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Tiivistelmä-Referat-Abstract This is a study of the role of nuclear weapons in France during and after the Cold War. To understand the significance attributed to the nuclear deterrent, one must understand the philosophy behind French nuclear politics, which is based on France's views about the world order and her own stand in this world. The aim of the study is to determine how the changes in world order in the 1990's have affected the political uses and the security purposes of the French nuclear deterrent. The study compares the political and military roles attributed to nuclear weapons when they were originally developed during the 1960s, to the purpose the French deterrent had acquired by the 1990's. Military aspects of the nuclear force are determined through examination of the French nuclear doctrine and nuclear hardware, where as political aspects are deduced from the speeches and articles written by French analysts and politicians concerning the nuclear deterrent. Special attention is given to France's NATO relations, because this relationship often culminated in nuclear issues. French nuclear weapons had an important security function both during and after the Cold War. In the 1960's nuclear weapons also served as a means of ensuring freedom of action, and as an element of prestige within the international community. By the 1990's, nuclear weapons no longer fulfil these political functions. This can be explained by a change in the nature of power, as the significance of military power as an element of political influence has decreased to the benefit of economic issues. To remain an influential power, France needs to be at the steering groups of the main international economic, military and political entities. The nuclear tests in the Mururoa Atolls can be interpreted as signalling to the world that that France intends to retain its nuclear deterrent at a credible level for national defensive purposes – and perhaps, in the future, also for the benefit of common European security.			
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