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LEGITIMIZING THE “REPUBLICAN MONARCH”: A
REEXAMINATION OF FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE
ATLANTIC ALLIANCE, 1958-1960

by

DREW M. FEDORKA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in History
in the College of Arts and Humanities
and in The Burnett Honors College
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term 2012

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the role foreign policy played in legitimizing the early French Fifth Republic from 1958 to 1960. I argue that President Charles de Gaulle employed foreign policy in the service of gaining public support for his new government and the new republic. Many historians have argued previously that his foreign policy of *grandeur*, as it came to be called, was used to recast international politics and France's role in them. My work diverges from these previous interpretations by arguing that Gaullist foreign policy served, in many instances, overarching domestic goals, not French international interests. I see foreign policy as inseparable from the broader domestic ambition to craft a persuasive narrative of renewal and national unity under Gaullist stewardship. In the process, my study puts de Gaulle's foreign policy into the context of his larger aspiration to precipitate constitutional reform and, thereafter, ensure popular support. De Gaulle exploited opportunities to use foreign policy in order to shape public opinion, both domestically and internationally. These efforts, as my research reflects, helped foster public support for the new regime and, by portraying national renewal, further discredited the preceding Fourth Republic.

To Kimberley, who has supported me through good times and bad

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank Dr. Amelia Lyons, my thesis chair and mentor. She has devoted much time and energy to helping me in *all* of my undergraduate research endeavors. I have improved immeasurably as a researcher and a student thanks to her constant advice and guidance. This thesis would not have been possible without her. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Edmund Kallina and Dr. Kerstin Hamann. Their support and participation in this pursuit were truly appreciated and their advice undoubtedly improved my research. I extend my sincerest gratitude to the staff of the UCF Interlibrary Loan Office. They proved indispensable on many occasions and always, without fail, retrieved the many odd or obscure primary and secondary sources I requested. I could not have completed my thesis without them. The UCF Office of Undergraduate Research and the UCF Research and Mentoring Program both supported my research in various ways. Their assistance, whether financial or academic, enriched this experience. Additionally, Denise Crisafi at the Burnett Honors College proved incredibly helpful on many occasions. Lastly, I would like to thank the people who accompanied me and supported me through this journey. Their help came in many forms: whether through fruitful conversations about my research, the arduous and tedious task of proofreading, brainstorming with me on my thesis topic, late nights at the UCF library, or simply through thoughtful words of encouragement. These people include, but are not limited to, Kevin Mercer, Michael Brooks, Katie Macdonald, Philip Beitelman, Lindsay Dhanani, Amy Bickel, M. Nicole Marcey, and my mother, Lynn Skorenki. All of you, in your own way, have made this a very rewarding experience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1: GAULLISM AND THE PURSUIT OF CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM	13
THE FOURTH REPUBLIC: GAULLISM’S POLITICAL ACTIVISM	14
THE ALGERIAN WAR AND THE FOUNDING OF THE FIFTH REPUBLIC.....	20
CHAPTER 2: NATIONALISTIC FOREIGN POLICY IN THE SERVICE OF THE GAULLIST DOMESTIC AGENDA	31
THE NEED FOR NATIONALISM AND <i>GRANDEUR</i>	33
FRANCE AND THE COLD WAR	36
GAULLIST FOREIGN POLICY IN THE COLD WAR	39
1958: SETTING THE STAGE FOR <i>GRANDEUR</i>	46
CHAPTER 3: DE GAULLE’S FOREIGN POLICY OF <i>GRANDEUR</i>	52
1959 ACT ONE: THE FRENCH MEDITERRANEAN FLEET	53
1959 ACT TWO: THE REMOVAL OF FOREIGN NUCLEAR STOCKPILES	59
1960: THE GRAND STATESMAN.....	65
CONCLUSION.....	75
A GAULLIST SUCCESS?	76
REFERENCES	83

INTRODUCTION

In May 1958, the leading politicians of the French nation, burdened by years of colonial conflict and a public clamoring for resolution, turned to the wartime hero, Charles de Gaulle, with hopes of securing a solution palatable to the many seemingly irreconcilable factions of French society. Upon his official return, de Gaulle, joined by his loyalist of companions, set out to end the short-lived Fourth Republic. Broad swathes of a weary public proved ready to forsake the postwar republic in exchange for de Gaulle's ambiguous promise to settle the ongoing Algerian War. By late summer 1958 a small group, headed by de Gaulle's closest advisor Michel Debré, completed the draft of a new constitution. On 28 September 1958, 80% of the public, vested in de Gaulle, approved of the constitution that became the foundation of the Fifth French Republic. Nearly three months later, on 21 December 1958, the electoral *notables* chose Charles de Gaulle as the first president of the Fifth Republic. On 8 January 1959, de Gaulle began his presidency.¹ That day marked the beginning of, among many other things, an extravagant foreign policy which, for the next 10 years, often captivated France's domestic audience as much as it frustrated France's allies. De Gaulle's foreign policy of *grandeur* has since perplexed and fascinated the many historians who have analyzed its intentions and goals.

Since de Gaulle's presidency, countless historians and political scientists have penned works devoted to his diplomatic initiatives. Early works, like W.W. Kulski's *De Gaulle and the World* offered careful analyses of de Gaulle's initiatives but indubitably found themselves

¹ Philip Thody, *The French Fifth Republic: Presidents, Politics, and Personalities* (London: Routledge, 1998), 17-20.

wrapped up in the politics of the day.² Others quickly followed. The common theme among them tended to rest on the idea that French foreign policy was “overtly striven to preserve and extend French influence abroad.”³ Herbert Tint’s *French Foreign Policy since the Second World War* and John Newhouse’s *De Gaulle and the Anglo-Saxons* provide prime examples of this trend.⁴ Shortly thereafter, Stanley Hoffman offered the first seminal text on de Gaulle’s foreign policy, *Decline or Renewal? France since the 1930s*. Hoffman’s work considered de Gaulle’s diplomacy alongside, though separate from, his domestic role in French society.⁵ The work provided a valuable framework through which to see how de Gaulle’s conceptions of *grandeur* and his political cunning played out in both the domestic context and the international arena.

Other works from the period offered significant contributions to the field. Wilfrid Kohl’s *French Nuclear Diplomacy*, for instance, placed the French pursuit of an independent nuclear force in the center of a larger, overarching diplomatic strategy which the nuclear program was not simply one part of, but central to.⁶ His work helped establish the importance of the nuclear force to France’s political and diplomatic strategy. Another work from the period, Michael M. Harrison’s *The Reluctant Ally*, argued that “French security and alliance policies ... ceas[ed] to be such divisive issues in domestic politics largely because of the gradual emergence of a national consensus on the value of the Gaullist security model.”⁷ Harrison’s monograph offered an insightful analysis on the policy continuities between the Fourth and Fifth Republics, while

²W.W. Kulski, *De Gaulle and the World: The Foreign Policy of the Fifth French Republic* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1966).

³Herbert Tint, *French Foreign Policy since the Second World War* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), 1.

⁴John Newhouse, *De Gaulle and the Anglo-Saxons* (New York: Viking Press, 1970).

⁵Stanley Hoffman, *Decline or Renewal? France since the 1930s* (New York: Viking Press, 1974).

⁶Wilfrid L. Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971).

⁷Michael M. Harrison, *The Reluctant Ally: France and Atlantic Security* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1981), 1-2.

also identifying why Gaullist conceptions of independence – whether in nuclear capability or alliances – has since become the basis for French foreign policy.

The early 1990s saw the emergence of a number of works that focused specifically on the relationship between the United States and France, as well as the tensions that arose as both countries tried to advance their own interests. Frank Costigliola's *France and the United States*, Charles G. Cogan's *Oldest Allies, Guarded Friends*, and the edited collection *De Gaulle and the United States* all represent this trend.⁸ The late 1990s saw the emergence of several major works by two French historians, both aided by extensive (and presumably previously unavailable) archival research. Maurice Vaisse's *La Grandeur* placed, and rightly so, the Algerian War and decolonization elsewhere in Africa squarely within the broader context of Gaullist foreign policy, something the vast majority of diplomatic histories had previously neglected.⁹ The other, Frédéric Bozo's *Two Strategies for Europe* added to the conclusions advanced by Stanley Hoffman that saw de Gaulle's foreign policy as an all-encompassing "grand design" in which "power, independence, and grandeur were for de Gaulle inseparable from the much wider objective of transforming the international system."¹⁰

Through the course of the historiography, many historians have offered nuanced contributions that have, each in their own way, advanced our understanding of the complexities and considerations that surrounded French diplomacy in the age of de Gaulle. Still, I will argue,

⁸ Frank Costigliola, *France and the United States: The Cold Alliance Since World War II* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), Charles G. Cogan, *Oldest Allies, Guarded Friends: The United States and France since 1940* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), and *De Gaulle and the United States: A Centennial Reappraisal*, ed. Robert O. Paxton and Nicholas Wahl (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994).

⁹ Maurice Vaisse, *La Grandeur: politique étrangère du général de Gaulle 1958-1969* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1998).

¹⁰ Frédéric Bozo, in *Two Strategies for Europe: de Gaulle, the United States, and the Atlantic Alliance*, trans. Susan Emanuel (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001), xi.

there exist more continuities than differences. Surely, the historiography has since shed subtle accusations of anti-Americanism found in earlier works such as Newhouse's *De Gaulle and the Anglo-Saxons*. Yet, the interpretation presented by Stanley Hoffman in 1974 has since become the underlying foundation for all contributions that followed. As Hoffman noted, "...the purpose of [de Gaulle's] statecraft was never in doubt. He had an unalterable set of imperatives and a clear design. The imperative was to renew France's substance and power, to restore her influence abroad, and to have her play as independent and active a role on the world stage as the world and French resources allowed."¹¹ Indeed, this assertion, that de Gaulle designed French policy with the intent of restoring France's international standing, has reigned supreme.

To illustrate this, we turn briefly to a contemporary rumination on the question at hand. In the conclusion to the 2010 edited collection, *Globalizing de Gaulle*, Garret Martin assessed the state of the debate. In it, he asked "What was [de Gaulle] trying to achieve with his often maverick foreign policy? Did he have a grand design, that is to say an overarching and ambitious vision to reshape international affairs, or was it mere posturing to further, and only further, France's prestige? This question divided commentators at the time, and still does today."¹²

This thesis seeks to diverge from the prevailing narrative that has hitherto dominated the interpretations of Gaullist foreign policy. In doing so, it rejects the notion that Gaullist foreign policy, at least in the early years of the Fifth Republic, sought to secure the return of France's "great power" standing or the restoration and spread of French international influence. Instead, it

¹¹Hoffman, *Decline or Renewal? France since the 1930s*, 283.

¹²Garret Martin, "Conclusion: A Gaullist Grand Strategy?" in *Globalizing de Gaulle: International Perspectives on French Foreign Policies, 1958-1969*, ed. Christian Nuenlist, Anna Locher, and Garret Martin (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 291.

argues that much of de Gaulle's major foreign policy decisions in the earliest years of his premiership, 1958-1960, were designed and executed with the intent of satisfying *domestic* goals. It argues that foreign policy served less to advance French interests on the international stage and more to act as an adjunct to Gaullist efforts to shape public opinion and garner popular support for the young Fifth Republic. Foreign policy, I argue, played a principal role in shaping the narrative of national unity central to the Gaullist republic.

In these efforts, this thesis has several main goals. First, it seeks to place Gaullist domestic ambitions squarely within the context of an analysis of foreign policy. The diplomatic literature on de Gaulle has neglected the central (and overriding) importance with which he and his closest allies, including Michel Debré and André Malraux, regarded constitutional reform. The founding of the Fifth Republic, as this thesis seeks to demonstrate, proved central to all other considerations in the early years of de Gaulle's tenure. Secondly, this thesis aims to blur the line where domestic policy ends and foreign policy begins. It posits that foreign policy does not occur in a vacuum, unaffected by domestic constraints, concerns, or goals. Instead, it can, and does, play a crucial role in the shaping of domestic politics. Lastly, the broader goal of this thesis is to force a reconsideration of the role of foreign policy in general and to encourage considerations into possible domestic motivations of diplomacy during future research.

In reaching this alternative interpretation of Gaullist foreign policy, I must credit the works, outside the gamut of diplomatic literature, which influenced my understanding of the anxieties and priorities of the period. Two in particular, Richard Kuisel's *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* and Kristin Ross's *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization*

and the Reordering of French Culture helped contextualize the fundamental changes French society underwent in the period and how the Cold War and “Americanization,” as well as domestic transformations, shaped France.¹³ Additionally, other works, like Herman Lebovics’s *Mona Lisa’s Escort: André Malraux and the Reinvention of French Culture*, helped impress upon me the Gaullists’ broader goals for the Fifth Republic and national unity.¹⁴ Inclusion of prominent cultural, social, and political historians, has allowed me to develop a more complicated and nuanced view of Gaullist ambitions and French society in the period concerned.

Before proceeding further, however, I find it prudent to define the limits of this study. For one, the study is limited to the years between 1958 and 1960 for several reasons. The first reason is the narrowed scope of an undergraduate honors thesis imposes certain constraints. Secondly, this period witnessed the creation of the Fifth Republic and early Gaullist efforts to ensure its legitimacy. Also, the study confines itself to an analysis of Gaullist foreign policy within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), or Atlantic Alliance. More specifically, the study focuses solely on France’s interaction with the United States and United Kingdom within the alliance. In doing so, other NATO members – the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, and the Benelux countries, for instance – are neglected. Additionally, the reader will notice the Algerian War and the French pursuit of an independent nuclear force – both undoubtedly central to French history of the period – are (regrettably) treated as tangential factors to the story. The politics of European integration are avoided completely. The reasoning is twofold. Again, the capacities of

¹³See Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993) and Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

¹⁴Herman, Lebovics, *Mona Lisa’s Escort: André Malraux and the Reinvention of French Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

an undergraduate thesis prevent a larger role for the above topics. But also, and more importantly, it is the interactions with the Anglo-Americans in the context of NATO which best illustrate my argument.

This delineation brings me to another limitation of the study that the reader will undoubtedly consider, if not outright challenge. In arguing that the reader must reconsider the intent of Gaullist foreign policy, I do not imply *all* foreign policy decisions. Naturally, most of the foreign policy formulations during the de Gaulle presidency strictly served France's interests in the international arena and did not seek to shape (at least overtly) French domestic opinion. Negotiations over European integration, for instance, or de Gaulle's efforts to court nations in South America and Africa served France's economic and strategic interests.

There were two distinct types of diplomacy employed. There was the day-to-day efforts of diplomats like Ambassador Hervé Alphand and Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville, as well as other members of de Gaulle's cabinet who, at the President's request, went on foreign excursions meant to advance France's interests abroad. These functions are quite typical of all nations, in all time periods, within the diplomatic sphere. Then there was the other side of French diplomacy: the decisions and actions taken by de Gaulle himself. These moves, undertaken with an outward appearance of unilateralism, tended towards abruptness and generally privileged theatrical flair over negotiation or compromise. He announced decisions with an air of spontaneity – undoubtedly with the intent of attracting media attention – not after long, tiresome negotiations. Unilateral foreign policy decisions provided, as Stanley Hoffman suggested, “the

confrontations and the solo performances de Gaulle seemed to crave” in his efforts to project a presidential authority.¹⁵ It is these latter aspects of French diplomacy that concern us here.

As this thesis will demonstrate, a large portion of French diplomatic decisions *did* prove superficial, especially in the context of the NATO alliance. In this respect, this thesis challenges the prevailing narrative that de Gaulle’s orchestrations within the alliance served only to strengthen France’s international standing and influence within (and eventually in contrast to) NATO. Contrary to the narrative which has interpreted the selected foreign policy decisions as part of a “grand design” to hasten an end to the bi-polar Cold War while enhancing French influence in the process, this study will demonstrate that the major policy decisions in relation to NATO in 1958-1959 – the withdrawal of the French Mediterranean Fleet from NATO integration and the removal of NATO nuclear stock piles from French soil – had no real intention of strengthening France’s bid for international influence or leadership, but instead augmented the Gaullist domestic narrative of renewal under the Fifth Republic. Equally, this thesis seeks to place renewed importance on the aforementioned decisions, as well as de Gaulle’s state visits of 1960, which the diplomatic historiography has commonly seen as mere stepping stones, restricted by the larger demands of the ongoing Algerian War, towards the full-on foreign policy of *grandeur* which blossomed following the war’s end in 1962.

The thesis is therefore organized as follows. Chapter One is used to establish the domestic priorities facing the Gaullists in 1958 and thereafter. It analyzes the politics that surrounded the founding of the Fifth Republic and the efforts to establish the preeminence of

¹⁵Stanley Hoffman, “The Foreign Policy of Charles de Gaulle” in *The Diplomats, 1939-1979*, ed. Gordon A. Craig and Francis L. Loewenheim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994) 244.

constitutional reform. This chapter challenges, if subtly, the assertions found in the diplomatic histories on the topic which suggest that de Gaulle's foremost concern upon his return to power was reviving French influence and prestige in the world. As Michel Debré, de Gaulle's closest advisor and first Prime Minister, reminded us, "despite pressing economic and financial problems, despite the difficulty of the Algerian problem, General de Gaulle made it his first priority to draft a new constitution."¹⁶ Indeed, everything else – the Algerian War, France's global standing, the French economy and society – depended on this "all-important" task.¹⁷ This rationale came from the belief that, in order to execute all other endeavors successfully, France needed a governmental framework that ensured a stable and effective state.

The chapter begins by examining de Gaulle's postwar foray into politics, joined by like-minded compatriots, in an effort to illustrate the extent to which de Gaulle and his allies strove to shape the French political and governmental system. The final section of the chapter will address the period surrounding the formation of the Fifth Republic and de Gaulle's return from political exile. This section will serve to demonstrate how various Gaullists took advantage of the increasing crisis in Algeria to precipitate an end to the Fourth Republic and, in doing so, usher in the Fifth Republic. Additionally, during this period of constitutional reform, we see a significant effort by de Gaulle and others to discredit the Fourth Republic and emphasize the indispensability of the new Fifth Republic institutions to the well-being of France. Their efforts, as we shall see, culminated in the construction of a narrative which asserted that France had

¹⁶ Michel Debré, "The Constitution of 1958, Its Raison D'être and How It Evolved" in *The Impact of the Fifth Republic on France*, ed. William G. Andrews and Stanley Hoffman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 6.

¹⁷ Charles de Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope: Renewal and Endeavor*, trans. Terence Kilmartin (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), 30.

undergone a genuine – and necessary – transformation which promised national unity and renewal under the auspices of de Gaulle.

Chapter Two considers France's position in the Cold War and how the Gaullists exploited this position to ensure the greatest domestic response. As Chapter One explained, constitutional reform proved the central factor to Gaullist efforts of the late 1950s. In this regard, the second chapter picks up where the first leaves off. The second chapter seeks to demonstrate how the architects of the Fifth Republic sought to legitimize their new republic and its institutional changes – a strong, independent president juxtaposed against a parliament weaker than the French Republic had ever known – through foreign policy. The Gaullists believed that if they could craft a compelling message of renewal and rejuvenation, evidenced by tangible acts and policies, they could garner widespread and genuine support for the new regime, thus vindicating the constitutional reforms of 1958. This process relied on efforts to *portray* a marked change from the vilified Fourth Republic (which in Gaullist mythology reinforced a divisive and polarized French society) to the Fifth Republic which served to unite the country around the monarchical and paternal figure of Charles de Gaulle.

This is where foreign policy becomes relevant to their efforts. How better to portray a major transformation in French politics than by acting out a highly visible, if not highly effectual, foreign policy buttressed by the inviting message of *grandeur*? This chapter serves also to challenge the prevailing narrative that de Gaulle's actions against the *de facto* Anglo-American leadership during the period – the 1958 September Memorandum on the Directory and the 1959 decisions on the French Mediterranean Fleet and NATO nuclear stockpiles –

demonstrate his bid to increase France's leadership in the Western bloc of the Cold War. Instead, as the chapter will reflect, de Gaulle's policies against NATO in the early years of his presidency were a response to ambivalence felt throughout the French public about France's position *in* the Cold War bloc system. The chapter helps to place into context French attitudes about the Cold War and to remind us that de Gaulle's actions corresponded less to the confining Cold War paradigm and more to domestic socio-economic anxieties.

Chapter Three provides examinations of the relevant policy decisions carried out during 1959-1960, the first two years of de Gaulle's presidency. The chapter hinges on the understanding, which is reflected in the evidence, that the decisions did little, if anything, to alter France's international standing or French or NATO strategic considerations. Instead, the decisions served primarily to advance the Gaullist domestic narrative of both renewal and of a French state responding to the concerns of the French people. As the evidence will suggest, the Gaullist politics of independence in 1959 – the decisions to withdraw the French Mediterranean Fleet and to remove foreign nuclear stockpiles – proved strategically ineffectual at best. Yet both actions carried numerous domestic benefits. For one, they were both highly visible and tangible acts, which portrayed a sharp contrast to the muted diplomatic style exercised by leaders of the Fourth Republic. Secondly, both actions had broad support across the French political spectrum, which helped reinforce the claims of de Gaulle as embodiment of national unity.

The second half of the chapter examines the role of de Gaulle's official state visits to the United Kingdom and the United States in April 1960. Both events – marginalized (and, more often, not mentioned at all) by previous literature – helped support Gaullist claims of a national

renaissance under de Gaulle's leadership. Using all the symbolism he could muster, de Gaulle evoked immense enthusiasm in both countries which, in turn, transfixed French newspapers for the duration of his official trip. The overwhelming passion and exuberance shown to de Gaulle by the UK and US crowds suggests, as the chapter reflects, that the events helped influence the French public's own perception of their president.

Through these various diplomatic efforts, de Gaulle and company hoped to construct a persuasive narrative about the ostensible benefits of the Gaullist constitutional reforms implemented in 1958. De Gaulle capitalized on popular socio-economic and cultural anxieties from the period, namely the omnipresent Cold War and the fears of "Americanization," to carry out a foreign policy with broad popular appeal. But before he could serve as the stately personification of the Fifth Republic – the indefatigable "Republican Monarch," in Debré's words – de Gaulle and his allies had to realize their long-sought constitutional reforms.

CHAPTER 1: GAULLISM AND THE PURSUIT OF CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

In 1959, the first full year of the Fifth French Republic, Gaullist intellectual Raymond Aron reflected on the events which had recently unfolded:

The crisis which General de Gaulle had always predicted but which he had waited for so long in vain was brought on by the Algerian War ... and [with it] the General had again become a national hero, ‘the most illustrious of Frenchmen.’ In 1958 he gave France a constitution *as he had passionately wanted to do for nearly twenty years*, and as he very likely would have been able to twelve years sooner had he shown the tactical skill, moderation, and charm of which he had given so many proofs during recent months.¹

The creation of the Fifth Republic constitution, as Aron noted, was not simply a byproduct of the unfolding events of 1958. Instead, its birth culminated from years of trying, in vain, on the part of Charles de Gaulle and his many companions to affect a lasting change to the French political system. The Gaullists deemed reform necessary and, in 1958, inevitable to ensure governmental strength in times of crisis and a structure that promoted national unity and mitigated disparate social tensions.

The goal of this chapter, then, is to establish the preeminence of constitutional reform to the overall Gaullist agenda. In doing so, it challenges the prevailing narrative that has long dictated the historiography of Gaullist foreign policy, one that assumes that de Gaulle’s diplomatic ventures were confined to international goals – from enhancing France’s global standing to precipitating détente within the Cold War. The diplomatic histories on the subject

¹Raymond Aron, *France: Steadfast and Changing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 106. Emphasis added.

have, thus far, generally neglected not only the domestic developments and concerns that influenced Gaullist policy but also the importance with which he regarded constitutional reform. The reader will quickly note the heavy reliance on secondary literature in this chapter. Indeed, it hardly reveals anything new regarding the political developments surrounding the founding of the Fifth Republic. What *is* new, however, is its placement within the context of a larger work on Gaullist foreign policy.

This chapter hopes to establish the value that the Gaullists placed on constitutional reform; something that long predated concerns about France's international standing in the Fifth Republic. Once we understand the central role this *domestic* priority played to their overall agenda, we can then, in the preceding chapters, examine how foreign policy augmented *domestic* concerns.

THE FOURTH REPUBLIC: GAULLISM'S POLITICAL ACTIVISM

Once the war in Europe ended in mid-1945, the reestablished states of Western and Central Europe held parliamentary elections which brought the eventual return of political parties. Lurid memories of fascism propelled many states to opt for parliamentary-led coalition governments.² In France, with elections in 1945, the result was no different. The major winners, the Socialist *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière* (SFIO), the Communist Party (PCF), and the newly-formed Christian-Democratic *Mouvement Républicain Populaire* (MRP) each garnered approximately one quarter of the vote of the Constituent Assembly responsible for state restoration. The three-way coalition opted to preserve de Gaulle, prominent thanks to his

²Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 286-87.

wartime leadership of the Free French, as head of the postwar provisional government and moved to draft a new constitution. The political wrangling which accompanied the debates over state budgetary matters and constitutional reform soon became too much for the Free French leader. De Gaulle, feeling the limits of his influence and disillusioned by the return of the aspects he reviled in the Third Republic, opted to resign on 20 January 1946.³ On his heels followed the loyal Gaullist ministers, many of whom had forged a relationship with de Gaulle during the war and were unaffiliated with the three parties of the coalition.⁴

In resigning, de Gaulle greatly overestimated his own importance and influence. The quarreling of the political parties, as he saw it, would inevitably lead to their collapse and, with it, a chorus of cries for his return. He was wrong. The postwar coalition of the SFIO, PCF, and MRP proved perfectly capable of continuing without him. Soon, the leftist contingent of the three-way political coalition produced a constitution which they put to national referendum. Not surprisingly, the Gaullists vehemently rejected the constitution, but they were not alone. The majority of the French public, including the center-right MRP, also rejected it. With the

³ Maurice Agulhon, *The French Republic 1879-1992*, trans. Antonia Nevill (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 320-21, 334-35, Frank Giles, *The Locust Years: The Story of the Fourth French Republic, 1946-1958* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1994), 18-28, and Julian Jackson, *De Gaulle* (London: Hans Publishing, 2003), 31-43.

⁴ Following the liberation in 1944, de Gaulle founding himself accompanied by a number of loyal compatriots, all of whom adhered to the principles and sentiments espoused by the General himself. These converts, wedded to a particular and often romantic vision of France, formed the collective known as Gaullism. We must look back on the formative years of the Gaullist movement to understand the commonality between the men attracted to its particular political philosophy. The movement was forged in the isolation of de Gaulle's wartime headquarters in London, severed from the parliamentary democracy that epitomized the French republic. The figures who felt compelled to join de Gaulle accepted, even embraced, the authoritarian wartime structure which defined the early Free French operation. The adherents of Gaullism were also attracted to the notions of unity ostensibly embodied in one man. Together, the group engaged actively within, and often against, the conventions of the Fourth Republic. See Anthony Hartley, *Gaullism: The Rise and Fall of a Political Movement* (New York: Outerbridge and Dienstfrey, 1971).

constitution's failure, de Gaulle saw an opportunity to reenter the fray with hopes of influencing the outcome of the revised constitution.⁵

His efforts culminated in the speech at Bayeux, France on 16 June 1946. This effort became the official Gaullist prescription for constitutional reform. In typical Gaullist fashion, the speech was replete with symbolism. Outfitted in his military uniform adorned with the Free French insignia, surrounded by fellow veterans, and located at the site associated with the allied landings of 1944, de Gaulle launched into his speech. The philosophy of liberal monarchist Montesquieu and the ruminations of loyal compatriot Michel Debré provided the intellectual inspiration for the speech.⁶ In it, de Gaulle denounced his usual targets. He chastised the Third Republic and the “rivalry of the parties” which, he argued, too often disregarded “the higher interests of the country.”⁷ Eventually, he offered his prescription for the governmental ills of France: the country required a strong Head of State, separate from the parliament and “situated above the parties,” who could “reconcile the general interest” of the French public.⁸ He, like Debré and others, envisioned a strong leader, answerable to the people alone, as the only way to precipitate national unity.

These proclamations proved incredibly audacious following years of dictatorial rule during the war. The speech and, more importantly, de Gaulle's haughty delivery reflected a profound misunderstanding of fundamental postwar changes to governance. Indeed, the

⁵Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle: The Ruler, 1945-1970*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993), 127-29.

⁶*Ibid.*, 129-31.

⁷Charles de Gaulle, “Speech at Bayeux,” June 16, 1946 in Charles G. Cogan, *Charles de Gaulle: A Brief Biography with Documents* (Boston, MA: Bedford Books, 1996), 185.

⁸*Ibid.*, 187.

prevalence of parliamentary coalitions throughout Western Europe, not just France, was a conscious response to the memories of a discredited authoritarianism.⁹ Given his conspicuous denouncements of the Third Republic and parliamentary democracy, the left proved quick to ascribe fascist and Bonapartist labels to the General and the Gaullist doctrines. Ultimately, the politicians in Paris, conscious of France's recent past and intent on preventing any one political force – especially Communist or Gaullist – from gaining too much influence, rejected his advice. Shortly afterward, the French public approved, if narrowly, the constitution of the Fourth Republic, the structure of which closely mirrored the Third Republic, thereby leaving ultimate power in the hands of the assembly.¹⁰ Frustrated with the outcome, de Gaulle departed to rethink his political strategy to affect change.

Within months of the speech at Bayeux, key Gaullist groups began sowing seeds for a broad political movement against the reviled Fourth Republic. As early as October 1946, a secret group of Gaullists led by André Malraux and joined by Jacques Soustelle, Pierre Lefranc, and Jacques Foccart among others, began plotting a movement which would allow for de Gaulle's political return. De Gaulle himself also began courting reliable allies, drawn mostly from his collection of wartime compatriots. By early 1947, the foundation of the group was intact. The movement took the name *Rassemblement du Peuple Français* (Rally of the French People), or RPF for short and included in its ranks the most notable of Gaullists: Malraux, Soustelle,

⁹See "Democracy Transformed: Western Europe, 1950-75" in Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 286-326.

¹⁰On the crucial aspects of the early period in the formation of the Fourth Republic, see Jon Cowans, "French Public Opinion and the Founding of the Fourth Republic," *French Historical Studies* 17, no. 1 (1991). Also, William I. Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe: The Turbulent History of a Divided Continent, 1945 to Present* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003), 74.

Foccart, Debré, and Jacques Chaban-Delmas.¹¹ The movement sought to “group the French people” in a way that allowed them to develop policies “independent of any single political party aspirations.”¹² This goal, on the surface, sounded benign enough. The RPF, however, intended to garner enough votes to become the majority party and, once there, precipitate the downfall of the Fourth Republic.

The hardening of the Cold War in the summer of 1947 provided the backdrop for the rise of the RPF. With the tightening of Soviet control in Eastern Europe and the establishment of the Cominform, accompanied by American offers for monetary aid, the major governing parties in France quickly ostracized the French Communist Party and moved to block it from gaining any positions of influence. With the perceived rise of an external Communist threat, the RPF, too, turned its focus on the PCF. Whereas a narrative of constitutional change marked the RPF’s first months of existence, by mid-summer 1947 the RPF’s platform focused narrowly on anti-communism. This singular focus, a more compelling message than institutional reform, allowed the RPF to attract a wide array of voters, robbing the major parties of many of their constituencies.¹³ In its first elections, in 1947, the RPF won 38% of the French vote. Within a year, the RPF had over one million members. The movement effectively launched a successful monthly journal, *Liberté de l’esprit*, edited by Claude Mauriac and enhanced by contributors such as Raymond Aron. By 1951, the RPF was the largest party in French politics.¹⁴

¹¹Lacouture, *De Gaulle: The Ruler*, 134-35.

¹²C.L. Sulzberger, *The Last of the Giants* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 27.

¹³ Lacouture, *De Gaulle: The Ruler*, 141-43.

¹⁴Jean-Pierre Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944-1958*, trans. Godfrey Rodgers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 156-57, Robert Gildea, *France Since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 43-5.

These successes, however, belied the limits of the RPF. The mainstream parties soon viewed the RPF, like the French Communist Party, as a danger to the republic. They quickly moved to stigmatize the RPF, making efforts to prevent their members from participating in the movement. This is, perhaps, not surprising. The RPF's entire reason for being was to gain enough support to extinguish the Fourth Republic and, with it, the political parties. Additionally, the RPF operated with a militancy rivaled only by the French communists. As the PCF, in their fall from a central government role, became increasingly reactionary, the RPF too took on an aggressive and, at times, violent role in French politics. Opponents quickly labeled the RPF as a radical far-right, even fascist, entity. Ominously to many, the RPF and the PCF, both of which envisioned the downfall of the existing political order, were the two largest parties in French politics by the late 1940s.¹⁵

The mainstream parties, namely the MRP, the SFIO, and the smaller Radicals and Moderates, responded to this dual-sided threat with a system of political alliances, called the Third Force, which prevented either fringe party from gaining electoral prominence. The reluctance of the RPF and PCF to compromise with the other parties furthered their isolation. By 1951 a loss of 350,000 members accompanied waning electoral success for the RPF.¹⁶ The final death knell came when a leading member of the movement, Jacques Soustelle, responded to calls from President Vincent Auriol to play a larger role in the National Assembly. Disillusioned by the RPF's active participation in the "games, poisons, and delights of the system" it was meant to

¹⁵ Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, 156-59.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 156-59.

end, de Gaulle abandoned the movement in May 1953 and turned to what Malraux deemed the “political wilderness.”¹⁷

From his political departure in 1953 until his grand return in May, 1958, de Gaulle abided in a quiet retirement at Colombey-les-deux-Églises. After his failed efforts at Bayeux and through the RPF, de Gaulle became jaded regarding the Fourth Republic. As he told C.L. Sulzberger in 1955, “Regimes never reform themselves. They simply fall. They collapse.” Indeed, he added, no meaningful constitutional change could occur under the Fourth Republic, “this regime must first vanish – as the regime vanished in 1940.”¹⁸ Other prominent Gaullists, meanwhile, such as Soustelle and Debré remained active within the Fourth Republic, often as outspoken critics of the republic and its positions on decolonization, the Cold War, and European integration, among other issues. The parliamentary Gaullists that outlasted the RPF as well as de Gaulle himself eventually coalesced in the spring of 1958 with the Algerian War as backdrop to institute the long-sought end of the Fourth Republic.

THE ALGERIAN WAR AND THE FOUNDING OF THE FIFTH REPUBLIC

After engaging in the political arena through several endeavors – mainly the speech at Bayeux and the RPF – during the Fourth Republic, de Gaulle had not only learned the limits of his influence but also tarnished his public image in the process. Indeed, upon emerging from the war, de Gaulle embodied, to many, national unity. His image appeared above the political fray, his name inseparable from the credibility of the Free French and the Resistance. Yet, after his involvement in the RPF, de Gaulle seemed to many, at best, a contributor to the partisanship and

¹⁷Quoted from Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle: The Ruler*, 153.

¹⁸Sulzberger, *The Last of the Giants*, 29.

political fighting he claimed to oppose and, at worst (as the left would liken him), a threat to the Republic and democracy itself. Other Gaullist leaders too, like Soustelle and Debré in particular, often represented reactionary and oppositional forces within the Fourth Republic, which did little to further their image.

By the spring of 1958, the Gaullists had learned their lesson. When the events which precipitating de Gaulle's political return arose, he waited until the opportunity was ripe for him to implement the long sought-after constitutional revisions.¹⁹ Only after he was guaranteed full powers to rewrite the constitution did he return. The others too, Debré, Malraux, and Soustelle among them, moved behind the scenes in different arenas to clear the way for de Gaulle's return.

Two narratives emerged in 1958, largely crafted by the Gaullists themselves, which emphasized the necessity and therefore inevitability of de Gaulle's ascension to power and subsequent constitutional reform. The first, in May and June 1958, posited that only de Gaulle, the human embodiment of national unity, could bring a palatable resolution to the ongoing quagmire in Algeria while, in the process, staving off the ubiquitous threats of civil war. The second narrative to emerge, in the autumn of 1958, stressed the dire need for the French public to approve the Fifth Republic constitution, thereby ending the short-lived Fourth Republic. All the while, the apparent dangers of the Algerian War provided the backdrop for the unfolding events.

¹⁹Indeed, jaded by his experiences in the Fourth Republic, de Gaulle had given up any possibility of returning to salvage what he considered a broken system; he would only return, he concluded, once he secured the authority to rewrite the constitution to his liking. Two years before his return, in 1956, de Gaulle noted to *New York Times* journalist C.L. Sulzberger, his unwillingness to aid the Fourth Republic: "This regime was made against me. Therefore it cannot call upon de Gaulle to save itself. De Gaulle is not prepared to save this regime." See Sulzberger, *The Last of the Giants*, 31.

The war in Algeria had, by 1958, raged for four grueling years as the French fought to suppress the Algerian nationalists' bid for independence. Algeria was first established as a French colony in 1830 and, by 1954, had become a part of metropolitan France, divided into three departments and answerable to the French Ministry of the Interior. Algeria's strong ties to France made the conflict's potential to divide enormous. Support for *Algérie Française* ranged from Gaullists to Socialists.²⁰ The left, meanwhile, bitterly opposed what they deemed as France's nationalist and imperialistic agenda.²¹ Complicating matters further was the fate of nearly one million French settlers who lived in the North African colony and whose fate hinged on the preservation of *Algérie Française*. The dire stakes made the settler population a boisterous and demanding political force, intent on preventing any concessions to the Algerian nationalist forces. Their actions, greatly supported by the French military, directed the government towards an increasingly hard line against the Algerian opposition.²² The left proved militant in their anti-imperial stance, rivaled only by the settler population's conviction for colonial preservation.

The tensions between factions, which had steadily risen since the beginning of the war, came to a fore on 13 May 1958 when a large mob of settlers in Algiers rioted over the investiture of the Christian-Democrat Pierre Pflimlin, a moderate politician openly in favor of negotiation with the Algerian nationalists. Alongside the protestors, two leading military figures based in Algiers, Generals Jacques Massu and Raoul Salan, formed a Committee of Public Safety intent

²⁰Gildea, *France Since 1945*, 25-6. Indeed, vocal support for *Algérie Française* ranged from Gaullists like Soustelle and Debré to Socialists like Guy Mollet and beyond. Numerous reasons, ranging from the benevolence of the "Civilizing Mission" to the central role of empire in France's international standing, engendered widespread backing for continued control over Algeria.

²¹ Leftist intellectuals, including Jean-Paul Sartre, and left-leaning journals and newspapers were the first to denounce the French military's use of torture against the Algerian nationalists. See Benjamin Stora, *Algeria 1830-2000: A Short History*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 88-91.

²²Gildea, *France Since 1945*, 25-6.

on forcing governmental change in Paris. The common denominator between the two groups – the rioting settlers and the conspiring generals – was General de Gaulle. Both parties believed de Gaulle was the only figure with the capacity to preserve French Algeria in a time of waning support in Paris.²³

But why the General? What distinguished him, at this moment of uncertainty, as the staunch and steadfast ally of French Algeria? Certainly, it was not de Gaulle himself. He never, during his time in the political spotlight, presented a clear position on French Algeria and he withdrew from politics a year before the Algerian War began. He did not offer comments on the subject in his infrequent public remarks made between 1953 and 1958 thereafter. If de Gaulle remained silent, however, fellow Gaullist Jacques Soustelle did not. Soustelle served as Governor-General in Algeria in 1955-56. He became one of the most outspoken adherents to French Algeria and, in doing so, won over many of the conservative Algerian settlers to the Gaullist cause. The military too found themselves often aligned with Soustelle's conservatism. These elements converged to help encourage the return of de Gaulle as developments ostensibly worsened for the settlers in spring 1958.²⁴

²³Stora, *Algeria 1830-2000*, 70-71.

²⁴Soustelle was not alone among the Gaullists. Michel Debré too greatly supported the cause; together, several years after the dissolution of the RPF, they formed the *Centre National des Républicains Sociaux*, a movement which campaigned on the preservation of French Algeria. The common thread, too, for many Gaullists was de Gaulle himself, who they regarded as the ultimate figurehead for their desired political changes. Many Gaullists, including Debré, by 1957 saw the Algerian War as the long-awaited opportunity to bring de Gaulle back. For others, like Soustelle de Gaulle seemed like the figure capable of preserving French Algeria. These positions converged to position de Gaulle as the visible Gaullist answer to the crisis of 1958. On the many elements of Gaullist thought leading up to de Gaulle's return, as well as the military's role in developments of these positions, see Stephen Tyre, "The Gaullists, the French Army, and Algeria before 1958: Common Cause or Marriage of Convenience?" in *France and the Algerian War: Strategy, Operations and Diplomacy*, eds. Martin Alexander and John Kieger (London: Frank Cass, 2002).

Eventually, after more than a week of plotting, the conspiring generals in Algiers acted. On the evening of 24 May, Massu and Salan, utilizing paratroopers, carried out “Operation Resurrection,” a bloodless *coup* which seized control of Corsica. The generals threatened to capture Paris next and install de Gaulle by force.²⁵ In response, 200,000 people, led by the French Communist Party, demonstrated in the capital to denounce the overt use of military force and the conditions under which de Gaulle was called to power.²⁶ The regime in Paris, meanwhile, found itself stuck in an impasse. Government leaders vacillated between several options. Should they respond to the revolting military factions with force, thereby initiating a full-blown civil war? Or should they appease the parties in Algeria through a renewed commitment to the preservation of French Algeria? The final, and most politically viable, option was to bring back General de Gaulle, the sole figure, the leaders assumed, with enough moral capital to pacify the rebelling military figures and preserve domestic unity.²⁷

By month’s end, the tide had shifted in favor of de Gaulle’s political return. Prime Minister Pflimlin found himself incapable of reconciling the various political parties for unified action. President René Coty, meanwhile, continued to pressure Pflimlin for de Gaulle’s return. The tensions in Algiers and Paris continued to mount, as the threat of a military *coup* in Paris loomed. In the background, meanwhile, de Gaulle seized the opportunity to fuel the controversy. In a bold statement, given at a press conference in Paris on 19 May 1958, as the leaders in Paris searched for feasible alternatives, he stated that “the time may have come” for him to be

²⁵Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe*, 189.

²⁶Gildea, *France Since 1945*, 51.

²⁷Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, 304.

“directly useful to France once again.”²⁸ Additionally, despite its apparent illegality, de Gaulle made no effort to publicly condemn the military insurrection carried out in his name.²⁹ In Paris, Pflimlin found himself out of feasible options to mitigate the situation. Faced with seemingly unresolvable problems and increasingly vocal calls for de Gaulle’s return, he resigned on 28 May.³⁰ The following day President Coty called upon de Gaulle to form a government.³¹

De Gaulle embarked on his new task without hesitation. Before the National Assembly on 1 June 1958, he outlined the demands – which included full emergency powers for six months and the grounds to write a new constitution – for his investiture. Shortly following his speech, in a vote of 329 to 244, the National Assembly ceded to de Gaulle’s request and dealt what proved to be the death knell of the Fourth Republic.³² In his speech de Gaulle described national conditions starkly:

The rapidly accelerating degradation of the State, the immediate danger to French unity, Algeria in the throes of trials and emotions, Corsica suffering from a feverish contagion, opposing movements in Metropolitan France hourly whipping up their passions and, reinforcing their action, the Army ... shocked by the lack of any real authority, our international position disparaged even within our alliances – such is the situation of our country.

²⁸“Press Conference of General De Gaulle Held in Paris at the Palais d’Orsay on the Conditions of His Return to Power on May, 19, 1958” in *Major Addresses, Statements, and Press Conferences of General Charles de Gaulle, May 19, 1958 – January 31, 1964* (New York: French Embassy Press and Information Division, 1964), 1. Hereafter abbreviated as *Major Addresses*. This statement comes from a man who, since 1953, had largely been removed from the spotlight of French politics.

²⁹Sulzberger, *The Last of the Giants*, 308.

³⁰*The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls: France 1939, 1944-1975*, ed. George H. Gallup (New York: Random House, 1976), 224-33. Even the public’s attitude toward the matter had shifted by late May. In February 1958, when asked “Are there any French political figures in whom you have confidence,” General de Gaulle garnered only 7% of the vote. By early June, meanwhile, 54% of the French public found de Gaulle’s return “desirable.” Hereafter abbreviated as *Gallup Public Opinion Polls*.

³¹Gildea, *France Since 1945*, 51.

³²Rioux, *The Fourth Republic*, 309.

At this very moment ... [France] finds herself threatened by disruption and perhaps even civil war.³³

At his most melodramatic, de Gaulle made a case for the dire need for his return. In his speech, he implied that the Fourth Republic's political leaders and institutions lacked the capacity to solve the problems confronting France. He sought to construct the impression that France faced its current perils as a result of its flawed institutional framework but that, given the means to do so, he could rectify France's course. In the process, he warned of civil war and argued that the nation needed unity (and a capable unifier). He aimed to position himself, in France's time of need, as the one solely "responsible for the unity, integrity, and independence of France."³⁴ He cast himself as the paternal figure – clearly drawing from his wartime legacy, not his dubious tenure as leader of the RPF – poised to "safeguard the unity of France" and "protect it from anarchy."³⁵

De Gaulle promptly assembled a team meant to deliberate and draft the new constitution. In June 1958 de Gaulle, and a hand-picked team, headed by Michel Debré and including members from the leading French political parties, gathered at the Hôtel Matignon in Paris to begin the drafting process.³⁶ The constitution was, undoubtedly, derivative of Debré's principles outlined in de Gaulle's famed speech at Bayeux in 1946. Indeed, the central feature of the Fifth Republic constitution was the creation of a strong presidential figure, separate from parliament, meant to lend stability and undermine divisiveness in French politics.

³³"Premier-Designate Charles de Gaulle Outlines His Governmental Program Before the National Assembly on June 1, 1958" in *Major Addresses*, 7.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 8.

³⁵Lettre au Compte de Paris, 9 Juin 1958, in Charles de Gaulle, *Lettres, Notes, et Carnets, Juin 1958-Décembre 1960* (Paris: Plon, 1985), 23.

³⁶Serge Bernstein, *The Republic of de Gaulle, 1958-1969*, trans. Peter Morris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 6-7.

The final product, the constitution of the Fifth Republic, embodied all of the tenets the Gaullists valued dearly. First, it instituted a strong presidential position, the personification of national leadership, elected by universal suffrage and an absolute majority of votes cast. The president – the sole “protector of the independence of the nation” – possessed the power to select and dismiss a prime minister at will and, more importantly, had the capacity to dissolve the National Assembly.³⁷ The final draft of the constitution made it clear that the Gaullists intended the president – what Debré deemed the “republican monarch” – to serve as the central government figure, no longer answerable to parliament.³⁸

The creation of the undeniably strong, and independent, presidential figure was a huge departure from the constitutional framework of the Fourth Republic, which derived its legitimacy from parliament – the National Assembly and the Council of Ministers. The president served a largely a symbolic role in the Fourth Republic and possessed severely limited powers. Equally, the Prime Minister relied on approval from parliament before he could take power.³⁹ In times of ministerial conflict there were frequent changes of Prime Ministers, as coalition-based political majorities shifted. In the twelve years between de Gaulle’s departure in 1946 and his return in 1958, the Fourth Republic witnessed 22 different Prime Ministers.⁴⁰ The Gaullists attributed France’s every failure, like the virtual collapse in May 1958, to this arrangement which they

³⁷“The French Constitution of October 4th, 1958” in Dorothy Pickles, *The Fifth French Republic: Institutions and Politics*, 3rd ed. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1967), 234-55.

³⁸On Debré’s thoughts of the president’s role in the Fifth Republic, see Michel Debré, “The Constitution of 1958, Its Raison D’être and How It Evolved” in *The Impact of the Fifth Republic on France*, ed. William G. Andrews and Stanley Hoffman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 4.

³⁹“Constitution of the French Republic” in Philip Williams, *Politics in Post-War France: Parties and the Constitution in the Fourth Republic* (London: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1954), 423-35.

⁴⁰William D. Blair Jr. and Lionel Durand, “In Another Desperate Hour,” *Newsweek*, June 9, 1958, 17-25.

believed undermined Prime Ministerial efforts to project legitimacy and leadership in times of crisis.

Eventually, by late summer 1958 Debré and his team completed the constitution of the Fifth Republic. Next, it was put to the test of the French people via referendum. During the month of September, de Gaulle set out to ensure its adoption. He made two appeals to the nation, requesting their full-fledged support of the nascent republic. In typical Gaullist fashion, he outlined the needs of the moment in grandiose terms.⁴¹ As he ended his address on 4 September, 1958, he illustrated the magnitude of the decision confronting the French public:

Here, women and men of France, is what inspires and what makes up the Constitution which, on September 28, will be submitted to your vote. With all my heart, in the name of France, I ask you to answer “Yes.” If you do not vote thus, we shall return, that very day, to the bad old ways with which you are familiar. But if you do, the result will make the Republic strong and effective ... But there will also be, in this positive display of the national will, the proof that our country is regaining its unity and, by the same token, its opportunity for grandeur. The world, which understands full well what importance our decision will have for it, will draw the inevitable conclusion ... A great hope will rise over France. I think it has already risen.⁴²

The importance of the new constitution, according to de Gaulle, transcended the domestic needs of the country. He framed the significance of the referendum around two weightier themes – national unity and international opinion. On September 26, on the eve of the referendum, de Gaulle made one last appeal. “Women and men of France ... in asking you to choose effectiveness of the state and national unity, I believe I am expressing what the many, many

⁴¹Indeed, the appeal of 4 September 1958 was replete with symbolism. The date, selected at Malraux’s request, was the anniversary of the founding of the Third Republic. The location, the Place de la République, too was consciously selected. Lastly, a large “V” insignia – representative of the Fifth Republic but also subtly referencing the symbol for victory – adorned the platform where de Gaulle, Malraux, and others addressed the crowd. See Lacouture, *De Gaulle: The Ruler*, 195-97.

⁴²“Address by the Premier Charles de Gaulle Outlining the Draft Constitution on September 4, 1958” in *Major Addresses*, 16.

generations that built the nation down through the centuries have hoped for it.”⁴³ History, he claimed, was on his side.

Leading up to the referendum, the Gaullists had the public on their side. Since his investiture, de Gaulle had capably painted himself as the answer for all whom, after four years of uncertain progress, wanted a resolution to the Algerian War (even if differences lingered over what “resolution” meant). From his tour of Africa and his ambiguous “I have understood you” speech in Algiers in June 1958, he allayed settler concerns about his commitment to their cause. In metropolitan France he positioned himself as the only one capable of resolving the colonial conflict. The public’s loss of faith in the Fourth Republic meanwhile, thanks to perceived mismanagement of the economy and the ongoing war, only strengthened the Gaullists’ bid.⁴⁴

The Gaullists used the mandate given to them to pursue constitutional reform. By including prominent members of the leading political parties in the drafting process, the Gaullists effectively silenced potential opposition to the constitution in the weeks leading up to the referendum. The PCF provided the only vocal hostility to the constitution which, given the public’s investment in de Gaulle, served to alienate the Communist Party further.⁴⁵ These factors contributed to a groundswell of support for de Gaulle. Heading into the referendum, 72% of the public professed confidence in the constitution despite the fact that only 36% felt “sufficiently

⁴³ “Premier de Gaulle’s Address to the Nation on the Eve of the Referendum on the Constitution on September 26, 1958” in *Major Addresses*, 18.

⁴⁴ See *Gallup Public Opinion Polls*, 223-227. When asked in January 1958 if Premier Félix Gaillard succeeded in his goal to “safeguard the house-keeper’s basket,” 81% of Frenchmen responded “no.” Equally, when asked what France’s “most important problem . . . , [was] at present,” the Algerian War and the financial situation together were at the forefront of peoples’ concerns. Collectively, 68% of the French public viewed the economy and the war as the country’s two most pressing problems.

⁴⁵ Bernstein, *Republic of de Gaulle*, 12-13.

well informed to vote” (compared to 55% who replied negatively).⁴⁶ On the day of the referendum, the country headed to the polls and, with an overwhelming majority, approved the Fifth Republic constitution. Of those who voted, 80% voted “yes.”⁴⁷ The republic began its life in auspicious fashion.

With the referendum a success, and after years of hard fought and messy political activism, the Gaullists ushered in their long-desired constitutional reform. The Gaullists finally gained the opportunity in 1958 after a war-weary public, invested in the promise of de Gaulle, proved willing to accede to institutionalized Gaullism. With this, de Gaulle emerged as the figurehead and personification of the new government. While Debré, the Fifth Republic’s first Prime Minister, and others operated the day-to-day administration of the new government, the theatrics of statecraft were reserved for the “Republican Monarch.” This arrangement allowed the young Republic to present one singular, stable, and commanding figure – the wartime hero of Charles de Gaulle – as the main focal point of government, in stark contrast to the ever-changing rotation of Prime Ministers under the Fourth Republic. The President, left responsible for the “honor and integrity of France” fashioned a foreign policy meant to portray national renewal and buttress national support in the early Fifth Republic. Employing a nationalist foreign policy, which responded to the widespread social anxieties of 1950s France, offered the French President an opportunity to bolster his claims to embodying national unity.

⁴⁶*Gallup Public Opinion Polls*, 241. When asked whether they were confident that “General de Gaulle will give France a good constitution,” 34% responded “very confident” while 38% responded “rather confident” compared to only 18% who were “not confident.” When asked “Do you feel that you are sufficiently well informed to vote in the referendum without additional explanation,” 36% responded “yes,” 55% responded “no,” and 9% had no opinion.

⁴⁷See Philip Thody, *The Fifth French Republic: Presidents, Politics, and Personalities* (London: Routledge, 1998), 19. On September 28, 1958 17,668, 790 Frenchmen voted for the new constitution compared to 4,624,511 who voted against it and 4,006,614 who abstained.

CHAPTER 2: NATIONALISTIC FOREIGN POLICY IN THE SERVICE OF THE GAULLIST DOMESTIC AGENDA

In 1882, Ernest Renan, the father of French nationalism, lectured about the defining aspects of nationhood in his speech “What is a Nation?” In it, he proposed the following:

To have common glories in the past and common will in the present; to have done great things together and to will that we do them again: these are the conditions essential for being a people...A heritage of glory and regrets to share in the past; one and the same programme to be realized in the future. To have suffered, enjoyed, and hoped together is worth more than customs agreements and frontiers that conform to strategic ideas; and this is what we understand in spite of racial and linguistic diversity. A moment ago I said ‘to have suffered together’: indeed, suffering in common unites more than joy. In matters of national memory, mourning has more validity than triumph, since it imposes duties which demand a common effort. A nation is therefore the expression of a great solidarity constituted by a feeling for the common sacrifices that have been made and for those one is prepared to make again.¹

National unity, Renan suggested, owed more to shared sorrow and a collective aspiration, not political or ethnic homogeneity. This axiom proved central to the Gaullist vision of *grandeur* at a time when a generation of French, from 1940 to 1958, faced a seemingly endless array of trials and challenges. As de Gaulle’s inaugural address on 8 January 1958 clearly reflected:

During the last half century [France] has been more gravely wounded ... than at any previous time in its history. But now, it has suddenly been offered an opportunity to emerge from doubt, from dissensions, from humiliations. And now our country wants to seize this opportunity by giving general interest precedence over all individual interests and prejudices.²

¹Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?” in *Nationalism in Europe, 1815 to the Present: A Reader*, ed. Stuart Woolf (London: Routledge, 1996), 58.

²“Text of the Inaugural Address of General de Gaulle as President of the Republic and of the Community at the Élysee Palace on January 8, 1959 in *Major Addresses, Statements, and Press Conferences of General Charles de*

De Gaulle framed the travails of France in a way which minimized the internal struggles and divisions and instead emphasized commonality, both in sacrifice and general will.³

The notions of unity and revival de Gaulle purposefully evoked in his inaugural address are central to the argument of this chapter. It contends that the Gaullists, with the founding of the Fifth Republic, sought to use *grandeur*, that ambiguous and ill-defined ideal, as the galvanizing force with which to reinforce their narrative of national rejuvenation. Indeed, it is not coincidental that de Gaulle reserved his message of France's rise from the ashes for his inaugural address: that day, in Gaullist lore, marked the start of a new epoch. One which, as the Gaullists hoped to portray, signaled a seismic shift from the follies of the Fourth Republic (and earlier) to an era of governmental stability and common ambition under the unifying force of President de Gaulle. As Chapter One sought to demonstrate, constitutional reform proved the central ambition of de Gaulle and his closest advisors (Debré especially). Chapter Two seeks to illustrate how nationalism and foreign policy served to legitimize the Gaullist Fifth Republic through popular support. It serves to demonstrate *why* foreign policy, among other things, proved central to the Gaullist narrative of national renewal and unity with which they used to bolster *domestic* support.

Gaulle, May 19, 1958 – January 31, 1964 (New York: French Embassy Press and Information Division, 1964), 34. Hereafter abbreviated as *Major Addresses*.

³It is clear that de Gaulle also embodied Renan's belief that "Forgetting and ... historical error are an essential factor in the creation of a nation." Following WWII, de Gaulle quickly moved to paper over the fratricide and rivalries that accompanied the War's occupation by shaping a narrative that insisted France fought a common struggle against the German occupiers and that "apart from a handful of wretches, the vast majority of [French] were ... Frenchman of good faith." He proved willing to maintain this visage during his presidential tenure. Quoted in Robert Gildea, *France Since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 70. See also, Renan "What is a Nation?" in *Nationalism in Europe*, 50.

THE NEED FOR NATIONALISM AND *GRANDEUR*

With de Gaulle's return to power in 1958, the Gaullists saw a revival of nationalism as an integral part of their efforts to unify the republic and to gain legitimacy for the new institutions. The Algerian War and the rapid, if uneven, social change and economic resurgence of the 1950s – to say nothing of the unresolved cleavage created during World War II – divided the country along fierce ideological lines. Moreover, the Gaullists believed the “party system” of the Fourth Republic failed to provide the French people with an inspiring, galvanizing national vision in response to these challenges. With this in mind, the Gaullists saw an opportunity to employ nationalistic themes which emphasized commonality and downplayed societal differences. They aimed to foster national unity and counter competing social pressures while simultaneously juxtaposing the Fifth Republic from its defunct predecessor. Additionally, nationalism, displayed in both rhetoric and tangible (if often ineffectual) acts and policies, served to garner public support, and with it legitimacy, for the leader of a newly stable and active republic.

Nationalism, in general, serves as an effective tool for galvanizing support for governing institutions – in this case for the Gaullist Fifth Republic – and reinforcing societal cohesion. Historian Eric Hobsbawm once argued that nationalist rhetoric's “very vagueness and lack of programmatic content gives it a potentially universal support within its own community.”⁴ De Gaulle and his team understood that nationalism's universal appeal could work to further integrate factions of society into a broader *national* community. Reinforcement of a common national message, via nationalistic themes and rhetoric, could then help counter societal tensions.

⁴Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), 169.

Equally, if large portions of society attached themselves to the nationalistic themes emanating from national leadership, legitimacy is thus conferred upon the state, its institutions, and programs.⁵

De Gaulle understood the galvanizing potential of nationalism. When, for instance, his Minister of Information, Alain Peyrefitte, noted the positive effect of nationalistic language in his rhetoric, de Gaulle explained the use enthusiastically:

Of course, that's what happens! The French again become French! We live in difficult times. It is necessary to rise above special interests. If we divide ourselves, if we quarrel, we are lost. One must create the conditions for the union of the French, and to do that one must awaken their national feelings. When the French divide themselves and quarrel, I speak to them of France.⁶

Nationalism, with its unifying potential, offered de Gaulle and the Gaullists an opportunity to drive home a common, if generic, message which reached all levels of French society.

Nationalist discourse offered the Gaullists a chance to gain appeal on all sides of the political spectrum and among all factions and, if not, make it difficult for opposing factions to offer a compelling counterargument.

Gaullist nationalism frequently hinged on notions of greatness and the need for the French people to strive for *grandeur*. De Gaulle conjured notions of *grandeur*, in his rhetoric and actions, because he understood its ideals possessed an attraction on both sides of the French political spectrum which, when employed effectively, could strengthen his bid for unity. He

⁵Brian Jenkins and Spyros A. Sofos, "Nation and Nationalism in Contemporary Europe: A Theoretical Perspective" in *Nation and Identity in Contemporary Europe*, ed. Brian Jenkins and Spyros A. Sofos (New York: Routledge, 1996), 22-24.

⁶Alain Peyrefitte, *C'était De Gaulle* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 294.

argued, for instance, that the French had “a need to feel pride in France.”⁷ This idea had the potential to speak to French men and women of all stripes, despite competing visions for the future (from European integration to France’s Cold War stance and decolonization).

De Gaulle’s notion of national pride tapped into the consensus, which blurred the lines between the French right and left, that presupposed that France remained exceptional and occupied a special place amongst nations, even if relegated to a reduced international role in the postwar era.⁸ All societal factions could agree that the French nation deserved self-respect and, with it, international respect. For many, this meant preserving an independent voice and identity – and resistance to a muted and subordinate role vulnerable to the dictates of others (whether in the machinations of the European Common Market or the NATO alliance) – even in the face of diminished global influence. *Grandeur*, of course, championed this notion of national self-worth. De Gaulle’s appeal to these sensibilities, at a time when France grappled with its own insecurities, had far-reaching potential.

The Gaullists believed nationalism and *grandeur* could construct a narrative which appealed to many and subdued ideological differences in favor of a common ideal. Certainly, the constant rhetoric of national renewal and *grandeur* did much to signify a changed political atmosphere and illustrate the departure from the Fourth Republic. These concepts of nationalism,

⁷Peyrefitte, *C’était de Gaulle*, 289.

⁸Brian Jenkins and Nigel Copsey, “National Identity in France” in *Nation and Identity in Contemporary Europe*, 109. This understanding of exceptionalism, of course, stemmed from several different legacies. The right looked to France’s empire and history of global influence as a source of its greatness. The left, meanwhile, viewed the supposedly universal values of equality, liberty, and secularization, borne out of the French Revolution, as the source of France’s exceptional status among nations. These two legacies often intertwined and converged, as France’s empire and its civilizing mission, in many cases, proved inseparable.

as we shall see, influenced the formation of Gaullist foreign policy. But first, we must turn our attention to a brief contextualization of France's role in the Cold War.

FRANCE AND THE COLD WAR

Before analyzing the formation of Gaullist foreign policy, one needs to define France's relationship to the Cold War. It is essential to note that France's perception of the Cold War and its own interests were starkly different from that of its Western allies. The United States emerged from World War II intact and confident, able and inclined, by 1947, to focus its attention on waging the Cold War.⁹ In contrast, France emerged from the war physically and financially devastated and torn by societal divisions exacerbated by the bitter civil war that ensued during the Occupation.¹⁰ Adding further difficulties, almost immediately following World War II the French launched into an unending series of colonial conflicts: first a war in Indochina (1946-1954) and then, with barely a pause, the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962).¹¹ Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that, given the imperatives of domestic reconstruction and preserving its

⁹Though there was divided public and governmental opinion over how much international involvement the US should play, there was a general consensus that communism, in all its forms, was the most tangible threat to US prosperity and the American "way-of-life." Moreover, the Soviet Union was seen as the chief adversary, if not because of its intent to wreak military havoc but because of its ability to influence and destabilize areas vital to US interests. On a general history of the early Cold War and American considerations, see, among others, Melvyn P. Leffler, *The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917-1953* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994) and John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005).

¹⁰The devastation wrought by WWII was immense: the war left a quarter of France's buildings razed and one million people homeless. Additionally, France had to contend with the waves of nearly five million Frenchmen – ranging from prisoners of war to forced laborers – returning from Germany. Making matters worse, the country was plagued by food and coal shortages and severe monetary inflation in the immediate postwar years. See William I. Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe: The Turbulent History of a Divided Continent, 1945-Present* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003), 74-76.

¹¹ Tony Judt, *Postwar*, 282-83. The French Empire was of vital symbolic importance as it reaffirmed France's identity for the French, if not the rest of the world, in the wake of the humiliating defeat of 1940. Equally, France's illusory claim to great power status was tied to its colonial possessions. To illustrate this point, even school textbooks during the Fourth Republic defined France's Empire as its key to international significance. See Frank Giles, *The Locust Years: The Story of the Fourth Republic, 1946-1958* (London: New York: Carroll and Graf, 1994).

crumbling empire, France was not prepared to commit itself wholeheartedly to the US' Cold War agenda.

In the early days of the Cold War, the US and France were at odds from a strategic standpoint as well. While the US fixed its gaze on the Soviet Union and its perceived threats to US interests, France remained preoccupied by its Eastern neighbor, Germany.¹² The shocking defeat of 1940 and the subsequent occupation proved too fresh a memory for fears of German resurgence to be allayed.¹³ Contrarily, the French, unlike the US, viewed the Soviet Union more positively. Since the late nineteenth century, Russia (and eventually the Soviet Union) served, on numerous occasions, as a traditional ally to France and an Eastern counterweight to a strong German presence in Central Europe.¹⁴ Even at the height of the Cold War, the majority of the French population harbored no distrust or disdain for the Soviet Union.¹⁵

¹² This was, of course, with good reason. Germany, France's 'hereditary enemy,' had invaded France five times since 1814 and had caused innumerable damages, both psychologically and materially. Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 114.

¹³ Maurice Vaïsse, "A Certain Idea of Peace in France from 1945 to the Present Day," *French History* 18, no. 3 (2004), 334. With most of the major developments in the early Cold War, France's decisions were dictated by concerns regarding Germany; not only in the threat of military resurgence, but also the threat a reunited Germany posed to economic and political influence on the continent. See George-Henri Soutou, "France and the Cold War, 1944-63," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 12, no. 4 (2001), 43-44.

¹⁴ This strategic relationship was at the forefront of French thinking as late as 1944, while the future of the American military presence on the continent was still unclear, when Charles de Gaulle turned to the Soviet Union for a mutual-defense treaty aimed at preventing future German aggression. Soutou, "France and the Cold War," 36. Equally, beyond a safeguard against Germany, the French sought a Franco-Soviet alliance to serve as a counterweight to the Anglo-American partnership that emerged during the war and continued to dictate Western planning in the war's aftermath. This demonstrates the extent to which the French regarded the Soviets as integral to their own interests and not an obvious adversary. See Judt, *Postwar*, 115-16.

¹⁵ When asked in September 1954, for instance, whether it was "advantageous or disadvantageous for France to trade with the Soviet Union," 49% believed it was "advantageous" compared to only 9% who believed it to be "disadvantageous" (4% had other answers and 38% did not know). Equally, when asked in November 1959 what opinion they had of the Soviet Union, a combined 17% said either "Very Good" or "Good" and 44% said "Neither Good nor Poor" compared to only 23% who chose either "Poor" or "Very Poor." See *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls: France 1939, 1944-1975*, ed. George H. Gallup (New York: Random House, 1976), 172, 269. Hereafter abbreviated as *Gallup Public Opinion Polls*.

Thus, given France's moderate view of the Soviet Union, France's drift into the Western camp in the late 1940s was, in no way, an obvious choice. The country fell into NATO more out of need than by ideological preference. The US' willingness to offer Western Europe funds via the Marshall Plan and other means, connected with the valuable ties to the US through French businessmen like Jean Monnet made the US appear preferential to the governing parties at a time when France was in desperate need of aid.¹⁶ Meanwhile, with French plans for German containment failing to gain traction following the war, the US offered the only alternative answer to fears of a revanchist Eastern neighbor. This became more apparent thanks to perceived Soviet intransigence in 1947-1948: the creation of the Soviet Communist Information Bureau – the so-called “Cominform” – in 1947, the refusal of Marshall Aid in Eastern Europe, and the blockade of Berlin in 1948.¹⁷ Circumstances, therefore, did far more than any natural inclination to dictate France's drift westward in the late 1940s.

The tepid enthusiasm for the Atlantic Alliance felt in large segments of society reflected this sentiment. There existed, for many, a lingering belief that France should maintain a neutral stance. When asked in November 1958, for instance, whether they felt France's “allegiance should be toward the West, toward the East, or neither,” 48% of Frenchmen responded “neither” compared to only 24% who chose the West.¹⁸ Whereas many French were glad to obtain a

¹⁶ Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe*, 74-76.

¹⁷ Judt, *Postwar*, 116-17, 142-50. The Cominform, which succeeded the Communist International (abandoned in 1943), was ostensibly designed to coordinate policy amongst international communist parties. The real intention, of course, was to ensure Soviet control over the international communist movement and maintain preeminent status amongst communist entities. The result in France was the alienation of the PCF which, between 1945-1947, proved to be an integral part of the governmental coalition. After 1947 the PCF was reduced to a reactionary mouthpiece for Soviet thought and a denouncer of most Western policies.

¹⁸ When asked “Personally, do you think that as this time France's allegiance should be toward the West, toward the East, or neither,” 24% said “West,” 4% said “East,” 48% said “Neither,” and 24% did not know. See *Gallup Public Opinion Polls*, 269.

security agreement from the US with regard to Germany, they were less excited about entering into America's broader Cold War campaign.

GAULLIST FOREIGN POLICY IN THE COLD WAR

The previous section served to complicate our perception of France's role in the Cold War and to remind the reader that anxieties came with equal force from both directions (east *and* west), which served to obscure, for many in France, the rigid delineations the bloc system presupposed. Thus, French ambivalence about the Cold War could not have failed to influence de Gaulle's diplomatic agenda. De Gaulle sought to orchestrate a foreign policy which would elicit the greatest domestic response, given France's limited ability to influence international affairs. As Henry Kissinger noted, "Governing a country racked by a generation of conflict and decades of humiliation, de Gaulle judged policies not so much according to pragmatic criteria as according to whether they could contribute to the restoration of French self-esteem."¹⁹ The overriding goal of ensuring governmental legitimacy and the appearance of national unity directed de Gaulle towards a policy which had broad popular appeal.

In this effort, given the strength of the French Communist Party, confronting the Soviet Union would have proven divisive and thus undermined Gaullist efforts to project de Gaulle as a national unifier. On a practical level too, France, a mid-size power of limited influence, could do little to alter Soviet intransigence or hasten détente. Lastly, given de Gaulle's domestic orientation, it is worth noting, as political scientist Philip Cerny asserted, that his foreign policy "ought not be so grandiose as to upset the international system in such a way as to cause other

¹⁹Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 603.

states to injure France.”²⁰ It remained imperative, therefore, to devise a strategy that elicited the strongest domestic reaction, one which had broad appeal, without actually disturbing international stability. With this goal in mind, the Soviet Union would have made an impractical target for his foreign policy of *grandeur*, both ideologically and strategically.

Therefore, when devising his foreign policy, de Gaulle understood that confronting the American-led NATO alliance offered the greatest benefits for arousing French nationalist sentiment and achieving a palatable consensus amongst disparate political and ideological factions. As we have seen, the French did not universally perceive the Soviet Union as an adversary. It thus lacked the galvanizing potential that de Gaulle sought in developing his foreign policy of *grandeur*. Contrarily, the Atlantic Alliance drew criticism from across the political spectrum (from the left who resented France’s western orientation to the right who felt France should play a more fruitful role within the alliance). Equally, lingering factors fueled rampant anti-Americanism in France that cut across political lines. These aspects, as we shall see, combined with France’s increasing role in NATO in the late 1950s, converged to make the US-led Atlantic Alliance the optimal target for de Gaulle’s foreign policy goals.

For one, there was frustration among the French political elite regarding the US’s influence – and interference – in European politics. Many felt exasperation toward the United States’ role in advocating the European Defense Community (EDC) in the early 1950s and its seemingly preferential treatment toward Germany during the EDC debates.²¹ Equally, the 1956

²⁰Philip G. Cerny, *The Politics of Grandeur: Ideological Aspects of de Gaulle’s Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 6.

²¹Charles G. Cogan, *Oldest Allies, Guarded Friends: The United States and France since 1940* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), 75-95. The debate over the European Defense Community from 1950-1954 was, ultimately, a

Anglo-French expedition in Suez was largely thwarted by American pressure.²² Moreover, Washington's constant public disapproval of France's colonial ambitions left the French leadership with the impression of an apparent abandonment by their supposed ally.

On a societal level, meanwhile, there existed an omnipresent anxiety regarding the perceived influence of American culture – what some leftists deemed “Coca-Colonization” – on the French way of life throughout the 1950s.²³ Part of the anti-Americanism stemmed from circumstances. While searching for an identity in the shadow of the humiliation wrought by World War II, the French were confronted by an influx of products and media from the self-confident and triumphant US.²⁴ Equally, the perceived impact of American business practices during reconstruction in the 1950s spawned fiery movements, like the Poujadists, who viewed American-style capitalism as incompatible with the French lifestyle.²⁵ The installation of American military bases and personnel littered throughout France, meanwhile, represented a

debate regarding the rearmament of West Germany in the wake of the Korean War and the heightening of Cold War tension. The French, for their part, resisted the idea of German rearmament less than a decade following the conclusion of World War II. The debate centered on the idea of creating a supranational European army meant to strengthen Western Europe without the return of an explicitly *national* German army. The French government eventually balked at the ratification of the EDC treaty in 1954 and West Germany was eventually admitted into NATO with their own rearmed military safely intact.

²² Ibid., 108.

²³ The left-leaning newspaper *L'Humanité* asked “Will we coca-colonisés?” while communists derided American influence by coining the phrase “cocacolonization,” both obvious references to the popular American soft-drink. See Richard Kuisel, “Coca-Cola and the Cold War: The French Face Americanization, 1948-1953,” *French Historical Studies* 17, no. 1 (1991).

²⁴ See the chapter “The New American Hegemony: The French and the Cold War” in Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

²⁵ As one individual's hyperbolic statement reveals regarding the anxieties of American-style consumerism and production: “Tomorrow ... we will all have the same shirt, the same suit, the same pair of shoes. We will buy all these things from the same automatic distributor ... They want to turn us into a bunch of robots.” Quoted in Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 128.

tangible encroachment by the Americans, adding credence to the many other anxieties regarding America's negative, if overstated, influence.²⁶

Challenging the conventions of the US-led NATO alliance offered an effective way for de Gaulle to galvanize factions on the left and the right and restore confidence in the Republic. These efforts tapped into common resentment found in many outlets regarding America's economic, cultural, and military influence. De Gaulle's insistence on independence and freedom of action attracted right-leaning French, like the Gaullist *Union pour la nouvelle République* (UNR) and the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire* (MRP), who believed France should have a greater international role. His hints of anti-Americanism appealed to the leftists like the French Communist Party and, to a lesser extent, the socialist *Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière* (SFIO).²⁷

On a more practical level, meanwhile, the Atlantic Alliance suited de Gaulle's goals because it was within the Alliance where de Gaulle's diplomacy could have the most impact. By the late 1950s, the geopolitical situation had changed in a way that left Europe poised to play a greater role in international affairs. Western Europe had, by then, recovered economically from the lingering effects of World War II and had begun an unprecedented streak of tremendous economic growth. Meanwhile, with developments in Soviet atomic technology – the launch of

²⁶Kuisel, *Seducing the French*, 21. As one Gallup Poll illustrated in May, 1960 when asked "All things considered, are you very much in favor of, somewhat in favor of, somewhat opposed to, or very much opposed to the stationing of American troops in France?" 51% of Frenchmen opposed the American presence (34% were "somewhat opposed" and 17% were "Very Much Opposed"). This was compared to only 30% who were "somewhat in favor" and a paltry 5% who were "very much in favor." Equally when asked "Are you in favor or opposed to American air bases in France?" 51% opposed their presence compared to only 30% who were in favor (19% did not know). On this see *Gallup Public Opinion Polls*, 282.

²⁷Brian Jenkins and Nigel Copsey, "National Identity in France" in *Nation and Identity in Contemporary Europe*.

Sputnik and the development of intercontinental ballistic missiles – the United States faced a perceived nuclear parity and could no longer act as sole protector of Western Europe.²⁸ These factors coalesced to provoke the US to seek further cooperation and integration among Western European NATO members as increased Cold War tensions placed “the greatest premium on Western unity.”²⁹ This, in turn, spelled an increased importance of France within US Cold War strategy because, without France, NATO would become “a geographic absurdity,” to quote one *Newsweek* editorial.³⁰ As a result, de Gaulle’s decisions of non-integration and non-compliance seemed all the more potent, lending credence to the *perception* of renewed strength and vigor in the Gaullist Fifth Republic.

The Atlantic Alliance, furthermore, provided the ideal framework for exercising a foreign policy meant for domestic consumption. De Gaulle knew he could challenge the NATO alliance directly and undermine US conception of Western unity (Western nations aligned under *de facto* US leadership) without jeopardizing French security in any real way. His actions bore no risk of escalating hostilities (if not aggravation) from France’s allies. Indeed, the US’s greater plans for the preservation of peace in Western Europe demanded stability in France, which de Gaulle’s return wrought. The various US diplomatic leaders, many of whom had known de Gaulle and his tendencies since World War II, understood that de Gaulle’s nationalistic inclinations, though vexing, were preferable to a collapse of French government or a civil war, the likes of which seemed imminent in spring 1958.

²⁸ Philip H. Gordon, *A Certain Idea of France: French Security Policy and the Gaullist Legacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 31.

²⁹ Robert C. Doty, “Paris Limits Role of Ships in NATO,” *New York Times*, March 14, 1959.

³⁰ William D. Blair Jr. and Lionel Durand, “In Another Desperate Hour,” *Newsweek*, June 9, 1958, 18.

US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, for instance, remarked in a Senate Committee on Foreign Relations hearing on 14 January 1959 that de Gaulle's revival of France was "a very important and significant fact." But, noting that "one hardly gets anything for nothing," he added that, as a result, the US would have "some complications and difficulties" with de Gaulle's "extreme[ly] nationalistic point of view."³¹ De Gaulle thus proved able to appease both his domestic constituency, through his rejection of American leadership and his insistence on national independence, and also France's NATO allies through his constant reaffirmation of "the deep-seated solidarity which exists among Western powers."³²

Additionally, de Gaulle knew that he could undermine NATO's unity without any danger from the Soviet bloc. He understood that the USSR no longer posed any genuine threat to Western Europe. Despite excitable rhetoric emanating from both superpowers, de Gaulle recognized the Cold War had settled into a stalemate and neither superpower had any inclination to undermine the arrangement. He likened the Soviet Union's policies in Eastern Europe to eighteenth century Russian imperialism and not to an ideologically-driven superpower intent on global revolution. Moreover, he questioned how the Soviet Union would set out to conquer the economically resurgent and stable Western European nations when, by 1958, it still "had not conquered the satellites."³³ Equally, Soviet advances in nuclear technology and the resulting

³¹ Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Briefing by Honorable John Foster Dulles Secretary of State (and Staff)*, 86th Cong., 1st Sess., January 14, 1959, 21.

³²"Address by President Charles de Gaulle Outlining the Principles of French Foreign Policy Following the Failure of the Summit Conference on May 31, 1960" in *Major Addresses*, 77.

³³ Memorandum of Conversation, The Secretary's Talks with General de Gaulle in Paris, July 5, 1958 in Office of the Historian Bureau of Public Affairs, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960 Volume VII Part 2 Western Europe*, Ed. Glenn W. LaFantasie (Washington DC: GPO, 1993), 58. (Hereafter abbreviated as *FRUS vol. VII Part 2*).

perception of parity with the US precluded the threat of nuclear war.³⁴ Later events, like Nikita Khrushchev's scuttling of the May 1960 summit in Paris and the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, reflected the Soviet Union's increasingly defensive stance, which only served to convince de Gaulle further of the preservation of the Cold War status quo.³⁵ By 1963, de Gaulle was convinced that the Soviet Union's "time had passed."³⁶

Given these considerations, it becomes clear why de Gaulle made the NATO alliance the centerpiece of his foreign policy of *grandeur*. He understood that challenging the existing order within the alliance offered the greatest opportunities for wide-ranging domestic support without risking French security or upsetting the international order. Additionally, French diplomatic decisions carried the most influence within the NATO alliance. The consternation and anxiety de Gaulle's decisions caused his Anglo-American allies served to strengthen Gaullist claims of renewal and resurgence under the Fifth Republic. France had much less means elsewhere (like the Soviet Union for example) to draw the same ire and, therefore, the same domestic effect. With a strategy in place, then, de Gaulle and his diplomatic advisors moved to lay the

³⁴Philip H. Gordon, "Charles de Gaulle and the Nuclear Revolution" in *Cold War Statesman Confront the Bomb: Nuclear Diplomacy since 1945*, ed. John Lewis Gaddis, Philip H. Gordon, Ernest R. May, and Jonathan Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 223-24.

³⁵At the Paris Summit of May 1960, Khrushchev departed after only two days, citing the outrage caused by the captured US U2 spy-plane in the preceding weeks as his cause for departure. De Gaulle recognized that Khrushchev, threatened by Soviet hardliners and the rise of Communist China, wrecked the conference not out of genuine outrage but as an attempt to prevent any concessions on Berlin or disarmament that might make weaken his position domestically. This is a conclusion the US reached independently as well. On de Gaulle's deduction of the Soviet mindset following the May 1960 summit, see Benjamin Varat, "Point of Departure: A Reassessment of Charles de Gaulle and the Paris Summit of May 1960," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 19, no. 1 (2008). For the US, see Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Hearing Regarding Summit Conference of May 1960 and Incidents Related Thereto*, 86th Cong., 1st Sess., May 27, 1960, 28-33.

³⁶Peyrefitte, *C'était De Gaulle*, 292. "La Russie" he noted, "En pratique, elle a sans doute renoncé à diriger le monde et comprend que son heure est passée."

groundwork for the foreign policy of *grandeur* that marked his presidency in 1959 and thereafter.

1958: SETTING THE STAGE FOR *GRANDEUR*

In late September 1958, both US President Dwight Eisenhower and UK Prime Minister Harold Macmillan received a letter and attached memorandum from the new French Premier which proposed dramatic changes to the Atlantic Alliance. The memorandum, dated 17 September 1958, cited the perceived shortcomings of the NATO alliance as seen from France's own interests. De Gaulle used the events from the summer of 1958, namely the bungled Anglo-American operation in Lebanon and Communist China's shelling of Taiwanese offshore islands, as a pretext to support his argument. The scope of the NATO alliance, confined to Europe, was sorely inadequate to handle the global nature of Cold War crises. The alliance did not extend to cover broad swathes of the globe, including The Middle East, Africa, the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific, all of which, de Gaulle argued, were the "indivisible responsibilities of France."³⁷

With the changes brought on by the Cold War, the scope of NATO, de Gaulle concluded, needed reconsidering. After drawing this conclusion, he proceeded to propose a reorganization of the Alliance which soon became the source of controversy among NATO member states. The memorandum stated:

France cannot consider that NATO, under its present form, satisfies the security requirements of the Free World and, particularly, her own. It seems to her necessary that at a world-wide political and strategic level, there should be instituted an organization comprising the United States, Britain, and France. This organization would, on the one hand, take common

³⁷Charles de Gaulle, Memorandum on the Directory, September 17, 1958 in Charles G. Cogan, *Charles de Gaulle: A Brief Biography with Documents* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 191-93.

decisions on political questions dealing with world security and ... apply strategic action plans, particularly as regards the use of nuclear weapons ... The French Government considers such an organization of security as indispensable. From now on it subordinates to it all development of its current participation in NATO and proposes, if it appears necessary to arrive at it, to invoke the procedure of the revision of the North Atlantic Treaty in conformity with article 12.³⁸

Indeed, what he proposed was nothing short of a triumvirate of power rested in the hands of France and the Anglo-Americans. More importantly, any future participation by France in NATO, he noted, hinged on this proposal.

The September “Memorandum on the Directory,” as it came to be called, spelled, for many contemporaries and historians alike, the decisive break with the foreign policy of the Fourth Republic and the inauguration of de Gaulle’s new policy. Certainly, de Gaulle himself intentionally helped seed this perception. “As early as September 14, 1958 [erroneously dated],” he recalled in his memoirs, “I hoisted my colors,” framed as if to mark the start of a new epoch.³⁹ But, despite de Gaulle’s efforts to shape the memory of the early Fifth Republic, he could hardly charge that the rationale behind his September Memorandum was a break with the policies pursued within NATO by the Fourth Republic.

As French historian Maurice Vaisse reminds us, French confidence in NATO’s system of integration had waned greatly prior to the return of de Gaulle, most notably as a result of the conclusions drawn from the failed 1956 Anglo-French operation in Suez. Equally, the lack of Anglo-American support for French operations in North Africa helped shape French desires for

³⁸Ibid., 193.

³⁹Charles de Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope: Renewal and Endeavor*, trans. Terence Kilmartin (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1971), 202.

joint leadership and an expansion of NATO's scope as early as 1956 under Premier Guy Mollet.⁴⁰ Indeed, the leaders of the Fourth Republic were largely disillusioned with the functioning of the alliance, something that led them to numerous proposals of their own for increased cooperation with their Anglo-American counterparts. As late as May 1958, while the Fourth Republic was besieged by the crisis of the army in Algeria, Prime Minister Pierre Pflimlin and Foreign Secretary René Pleven proposed heightened cooperation among the three powers on the basis of France's progress in the nuclear field, similar to the Gaullist proposal of 1958.⁴¹ De Gaulle could therefore hardly claim with authenticity that the Fourth Republic had not made strides of its own to alter the NATO alliance.

From a strategic standpoint, the September Memorandum was hardly original, echoing many Fourth Republic grievances. The September Memorandum did not mark a genuine shift in French strategic reasoning, but it provided the pretext for all Gaullist foreign policy that would follow. As de Gaulle noted, France's participation within the alliance depended on the changes proposed. It seems likely that he did not expect Eisenhower to accede to the vast proposals, which not only outlined a vast reorganization of the alliance but also institutionalized the triumvirate leadership at the expense of the remaining NATO allies.⁴² When Eisenhower finally replied on 20 October 1958, he sympathized with the French position, but confirmed that NATO

⁴⁰Maurice Vaïsse, "Aux Origines du Memorandum de Septembre 1958," *Relations Internationales* 58, no. 2 (1989), 253-65.

⁴¹Irwin M. Wall, "De Gaulle, the 'Anglo-Saxons,' and the Algerian War," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 25, no. 2 (2002), 126. Given the calamity of French internal politics at the time of the Pflimlin-Pleven proposal, it was easily brushed over by the Anglo-Americans.

⁴²The sincerity behind de Gaulle's memorandum is still hotly debated within the historiography. Historians like Frédéric Bozo see de Gaulle's motives as sincere, whereas others, like Charles G. Cogan, are more skeptical. See Bozo's *Two Strategies for Europe: de Gaulle, the United States, and the Atlantic Alliance*, trans. Susan Emanuel (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001) and Cogan's *Oldest Allies, Guarded Friends: the United States and France since 1940* (London: Praeger Publishers, 1994).

could not adopt the proposed changes. Eisenhower feared that such reorganization would lend the impression to other NATO nations that “basic decisions affecting their own vital interests are being made without their participation.”⁴³

Certainly there is reason to believe the Gaullists expected rejection and that, with this denial, they were handed the desired grounds to begin the withdrawal from NATO’s integration. For one, they already knew how the US felt on the matter. During his first encounter with US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in Paris on 5 July 1958, de Gaulle broached the subject of tripartism. In response, and without hesitation, Dulles firmly elucidated “the dangers of such a course,” adding that “nothing of the nature ... should be established as a formal institution.”⁴⁴ One can therefore hardly doubt that the French strategists knew full well what reception the memorandum would have in London and Washington.

So, if not a greater role in NATO, what *did* the Gaullists hope to gain from the September Memorandum? Several years later, in a conversation with his Minister of Information, Alain Peyrefitte, de Gaulle explained the reasoning behind the September Memorandum:

That memorandum was a procedure of diplomatic pressure. I searched, then, to find a means of leaving NATO and reclaiming my freedom which the Fourth Republic had lost. At the time, I asked for the moon. I was certain that they wouldn’t grant it to me. The Anglo-Americans would like to be able to use their force as they wish ... What they want is to dominate us. But in not responding to my memorandum, they allowed me to make

⁴³Letter from President Eisenhower to President de Gaulle, 20 October 1958, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower, The Presidency: Keeping the Peace XIX*, ed. Louis Galambos and Daun Van Ee (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 1151-1161.

⁴⁴Office of the Historian Bureau of Public Affairs, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960 Volume VII Part 1 Western European Integration and Security; Canada*, Ed. Glenn W. LaFantasie (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1993), 353. (Hereafter abbreviated as *FRUS vol. VII Part 1*)

some arrangements which led me to move away from NATO, little by little. I could not have done it if I hadn't first endured that refusal.⁴⁵

De Gaulle's Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville later reaffirmed these sentiments, noting that de Gaulle was "under no illusion" regarding the eventuality of the proposal. From a practical standpoint as well, there was reason to doubt that the alliance, according to de Gaulle's specifications, would meet French expectations. As Paul-Henri Spaak, then Secretary-General of NATO, later reflected in his memoirs: "There were ... reasons why, in my opinion, the triumvirate scheme was not viable. It seemed unlikely that de Gaulle would always be prepared to bow, in the conduct of international affairs, to the decisions of his two Anglo-Saxon partners."⁴⁶ Taken together, these reflections illustrate the intent of the September Memorandum. Clearly, de Gaulle and his advisors did not expect to emerge from the negotiations with a heightened role in the alliance. Instead, it seems, the Gaullists planned to use the Anglo-American reluctance as an excuse for the bold actions taken in 1959 and beyond.

Despite his refusal on 20 October 1958, Eisenhower sought not to alienate de Gaulle. Far from accepting the far-reaching proposals put forth by de Gaulle, he approved exploratory low level diplomatic talks between the three countries. This was, however, too little too late. Even before de Gaulle received Eisenhower's polite, if blunt, refusal on 20 October, he had already reaffirmed his plans for France to have a "national" defense during a meeting with his National Defense Council on 13 October.⁴⁷ Noting that his Anglo-American counterparts had "replied evasively," de Gaulle moved to carry out his foreign policy of *grandeur*, orchestrated with his

⁴⁵Alain Peyrefitte, *C'était De Gaulle* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 360.

⁴⁶Paul-Henri Spaak, *The Continuing Battle: Memoirs of a European 1936-1966*, trans. Henry Fox (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1971), 314.

⁴⁷Bozo, *Two Strategies for Europe*, 21-22.

domestic audience in mind. With the expected response to the memorandum behind him, “there was nothing,” he later recalled, “to prevent [France] from taking action.”⁴⁸ The French Premier thus looked toward the year of 1959, when he could embark on a series of diplomatic moves designed to build upon the Gaullist narrative of renewal and the desire to show the newly inaugurated Fifth Republic in full action.

⁴⁸De Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope*, 203.

CHAPTER 3: DE GAULLE'S FOREIGN POLICY OF *GRANDEUR*

On 8 January 1959, Charles de Gaulle was sworn in as the first president of the Fifth French Republic. His inaugural address highlighted the hardships France had faced in its recent past. He also spoke of the opportunities which awaited his country, thanks largely to the new institutions afforded it. Later in the month, he proudly announced to his countrymen that “a rejuvenated France is once more taking up the reins of history.”¹ Accompanying these remarks, de Gaulle embarked on his foreign policy of *grandeur*. The intent was simple: demonstrate a clear juxtaposition of demeanor and policy between the Fourth and Fifth Republics which coincided with the demise of the old and the inauguration of the new.

Beneath the surface, the continuities between the Fourth and Fifth Republics were numerous.² Politically, however, de Gaulle aimed to make this less obvious. The framework of the Fifth Republic constitution gave de Gaulle the opportunity to exploit certain arenas, including foreign policy which was the President's *domaine réservé*. While his ministers and advisors worked toward the same goal elsewhere – André Malraux in the Ministry of Culture and Jacques Reuff in the economic sphere, to cite two examples – de Gaulle employed foreign policy in the

¹ “Address by President Charles de Gaulle on France's Future Broadcast over French Radio and Television on January 30, 1959” in *Major Addresses, Statements, and Press Conferences of General Charles de Gaulle, May 19, 1958 – January 31, 1964* (New York: French Embassy Press and Information Division, 1964), 38. Hereafter abbreviated as *Major Addresses*.

² Historians such as Philip H. Gordon and Michael M. Harrison, to name only two, have analyzed the extensive continuities between the Fourth Republic and The Fifth within the diplomatic sphere. See Gordon's *A Certain Idea of France: French Security Policy and the Gaullist Legacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993) and Harrison's *The Reluctant Ally: France and Atlantic Security* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1981). Philip Nord has recently argued that extensive continuities lay elsewhere too, despite Gaullist mythologizing suggesting otherwise. See Nord's *France's New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

service of Gaullist myth-making concerning the image of national renewal. He designed the foreign policy of *grandeur* with two goals in mind. The first was to garner support for the Fifth Republic by carrying out policies which had broad popular appeal. The second intent was to further discredit the Fourth Republic. By declaring the need to reclaim national independence, it was implied however subtly, that the Fourth Republic had somehow lost it. And, of course, somewhere between the two goals laid the potential for substantiating claims to national unity.

1959 ACT ONE: THE FRENCH MEDITERRANEAN FLEET

Following the inauguration, de Gaulle and his advisors quickly proceeded to demonstrate France's reassertion of independence, first by withdrawing the French Mediterranean Naval Fleet from NATO integrated command and later by demanding the removal of US nuclear weapons stationed in France. The actions taken in 1959 were certainly limited in practical effect. Despite aggravating his Anglo-American counterparts, the decisions did little more than make for interesting headlines. Arguably, though, it was this aspect which de Gaulle regarded most importantly. How better could the French President contrast the new republic with the old than to challenge the existing order in a highly visible way? His decisions, far removed from the staid and muted negotiations which often accompanied diplomacy, capably fixed national and international attention on the actions of the French President. The consternation his decisions elicited from France's allies served to reaffirm the ostensibly dramatic shift in French leadership de Gaulle had hoped to portray.

The first significant diplomatic act came on 6 March 1959. In a telegram to the US Department of State, the French announced a change to the status of France's naval forces in the

Mediterranean whereby France's naval forces, in the event of war, would remain under national command, contrary to NATO's framework of integration. Prior to the withdrawal, a portion of France's Mediterranean fleet contributed to the integrated Allied Forces Mediterranean (AFMED), under the command of a British admiral based in Malta. This subordination to a British superior became a source of irritation throughout the 1950s, given France's sizable presence in the Mediterranean. The frustration was further exacerbated when, in the late 1950s, the British reduced a large portion of its NATO naval forces allocated to AFMED, leaving the French fleet as the largest in the Mediterranean after the US Sixth fleet which itself was not integrated into NATO.³

Despite lingering frustrations over the integration of France's naval forces, the telegram cited France's responsibility to defend the French community and protect vital oil supply-lines from the Sahara as the main rationale for the decision. The demands placed on the fleet stemming from the "struggle to pacify Algeria," the telegram claimed, also played a role in the decision. Throughout, the telegram alluded subtly to the same complaints raised in the September Memorandum regarding the scope of the alliance.⁴

But should one accept the telegram's claims at face value? The diplomatic record from the period suggests otherwise. For one, the claim that France's actions were taken because "the zone of possible NATO action does not extend to the south of the Mediterranean," proved

³Bozo, *Two Strategies for Europe*, 44-45.

⁴Telegram from the Mission at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and European Regional Organizations to the Department of State, 6 March 1959, *FRUS vol. VII Part 1*, 420-21.

unfounded.⁵ Article Six of the North Atlantic Treaty clearly stated, the scope of the alliance covered not only “the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America,” but also “the Algerian Departments of France.”⁶ Moreover in time of peace (and the Cold War had indeed established a virtual peace), individual NATO countries were able to use their fleets as they deemed fit – the alliance did not prevent this. Consequently, the decision simply “de-earmarked” France’s fleet from potential future wartime use.⁷

The private correspondence tells a similar story. As early as 23 January 1959, the French Ambassador in Washington, Hervé Alphand, informed US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles that de Gaulle felt “the French naval forces should be as free as the US Mediterranean forces, notably the Sixth Fleet.”⁸ In the meeting, Alphand made no mention of the Algerian War. Instead, what seemed important was the *status* of France’s fleet which, unlike the US’s Sixth Fleet, was integrated into NATO’s Mediterranean command. In the days leading up to the official announcement, the French Ambassador revealed that “this latest move was a reflection of the fact that France preferred ‘cooperation’ to ‘integration.’”⁹ US officials too, in their assessment, felt the impending action was simply “a matter of French national pride.”¹⁰ Their analysis, like Alphand’s earlier analysis, contained no mention of the Algerian War. It seems

⁵ “First Press Conference Held by General de Gaulle as President of the French Republic in Paris at the Elysée Palace on March 25, 1959” in *Major Addresses*, 49.

⁶ “The North Atlantic Treaty,” North Atlantic Treaty Organization, accessed May 2, 2011, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm.

⁷ Quoted in John Newhouse, *De Gaulle and the Anglo-Saxons* (New York: the Viking Press, 1970), 87.

⁸ John Foster Dulles, Memorandum from Secretary of State Dulles to President Eisenhower, *FRUS Vol. VII Part 1*, 408.

⁹ Hervé Alphand and Livingston T. Merchant, Memorandum of Conversation, March 3, 1959, *Ibid.*, 417. In a frosty response, Livingston T. Merchant, the US Acting Secretary of State, noted that “there had not been much cooperation in this particular instance.”

¹⁰ John S. D. Eisenhower, Memorandum for the Record by the President’s Assistant Staff Secretary, March 3, 1959, *Ibid.*, 415.

clear, then, that the desire to display the Fifth Republic's newfound policy of independence – not the exigencies of the Algerian War – guided the decision on the fleet withdrawal.

For his part, in his first press conference of the year on 25 March 1959, de Gaulle seized the opportunity to publicly castigate the alliance for its perceived shortcomings. France, in withdrawing its fleet, he implied, simply restored its rightful place amongst nations. He proceeded to remind the audience that Britain and the United States, “the two other great world powers of the Atlantic Alliance,” had both withheld the “greater part of their naval forces from being integrated into NATO.” France, as he saw it, had no reason to act differently. He made it clear that France's action on the fleet was not anomalous; the withdrawal marked the start of a new era. When a reporter asked if France would take a similar stance on its ground and air forces, de Gaulle responded coyly “Well, you will see what happens.”¹¹

It is clear, then, that the new administration of the Fifth Republic had more in mind than those cited in the 6 March telegram. Nothing within the NATO context directly constrained France from fulfilling the stated needs while also willfully complying with NATO integration. Instead, the decision played directly into their new, larger domestic aim of portraying a unified and rejuvenated France. The move fit nicely into the larger constructed Gaullist narrative of France reclaiming its independence, and with it its voice, after the failings of the Third and Fourth Republics. The action left opposing domestic political forces with little to muster dissent, thus strengthening de Gaulle's claims to embodying national unity.

¹¹ “First Press Conference Held by General de Gaulle as President of the French Republic in Paris at the Elysée Palace on March 25, 1959” in *Major Addresses*, 49-50.

Fittingly, the administration's decision became the centerpiece of French national newspapers barely a week after the pronouncement weaved its way through NATO's diplomatic channels. Both *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*, for instance, devoted several pages, including the centerpiece of the front page, to analysis of the decision.¹² The newspapers offered an array of coverage and commentaries on the decision. Often, without expressly endorsing the government's position, the articles framed the NATO system of integration in a manner which lent credence to the President's complaints. French commentators, it seemed, sympathized with the Gaullist skepticism regarding institutionalized subordination within the alliance.

As *Le Figaro* wrote, "We note, for our part, that the French initiative is likely to open new prospects for solving the questions of cooperation posed officially by General de Gaulle last September. Many will be pleased about it. Others will regret that the moment chosen [for withdrawal] wasn't made with a perfect sense of timing [given the outbreak of tensions over Berlin]." ¹³ Far from critical, the article recognized that the move had widespread appeal.

The decision struck a chord with the writers of *Le Monde* too. One article from the March 15-16 edition noted that "the hierarchy of the Atlantic [Alliance] placed all commands, at all levels, under the orders of an American leader." "Our naval forces," he added, "find ourselves in the same situation to those of Italy, Greece, and Turkey, reduced to responsibility of a subordinate sector."¹⁴ The article confirmed de Gaulle's claim that the alliance not only rested power in American hands, but also subordinated France in a fashion akin to three tangential

¹²See *Le Figaro*, 16 Mars 1959 and *Le Monde*, 15-16 Mars 1959.

¹³Roger Massip, « La France décide – tout en demeurant à l'O.T.A.N. – de Soustraire au Commandement Interallié une Partie de sa Flotte Méditerranéenne, » *Le Figaro*, 16 Mars 1959.

¹⁴Jean Planchais, "L'Alliance et Ses Navires," *Le Monde*, 15-16 Mars 1959.

NATO members. It also unwittingly revealed anxieties about France's perceived decline. De Gaulle's position thus struck a chord with a public who, regardless of political stripe, did not see France, with a history of influence and empire, in the same light as countries like Greece and Italy. Moreover, the move fooled nobody: the article noted that, to some, the initiative was seen "much less for immediate needs than by the desire of the Fifth Republic to assume all the responsibilities related to its role as a great power."¹⁵ As the article suggested, the French public recognized de Gaulle's efforts and responded favorably to the nationalist elements of his policies.

Not to be forgotten, outside observers also noted of the action. As one *New York Times* article keenly observed, the withdrawal of the French Mediterranean Fleet "was probably as popular with the French public, currently in the throes of a marked nationalist syndrome, as it was unpopular and worrisome to France's fourteen allies in NATO. Not a single important voice was raised publicly against the action. And, to the average Frenchman, the news probably sounded like a brass band chorus of 'La Marseillaise.'"¹⁶ It was clear that de Gaulle's decision had garnered national and international attention, projected an image of France that largely matched his rhetoric of national rejuvenation, and quieted potential domestic dissent. By fashioning a foreign policy which had widespread domestic appeal, de Gaulle and his advisors brought together factions of society (like the PCF) which would have otherwise opposed his ventures.

¹⁵"Les forces navales françaises en Méditerranée resteront en tout temps sous commandement national," *Le Monde*, Mars 15-16, 1959.

¹⁶Robert C. Doty, "France Presses for 'Grandeur': Looks for a Greater Role in NATO," *New York Times*, March 22, 1959.

1959 ACT TWO: THE REMOVAL OF FOREIGN NUCLEAR STOCKPILES

Within months, de Gaulle took a stand against the storage of foreign nuclear stockpiles in France. The events associated with the decision were drawn out over a series of months and therefore lacked the media potency of the pronouncement on the French Fleet. It was nonetheless much aligned with not only the Gaullists' broader narrative but also public opinion. The debate concerned the storage of nine US F100 bomber squadrons located in France. In light of the escalating Berlin crisis, General Lauris Norstad, the NATO Supreme Allied Commander of Europe, deemed it necessary to equip the nine squadrons stationed in France with nuclear warheads.¹⁷ This line of reasoning, for all its strategic merit, was at odds with the Gaullist view that France and France alone should possess control over nuclear stockpiles in France.

In analyzing the decision, one must see the process of withdrawing the nuclear stockpiles and accompanying bomber squadrons within the broader context of France's pursuit of an independent nuclear strike force. Unfortunately, the complexities associated with this matter, worthy of an examination of their own, are beyond the limits of this study. At the simplest, the French nuclear program had its origins in the Fourth Republic. By the time of de Gaulle's return, the leaders of the Fourth Republic scheduled the first test of a French bomb for early 1960. The leaders of the Fourth Republic pursued a nuclear weapons program for a number of reasons. De Gaulle, meanwhile, saw the *force de frappe*, as it was called, as primarily a political tool; it was

¹⁷Constantine Pagedas, *Anglo-American Strategic Relations and the French Problem 1960-1963: A Troubled Partnership* (London: Frank Cass Publishing), 40-42.

to be the centerpiece of his policy of national independence and his reorientation of the French armed forces.¹⁸

Once the dust had settled regarding the French Mediterranean fleet, de Gaulle acted on his objection to NATO nuclear stockpiles on French soil. In a letter to Eisenhower on 25 May 1959, de Gaulle noted France's concerns. The letter alluded to many of the irreconcilable concerns raised in his September Memorandum from the previous year, namely the lack of a joint tripartite leadership and NATO's limited scope. De Gaulle also tied the US' resistance to France's pursuit of an atomic weapon to his decision. As he stated:

[France] obviously cannot entirely entrust her life or death to any other state whatsoever, even the most friendly. For this reason, France feels it is essential that she participate, if the case were to arise, in any decision which might be taken by her allies to use atomic missiles ... Until she has been able to conclude with the United States and with Great Britain the agreements which seem necessary to her on this subject, she cannot consent to such projectiles being stored on her territory and used from there unless she herself has complete and permanent control over them. As I have ... [written] to you previously, I believe that these problems might be solved between us as soon as there has been established between the United States and Great Britain and France organized cooperation in political matters and in strategic matters for the security of the world.¹⁹

De Gaulle justified the decision by placing the onus on the United States to do one of two things: either accede to his previous call for tripartite leadership and nuclear cooperation or accept his decision to further France's aims for independence.

¹⁸On the role of the French nuclear program see, among others, Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), Michael M. Harrison, *The Reluctant Ally: France and Atlantic Security* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1981), Wilfrid L. Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), Maurice Vaïsse, "Le Choix Atomique de la France (1945-1958)," *Vingtième Siècle, Revue d'histoire* 36 (Oct.-Dec. 1992), pp. 21-30, and Jacques E.C. Hymans, *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation: Identity, Emotions, and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹⁹Charles de Gaulle, *Lettre au Général Eisenhower, Président des États-Unis D'Amérique, 25 Mai 1959, Lettres, Notes, et Carnets : Juin 1958-Décembre 1960* (Paris : Plon, 1985), 225-28.

Certainly, there is reason to believe, as some scholars have argued,²⁰ that the ultimatum was sincere in its attempt to facilitate the creation of a French bomb. Regardless, the decision served the aim argued here. The leadership of the Fifth Republic's broader goal was to create an atmosphere of nationalistic self-respect within France that contrasted his foreign policy, and therefore the Fifth Republic, with the image of a prostrate France under the Fourth Republic acquiescing to American dictates. After all, the issue in question was France's apparent subordination institutionalized through NATO's system of integration. Therefore, if the Americans had accepted his requests, an obvious longshot to say the least, he would have enhanced French prestige and facilitated the creation of a French nuclear weapon without committing France to any integration. Or, if the Americans responded evasively to his requests and instead withdrew the weapons in question, he could claim a diplomatic victory.²¹

Norstad and others consequently opted for the latter option, thereby handing de Gaulle his second tangible foreign policy success in a matter of several months. By early June, a sizable portion of the air forces had moved to West Germany. The entire redeployment, which took about six months, quietly shifted the nine air squadrons and their accompanying nuclear warheads to bases in West Germany and the United Kingdom.²² All told, de Gaulle's decision

²⁰As recently as 2010, Sebastian Reyn argued this point in his monograph *Atlantis Lost: The American Experience with De Gaulle, 1958-1969* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010).

²¹There was significant reluctance on the part of American policy-makers to accede to de Gaulle's demands, mainly because of the broader implications to NATO. Reluctance on the issue of nuclear weapons information-sharing stemmed from a fear of France's sizable presence of self-identified communists and the perceived instability of French government. The only ardent defender of de Gaulle's position was President Eisenhower who, through his relationship with de Gaulle, sympathized with the French position and sought compromise. On these debates, see "Convergence and Divergence: Aspects of Anglo-American Relations with France in the 1950s" in Constantine Pagedas, *Anglo-American Strategic Relations and the French Problem 1960-1963: A Troubled Partnership* (London: Frank Cass Publishing).

²²Mr. Robert Murphy and General Lauris Norstad, Memorandum of Conversation, 8 June 1959, *FRUS Vol. VII Part 1*, 459-60.

bore no adverse strategic consequences for the alliance, though Norstad fumed about France's perceived obstinacy when "the vote is against them by 14 to 1" within the alliance.²³

Domestically, in light of the frustrations concerning the presence of foreign military personnel and weapons, the decision to remove foreign nuclear stockpiles was quite popular. Leftists in the country rejected the pervasive influence America presented while the voices of the far right, ardent defenders of French colonialism, disdained the installation of American military bases throughout France, an ostensible colonization of its own. Beyond the anti-Americanism presented by the political margins remained the broad swathe of the general public who maintained a distinct inclination for neutralism and non-alignment within the context of the Cold War.²⁴ With this in mind, an overwhelming 69% of citizens polled responded that they approved of de Gaulle's decision on foreign nuclear stockpiles, compared to only 4% who disapproved (27% had no answer).²⁵ To the majority of the French, the presence of foreign nuclear stockpiles seemed more like an unwarranted provocation than an added security measure.

The decision to demand the removal of foreign nuclear stockpiles from France served the Gaullists' goal to substantiate the narrative crafted by the architects of the early Fifth Republic – Debré like Malraux – regarding the return of political independence (and therefore *grandeur*) from prior subordination. Later in the year, on 3 November 1959, as the last of the US bombers

²³ General Lauris Norstad and President Dwight Eisenhower, Memorandum of Conversation, 9 June 1959, *FRUS Vol. VII Part I*, 461-64.

²⁴ Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *France and the United States: From the Beginnings to the Present*, trans. Derek Coltman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 199-202.

²⁵ *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls: France 1939, 1944-1975*, ed. George H. Gallup (New York: Random House, 1976), 262-63. In June 1959, Gallup posed this question: "The French Government has refused to allow the United States to maintain its atomic weapons in France, as long as NATO's allies refuse to allow France to intervene if the United States should decide to use the weapons. Do you approve or disapprove of the position that the French Government has taken?" Hereafter abbreviated *Gallup Public Opinion Polls*.

were departing French soil, de Gaulle gave an impassioned and nationalistic speech to the cadets of the Saint-Cyr Military Academy about the need for French independence. He said in part:

The defense of France must be French. This is a need that has not always been very familiar during the last few years, I know, but it must return to such. If war comes to pass for a nation like France, so be it. Its effort must be its effort. If it was otherwise, our nation would contradict everything it has stood for since its founding, with its role, with the respect it has for itself, with its soul. Naturally, French defense would be, should the case arise, joined with that of other nations. This is only natural. But it is essential that this defense be our own, that France is defended by itself, for itself, and in its own way.²⁶

The speech acknowledged, with a touch of remorse, the dependence France had repeatedly had on outside powers in recent decades, from the failures of the Third and Fourth Republics to the abhorrence of the Vichy regime and even the shortcomings of the Free French movement and its reliance on the allied forces. But he also implied that *now*, given his return, France would pursue its own defense policy, in an effort to discredit the previous regime. What he failed to mention, of course, was that, under the Fourth Republic, numerous technological advances were made which cleared the way for the creation of a French bomb. Indeed, without these gains, France would not have been able to test its first bomb as quickly as it did. Though de Gaulle touted the first test, on 13 February 1960, as one of the many successes of the newfound Fifth Republic, it was in fact Prime Minister Félix Gaillard, in April 1958, who ordered the successful detonation of a French bomb by early 1960.²⁷

²⁶ Charles de Gaulle, "Discours de Charles de Gaulle devant l'Ecole militaire de Saint-Cyr" (speech, l'École militaire de Saint-Cyr, Paris, France, November 3, 1959), Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe (CVCE), <http://www.cvce.eu/collections> (accessed December 9, 2011).

²⁷ Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 62-74.

Despite the continuities between policies, de Gaulle was able to project a sharp departure from the defunct Fourth Republic through a highly visible and authoritative manner. Whereas the many leaders of the Fourth Republic relied on negotiation and compromise to alter their position in NATO, de Gaulle simply announced his decisions, leaving little room for compromise. Through this use of cult of personality, augmented by an effective manipulation of press conferences and speeches, de Gaulle was able to create the impression of a renaissance of French independence under the Fifth Republic.²⁸

Also, despite the limited strategic impact of his decisions on the French Mediterranean Fleet and foreign nuclear stockpiles, the French President was successful in shaping popular perception of a strengthened and emboldened France. His announcements – not negotiations – on the Mediterranean Fleet and the foreign nuclear stockpiles provided the opportunity “to demonstrate that the Fifth Republic had its own policies.”²⁹ As early as April 1959, already 55% of the French citizenry believed France had gained international prestige in the year since the de Gaulle’s return, compared to only 8% who felt the opposite.³⁰ After demonstrating France’s seemingly newfound independence in 1959, de Gaulle used the first half of 1960 to reinforce the presidential image as embodiment of the new French Republic in a series of highly publicized state visits to the United States and the United Kingdom.

²⁸On de Gaulle’s exploitation of the media, see Chris Tinker “‘One State, One Television, One Public’: The Variety Show in 1960s France,” *Media History* 14, no. 2 (2008) and Jean K. Chalaby, *The de Gaulle Presidency and the Media: Statism and Public Communications* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

²⁹De Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope*, 204.

³⁰*Gallup Public Opinion Polls*, 259.

1960: THE GRAND STATESMAN

Aside from illustrating France's seemingly renewed stature through a foreign policy of non-integration, the French President relied greatly on state visits and summit diplomacy in the early years of his presidency to substantiate his message of national renewal. Though highly important, this aspect of de Gaulle's foreign policy, his usage of state visits to convey a sense of *grandeur*, is rarely mentioned in the historiography. Their conspicuous absence from the literature on Gaullist diplomacy may stem from the fact that de Gaulle's state visits generally did little to advance negotiations or alter policies regarding NATO.

Perhaps as a result, no study of Gaullist foreign policy has placed his state visits in the context of his foreign policy of *grandeur*. This is a predicament not limited to de Gaulle's foreign policy; in general, as Jeffrey G. Giauque noted, "the theoretical literature on summitry, as opposed to analyses of specific meetings, is quite sparse."³¹ Despite their absence from the secondary literature, the role of summit diplomacy and state visits was central to de Gaulle's foreign policy of *grandeur*. Indeed, de Gaulle himself attached great importance to state visits. As he recollected in his memoirs:

The respectful attention shown us on all sides persuaded me to increase our contacts with the outside world. This led to an active interchange of visits, all of them occasions for mutual exchanges of view if not always mutual persuasion, for the furtherance of relations, for the conclusion of agreements ... and for the manifestation of public sentiment. *I attached the highest importance to them, knowing what reverberations such encounters often produce.* True, they no longer have the same dramatic character as of old, and the facilities of modern travel have deprived them of some of their glamour. Nevertheless, during these years when France was resuming her rightful place in the world, the visits to Paris of so many foreign rulers and

³¹Jeffrey G. Giauque, "Bilateral Summit Diplomacy in Western European and Transatlantic Relations, 1956-63," *European History Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (2001), 428.

statesman, and my own journeys ... formed the weft and woof and the visible illustration of our global recovery.³²

He saw state visits as vital, not for the advancement of negotiations, but for their ability to muster public enthusiasm and shape opinion. The role of state visits offered him a chance to act as the personification of France abroad.

The French President saw visits of foreign Heads of State and his own travels as grand opportunities to further French prestige and ensure his own legitimacy. In this effort, one is reminded of the Third Republic's employment of republican symbolism in song, ceremony, and statuary in its effort to "arouse and orient public opinion," to quote Philip Nord.³³ In a similar sense, in an age of television and radio, de Gaulle used his monarchical persona and nationalistic rhetoric in the service of shaping popular perception of the French President and the Fifth Republic by capturing the attention of newspapers and television stations. With this in mind, de Gaulle always went to great lengths to ensure the visits were accompanied by magnificent ceremonies of pomp and circumstance.³⁴ Likewise, his visits to foreign countries almost always ensured spectacle.

This section therefore focuses on de Gaulle's own visits to the United Kingdom and the United States in April 1960. The visits were significant, as this was de Gaulle's only official state

³²De Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope*, 207. Emphasis added.

³³Philip Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 190-92.

³⁴The events needed to be befitting of a republican monarch, after all, and his efforts did not go unnoticed: his US and UK counterparts all noted the grand atmosphere which accompanied their visits to Paris during 1958 and 1959. In his diary, for instance, UK Prime Minister Harold Macmillan made a special note of the guard of honor, the band, and the very large crowd that awaited his arrival to Paris on 29 June 1958. Indeed, as he noted, no doubt a reflection of the intended atmosphere, "I have never seen a French crowd cheer in such a friendly way." See *The Macmillan Diaries: Prime Minister and After, 1957-1966*, ed. Peter Catterall (London: Macmillan Publishers, 2011), 129-30.

visit to the US during his presidency and his first official visit to London since his days as leader of the Free French during the Second World War. Also, and perhaps not unrelated, his string of visits came on the heels of the detonations of France's first and second nuclear bombs, in February and April respectively, at a time when French prestige, in the eyes of the three other nuclear-armed states, was at its height.³⁵

The French President's first official state visit, a four-day *tour de force* of ceremonies, speeches, processions, and banquets, began on 5 April 1960 in the United Kingdom. Shortly after noon, de Gaulle and his wife arrived by train to London's Victoria Station, greeted by a concert of state officials, including the Queen and Prime Minister, and a sizable assemblage of exuberant onlookers.³⁶ After cordial exchanges, the official party exited the station and climbed into a series of open-faced carriages, the first of which was reserved for de Gaulle and the Queen. The carriages – six in all – led a procession from Victoria Station to Buckingham Palace, the entire route lined by enthusiastic crowds.³⁷ Upon reaching their destination, the official party found the Palace surrounded by 100,000 densely-packed Englishmen chanting "Vive de Gaulle."³⁸ Later that evening, after a royal banquet honoring the guests, a lavish fireworks display entertained the French President and the Royal family, perched on a Palace balcony, as well as the "unbroken sea of upturned faces" still congregating in the surrounding area.³⁹ The crowd of 100,000 persons

³⁵ Indeed, it is hardly coincidental that de Gaulle's first two visits to the US and UK since WWII, as well as a high profile visit to Paris by USSR Premier Nikita Khrushchev in late March (the second successful test, in early April, occurred while Khrushchev was visiting France), came during France's first successful nuclear tests. The Four-Power Summit of May 1960 too was, at de Gaulle's insistence, held in Paris.

³⁶ Drew Middleton, "De Gaulle gets London Welcome: 100,000 at Palace Acclaim War Leader on His Return," *New York Times*, April 6, 1960.

³⁷ The Queen's Welcome to President de Gaulle, *The Times*, April 6, 1960, 8d.

³⁸ "London's Heart Opens to an Old Ally: Pomp and Sentiment Greet De Gaulle as He Starts His Round of High-Level Visits," *Life*, April 18, 1960, 30-32.

³⁹ "Big Crowds See Fireworks Display: General de Gaulle on Palace Balcony," *The Times*, April 6, 1960.

which had gathered around Buckingham Palace and overflowed into St. James Park to witness de Gaulle's entrance was, reportedly, the largest gathering at the Palace since the V - E Day celebration in May 1945.⁴⁰

The following day de Gaulle, speaking before both Houses of Parliament, provided an impassioned and lengthy speech which drew upon the shared memories of the Second World War, denounced the dangerous and aberrant Cold War, and reaffirmed Anglo-French solidarity. In typical Gaullist fashion, the entire speech was committed to memory, much to the amazement of his audience. This feat, accompanied by de Gaulle's commanding presence, "combined to heighten the sense of occasion," ensuring that none "could be unaware of the surge of emotion that passed through Westminster Hall and which found expression in sustained handclapping."⁴¹

During the state visit to Britain, de Gaulle capitalized on his legacy as wartime leader of the Free French to reinforce his claims to presidential legitimacy. Throughout the trip he made subtle and overt references to his former role. While at Westminster, for instance, he devoted approximately one-third of his speech to the triumphs and sacrifices of the Second World War. The following day, de Gaulle was the centerpiece of a gathering of several hundred people held at Carlton Gardens, de Gaulle's wartime headquarters, meant to commemorate the wartime movement. Additionally, a highlight from the fireworks display of his first evening in London was a pair of fireworks shaped like the Cross of Lorraine, the Free French symbol. These cues provided, for all involved, a constant reminder of de Gaulle's ostensible authority and stature. Reinforcing the connection further, de Gaulle spent the majority of the trip donning a spare,

⁴⁰Drew Middleton, "De Gaulle gets London Welcome: 100,000 at Palace Acclaim War Leader on His Return," *New York Times*, April 6, 1960.

⁴¹"General De Gaulle Calls to Abandon Nuclear Arms," *The Times*, April 8, 1960.

khaki military uniform, much more befitting a war hero than the President of the French Republic. In highlighting his wartime attributes, de Gaulle hoped to establish a degree of continuity between the perceived heroics of his wartime past and the early Fifth Republic, thereby disassociating France from the memories of the Fourth Republic. Likewise, these actions forced the masses to link him to a mythologized and undisputed past, with all its positive attributes, and not to the negative connotations of a modern politician.

Despite lingering disputes regarding NATO and Britain's proposals for a European Free Trade Area, it was clear from the outset that de Gaulle would use his time in London to conjure public sentiment, not advance negotiations. Indeed, after a 45 minute *tête-à-tête* with Harold Macmillan on the first day of his visit, "there was no indication" that the French President "had been impressed" with the British Prime Minister's proposals.⁴² The only tangible agreement scored after two meetings during the trip was a joint reaffirmation of solidarity in the face of the upcoming East-West summit in May 1960.

His characteristic obstinacy, however, did nothing to prevent his larger goal of shaping public opinion; indeed the general public responded strongly to the French President. As *Life* magazine would describe it, "through an alchemy of personality and sentiment, [de Gaulle] won a diplomatic triumph without settling one of the many political and economic differences worrying the two countries."⁴³ Following his departure, the left-leaning British periodical *The New Statesman* reflected on the President's visit:

⁴² Drew Middleton, "De Gaulle gets London Welcome: 100,000 at Palace Acclaim War Leader on His Return," *New York Times*, April 6, 1960.

⁴³ "London's Heart Opens to an Old Ally: Pomp and Sentiment Greet De Gaulle as He Starts His Round of High-Level Visits," *Life*, April 18, 1960, 30-32.

The warmth of the reception which London has accorded President de Gaulle is in genuine contrast to the perfunctory cheers which normally accompany state visits. This is due in part to the general recognition that de Gaulle, whatever his shortcomings, is a man of quite extraordinary stamp; for the public, in an age of mediocrities, can still instinctively respond to greatness. It is also due to the memories, which Londoners still preserve, of the somber days of 1940 ... Today, the British public, though highly critical of France, recognizes that its old ally has two faces, and is prepared to give de Gaulle the benefit of the doubt and concede that he represents the one which we admire and respect.⁴⁴

The combination of genuine sentiment demonstrated by the masses and de Gaulle's self-conscious employment of a paternal and stately public persona helped construct the intended image of national rejuvenation and resurgence.

Later in the month, de Gaulle made stops in several major cities during his eight-day tour of the United States. The state visit, lasting longer and stretching thinner than de Gaulle's time in London, lacked the intensity of its predecessor. Nonetheless, de Gaulle did not fail to impress. He received full city honors when he and Madame de Gaulle arrived in New York City on 26 April, 1960. The couple was treated to an exuberant ticker-tape parade down Broadway en route to City Hall.⁴⁵ After his whirlwind 22-hour tour of New York, of which over a million New Yorkers came out to see, de Gaulle and his official entourage headed west. When he arrived in San Francisco the following day, he was met by 250,000 people and treated once again to a ticker-tape and confetti parade, as the procession ambled through tricolor-laden avenues. The reception "was regarded by the police as the biggest ever given [in San Francisco] to a head of

⁴⁴"De Gaulle and His Shadow," *The New Statesman*, April 9, 1960.

⁴⁵"De Gaulle to Get Full City Honors," *New York Times*, April 14, 1960.

state.”⁴⁶ The official trip continued with visits to Washington D.C. and New Orleans, where the heralded guest received similar treatment before de Gaulle departed for the French Caribbean.

During his visit to Washington, de Gaulle spent ample time privately with President Eisenhower in the White House and on Eisenhower’s Gettysburg farm. The two talks between the men, similar to the de Gaulle-Macmillan talks earlier in the month, reaffirmed their solidarity in light of the upcoming summit but settled little more beyond it. On a political level, de Gaulle capably conveyed the image of a restored France under his stewardship. After his departure, newspapers and periodicals praised the French President for his apparent revival of France as a stable and reliable ally. *Life* magazine, for instance, noted that “his reception represented a high moment of personal and historic triumph,” citing “de Gaulle himself” as the greatest factor for “the return of French prestige.”⁴⁷ *Newsweek*, in a piece on de Gaulle’s trip, lavished the French President with even further praise:

As General Charles de Gaulle stepped from his plane into the brilliant sunshine ... one could sense the feeling of pride in the man ... In 22 months, by sheer force of his character, he completely had recast the world’s image of France. No longer did the world look upon France as a third-rate power, incapable of governing itself and more a problem for the West than a viable asset. Now France again indubitably was a great power. De Gaulle had come to Washington, at the oft-repeated invitation of President Eisenhower, as a full-fledged partner of the U.S. and Britain in planning the West’s position for the summit conference.⁴⁸

By all accounts, it seems, de Gaulle had effectively woven for his hosts a new image of the French Republic based on his perceived steadfast leadership.

⁴⁶ Lawrence Davies, “De Gaulle Hailed by San Francisco: 250,000 Acclaim Him on His Ride from Airport,” *New York Times*, April 28, 1960.

⁴⁷“Time for French Grandeur: De Gaulle’s Welcome in U.S. is a Sign of France’s New Stature,” *Life*, May 2, 1960, 22-27.

⁴⁸“Old Soldiers in Step,” *Newsweek*, May 2, 1960, 19.

But how did the French regard their president's state visits abroad? They followed his every step closely from France. Each day, from 5 April to 10 April, *Le Figaro* made his state visit to Britain the headline story, which suggests a genuine preoccupation. The accompanying pictures alone were revealing. The photos evoked *grandeur* and pride, the President always, and without fail, depicted as stately and regal. On 5 April 1960, for instance, the front page photo depicted the Tricolor waving majestically alongside the Union Jack with the clock tower of the British Parliament providing the backdrop.⁴⁹ Several pages later, a picture depicted a small boy, alongside a policeman, gazing in awe as mounted guards prepared for their guest's arrival.⁵⁰ Both images conveyed simple messages of reverence and admiration. In the following days, the pictures of de Gaulle showed him in commanding poses, from saluting a crowd,⁵¹ to speaking before parliament and inspecting royal guards.⁵² All conveyed, day after day, a sense of authority and monarchical statesmanship. Photography does, admittedly, play an abstract role in shaping public perception. There is no doubt, however, that the steady barrage for nearly a week, which depicted French *grandeur* personified in the President, helped reinforce messages of renewed national unity and prestige.

The words were no less flattering. *Le Monde* wrote on the day of de Gaulle's London arrival, "President de Gaulle ... is assured in advance of a most enthusiastic welcome. Even among those, notably the Labour Party and the Liberals, who the politics of *grandeur* irritates, it is held in high esteem. It inspires respect."⁵³ *Le Monde* also made a special point to include

⁴⁹"Le Général de Gaulle gagnera en carrosse le palais de Buckingham," *Le Figaro*, 5 Avril 1960.

⁵⁰"Le Général de Gaulle aujourd'hui à Londres," *Le Figaro*, 5 Avril 1960.

⁵¹*Le Figaro*, 6 Avril 1960.

⁵²*Le Figaro*, 8 Avril 1960.

⁵³Henri Pierre, "D'abord l'homme du 18 Juin," *Le Monde*, 5 Avril 1960.

dotting reviews from the British press, including *the Daily Mirror* and *the Guardian*.⁵⁴ All of these measures helped portray de Gaulle as a man of exceptional qualities. Both the foreign press, of which was translated into French in the leading newspapers, and the papers' own reporters offered lavish praise.

Ultimately, the foreign policy initiatives taken by the administration in the early years of the Fifth Republic effectively shaped the perception of national renewal. It is a testament to de Gaulle's theatrics that the limits of French power were largely concealed during the period. From a strategic standpoint, de Gaulle's challenges had virtually no impact on the functionality of the alliance. Consider the French Mediterranean Fleet for instance: only about one-third of France's naval tonnage in the Mediterranean actually *was* integrated into NATO. The other two-thirds had always remained under national command, since NATO's inception, and was never integrated.⁵⁵ The move was, in reality, completely ineffectual. Yet de Gaulle's NATO allies, like Secretary-General Paul-Henri Spaak, still fretted the "incalculable psychological significance."⁵⁶

The nature of Gaullist foreign policy during the period ensured broad popular support, as he did not affront his NATO allies but instead simply resisted integration. Moreover, de Gaulle was always quick to affirm France's fidelity to the Atlantic Alliance (the concert of Western nations), even if he rejected the integrationist model of NATO. In all, his decisions were generally supported by the French public, who maintained skepticism about the usefulness of NATO, let alone France's meager position in it. The manner in which he approached state visits

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Bozo, *Two Strategies for Europe*, 44-45.

⁵⁶Telegram from the Embassy in France to the Department of State, March 7, 1959, *FRUS Vol. VII Part I*, 422.

also contributed to a heightened perception of renewal and change in the young Gaullist Fifth Republic.

CONCLUSION

The period from spring 1958 to spring 1960 marked the return of Gaullism as a potent political force. During that time the French Republic saw the end of the Fourth Republic, barely twelve years old, and the inauguration of the Fifth Republic, one which provided the president with unprecedented powers. The main goal of de Gaulle, Michel Debré, and others, of course, was the creation of a state which allowed for one paternal figure to rise above the divisive elements of modern politics and promote a particular vision of national unity. This came in the form of Charles de Gaulle, who, supported by his Gaullist companions, shaped a narrative of renewal and unity in the early Fifth Republic.

Employing nationalism, through rhetoric and a tangible policies (including foreign policy), the Gaullists sought to legitimate the Fifth Republic and its “Republican Monarch.” The legitimacy they craved came in the form of popular support, or at least muted dissent. The Gaullists sought to vindicate their constitutional reforms by crafting a persuasive argument that the Fifth Republic had rectified France’s course (both domestically and internationally) after the perceived failures of prior republics. In this effort, the Gaullists consistently vilified the parliamentary nature of the Fourth Republic, arguing that the system institutionalized the divisions within French society. In contrast, the Gaullists hoped to portray the “Republican Monarch,” in further evidence of fundamental change between republics, as the embodiment of French unity.

To serve this end, de Gaulle and company orchestrated a foreign policy that lent the perception of positive change and also presidential authority. By carrying out diplomatic initiatives that had popular appeal and responded to widespread French social and political anxieties, de Gaulle managed to substantiate his claims of national unity and legitimacy. The copious press coverage that accompanied all of de Gaulle's actions, alongside his resolute and stately persona, made the decisions *seem* very potent. His decisions were generally supported by the French public, who maintained skepticism about the usefulness of NATO, let alone France's meager position in it. The manner in which he approached state visits also contributed to a heightened perception of renewal and change in the young Gaullist Fifth Republic. The way de Gaulle framed the policy decisions – that France deserved independence and prestige, if not influence – proved difficult for leftist opponents to craft compelling counterarguments, at least in the early years.

A GAULLIST SUCCESS?

How, then, do we measure if the Gaullists' efforts succeeded? Certainly, I have already identified how each of the relevant foreign policy decisions received some degree of popular support from the French public. But this only reveals one aspect of the larger goal. As I stated throughout, the broader goal of the Gaullists was to effectively convince the French public that the early Fifth Republic served to rejuvenate France and unify the French people under the leadership of Charles de Gaulle. In this effort, foreign policy provided one aspect. The real measurement of Gaullist success was the extent to which the public bought into the narrative of renewal and unity.

In this respect, the Gaullists did prove successful. Their first goal was to mythologize the person of General de Gaulle and, from there, make him synonymous with the Fifth Republic. The national myth of Charles de Gaulle became a central piece of the constitutional revisions, which aimed to institutionalize what Stanley Hoffman has termed “heroic leadership,”¹ envisioned by Debré and others. As Debré wrote later:

Most certainly, this constitution, in the minds of those who conceived and wrote it, and I myself was foremost among them, did allow General de Gaulle to assume responsibility for French affairs for the longest period of years possible. How could we have considered doing otherwise when in every respect our domestic state of affairs, the needs of Europe, and the exigencies of the world scene called for a kind of government that only General de Gaulle, even though he was entering his later years, could lead and ensure?²

De Gaulle provided for the Gaullists the galvanizing force with which to represent the perception of profound governmental change following the inauguration of the Fifth Republic.

For the Gaullists, Charles de Gaulle represented the Man of 18 June – the mythologized (and romanticized) lone resister in June 1940 and the undisputable personification of the French nation thereafter. This myth was constructed and shaped largely by the writings of the Gaullist intellectual Raymond Aron in the 1950s and accepted by a French public unwilling to turn a critical, introspective eye onto the wartime years under the Vichy regime.³ De Gaulle, too, mythologized his own role in his massively popular *Memoires de Guerre*, published in the mid-to-late 1950s. Conveniently, and perhaps not coincidentally, the final volume of de Gaulle’s war

¹See Stanley Hoffman, *Decline or Renewal? France since the 1930s* (New York: Viking Press, 1974).

²Michel Debré, “The Constitution of 1958, Its Raison D’être and How It Evolved” in *The Impact of the Fifth Republic on France*, ed. William G. Andrews and Stanley Hoffman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 7.

³On these points, see Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order 1940-1944* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972) and Henry Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

memoirs was released in 1959 under the title *Le Salut* (Salvation). Fittingly, the last volume recounted de Gaulle's triumphs in saving France and restoring the French state following Nazi occupation (seen, of course, through a fuzzy and nostalgic lens).⁴ The theme of salvation proved timely during the first year of the Fifth Republic and de Gaulle's presidency.

Additionally, in Gaullist lore, de Gaulle's ostensibly apolitical role, for them, meant that he could embody the nation in its entirety (unlike the supposedly partisan politicians emblematic of prior French republicanism). André Malraux, the writer and Minister of Culture under de Gaulle, revealed this thought in 1969 in a conversation with de Gaulle: "For the majority those who followed you, it does not seem to me that your ideology was the major element. The important thing was something else: during the war, obviously, it was the national will; afterward, and especially since 1958, it was the feeling that your motives, good or bad, *were not the motives of the politicians.*"⁵ The early Fifth Republic, then, rested on the legacy of de Gaulle. The Gaullists made him the central representation of the perceived shift from the Fourth Republic to the Fifth.

In this multi-faceted myth-making of de Gaulle, the public responded positively. His perceived aura of national legitimacy did much to ensure confidence and support for the regime. As one Frenchwoman wrote in November 1958, "Most of us are hopeful but worried. Maybe that's what we are worried about – being hopeful, I mean. Here in France we've lost the habit for

⁴ Charles de Gaulle, *Volume 3: Salvation 1944-1946*, trans. Richard Howard in *The Complete War Memoirs of Charles de Gaulle* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964),

⁵ André Malraux, *Felled Oaks : Conversation with de Gaulle*, trans. Irene Clephane (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 82.

so long.”⁶ Fittingly, the women’s thoughts echoed both aspects of the Gaullist narrative: that de Gaulle had revived France and that the Fourth Republic (and earlier) had consistently failed the French people. Additionally, de Gaulle’s constant denunciations of a Fourth Republic “totally unfit to ensure the conduct of affairs” helped shape public perception.⁷ In August 1958, for instance, 75% of the French public agreed that “the parliamentary system was bad.”⁸ In contrast, 60% of the public expressed satisfaction in de Gaulle’s government. Their greatest reasons for support were his ability to reestablish “hope and confidence,” “return order,” and “give strength as leader.”⁹

Electoral success for Gaullist and other conservative parties sympathetic to the Gaullist cause in 1958, and later in 1962, helped sustain the perception of change under de Gaulle’s leadership. In the elections of 1958, for instance, the Gaullists gained 216 of 481 seats in parliament. Together, with other right-leaning parties, the conservatives parties gained 388 of 481 possible parliamentary seats.¹⁰ The overwhelming successes of conservative and Gaullist parties in parliament helped authenticate de Gaulle’s claims to national unity.

⁶“De Gaulle and the Rebirth of Hope,” *Life*, November 3, 1958, 34.

⁷ “Address by Premier Charles de Gaulle on Policy Aims Broadcast over French Radio and Television on June 13, 1958” in *Major Addresses, Statements, and Press Conferences of General Charles de Gaulle, May 19, 1958 – January 31, 1964*, (New York: French Embassy Press and Information Division, 1964), 9. Hereafter abbreviated as *Major Addresses*.

⁸In August 1958, French men and women were asked a series of questions which inquired about “the reasons to explain the failure of the last political regime.” Among the reasons, was “The Parliamentary system was bad.” To this, 75% agreed, compared to only 5% who disagreed (20% had no answer). See *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls: France 1939, 1944-1975*, ed. George H. Gallup (New York: Random House, 1976), 239-40.

⁹*Ibid.*, 243. Gallup asked the French public in September 1958 if they were “satisfied or dissatisfied with the performance of General de Gaulle’s Government.” 60% responded satisfied, 18% responded dissatisfied, and 22% did not know. Of those satisfied, the three most common reasons were those cited above.

¹⁰Andrew Knapp, *Parties and the Party System in France: A Disconnected Democracy?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 34-39.

We shouldn't forget, however, that the Gaullists had their opponents during the period. In the vote for de Gaulle's investiture on 1 June 1958, for instance, 244 deputies voted "no," many of whom came from the socialist or communist ranks and proved skeptical to cede power to a strong man in a manner all too reminiscent of the investiture of Marshal Pétain in 1940.¹¹ Throughout the de Gaulle presidency, there were leftists and, increasingly, figures on the far-right who denounced de Gaulle and his allies. Thanks to Gaullist efforts to include leaders of the major parties in the constitutional drafting process, many parties found themselves forced to reluctantly accede to the Gaullist Fifth Republic. On the far-right, meanwhile, partisans became disillusioned with de Gaulle's position on French Algeria. But their voices were capably marginalized. In numerous instances the *Organisation de l'armée secrète* (OAS), in efforts to preserve French Algeria, organized uprisings and assassination attempts against the de Gaulle government – acts not dissimilar from the one that toppled the Fourth Republic in May 1958.¹² De Gaulle countered by denouncing the "guilty ones" and reiterating his mandate granted by the French people and the "national legitimacy" he had "embodied for twenty years."¹³ The de Gaulle government proved able to silence or marginalize, in the early years, the rancorous factions that challenged its narrative of national unity.

In all, the diplomatic decisions chosen for study in this thesis presented just one of many elements which contributed to the Gaullist narrative of change and renewal. In this respect, the foreign policy cases helped shape public perception but were not, of course, the central factor.

¹¹Jean-Pierre Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944-1958*, trans. Godfrey Rodgers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 309.

¹²On the role of anti-Gaullists, see Julian Jackson, "General de Gaulle and His Enemies: Anti-Gaullism in France since 1940," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 9, no. 6 (1999), 43-65.

¹³"Address by President Charles de Gaulle on Algerian Policy Broadcast over French Radio and Television on January 29, 1960" in *Major Addresses*, 74.

One should not overlook the main element which ensured public support for the regime in this early period. The public had invested in Charles de Gaulle to solve the seemingly unsolvable quagmire in Algeria. Everything else, including international affairs, was ancillary to this pressing concern. The public proved willing to go along with the prescribed governmental changes mainly because of the mandate they had given de Gaulle in regards to the Algerian War.

As the war ran its course, though, the Gaullists relied on various policies to sustain the feeling of hope and confidence which pervaded during the period of de Gaulle's investiture. De Gaulle attached the greatest importance to this effort: "The important thing – perhaps the most important thing for all men who have been involved with history – was not what I said, but the hope I roused. So far as the world goes, if I have renewed France, it is because I renewed hope in France."¹⁴

Public support, though not during the early period covered in this thesis, did eventually wane. Though beyond the scope of this thesis, the events of May 1968 represent the most obvious example of the eventual repudiation of de Gaulle and the Gaullist narrative he maintained. In foreign policy too, as de Gaulle took on an increasingly confrontational stance in the later years of the administration – most notably in the outright withdrawal from integrated command in 1966 from NATO – public support wavered.¹⁵ Even during the period studied here, the notions of national unity the Gaullists evoked were, in many ways, illusions. The consistent electoral majorities and the public's trust in de Gaulle to end the Algerian War aided the Gaullists in their efforts to paper over the divisions in French society that *did* still exist. Though

¹⁴As told to André Malraux in *Felled Oaks*, 105.

¹⁵On this point see Richard Kuisel's *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 142-43.

the Gaullists, in their goals outlined in this thesis, proved successful till 1960, a larger study would seek to recognize the longer-term limits of their efforts.

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