasing the oil producers and placing the blame for continued Israeli occupation of Arab territories on the United States. Any attempt by the consumer nations to organize would provoke the Arab oil producers, Pompidou and Jobert believed.

Georges Pompidou had...affirmed many times that he would not associate himself with a bloc of consumer countries against a bloc of producer

⁶³ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 872.

countries... The economic war that was brewing between the countries was too menacing to provoke its unleashing or to continue to stir up tensions. He saw... that the United States, little affected by the crisis, wanted to profit from the circumstances to establish its supremacy over the European countries.⁶⁴

According to the President, the French economy could not withstand additional oil sanctions, and the Americans, less dependent on Middle East oil, might take advantage of the crisis to re-assert their leadership within the Atlantic Alliance.⁶⁵

Additionally, Jobert suspected that the true motivation for the conference was to gather the Europeans together and lead them away from the French: “I knew that Henry Kissinger was determined to make this conference... a purely political act, a brilliant affirmation of American supremacy.”⁶⁶ Kissinger also remembers, “When I asked Jobert what disturbed him about the energy conference, he replied quite simply, ‘American leadership.’”⁶⁷ In retrospect, the Foreign Minister’s suspicions were well-founded. Transcriptions of Kissinger’s conversations with his aides reveal that the Secretary of State’s unspoken goal for the conference was to intimidate the Europeans and weaken France’s hold on the EC. In private, he confirmed, “Jobert was absolutely right when he said the energy conference was purely political. I don’t give a damn about energy; that is not the issue. The issue is to break the other Europeans away from the

⁶⁴ Jobert, *Mémoires de l’Avenir*, 281. « Georges Pompidou avait... affirmé plusieurs fois qu’il n’accepterait pas de s’associer à un front des pays consommateurs contre un front des pays producteurs... La guerre économique qui couvait entre les pays était trop menaçante pour provoquer son déclenchement ou attiser encore les tensions. Il voyait... que les Etats-Unis, peu atteints par la crise, voulaient profiter des circonstances pour asseoir leur suprématie sur les pays européens. »

⁶⁵ Europe certainly was in a worse position than the United States during the Oil Crisis, in economic terms. “Before the crisis began, 77 percent of France’s total energy consumption came in the form of imported oil, nearly all from the Middle East... Imported oil made up only 17 percent of America’s total energy consumption” (Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 178). Kissinger believed that 25 percent of Europe’s oil came from Libya alone (Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 860).

⁶⁶ Jobert, *Mémoires de l’Avenir*, 285. « Je savais la détermination d’Henry Kissinger à faire de cette conférence... un acte de pure politique, une affirmation éclatante de la suprématie américaine. »

⁶⁷ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 910.

French.”⁶⁸ To do this, Kissinger would have been willing to sacrifice European unification: “I would rather break the European Community than have it organized against the U.S.”⁶⁹ It is important to consider this conversation in its proper context, since it occurred several weeks after the Washington Energy Conference during a final brief US-EC flare-up and behind closed doors, where Kissinger was able to vent his frustrations without consequence. His words in this memorandum were probably stronger than those he would have chosen in public or in a more sober state of mind. Still, the outburst is evidence supporting French fears that the US meant to re-assert leadership within the Western Alliance during the Washington Energy Conference.

Paris’ fears that the Washington Energy Conference would provoke the Arabs to punish Europe with still higher oil prices or that the US contrived the conference to bring the Europeans back into the fold were understandable. However, refusing consumer cooperation proved to be Michel Jobert’s fatal mistake. The position was self-defeating both for France’s negotiations with the Arab oil producers and for France’s relations with the Eight. Just as in my earlier argument that French foreign policy in 1973 was fundamentally inconsistent, during the Washington Energy Conference, certain French political goals prevented Jobert from seeing the complete strategic picture.

In the first place, Pompidou’s own admission, “I won’t be able to accept, no matter what conditions are established, a situation which requires us to forgo Arab oil, for even a year,” actually hurt his bargaining position vis-à-vis the producing countries.⁷⁰ Refusing to take the Washington Energy Conference seriously, the French limited themselves to one option, negotiating with the Arab states for advantageous oil deals. A party to a negotiation that cannot

⁶⁸ Document 50: “Memorandum of Conversation,” 5 March 1974.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 897. Kissinger recounted Pompidou’s words in a private meeting in Paris on December 20.

accept failure or walk away from the table essentially forfeits all of its leverage. Why would the Arabs conclude an agreement with France in this situation? Their incentive would be to take advantage of French paralysis, drag out the negotiations indefinitely, and try to obtain the greatest concessions possible from France. For this reason, even though the Quai d'Orsay believed that there was more to gain from talks with the producers than collective bargaining, Jobert still should have participated in the Washington Energy Conference in good faith and should have avoided showing the Arabs his hand.

The other problem with French policy from the standpoint of negotiations with the oil-producing countries was that even if France did exactly as it intended and wrecked the conference, the US would go bilateral and would have much more to offer the Arabs. This option was always available to the United States, as Kissinger's message to his State Department staff makes clear:

The Europeans have to understand that we believe it to be in the common interest to have a multilateral solution which is of no special benefit to any one group or region...Under no circumstances will we give them a free field for bilateral deals. And if they will not work multilaterally, we will force them by going bilateral ourselves. If we go bilateral, we can preempt them, I think, in most areas.⁷¹

The Secretary of State put it more crudely on another occasion: "On energy they are weak reeds and we will drive them against the wall."⁷² The US represented a large and lucrative market for oil and boasted its own Arab friends: Sadat in Egypt, King Faisal in Saudi Arabia, and King Hussein in Jordan.

Even more importantly, the United States alone could offer the Arabs what they really wanted, progress in negotiations with Israel. No other country—certainly not France—had

⁷¹ Ibid., 902.

⁷² Document 50: "Memorandum of Conversation," 5 March 1974.

Israel's ear and the influence within the region necessary to act as a mediator. The US had the unique ability to turn the oil weapon back on the producers, if it had the will to white-knuckle a bad business cycle. Kissinger repeated to Golda Meir, Israeli Prime Minister, his message to the Arab states during his negotiations: "I keep telling them we can't negotiate terms with them: 'We are a great power. Go to the Europeans if you want a declaration; if you want action, come to us. But turn the oil on.'"⁷³ Similarly, he told the Washington Special Actions Group, an NSC committee, "They may have a monopoly on oil but we have a monopoly on the political progress."⁷⁴ Kissinger believed that the peace process could not proceed without US cooperation, and he convinced the Arab states of the necessity of American mediation. Illustrating Arab trust in Kissinger's ability to redress the Arab-Israeli conflict, Saudi Foreign Minister Umar al-Saqqaf told NBC news "We think the man who could solve the Vietnam War, the man who has settled peace all over the world could play a good role in settling peace in our area, the Middle East."⁷⁵ In the month leading up to the Washington Energy Conference, Kissinger had brokered a military disengagement agreement between Egypt and Israel, and this success made him look to the Arabs—and to the Europeans—like the only leader with a concrete plan to bring peace to the Middle East and to end the Oil Crisis.⁷⁶ Subsequent events continued to confirm al-Saqqaf's reasoning as Kissinger, rather than Jobert or other European leaders, played a vital role in lifting the oil embargo. Shuttling between the various Arab capitals in February, he began to link American arbitration of a Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreement and lifting the oil embargo.⁷⁷ By mid-March, the Oil Crisis was over.

⁷³ Document 398: "Memorandum of Conversation," December 16, 1973, FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973, <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v25/d398>.

⁷⁴ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 881.

⁷⁵ Tom Brokaw, "NBC Evening News: Arab Reps., President Meeting," Vanderbilt Television News Archive 467265, 02:40, 17 October 1973, <http://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu/program.pl?ID=467265>.

⁷⁶ Quant, *Peace Process*, 140-141.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.

Second, Michel Jobert's vocal opposition to a consumer group was a fatal mistake because it alienated France from the rest of the Community. France's main source of power was its European partners; alone, France was not able to challenge the United States. 1974 was characterized by a growing unease among the Europeans due to confrontation between the EC and the US. Henry Kissinger noted, "Early in January many European leaders—though not the French—began to edge toward some kind of energy cooperation."⁷⁸ The Europeans were caught in a difficult spot between two countries they wanted to be on good terms with, but whose prescriptions for the Atlantic Alliance, the Middle East, and the Oil Crisis were so different that it was hard to see how a compromise could be found. "All during January," as Kissinger remembered, the American State Department received "emissaries—from Britain, the Federal Republic, and smaller states—who sought to do the impossible; they wanted to give us enough of what we proposed for the sake of Atlantic unity, meet French concerns for the articulation of European identity, and court producer goodwill by dissociating from us."⁷⁹ French officials also noticed the shift. The Eight began to ease toward consumer cooperation in January and seek rapprochement with the United States. A ministry-wide memo warned that a conference to consider short and long term fixes for the energy problem was "favorably welcomed by our principal partners," who also recommended "avoiding any misunderstanding between Washington and the Nine in the future."⁸⁰

It is hard to know at exactly what point the tide began to turn in Washington's favor. Gfeller argues that Nixon's invitation to the Energy Conference incited divisions in Europe.⁸¹ I

⁷⁸ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 900.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 902.

⁸⁰ Courcel, "Circulaire d'Information Generale No 24," 11 January 1974, MAE 91QO 748. « accueillies favorablement par nos principaux partenaires. »...« d'éviter à l'avenir tout malentendu entre Washington et les Neuf. »

⁸¹ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 124-125.

believe that many members of the EC were already upset by the sorry state of their relations with the US, but were unwilling to challenge the French until the Washington Energy Conference provided the right opportunity. None of the other European states had completely agreed with France's provocative stance towards the US during the Year of Europe and after the Yom Kippur War. Likely, the exigencies of the Oil Crisis made European unity relatively less important, and Europe was willing to try any solution that might work. Unlike the French, the rest of the Community did not reject the Energy Conference out of hand just because the Americans had proposed it. Also, the conclusion of a disengagement agreement between Egypt and Israel on 18 January probably strengthened the US's position at the Conference.⁸² The agreement impressed upon France's European partners that Kissinger had a track record of successful dealings with the Arabs, while the Arab-EC dialogue, championed by Jobert, had not yielded an agreement or lowered the price of oil.

"The French are Isolated"

French and American sources show that the Washington Energy Conference on 11-13 February marked the moment when French foreign policy fell apart. At the conference, the underlying strategic problems with France's design as well as the short-term problems with its energy approach came to a head. Situating French failure here departs from other scholars, such as Möckli and Gfeller, who point to the Gymnich Agreement on 10 June as a moment when France was forced to compromise its foreign policy, and Ludlow, who believes that Franco-American relations did not improve at all during the Nixon administration.⁸³

⁸² Quant, *Peace Process*, 140-141.

⁸³ Möckli, *European Foreign Policy during the Cold War*, 3, 321-322, 363. Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 153-154. N. Piers Ludlow, "The Real Years of Europe? U.S.–West European Relations during the Ford Administration," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 15, no. 3 (2013), doi:10.1162/JCWS_a_00373, 145.

Yet observers in Paris and Washington recognized the Washington Energy Conference's unfortunate implications for France. Ambassador Kosciusko-Morizet reported after the conference, "We can expect that the instances of reluctance will multiply...Our diplomatic actions, our economic enterprises around the world can be thwarted by American pressures."⁸⁴ Others in the French Foreign Ministry also recognized the major setback: "The abandonment of political cooperation...would permit Mr. Kissinger to accomplish one of the goals that were attributed to him. He would draw the European governments from one another in order to render them more vulnerable."⁸⁵ Later, Henry Kissinger noted with satisfaction that the Washington Energy Conference proved the superiority of the State Department's vision for the Western Alliance: "When two views of the future clash, only one of them can turn out to be right. What cannot be created by foresight must then be brought about through experience."⁸⁶ The French "doomed themselves" to "this, the most painful method of education."⁸⁷ Only Michel Jobert downplayed the conference's importance, terming it "the unfortunate Washington conference in February of which today we still ask ourselves what contribution it could have brought to the energy issues."⁸⁸ Jobert's memory betrays his bitterness toward the Washington Energy Conference, where his successes during the Year of Europe were reversed.

Arriving in Washington on the evening of February 10, Michel Jobert found that his friends had deserted him. He had lost the strong political support that enabled France to carry out a contrarian policy toward the United States since April 1973. The fact the Nine insisted on

⁸⁴ Kosciusko-Morizet, "Malentendus Transatlantiques," 7 March 1974, MAE 91QO 748. « Nous pouvons nous attendre à ce que les réticences se multiplient...Nos actions diplomatiques, nos entreprises économiques à travers le monde peuvent être contrecarrées par les pressions américaines. »

⁸⁵ Luc, "Coopération Politique a Neuf--Relations Europe-Etats-Unis," 25 March 1974, MAE 91QO 748. « L'abandon de la coopération politique...permettrait à M. Kissinger d'atteindre un des buts qui lui a été attribué. Il éloignerait les gouvernements européens les uns des autres et les rendrait plus vulnérables. »

⁸⁶ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 729.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Jobert, *Mémoires de l'Avenir*, 277. « La malheureuse conférence de Washington en février, dont on se demande aujourd'hui encore quelle contribution elle a pu apporter aux questions énergétiques. »

speaking for themselves at the conference shows how these negotiations were different from the Year of Europe. Before, they were content to let Andersen be the go-between for the US and Europe. Here, the stakes were too high. In his memoirs, Jobert claimed that Kissinger had bullied the Europeans into supporting the American formula for the conference before he even arrived on the scene:

I found my colleagues in a great panic...Henry Kissinger had thrown a horrible fit—they said—describing an apocalypse between Europe and the United States...The American Secretary of State had made himself understood and they had already resigned themselves to obey, that is to say to betray the agreements made in Brussels.⁸⁹

He drily remarked, “I was hardly surprised to see my colleagues give in as soon as the Secretary of State raised his voice.”⁹⁰

Kissinger might have turned up the pressure on his European allies, but some of the representatives also approached him the day before the conference. Walter Scheel, the German Foreign Minister who was speaking on behalf of the EC at the conference, confided in Kissinger:

We look at the situation in Europe and we find ourselves in a difficult situation. The French always seem to proceed in their own worst interests. You have examples of it in their isolated floating and now in their attempts to seek economic benefits on their own. We know that in the end this sort of thing is going to lead to chaos and that's what we are trying to prevent. There are

⁸⁹ Jobert, *Mémoires de l'Avenir*, 287. « J'y trouvai mes collègues dans un grand effroi...Henry Kissinger leur avait fait des scènes affreuses—disait-on—décrivant l'apocalypse entre l'Europe et les Etats-Unis...Le secrétaire d'Etat américain s'était fait comprendre et l'on se résignait déjà à obéir, c'est-à-dire à trahir les engagements pris à Bruxelles. »

Interestingly, in his memoirs Kissinger gives a very different account of his behavior at the conference: “Later Jobert wrote dramatic descriptions of the encounter. I had been making frightful scenes to terrorize the other Europeans, he claimed...It is a tale in keeping with Jobert's romantic streak.” (Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 910.)

⁹⁰ Ibid. « J'étais guère surpris de voir mes collègues flancher des que le secrétaire d'Etat haussait le ton. »

politicians in all of our governments who are anxious to try to keep the French from moving out of the Community.⁹¹

Scheel complained of France's recent efforts to play the foreign currency markets, deviating from the "snake," the EC's joint current float, in an effort to improve the French trade deficit.⁹² The US State Department estimated this deficit at \$6.5 billion, almost all of which was attributable to the Oil Crisis.⁹³ He also complained of the recklessness of French foreign policy. Many in Europe believed that France had pushed the US away more than was wise in recent months and that the United States must be part of the solution to the Energy Crisis. By the end of the day, Britain, Germany, and Japan had privately promised to support a consumer group.⁹⁴

On February 11 as the conference officially opened, Kissinger told Alexander Haig, Nixon's Chief of Staff, "The French are isolated."⁹⁵ Jobert did not adjust his foreign policy or even his rhetoric to the new circumstances. Faithful to French convictions that the Washington Energy Conference could not solve anything, Jobert was incorrigible for its duration. He lambasted the German delegation, which also spoke for the EC, for ignoring the Community mandate that no substantive decisions could be made at the conference.⁹⁶ Kissinger remembered that "he offered no proposal of any kind, neither an alternative to what we had put forward nor a supplement...He was out to torpedo the conference."⁹⁷ NBC news, which aired a special report on the Washington Energy Conference, also criticized "France's obstructionist tactics" and

⁹¹ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 907.

⁹² Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 7. The EC instituted the "snake," basically an exchange rate system in which the European currencies were pegged to the German deutschmark, which in turn floated against the dollar, in March 1973.

⁹³ Document 323: "Paper Prepared in the Department of State."

⁹⁴ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 909.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 911.

⁹⁶ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 128.

⁹⁷ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 913.

reported that “French Foreign Minister Michel Jobert remained uncooperative to the end.”⁹⁸ When the participants issued a communiqué on 13 February to conclude the conference, Jobert refused to endorse its substantive parts. This act of protest may have gone beyond the Foreign Minister’s purview. Kosciusko-Morizet later insisted that Jobert had acted on his own authority since it was the middle of the night in Paris during the drafting of the communiqué, and Pompidou’s fragile health prevented him from being involved in the decision.⁹⁹

After the Washington Energy Conference

The impact of the Washington Energy Conference quickly became apparent in French-US relations. The only viable choice available to France at this point was to draw closer to the United States. France, as I have shown, could not defend a foreign policy that competed with the US agenda without allies within the EC, nor would its national security interests allow the French to walk away from the Western alliance. The first effect of the conference to appear in the documentary evidence, though, was not an exchange of conciliatory words, but an increase in American bullying. For instance, Sonnenfeldt instructed Kosciusko-Morizet, who was due at the Elysée a few weeks after the conference, to tell the French President that “there should be no doubt in Paris about the steady deterioration in US-French relations due to the tone and content of French policies.”¹⁰⁰ The rest of their conversation reads like a list of grievances with regard to “energy, the Middle East and US-European relations” and France’s “erroneous interpretations of

⁹⁸ Richard Valeriani, “NBC Evening News: Oil Consumers’ Conference,” Vanderbilt Television News Archive 475148, 01:50, 13 February 1974, <http://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu/program.pl?ID=475148>.

⁹⁹ Kosciusko-Morizet, interview, 20 January 1994, MAE, AO, Kosciusko-Morizet in Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 129.

¹⁰⁰ Document 318: “Telegram 38057 From the Department of State to the Embassy in France,” 26 February 1974 FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume E–15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973–1976, France, 1973–1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2/d318>.

the June 22 US-Soviet agreement.”¹⁰¹ Sonnenfeldt pulled out all the stops, criticizing all aspects of French foreign policy that had caused conflict over the past year, but which the Americans were not free to protest while the French were leaders in Europe. The Ambassador could only agree that their “relations undoubtedly had worsened and he personally regretted it” and sheepishly ask “what could be done to reverse the trend.”¹⁰² The example illustrates the newly-confident tone that the US took in its dealings with France and illustrates that the Quai d’Orsay now felt it necessary to avoid antagonizing the US.

Washington also decided to send a clear message by threatening to end the secret program of nuclear cooperation with France. The Department of Defense directed two American technicians to deliver the news to the French in person: “Suspend any consideration of new initiatives, and serve warning on suspension of both the ongoing missile program and the safety program. For the present, though, we would continue these ongoing programs as planned.”¹⁰³ The recent conference had clearly emboldened the United States so that Defense believed that a further demonstration of strength would solidify the gains made there. The Deputy Director explained, “to continue business as usual without some reaction, after the Washington Energy Conference, could encourage a French view that the security component of our relationship can be isolated from all others, or that recalcitrance is cost-free, and even has its rewards.”¹⁰⁴ The US felt the need to capitalize on its recent victory to let France know that its competing foreign policy would no longer be tolerated.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Document 320: “Memorandum From the Deputy Director of the Office of Strategic and Space Systems, Department of Defense (John B. Walsh) to Secretary of Defense Schlesinger Washington,” 6 March 6 1974, FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume E–15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973–1976, France, 1973-1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2/d320>.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Still, Jobert ended his career in the Quai d'Orsay by leading the Europeans in one final intrigue. On 4 March in Brussels, the EC Council of Ministers met while, across town, Kissinger briefed the NATO ambassadors on the progress of his shuttle diplomacy.¹⁰⁵ In the press conference that followed the Secretary of State's presentation, journalists surprised Kissinger with questions concerning the EC's decision to move forward with the European-Arab dialogue.¹⁰⁶ Looking back, this appears to have been an isolated incident. At the time, Kissinger was enraged that the EC had not consulted with him, but he interpreted it as an attempt to appease the French. He blustered, "It is clear what the Europeans are up to. They have set up one thing to please us, the Washington Energy Conference, and one thing to please the French, the initiative toward the Arabs."¹⁰⁷ Gfeller argues that the EC's 4 March decision showed that France's policy toward the Middle East was not completely defeated, but since the European-Arab dialogue stalled afterward, it is more likely that the EC wanted to salvage relations with France to make up for deserting Jobert in Washington.¹⁰⁸

By the end of March, however, France's partners were through with secrecy and an adversarial relationship with the United States. Denmark, Luxembourg, and West Germany advocated abandoning the cumbersome procedure that the EC had used to communicate with the US during the Year of Europe in favor of a more reciprocal relationship with freer exchanges of information: "It is important to give America the ability to make its point of view known at a stage before we have reached the point of no return, that is to say when we are not yet at the level

¹⁰⁵ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 929.

¹⁰⁶ Document 49: "Memorandum of Conversation," 4 March 1974, FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume E–15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973–1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2/d49>.

¹⁰⁷ Document 50: "Memorandum of Conversation, 5 March 1974.

¹⁰⁸ Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 144-145.

of the ministers.”¹⁰⁹ Similarly, the French ambassador to Luxembourg warned that the only alternative to “accepting a procedure for reciprocal sharing of information with the United States” was “strictly bilateral actions,” giving up entirely on European unity in foreign affairs.¹¹⁰ The ambassador’s memorandum showed how the French conception of European unity had also changed: “All the while affirming that the priority should be given to European policies over Atlantic policies...there is not necessarily a contradiction between these two policies.”¹¹¹ In spring 1974, both France and the rest of Europe demonstrated a will to improve relations with the United States. Informal meetings between the EC Foreign Ministers in April resulted in a “gentleman’s agreement” known as the Gymnich formula.¹¹² It set up a procedure for consultations with the US that made it very implausible that the EC would adopt a common stance in opposition to American foreign policy in the future. To remain on the Europeans’ agenda, there had to be agreement between all Nine on how to proceed with informing the Americans.¹¹³ Therefore, any EC member that wanted to ingratiate itself with the US could easily have the offending item dropped.

Not only did it achieve regular consultations with the Community, the Nixon administration also had the final word on the Year of Europe. On March 15, Nixon wrote to Brandt and finally tabled the EC declaration: “I have concluded that it would be preferable to let the situation mature further in the hope that at a later time events will demonstrate the mutual benefit all of us will derive from the achievement of more organic, consultative

¹⁰⁹ Pelen, “Consultation Europe-Etats-Unis,” 26 March 1974, MAE 91QO 748. « Il est important de donner à l’Amérique la possibilité de faire connaître son point de vue à un stade où n’aurait pas été atteint le point de non-retour, c’est à dire si l’on n’est pas encore au niveau des ministres. »

¹¹⁰ Luc, “Coopération Politique a Neuf--Relations Europe-Etats-Unis,” 25 March 1974, MAE 91QO 748. « L’acceptation d’une procédure d’information réciproque avec les Etats-Unis »...« actions strictement bilatérales »

¹¹¹ Ibid. « Tout en affirmant donner la priorité à la politique européenne sur la politique atlantique...il n’y a pas nécessairement contradiction entre ces deux politiques. »

¹¹² Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 153.

¹¹³ Ludlow, “The Real Years of Europe?” 147.

arrangements."¹¹⁴ It did not really matter. Much of the material in the draft EC declarations was incorporated into the NATO drafts, which became the Ottawa Declaration.¹¹⁵

After the EC Declaration was dropped and Giscard's government redirected French foreign policy, much of the placatory language that had been missing in Franco-American relations began to appear in the sources. Nixon flew to Paris to attend Georges Pompidou's funeral on April 4. After the service, he stood for a moment in silence in front of a black-draped photograph of Pompidou.¹¹⁶ Nixon then delivered a brief speech that expressed great respect for the French President's physical courage during his illness and offered his condolences to Madame Pompidou.¹¹⁷ The American President's presence at the funeral and his homage to Pompidou symbolized that the Franco-American alliance would endure despite the recent crisis in their relations. In a press conference just after taking office, Sauvagnargues applauded the Gymnich agreement and the regular consultations with the United States that would result from it. He insisted,

I must say that my first reaction...when I took up office was to say that I did not quite see where the problem lay. Normal diplomatic practice among friends and allies involved fairly permanent exchanges on what the two sides do. I believe that the pragmatic procedure that we have agreed upon [at Gymnich]...fully meets everyone's needs and resolves the—largely ungrounded, I must say—difficulties that arose in the past.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 932.

¹¹⁵ David Möckli, "Asserting Europe's Distinct Identity: The EC Nine and Kissinger's Year of Europe," in *The Strained Alliance: U.S.-European Relations from Nixon to Carter*, ed. Matthis Schulz and Thomas Schwartz (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 218.

¹¹⁶ Edwin Newman and Lloyd Dobyns, "NBC Evening News: Pompidou Memorial Service," Vanderbilt Television News Archive, 476493, 01:59, April 5 1974, <http://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu/program.pl?ID=476493>.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ "Conférence de presse à l'issue de la réunion des ministres des Affaires étrangères des Neuf, à Bonn, le 12 juin 1974. Intervention de M. Jean Sauvagnargues," MAE, EC files 1971-6, 3792 in Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 155.

The new Foreign Minister sought to sweep France and the United States' disagreements over consultation during the Year of Europe under the rug.

In June of 1974, after the Year of Europe should have ended, judging by the date, the NATO Foreign Ministers met in Ottawa to discuss the alliance's new mission. Kissinger's report to Nixon on the progress of the Atlantic Declaration displayed a similar spirit of optimism and a new willingness to exchange information with the European Community, even on issues that remained divisive, like the Middle East and détente.

The NATO meeting here in Ottawa has gone extremely well, with the new Foreign Ministers from Britain, France and Germany all contributing to a far more constructive mood than last December...I provided the Ministers with a briefing on our Middle Eastern policy...I think they now understand better that our criticism of their initiative toward the Arabs was not intended to exclude them from the area, but related to the dangers it might pose to efforts toward a settlement. I also gave them a preview of some of the specific issues at the Moscow Summit.¹¹⁹

The American media also picked up on the positive tone of French-US relations at Ottawa. NBC reported that, "for a change, the French and the Americans were in harmony" in keeping with the talks' goal of "demonstrate[ing] Western harmony following the bitter disputes between Europe and the United States over Middle East policy and oil diplomacy."¹²⁰ Denying that the "bitter disputes" of the previous months could have permanently damaged the alliance, the newscaster said, "the word around here is that the alliance is all the better for having debated its problems out in the open."¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Document 60: "Message Haktto 2 From Secretary of State Kissinger to President Nixon," 19 June 1974, FRUS, 1969–1976, Volume E–15, Part 2, Documents on Western Europe, 1973–1976, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve15p2/d60>.

¹²⁰ Richard Valeriani, "NBC Evening News: NATO Foreign Ministers' Conference," Vanderbilt Television News Archive, 477257, 01:30, 18 June 1974, <http://tvnews.vanderbilt.edu/program.pl?ID=477257>

¹²¹ Ibid.

In spite of all this goodwill, the Ottawa Declaration was a feeble document, especially considering that it marked a moment of great symbolic importance, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the North Atlantic Treaty. The declaration contained no surprises and few innovations. Paris received an official admission that the *force de dissuasion* and the British nuclear arsenal were integral parts of the West's deterrent, and Washington received a statement that political, economic, and defense issues were linked.¹²² Compared to Kissinger's initial vision in April, the compromise was an anticlimactic end to the "Year of Discord" in that it made no attempt to address the questions he had outlined in his speech. In a different way, however, the bland Ottawa Declaration was a victory for the Western Alliance. It highlighted the allies' common points. The fact that North Atlantic Council could produce a statement of consensus that offended no one showed that the alliance had weathered the latest crisis and that even its most combative members, France and the United States, agreed on many principles.

Because I argue that French-US reconciliation in spring 1974 resulted from French mistakes, this chapter has focused on identifying and analyzing France's failures. It does not follow, however, that Henry Kissinger navigated the Year of Europe and the Oil Crisis without a false step. Perhaps, given France and the United States' separate visions for Europe, there was no way that Kissinger could have made the Year of Europe attractive to the French. Watergate and the urgent need to distract the American public from the scandal probably meant that the poor timing of the initiative—before the Europeans had had a chance to test out the EPC and get used to functioning as a unit in the political sphere as they had been doing in the economic sphere—could not have been helped. But surely Kissinger could have modified the language of

¹²² Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 175. See also "Declaration on Atlantic Relations issued by the North Atlantic Council (the 'Ottawa Declaration')," 19 June 1974, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization Official Texts*, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_26901.htm?

his Year of Europe Speech to avoid offending the French. Also, he or someone else in the Nixon administration ought have known that the message should have come from outgoing Secretary of State William Rogers, and the talks should have been managed by the State Department rather than the White House to respect the Europeans' way of conducting diplomacy and to emphasize that the US would deal with its allies differently than it had dealt with its enemies like the Chinese, Soviets, and Vietnamese.

Kissinger probably could have done little to hedge the strategic problems that détente created, but given that French fears centered around the 22 June Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War, perhaps reassuring Jobert that the agreement did not mean that the Soviet Union and the United States were working together against European interests would have helped to avoid a crisis in French-US relations.¹²³ He should have known enough of France's history to realize that the agreement would aggravate his ally's "Yalta complex."¹²⁴

Kissinger offered many plausible reasons for closing the door on French and EC consultation during the Yom Kippur War and the peace negotiations. He may have been driven by the need to make quick decisions, particularly during the frightening night of October 24-25, and by his conviction that Europe, and especially France, was unsympathetic towards Israel. Kissinger was mistaken, though, when he used the Washington Energy Conference to humiliate France. His taking pleasure in "breaking" the EC ultimately shows a lack of foresight.¹²⁵ Public disagreements that result in winners and losers weaken alliances. Kissinger did not feel that he could accept the compromise that Jobert proposed of adjourning the conference and continuing

¹²³ See pages 26-27 and 31-32 on France's interpretations of the 22 June Agreement.

¹²⁴ See note 35 on page 52 for a definition of the "Yalta complex" and its origins.

¹²⁵ Telecon Kissinger/Snowcroft, 12 February 1974, 5:45 P.M., NPM, NSC, Kissinger files, Telecons, 24 in Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 129.

the discussions on oil in Paris under the auspices of the OECD, but he could have encouraged unity within the Western Alliance by giving Jobert an honorable way to change his mind.¹²⁶

By the Secretary of State's own admission, his style of diplomacy and, at times, his lack of sensitivity to his ally's position offended the French.¹²⁷ The summary on relations with France that the State Department prepared for President Ford adopted a humble tone and stressed many of the lessons learned in 1973-1974.

It is prudent, therefore, to assume that the present improvement in US-French relations may someday be followed by renewed difficulties, but to assume also that there is an opportunity now to establish better understanding with France, at least on specific current issues, if not on long-range conceptions of how Europe and the US-European relationship should be structured...At all times deal with France as it is, an important second-level European power with considerable ability to thwart or contribute to US policies, particularly in multilateral organizations, but without the strength to achieve its own wider ambitions...Assume that France will not give up its aspirations to autonomy and leadership and will therefore remain a difficult partner, but more or less difficult depending on changing circumstances. We should therefore achieve as wide agreement as possible in the cooperative phases...In the period which is now beginning, it is in our interest to nurture our relations with Giscard in a way which neither jeopardizes his political base at home nor forces him into unnecessarily rigid positions to satisfy domestic political forces. Improved consultations are basic to our relationship with France.¹²⁸

This set of instructions reveals that there was at least a measure of introspection going on in Kissinger's department as Ford took office. The department recognized that it had underestimated France's "considerable ability to thwart" US foreign policy when the Year of

¹²⁶ See page 3 for a description of this compromise.

¹²⁷ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 729.

¹²⁸ Document 323: "Paper Prepared in the Department of State."

Europe was launched in April and as the year continued. Nor had American leaders appreciated the extent of French “aspirations to autonomy and leadership” within the European Community. The summary was pessimistic about the permanency of “the present improvement in US-French relations,” noting that, historically, the relationship between the allies cycled between “cooperative phases” and periods of “renewed difficulties.” The US and France could agree on “specific current issues,” but would probably not be able to agree on “long-range conceptions of how Europe and the US-European relationship should be structured” or, I would add, on certain defense questions for the foreseeable future. Still, Ford’s brief expressed hope that if the US worked harder to understand French leaders’ perspectives and domestic political context, the allies could work constructively together. Even after the trials of 1973-1974, the State Department, if not Kissinger himself, still believed that France could potentially be a valuable partner and could “contribute to US policies.”

Authors of American foreign policy after 1974 would need these recommendations because France and the United States’ reconciliation at this juncture was not a return to a peaceful status quo. The threat posed by the Soviet Union guaranteed that these allies would remain dependent on one another in the decades to come, yet at the same time the enduring legacy of de Gaulle in French politics and the impenetrable strategic questions that détente posed guaranteed that their alliance after 1974 would also remain precarious. A cynic would see spring 1974 as only a false reconciliation, a hopeless attempt to paper over the differences in two countries’ fundamental interests until the next provocation. Indeed, nothing that happened between the Yom Kippur War and June 1974 solved the deep structural problems outlined in the previous chapters; these problems remained below the surface, prepared to return to the forefront of Franco-American relations during a future “Year of Discord.”

CONCLUSION

Thirty years after the “Year of Discord,” and a few months after the Iraq War ended, Thomas Friedman, American journalist and intellectual, wrote an opinion piece for the *New York Times*:

It's time we Americans came to terms with something: France is not just our annoying ally. It is not just our jealous rival. France is becoming our enemy...If you look at how France behaved during the war...then there is only one conclusion one can draw: France wants America to fail in Iraq. France wants America to sink in a quagmire there in the crazy hope that a weakened U.S. will pave the way for France to assume its "rightful" place as America's equal, if not superior, in shaping world affairs...France seems to have given no thought as to how this would affect France. Let me spell it out in simple English: if America is defeated in Iraq by a coalition of Saddamists and Islamists, radical Muslim groups—from Baghdad to the Muslim slums of Paris—will all be energized...The French have put out an ill-conceived proposal, just to show that they can be different, without any promise that even if America said yes Paris would make a meaningful contribution...Clearly, not all E.U. countries are comfortable with this French mischief, yet many are going along for the ride.¹

Change Iraq to Egypt and Baghdad to Cairo, and Friedman’s 2003 editorial could almost have been written in 1973. Not only did France’s sharp criticism of the American invasion of Iraq resemble its 1973 decision to close its airspace to American planes bringing fresh supplies to Israel during the Yom Kippur War, Friedman’s language recalls Kissinger’s reactions to French opposition to the Year of Europe and the airlift. Evident in the opinion piece is Friedman’s shock that France would become an “enemy” to American foreign policy, similar to the shock Kissinger said he experienced at what he saw as Jobert’s betrayal during the Year of Europe.

¹ Thomas Friedman, “Our War with France,” *New York Times*, 18 September 2003, accessed 14 March 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/18/opinion/our-war-with-france.html>

The journalist sneers at France's "ill-conceived" and irrational approach to the Middle East. The French want influence in the region but, lacking the US's resources and soft power, they are incapable of following through with their policies. The French fail to think through the long-term impact of their "mischief." The former Secretary of State made very similar arguments when France vetoed forming an oil consumers' cooperative during the Oil Crisis.

Other parallels could be drawn between the crisis in French-US relations in 2003 and the 1973 crisis. Secretary of Defense Don Rumsfeld's dismissal of France and Germany as "Old Europe" during a press conference at the Pentagon caused as much controversy as Kissinger belittling Europe's "regional interests," as opposed to the United States' "global interests," during the Year of Europe Speech.² To offer a second example, the 2003 *New York Times* exposé that accused French defense companies of helping Saddam Hussein procure materials for building long-range ballistic missiles recalls speculations during the Yom Kippur War that French Mirage jets originally sold to Libya were used against Israel.³

Friedman's article and these comparisons between French-US relations in 2003 and 1973 remind us that alliance crises are not singular occurrences. The United States and France had weathered a "Year of Discord" before the purview of this thesis—that was in 1956, which was punctuated by the Suez Crisis—and the allies, clearly, were bitterly estranged again in 2003. Even though French-US relations have been largely undisturbed by serious disagreements in recent years, especially since France rejoined NATO military command in 2009, another crisis is almost certainly on the horizon sooner or later.⁴

² "Secretary Rumsfeld Briefs at the Foreign Press Center," *U.S. Department of Defense*, 22 January 2003, accessed 7 April 2015, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=1330>.

³ William Safire, "The French Connection," *New York Times*, 13 March 2003, accessed 7 April 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/13/opinion/13SAFI.html>.

⁴ Edward Cody, "After 43 Years, France to Rejoin NATO as Full Member," *Washington Post*, 12 March 2009, accessed 16 March 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/11/AR2009031100547.html>

Looking back at April 1973-June 1974, my general conclusion is that many of France and the United States' disagreements were made worse because each ally did not understand the other's perspective. There were real, strategic differences between the two countries that could not have been reconciled. But when leaders misunderstood their ally's intentions, they often overreacted and magnified these differences. The solution, it would seem, is for scholars and diplomats of countries like the US and France to try to understand their allies' thinking better.⁵ To this end, my thesis's main contribution is a new methodology for studying bilateral relations. The exercise of immersing myself in each country's perspective and reading leaders' accounts in their native languages helped me to understand France and the US's differing fears and priorities. I gained sympathy for arguments and individuals that I had dismissed at first glance. Only then did I feel comfortable comparing each ally's story and making my own judgments as to why 1973 was a year of such deep crisis and why spring of 1974 was transformed into a remarkably peaceful period in France and the United States' alliance. No other scholar has taken a similar approach, yet the methodology would be appropriate for studying any bilateral relationship for which evidence of both countries' foreign policies is available, especially relationships with an adversarial quality.

A second way that this project makes a unique contribution is that it begins to uncover the nature of France's foreign policy towards the Middle East in 1973 and 1974. Surprisingly, this aspect of French strategy has received very little attention from historians. There are some journalistic sources based on interviews and newspapers. For example, Mary Kathleen Weed's

⁵ Political scientist Richard Neustadt arrived at the same conclusion in his study of the Anglo-American alliance. Examining two cases, the Suez Crisis in 1956 and the Skybolt affair—a 1962 crisis in Anglo-American relations that resulted when the US canceled the delivery of the Skybolt land-to-air missile to Britain—he showed that the main cause of alliance crises is failing to understand the ally's government "machine" (80). Neustadt offered a recommendation to American policymakers and academics, which could also apply to any government entangled in alliances: If you want to influence an allied government, understand the constraints it is subject to, its operating procedures, and the human players' priorities (114). Richard E. Neustadt, *Alliance Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970).

biography of Jobert argues that his upbringing in Morocco made him especially eager to cultivate relationships with Arab states as Foreign Minister, while David Prynce-Jones explores changing French perceptions of Arabs—first as subservient peoples inhabiting France’s natural sphere of influence along the Maghreb, then as restive and dangerous immigrants.⁶ Then, the third chapter of Gfeller’s monograph is a serious, if brief, treatment of the subject that presents Middle East policy as an important facet of France’s larger strategy of increasing its influence within Europe and the Mediterranean.⁷ However, the historical literature suffers from the paucity of official French sources on policy toward the Middle East. Most of the relevant documents from the 1970s onwards remain classified. This stands in stark contrast to the literature on American foreign policy towards Israel and the Arab states, which is well fleshed-out thanks to declassified US documents and seminal studies by William Quant and Craig Daigle.⁸

This thesis adds to the current knowledge of French attitudes towards Arabs and the Middle East’s role in France’s overall strategy using information that I was able to glean from French archival sources. But future researchers must continue to explore French foreign policy towards the Middle East. Hopefully the relevant French diplomatic documents from this period will soon be declassified and will illuminate France’s strategy in the region.

⁶Weed, *L’Image publique*, 124-163. David Prynce-Jones, *Betrayal: France, the Arabs, and the Jews* (New York: Encounter Books, 2006), 100-122.

⁷Gfeller, *Building a European Identity*, 85-114.

⁸Quant, *Peace Process*. Daigle, *The Limits of Détente*.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:

AN	Archives Nationales
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
EC	European Community
EPC	European Political Cooperation
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GRF	Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library
MAE	Archives du Ministre des affaires étrangères
MBFR	Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NPM	Nixon Presidential Materials (housed within NARA)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSC	National Security Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
RI	Républicains indépendants
RMN	Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks

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COMPREHENSIVE CHRONOLOGY:

- 1940 France falls under Nazi occupation.
- 1945 Nazi Germany surrenders, World War II ends in Europe.
- 1954 French involvement in Indochina ends with the Battle of Dien Bien Phu.
- 1956 Suez Crisis, in which the US and USSR jointly force British and French troops to withdraw from Egypt.
- 1957 The Treaty of Rome establishes the European Economic Community (EEC) with six member states: France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands.
- 1958 General Charles de Gaulle returns to France as Prime Minister, before he is elected the first President of the Fifth French Republic the following year.
- 1958-1962 France's colonies in Africa gain independence, most notably Algeria, where a bloody war of independence ends in 1962.
- 1964 US Congress approves the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which greatly expands the American President's powers to conduct military operations without a formal declaration of war.
- 1966 France withdraws from the NATO military apparatus, though remaining within the alliance.
- 1967 The Merger Treaty combines the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the EEC, and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC) to create the European Community (EC).
- 1968 The USSR invades Czechoslovakia, student demonstrations in France, US carries out Tet Offensive in Vietnam, encouraging protesters, and Richard Nixon is elected President.
- 1969 Georges Pompidou succeeds de Gaulle as President of France.
- May 1971 The Mansfield Amendment, which would have withdrawn 50 percent of American troops stationed in Western Europe, is defeated in the Senate.
- August 1971 The US ends direct convertibility of the dollar to gold and evolves, over the following months, to a floating exchange rate regime.

1973

- January 1 Britain, Ireland, and Denmark join the EC.
- January 27 The Paris Peace Accords end American involvement in the Vietnam War.
- March 11 French parliamentary elections result in Michel Jobert's appointment as Foreign Minister.
- March 29 Henry Kissinger, National Security Advisor, discusses the Year of Europe with Jacques Kosciusco-Morizet, the French ambassador to the US.
- April 23 Kissinger's Year of Europe Speech.
- May 1-3 Nixon and Willy Brandt, West German Chancellor, meet in Washington.
- May 15 The Washington Special Actions Group (WSAG) discusses the possibility of war in Middle East.
- May 17 Kissinger and Jobert's first meeting during Jobert's term as Foreign Minister takes place in Paris.
- May 31-June 1 Nixon and Pompidou meet in Reykjavik.
- July 16 Jobert rejects Kissinger's draft of a Year of Europe declaration.
- June 22 The US and the USSR sign the Agreement on the Prevention of Nuclear War.

- July 23 The EC Foreign Ministers meet in Copenhagen and decide against bilateral negotiations with the US on the Year of Europe—the US may negotiate with the EC Council of Ministers.
- September 22 Nixon appoints Kissinger Secretary of State.
- September 25 The EC presents a draft declaration.
- September 28 In Washington, Andrei Gromyko, Soviet Foreign Minister, warns Nixon of the prospect of war in the Middle East.
- October 5 Soviet dependents and advisors evacuate Egypt.
- October 6 Yom Kippur War begins with an Egyptian and Syrian coordinated attack on Israel.
- October 7 Kissinger initiates procedures to provide ammunition and arms to Israel.
- October 9 Simcha Dinitz, Israeli ambassador to the US, reports Israeli losses of 500 tanks and 49 airplanes, which far exceed previous estimates. Nixon agrees to allow Israeli aircraft to pick up supplies in the US to replace these losses.
- October 10 The USSR initiates airlift to resupply Syria and Egypt. Turkey closes its airspace to the US, followed by the rest of NATO except Portugal, the Netherlands, and West Germany. Spiro Agnew resigns the Vice Presidency.
- October 11 The EC Political Committee meets in Copenhagen and calls for a ceasefire in the Middle East. Israeli gains on the Syrian front position its forces beyond the prewar lines. Jobert and Kissinger discuss the possibility of an oil embargo.
- October 12 Dinitz reports that Israel is running short on ammunition and that heavy equipment will not arrive in time to affect the military situation. Congress passes the War Powers Act, which limits the President's discretion in carrying out military operations. Nixon appoints Gerald Ford Vice President.
- October 13 The US initiates airlift to Israel.
- October 15 The tide turns in Israel's favor along the Sinai front.
- October 16 The Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister meets with EC ambassadors, warning them to exert their influence on the US to stop airlift or Saudi Arabia would cut oil production. Israeli tanks cross the Suez Canal. Six Arab countries increase oil price by 70 percent.
- October 17 The Arab OPEC members announce that production will be cut by five percent, with additional five-percent cuts per month until Israel returns to its pre-1967 borders.
- October 20 The Arab OPEC members declare a complete oil embargo on US.
- October 21 Kissinger and Leonid Brezhnev meet in Moscow.
- October 22 United Nations Security Council Resolution 338 institutes ceasefire.
- October 23 West Germany no longer approves shipments of equipment to Israel from its airbases; United Nations Security Council Resolution 339 adopted.
- October 25 US institutes Defense Readiness Condition (DEFCON) 3.
- November 6 The EC Foreign Ministers meet in Brussels and publically affirm a common Middle East policy in opposition to American policy.
- December 9-10 North Atlantic Council meets in Brussels.
- December 14-15 The EC heads of state meet with Arab Foreign Ministers in Copenhagen.
- December 21 The UN Secretary General and representatives from Israel, Egypt, Syria, the US, and the USSR attend the Geneva Conference of 1973.
- December 22 In Tehran, OPEC votes to increase the price of oil by 130 percent.

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- January 9 Nixon invites oil-consuming nations to an energy conference in Washington planned for the next month.
- January 10-11 Top foreign policy officials of the EC meet in Bonn, France encourages dialogue with Arab experts.
- January 18 Egypt and Israel sign a military disengagement agreement.
- February 6 Jobert announces that he will attend the energy conference in the US.
- February 11-13 The International Energy Conference in Washington.
- March 4 The EC Foreign Ministers convene in Brussels and affirm the French program of dialogue with the Arabs.
- March 18 The Arab oil producers lift the embargo.
- June 18-19 The North Atlantic Council meets in Ottawa, adopts the Declaration on Atlantic Relations.