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7

De Gaulle, the 'Anglo-Saxons', and the Algerian War

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A new orthodoxy now dominates French diplomatic historiography, according to which Charles de Gaulle was the founder of a new French independence and the creator of virtual revolution in French diplomacy.[1] According to this view, de Gaulle's famous memorandum of 17 September 1958 to President Eisenhower and Prime Minister Macmillan, proposing a three-power 'directorate' to run NATO, reflected the return of stability in French political institutions, the achievement of economic equilibrium, and the projection in world affairs of a new French assertiveness. The culmination of this policy, based on the creation of a French nuclear force, came in 1966 with the withdrawal of France from NATO's integrated command.

According to Frédéric Bozo, de Gaulle offered NATO a competing vision of how to organize the alliance, based on a concerted European policy and an independent European (French) deterrent in partnership with Washington, rather than the American-dominated 'empire by invitation.' Paradoxically, Bozo argues, the measured American response to de Gaulle's challenge, the refusal of polemic, continuation of cordial relations despite disagreement, and the increased effort to allow European members of the alliance a greater role in consultation and the formulation of policy actually strengthened NATO for its other participants and made them more willing to accept American leadership.

The '14+1' formula was an improvement over the integrated 15, even if de Gaulle was unable to win over the other Europeans to the rejection of American hegemony and the creation of a genuinely independent European policy. De Gaulle's challenge went further than the declaration of French independence, however, and if ahead of its time, has been vindicated 30

years later. For the French statesman saw beyond the bipolar world of his day, dominated by competing ideologies, to an independent world in which national states would once again assert themselves, but peacefully, in concert, and allow the construction of a Europe 'from the Atlantic to the Urals'.[2]

It is further argued that de Gaulle's challenge went further than the declaration of French independence, as became evident with the collapse of communism some 30 years later. The definitive statement of modern-day retrospective Gaullism is undoubtedly to be found in Maurice Vaïsse's *La Grandeur*, the title of which, devoid of any mitigating punctuation, sets forth the message.[3]

Vaïsse, while paying due attention to elements of continuity in de Gaulle's policy with the foreign policy of the Fourth Republic, nevertheless credits de Gaulle with a 'Copernican revolution' in French diplomacy. The political and financial stability, prestige, authority, and determination with which de Gaulle endowed French policy constituted one element of this revolution, but more important was de Gaulle's way of pursuing French independence. Real self-determination for France in the postwar world required a change in the status quo oriented toward the achievement of a new international equilibrium beyond Cold War politics.

The fierce refusal of de Gaulle to compromise on French sovereignty was a model for a renewed system of interstate relations based on opposition to the hegemony of East or West; once achieved, with France leading the way, an end of the bipolar world based on mutual assured destruction would become possible, and in time, communism would be revealed as a superficial veneer masking the deeper reality of the national traditions of the nations in which it occurred, allowing them to join the West.

A complement to this view is that de Gaulle had first to deal with the messy Algerian situation before engaging in his *Weltpolitik*, alone capable of expressing, in his famous view, the 'grandeur' of France. It was, of course, to the Algerian crisis that he owed his return to power in May 1958. There is a paradox here. The military rebels and *colons* who precipitated the crisis that brought de Gaulle to power supported him with the understanding that he would preserve *Algérie française*, something that, according to these historians, he had no intention of doing.

De Gaulle himself, of course, later claimed in his memoirs that granting Algeria its independence had been his intention from the first moment he came to power.[4] For de Gaulle's historical vision allegedly extended to colonial affairs as well as European and world politics. He understood that

colonial empires were a thing of the past.[5] He had no intention of trying to integrate Algeria's nine million Muslims with the rest of the French nation.[6] Instead he systematically set about finding a way to separate Algeria from France while restoring the military to obedience to civil authority and dealing with the one million *colons* of European origin. It took him four years to accomplish this, but once France had weathered the crisis, granted Algeria its independence, and rid itself of its legacy of the colonial past, he was finally free to embark upon his broader, worldwide political design.

Most treatments of de Gaulle's diplomatic policies grant Algeria, and indeed the whole subject of the decolonization of France in Africa, a separate chapter if they deal with it at all, thus emphasizing its marginal, anachronistic character.[7] De Gaulle's policies are seen in conceptual and chronological sequence. First de Gaulle had to rid France of its colonial burden, carry out the necessary constitutional reforms strengthening the executive and restoring political stability, and establish the internal foundation of his external policy. Only then was he truly free to undertake his daring international initiatives, which challenged American hegemony while transforming France into the spokesman in the developed world for the aspirations of the nations of the so-called Third World for development and equality. According to this view 1962 was the turning point in de Gaulle's diplomacy, the point at which, Algeria behind him, he was able to chart out an independent role for France in world affairs.

A further elaboration of this interpretation takes French modernization and consumerism, and the development of a nuclear force, as substitutes for empire. Once shorn of its burden of colonial wars, France turned to indulge its postwar hunger for the better things in life brought by a higher standard of living. Indeed, the rapid takeoff France achieved in the 1960s tended in retrospect to validate the theory known as *Cartierisme*, after the editor of the weekly *Paris-Match* who popularized it: colonies in the long run cost more than they are worth; only by ridding itself of them could the nation achieve its full economic potential. Algeria thus was in every way a drag and an anachronism. Once free of it France could join the consumer society, modernize its army with nuclear weapons, and chart an independent course in world affairs. Algeria was an albatross, and de Gaulle once observed to Alain Peyrefitte that getting rid of it was perhaps the greatest service he had rendered France in his career.[8]

Some historians have argued, however, that the opposition between imperialism and modernization is artificial; in fact the two were integrally related. The years of the Algerian war were years of economic growth and prosperity in France. Kristin Ross has tried to integrate France's

decolonization experience with its economic takeoff into consumerism. In *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture*, she argues that French colonialism and Fordist modernization are linked; colonialism outlived its external history, and was internalized by the development of consumer culture and modernization. Decolonization helped make the economic takeoff possible, by bringing hundreds of thousands of low-wage immigrant workers to France, and then one million displaced *colons* from Algeria, helping in the process to create the conditions for the contemporary problems of French exclusion and racism.

Ross is no doubt right about this, if she is wrong-headed about other aspects of the problem; it is less obvious, for example, that consumer goods transformed women into household dependents, internally 'colonizing' them and substituting them for the Algerian 'native', or that there was necessarily a dialectical relationship between the everyday objects of modernization, from telephone wires to the kitchen sink, and their use in electrical charges on genitals and the submerging of heads under water in the process of torturing human beings in Algeria.[9] But no matter; her work stands as having posed the problem of the necessary relationship between decolonization and French modernization and consumerism.

Philip Dine has done a brilliant and sensitive job of demonstrating the relationship of the Algerian War with French fiction and film.[10]

If Algeria was at the basis of French economic development and culture, as these writers show, how much more significant must it have been to a proper understanding of French diplomacy? My contention here is that the Algerian War is crucial to the interpretation of French diplomatic initiatives, and their reception by the Anglo-Saxon powers and NATO, not only prior to 1962, but after. Moreover, far from marking a 'watershed' after which de Gaulle was finally free to pursue his long-anticipated diplomacy of independence, 1962 was the year of the final ignominious collapse of a bold, striking, three-pronged effort by de Gaulle to reorder world affairs with a new place for France in the whole, at the basis of which lay his vision of an Algeria closely associated with, indeed dominated by France in a relationship that today's rhetoric would undoubtedly call 'neo-colonial'.

France's transformed relationship with Algeria was to be the key to the French community, the basis for French leadership in Europe, and the foundation in turn of a new relationship of French equality with Britain and the United States. And by a simultaneous pursuit of this vision, de Gaulle hoped to enlist the cooperation of the US and UK, Europe, and black Africa in the task of keeping Algeria tied to France.

But if the vision was bold, its conceptualization and execution were fatally flawed. To make it work, de Gaulle would have needed the cooperation of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN), the agreement of the leadership of the *colons* to work with the Arab and black African populations in a spirit of equality, the agreement of the black African nations to a federal community, the cooperation of his European partners in a loose confederation-like arrangement in Europe, and the forbearance of the United States and the United Kingdom. For a wide variety of reasons dealt with below, most of them attributable to de Gaulle himself, none of these were forthcoming.

De Gaulle himself helped conceptualize the link between decolonization and diplomacy, the basis of the present argument. In his view, as told to Alain Peyrefitte, the Fourth Republic 'created for us a docile foreign policy in the hands of the Americans and a colonial policy combated by them'. France was set against the countries of the Soviet bloc by the American alliance and against the countries of the Third World by its colonial policies; as it pretended to subject its colonial possessions to its eternal protection it in turn became the protectorate of the Americans, who did not hesitate to encourage the vassals of France to rebel against it even as the United States proceeded to make its own vassal out of France. This, for de Gaulle, was the fateful contradiction of French foreign policy which he intended to end.

Interestingly, Peyrefitte asked de Gaulle whether the policies of the Fourth Republic were not rather coherent than contradictory: did not the making of France a vassal to the United States in fact enable France to maintain its protectorate over its colonies? De Gaulle left this query without a response. A significant silence, for Peyrefitte seems to have articulated the policy that de Gaulle not only inherited from the Fourth Republic but himself initially sought to continue.

This was the real sense of de Gaulle's 17 September 1958 memo to the United States and Britain proposing a 'directorate' of the three Great Powers over the policies of NATO and, by extension, the world. De Gaulle later told Peyrefitte, in keeping with his rejection of the policies of the Fourth Republic, that his proposal to the 'Anglo-Saxons' was not meant seriously. 'I asked for the earth', he said, knowing full well that it would not be granted, but providing in the meantime the pretext for the progressive withdrawal of France from NATO's integrated command.[11]

But the General was again reinterpreting his past for the benefit of future historians; the evidence rather suggests, on the contrary, that de Gaulle offered his proposal to Eisenhower and Macmillan in deadly seriousness, and not accidentally at the height of his Algerian problem, at the moment of

his assumption of political power. Why did he not wait until France was really internally strengthened, politically stable, and rid of the burden of colonial war, unless he hoped, by means of that initiative, to accomplish these very goals? The British and Americans, by means of their cooperation with France, were to provide the needed help to restore French prestige and political stability, by helping to solve France's problems in Algeria and the Empire, keeping them both safely under French influence and control.

A great deal has been written about de Gaulle's alleged real motives with regard to Algeria when he came to political power in 1958. Motives are the stuff of most historical debates and almost never subject to proof. There is ample evidence, summarized by Lacouture and others, of confidential remarks by de Gaulle to individuals to the effect that France would not be able to keep Algeria, that Algeria was lost.[12] De Gaulle also gave similar confidences to selected American officials. But these remarks, always private, stressing that Algeria was 'lost', implied a regrettable but ineluctable state of affairs so long as France was governed by the ineffectual Fourth Republic.

On the other hand there is a much more impressive body of evidence that argues in favor of the view that de Gaulle, like his countrymen, was part of the French colonial consensus, and quite unwilling to conceive any benefit to a France shorn of any of its colonies, much less Algeria. When de Gaulle addressed himself to France's role in the non-Western world, which he did infrequently, he almost always referred to France's colonial Empire. And his travels during the period of traversing the 'desert' from 1946 to 1958 were, for the most part, limited to France's imperial possessions. These, for de Gaulle, represented the 'world', and there is no example of a public statement at any time by him prior to 1958 advocating decolonization or critical of imperialism. Moreover, de Gaulle was bitterly impatient, even when in power and forced to grant independence to France's former colonies, with the public statements of African leaders critical of 'imperialism'. On the contrary, de Gaulle insisted always that indigenous peoples owed France their gratitude for its efforts in the tradition of its '*mission civilisatrice*'.

De Gaulle thus gave every reason for military leaders such as General Edmond Jouhaud, later one of the insurgents in April 1961, to advocate his return to power in May 1958. Not only did de Gaulle lead advocates of *Algérie française* to believe that he was an advocate of their cause, he adamantly refused to condemn their insurgency against the Fourth Republic for its alleged lack of resolve in adhering to that position.[13]

De Gaulle's words, the famous 'I have understood you' from the balcony of the Governor-General's palace in Algiers on 4 June 1958, and

then the single utterance of 'Vive l'Algérie française' at Mostaganem a few days later, were, moreover, followed by acts. The Challe Plan, initiated by General Maurice Challe in an effort to turn the tide of the war in favor of France by ruthlessly destroying the FLN on the ground, combined with the Constantine Plan, which committed France to the expenditure of billions of francs for Algerian modernization and economic development, were ample evidence of his determination to keep Algeria French.[14]

This is not to say that de Gaulle was not dissimulating in at least one respect. He did not interpret 'Algérie française' in the sense of full assimilation of the Muslim population to the status of Frenchmen equal to all others: 'These people aren't like us', he often remarked of the Arab population, meaning they were incapable of assimilation, and he did not want nine million Muslims voting in 80 of their own representatives to sit in the French National Assembly.

Moreover, the concept was a recent one as far as the Algerian insurgents, army and *colons*, were themselves concerned. De Gaulle hoped to find another formula to keep Algeria French, one which would enable it to take 'a privileged place' in the construction of his French Community, initiated by the constitution of 1958 for France's sub-Saharan possessions.[15]

Add to this the stubborn efforts of de Gaulle to hold on to North African military bases, in particular Bizerta (in Tunisia), even after Algerian independence, and the location in the Sahara of deposits of oil and the sites of French nuclear testing, both regarded as essential for the recovery of French economic and political independence, and one can understand the depth of his commitment to keeping Algeria French after he came to power. His earlier remarks to the effect that Algeria was lost should rather be seen as reflecting his contempt for a weak Fourth Republic that he regarded as incapable of holding on to it and his own pessimism about the prospects of coming to power in time to reverse the tide.

One need not repeat here the details of the spectacular initiatives toward the construction of a French community, written into the Constitution of 1958, and the Fouchet Plan for a European political community of states, which de Gaulle pursued first on the basis of entente with the Federal Republic of Germany and then with the Community of six as a whole.[16] The important point is that, with the September 1958 suggestion of a tripartite 'directorate', they amounted to a coherent vision of a reordered world with an enhanced place for France within it. France would be the hub of, the directing force in 'Eurafrica', and its representative to the Anglo-Saxons. Both initiatives, moreover, had Algeria and North Africa in mind. The French community was to provide a model for the settlement of the

Algerian problem and a pole of attraction for the return of Tunisia and Morocco to the fold, and the European Community was to provide the capital necessary for the construction of *Eurafrique*.

Most interesting in this connection was de Gaulle's insistence on a federal community of African states, headed by a strong President who would, of course, be the President of the French Republic, with key ministries like defence, foreign affairs, economics and education administered in common but occupied by French officials, as opposed to the looser confederation based on internal autonomy preferred by the Africans themselves. Had de Gaulle conceded on this point at the outset he might have avoided the collapse of the community in 1960.

On the other hand de Gaulle rejected the federalism preferred by his partners during the discussions over the Fouchet Plan and railed angrily against the proponents of supra-nationality in Europe, thus destroying his chances for a European Political Community. Clearly de Gaulle expected to dominate Africa, and hence imposed on the community as centralized a mechanism as possible, but he rejected what he feared would be the submergence of France in a federalized Europe in which France would be among equals, holding out instead for a confederated Europe of states which France would naturally lead. As a result he got neither. The only policies that could have worked were exactly opposite, a dose of federalism in Europe and a loose confederation with local autonomy in Africa.

But by far the most important of de Gaulle's initiatives was the 17 September 1958 memorandum to President Eisenhower and Prime Minister Macmillan demanding a role for France in an informal arrangement, commonly referred to as a 'directorate', of the three great powers to coordinate the policies of the so-called Free World. Algeria, and North Africa in general, were central in this initiative, and the Algerian War, detested by France's purported partners, was one of the central reasons, if not the single most important reason, for the very cool reception the initiative received from the British and the Americans. This point would appear to have been missed by most of the literature dealing with de Gaulle's foreign policy.[17]

This is not to downplay the importance of other critical questions at issue between the French and the United States which also lay at the root of the failure of the 1958 initiative. The conflict over the French program to construct an independent nuclear deterrent was basic; instead of much-coveted cooperation the French got only hostility from Washington on this question, although President Eisenhower was himself an unwilling participant in the policy. He could not overcome the opposition in Congress,

the State Department, and the all-powerful Atomic Energy Commission, however.

Washington had also been unhappy with French non-participation in NATO since the Algerian War began: instead of being allocated to NATO's shield, as the 1952 Lisbon agreements specified, French troops were deployed in Algeria, greatly weakening the alliance from the American point of view.[18]

Finally, American concerns for French political stability and the continuity of democratic institutions were shared by the British and all the NATO powers, and compounded by earlier American fears of de Gaulle as a would-be dictator. Following the bombardment of the Tunisian village of Sakhiet by the French air force in February 1958 Dulles repeatedly expressed his fears that the French army was out of control.[19]

All these American concerns were in turn tied to Algeria, however: the decision to build the French bomb was spurred by American non-cooperation in Algeria and during the Suez crisis, Algeria was the reason for French non-participation in NATO, and Algeria caused French political instability and the fall of the Fourth Republic. There was no sound reason for the Americans to believe that stability in France had been restored fully in September 1958, aware as they were of the continued insurrectionary propensities of the French army.

It has frequently been noted that the de Gaulle memorandum was in the tradition of the foreign policy of the Fourth Republic which had repeatedly sought admission to what it perceived as an Anglo-Saxon 'club'. Less noted, because it occurred only four months earlier, at the moment of the Fourth Republic's demise, was the latest such proposal put forward by Premier Pierre Pflimlin and Foreign Minister René Pleven. Noting that France now had the capacity to build nuclear weapons and would in the future do so, Pleven instructed Ambassador Alphand to inform Washington that Paris expected important results from this fact 'on foreign and domestic fronts': close cooperation with the Anglo-Saxon powers in matters of defense, revision of the American MacMahon Act which prohibited the sharing of nuclear secrets, and, implicitly, membership in what was to be a three-power directing organism within NATO.[20]

This proposal, coming on the heels of the crisis over the Sakhiet bombing, the 'good offices' carried out between France and Tunisia by the United States and Great Britain, the rejection of the good offices agreement by the French parliament, the fall of the Gaillard government, and the insurrection of the French *colons* and army in Algiers, could only have struck Washington as absurd.

If in the spirit of the Plimlin-Pleven proposal of May 1958, de Gaulle's initiative of September was much more detailed and far-reaching, more fully developed as it were. And it came amid continued bitter French-American conflict over French North Africa, by no means abated since the fall of the Fourth Republic despite de Gaulle's settlement of the crisis with Tunisia over Sakhiet. De Gaulle met Dulles on 5 July in Paris; in response to the American Secretary's effort to convince him that France should be satisfied with a role in the deployment of the American nuclear deterrent rather than wastefully pursuing its own, de Gaulle reiterated France's intention to build an independent nuclear force, and expressed his dissatisfaction with the NATO alliance as presently constituted.[21]

The alliance gave insufficient weight to France and was limited in geographical scope to the defence of Europe. France, by contrast, was a world power, with interests on several continents, but primarily in the Mediterranean and North and sub-Saharan Africa. De Gaulle attempted to drive that point home, angrily rejecting later that month Dulles's suggestion, in accordance with a Tunisian request, that Bizerta be made a NATO base; Tunisia, the French noted, lay outside the zone formally covered by NATO, to wit the three northern departments of Algeria, and France claimed the exclusive right to arm Tunisia.

The United States had already precipitated a crisis with France in November 1957 by acceding to a Tunisian request for light arms; when President Bourguiba of Tunisia once again rejected French pretensions to be its exclusive supplier in July 1958, and rejected suggestions that Washington finance its purchases in France through the 'offshore' provisions for foreign military aid, the Americans and the British again agreed to equip two Tunisian divisions. France had no choice but to acquiesce.[22] But Paris by no means meant to surrender its claims to hegemony in the former French protectorates of North Africa by that action.

De Gaulle's assumption of power was also accompanied by a new policy of angry protest against what the French thought to be American interference in French Algerian policy. The Fourth Republic, too, had frequently protested against American contacts with the Algerian rebels, the free rein enjoyed by National Liberation Front (FLN) representatives to carry out political activities in the United States particularly in New York, seat of the United Nations and their efforts to curry favor with American public opinion through an active propaganda campaign. But the French Ambassador to the USA, Hervé Alphand, had been convinced, and argued Washington's case in Paris, that American contacts with the rebels were on a low diplomatic level, for informational purposes only, and Paris was kept

fully informed. Was this not in the French interest rather than the contrary? Moreover, the State Department was an open house at which anyone was free to call, and the American legal system made obligatory the granting of visas to all those carrying legitimate passports and not communists or subversives.

But de Gaulle was no longer disposed to accept these arguments. The sinister American purpose was clearly to gain the favor of the National Liberation Front, which Washington believed to be the next ruler of Algeria, and thus to supplant French influence in North Africa with its own.

Exactly the same arguments between French and British diplomatic officials took place in London. Couve de Murville, in July 1958, instructed Alphand that he was no longer to acquiesce in these hostile American policies.[23] Washington had no business carrying on contacts with rebels against whom France, its ally, was at war; nor could Washington's insistence that it must give political asylum to the rebels, itself questionable, be allowed to mean that their political activities, in the United Nations and elsewhere, should go unrestricted. Couve de Murville instructed Alphand to protest in the strongest terms, which he did, to no avail.

When Michel Debré became Premier in January 1959 French protests became angrier and more menacing, with the result that Washington did eventually cease contacts with the Algerian rebels 'for the time being'. But France never received full satisfaction from its Anglo-Saxon partners on this issue.

De Gaulle's message to Eisenhower and Macmillan on 17 September 1958, had only one direct reference to North Africa: the NATO alliance as presently constituted was inadequate to meet the Mediterranean and North African concerns of France. But the message was followed, within three days, with another, equally spectacular initiative involving virtually the entire globe. The National Liberation Front had declared itself a Provisional Government of the future Algerian Republic (GPRA) and opened a campaign for recognition as such. On 20 September 1958, Couve de Murville instructed all French diplomatic representatives to warn their host governments that recognition of the newly-formed Algerian 'Provisional Government' in Cairo would be construed as an unfriendly act to France and interference in French internal affairs.[24]

The isolation of the putative rebel government became a major preoccupation of French diplomacy. Taken with the background of arguments over Bizerta, the arming of Tunisia, and the activities of FLN rebels in the United States, the 17 September memorandum appears part of a broader ensemble, an effort to enlist the United States, Great Britain, and

France's allies in NATO in support of the French effort to retain hegemony in Algeria.

How would the proposed directorate work in the non-European world? Each of the three Great Powers, in consultation with and with the support of the other two, would exercise hegemony in its own area of concern. The three-power body would in effect adopt the policy of 'the most involved power in such and such a question or zone. In Morocco or in Tunisia, for example, the shared position should be that of France.'[25] If the big three were to follow French policy in Tunisia and Morocco, it followed that they must also do so in the case of Algeria.

President Eisenhower's reply was appropriately cautious; he did not wish to antagonize de Gaulle nor to lose France to NATO, but he could not accede to the French request either. An internal State Department memorandum noted that the American military would never accept de Gaulle's idea of tripartite military planning contained in the proposal, it was impossible for the United States to satisfy French requests for nuclear cooperation, and the creation of a tripartite organization would be resented by the other NATO allies. The best tactic, therefore, was to agree to informal tripartite talks, find a counter-proposal sufficiently attractive to keep de Gaulle in NATO, and seek 'clarifications' while suggesting 'problems' with the proposal as it stood.[26] In other words, stall.

Eisenhower's letter of 28 October 1958 to de Gaulle in reply to the memorandum agreed that NATO needed to be modernized, but warned that the United States could not participate in any arrangement that gave other NATO allies the impression that decisions were being made without them, and noted that very serious problems would be raised by any projected extension of the geographical area covered by the alliance. The message was clear: whatever changes were made in NATO, the United States could not become involved in the active support of French designs in the Mediterranean and North Africa.

Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's simultaneous reply to de Gaulle was somewhat different. Ever since the Algerian War began the British had been caught between American opposition and hostility, based on traditional anti-colonialism, to French policies in Algeria, with which the British fundamentally agreed, and the need to placate France for other reasons. Britain, like France had its own imperial legacy, and was reluctant to take too strong a position lest its position in its own areas of influence, Cyprus or Southern Rhodesia for example, come under scrutiny and attack as well.

More seriously, as the British had noted during the Sakhiet crisis, unlike the United States, which could afford to antagonize the French, Britain

desperately needed French cooperation in its plans to associate the Common Market with the projected European Free Trade Association, thus preventing the establishment of a tight internal European trading bloc which would exclude British products. British fears of a split in the West between adherents of the Common Market and the European Free Trade Association tended toward the apocalyptic.

But in any event London regarded 1958 as a turning point in its European relations, and with de Gaulle, even more than with the Fourth Republic, felt that it was vital not to alienate Paris, for 'we are in French hands to a most uncomfortable degree'.[27] On the other hand neither could the British dissociate themselves from Washington, nor appear less pro-Arab than Washington with regard to Algeria. The Middle East, after all, remained the source of Britain's oil supplies, and Whitehall felt equally dependent upon the good will of the Arabs.

Macmillan's reply to de Gaulle therefore raised no substantive points of disagreement, while readily agreeing to the French request for tripartite talks. The Prime Minister agreed that NATO as presently constituted did not meet the interests of members with concerns outside the zone covered by the alliance. Macmillan limited himself to raising problems of a procedural nature: how would tripartism work? Would it be in addition to or a substitute for NATO's present directing organs, not to mention other regional alliance systems in the world?[28]

Dulles initially opposed the holding of tripartite discussions with Paris at all for fear of alienating the other members of the alliance, but he was overruled by Macmillan and Eisenhower, and discussions began in Washington in December 1958. One can see clearly the French purpose in these discussions in the formal instructions from Couve de Murville to Alphand, who became the French representative in these talks. Alphand was initially to 'educate' the British and Americans about French concerns. France wanted a unified world strategy of the three Western powers, as opposed to NATO strategy, which was for Europe only and essentially devised by the Americans alone.[29]

But like NATO the world strategy was to include military planning. As its first order of business, France needed a reorganization of NATO's military command in the Mediterranean to take into account French interests in communications with and the defense of North Africa. De Gaulle demanded a national, not an integrated defense for internal political reasons; French problems with the military, he said, stemmed in part from the army's insufficient consciousness of its role defending France, due to the subordination of its operations to an international organization in the

abstract. Alphand was thus to put the allies on notice that France intended to withdraw its Mediterranean fleet from the integrated NATO command, which it did in March 1959.

The tripartite talks convened on 3 December 1958. Alphand explained the meaning of de Gaulle's memo in a few basic points. NATO was no longer adequate to meet the needs of France, which was a nuclear power with worldwide interests. The three nuclear powers with world interests, the US, UK, and France, must meet periodically to take common decisions on policy all over the world, France having equal rights of consultation with the other two.

And, of course, NATO military planning in the Mediterranean must be revised to take into account the primary French role in the defense of North Africa.[30] What Alphand perforce left unsaid was against whom the reorganized Mediterranean command was to be directed. For London and Washington the enemy was communist, and perhaps Nasserist subversion of the type that had led to the intervention in Lebanon in July 1958, an intervention in which Paris had been told, despite its historic interest in Lebanon, that its participation was unwelcome. For Paris, the enemy was communism, Nasser, and the National Liberation Front which it persisted in regarding as their puppet.

That difference became clear in the United Nations debate over Algeria which reached its finale in December 1958, the fourth time the world organization addressed the Algerian question. In 1957 France had got out of the debate in a satisfactory way – the Assembly took note of the situation in Algeria and expressed its desire for a peaceful and just solution based on the principles of the United Nations Charter. France had explained its Algerian policies in the Assembly and then challenged the competence of the UN to deal with what it defined as an internal matter. De Gaulle's tactic in 1958, much to American displeasure, was to boycott the proceedings altogether, but to work behind the scenes to influence its friends in the hope of achieving a similar outcome to that of the year before. At bottom de Gaulle regarded the United Nations, much as he did NATO, as an American-run organization.

At first things seemed to be going France's way. A resolution sponsored by the African-Asian bloc calling on France to negotiate with the Algerian Provisional Government was defeated, the United States using its considerable influence to marshal votes against. But when a compromise resolution calling for negotiations between the 'two parties' in the dispute was tabled, the Americans looked at the situation somewhat differently. Paris regarded this resolution as equally unacceptable, since one of the 'two

parties' must mean the National Liberation Front. But instead of actively opposing this resolution, Washington adopted sphinx-like tactics, remaining silent in the debate and revealing how it would vote to no one. Because the United States voted near last in the alphabetical order the Assembly used, other delegations were not influenced by the Americans in casting their own votes. As a result, according to the French analysis, the resolution came within a single vote of achieving the two-thirds majority needed for adoption, while the United States abstained. The FLN regarded the vote as a moral victory, all the more so when American delegates fraternized with them openly at a reception given in their honor by the Tunisian delegation.[31]

In 1959 the tripartite talks got down to serious business. The Far East was discussed on 5 February, Africa on 16 April, continuing until 21 April. In the interval France withdrew its Mediterranean fleet from NATO. Couve de Murville laid out the reasoning Alphand was to use in explaining this move to the Americans. The United States, despite its atomic weapons preponderance, could not unilaterally make decisions about the use of such weapons; it must consult the other NATO powers with world interests, Great Britain and France. Only these three NATO countries, moreover, had the 'vocation, means, and tradition' of a true national defense. Of those three, France alone integrated its fleet with NATO; the Americans and the British did not. NATO had two main sectors of defense, Central Europe and the Mediterranean, the latter being the primary area of French concern. Hence France would withdraw its fleet from the integrated Mediterranean command.

The question of the return of French ground forces to NATO's integrated command in Central Europe once the Algerian war was over remained to be addressed. Here was the first hint that France might not 'return' its divisions to NATO (they had never been there in significant strength) when the Algerian war ended. The task of the French fleet was the defense of France's North African shores and to guarantee transit between them and the *métropole*. 'It is not acceptable that this task should be a part British, part American responsibility when many other political problems are in play elsewhere and when the policy of our allies, in regard for example to Algeria, in no way conforms to our own.'

French demands could be reduced to three basic issues, according to Couve de Murville: tripartite cooperation on world strategy, tripartite decisions on the use of nuclear weapons, and the reshaping of naval organization in the Mediterranean.[32] Couve de Murville gave no indication that these were separable, or that any one or two were more fundamental or basic than the others.

When Alphand informed Dulles of French plans for the fleet in late January 1959 Dulles brushed the issue aside as a technical problem for the military to deal with. Dulles discussed the issue again with de Gaulle on 6 February, insisting that new arrangements for France's fleet could be negotiated with NATO. Yet new US Secretary of State Christian A. Herter affected surprise in his discussion with Alphand when he learned that the decision which would go into effect on 6 March 1959. Eisenhower, Herter said, was visibly upset, especially given the Berlin crisis in which the unity of the allies was all the more necessary for psychological reasons. Alphand repeated the French rationale: '… unfortunately we could not come to a perfectly shared view between us on the policy to follow in Algeria'. He went on to complain about the American abstention in the United Nations the previous December and the 'inadmissible' nature of the relations between American diplomats and FLN representatives in New York.

There followed a bewildering variety of explanations offered by the French to the Americans: de Gaulle was said to be angry at the UN vote, or upset over the vote in Algeria which returned Muslim deputies in favor of integration rather than interlocutors with whom France could negotiate; or the French President needed a spectacular gesture to show the integrationists that France would not abandon Algeria.[33] But all the explanations boiled down to one. The action on the fleet was not so much about the 'independence' of France as it was about Algeria.

France's overall goals were once again spelled out in the Quai d'Orsay's 'Directives du Département pour ses conversations de Washington' of 25 March 1959, in preparation for the tripartite discussion of Africa scheduled for April.

First, there must be a formal mechanism of consultation between the US, Britain and France on world problems: France could not permit itself to be dragged into an atomic war through decisions for which it had no part.

There must be a Eurafrican zone of defense organized by the big three centred around the Mediterranean and North Africa; NATO was insufficient to meet this challenge. North Africa and the Mediterranean were of particular importance to France, and NATO had no strategy for dealing with this part of the world.

In general the same principles should apply in North Africa as elsewhere; one of the Great Powers must be responsible for security in the name of the others, with which it consulted regularly. 'But the government insists, above all, that they [the principles] should be applied to a region of the world in which such responsibilities are predominant. The guiding role of France in the western Mediterranean, in the Maghreb and in Black Africa

must be recognised by our allies. Similarly, the organisation of the military commands in these regions must be entrusted to French authorities.'

The long-coveted tripartite talks on Africa finally began on 16 April 1959, France being represented by Secretary General of the Quai d'Orsay Louis Joxe. Joxe raised three central points: (1) Algeria was one of the '*pièces maîtresses*' of the French presence in Africa, and no bilateral negotiations were possible there since it was under French sovereignty; (2) France recognized the independence of Tunisia and Morocco but must be responsible for their defense and maintain bases there, in particular Bizerta; and (3) the Sahara was a 'French creation'. There must be a united military approach by the West to Africa, a solid structure of defense stretching from the Western Mediterranean to the Congo in which the primary responsibility would be that of France. This would require the reorganization of NATO and the construction of new forms of military cooperation among the Big Three and France's NATO allies.[35]

The United States and Great Britain would not commit themselves to the support of a Mediterranean policy dictated by France so long as France continued a North African policy of which they disapproved. Moreover, the Eisenhower administration was unable to accommodate de Gaulle by helping in the construction of the French nuclear program, and the British, who enjoyed an exception from the MacMahon Act, were forced to keep from cooperation with Paris by its terms.

De Gaulle's spectacular offer of self-determination to Algeria in September 1959, marking the real turning point in his Algerian policy, may well have been a last-ditch effort to win American approval and blunt the hostility of the United Nations to his Algerian policy. Eisenhower was pre-informed of de Gaulle's decision during his visit to Paris in early September 1959, and American policy toward France was moderated as a result. Yet the essential reason for the failure of de Gaulle's grand design under Eisenhower was what the American President termed the 'running sore' of Algeria, which the insurrections by the *colons* and elements of the French army in January 1960 and April 1961 showed to be far from healing .

Eisenhower personally favored American help for France's nuclear program and he was not averse to some form of continued tripartite cooperation. Secretaries of State Dulles and then Herter, however, were hostile to both, and carried the day within the administration because of Algeria. By the time Algeria was settled the Kennedy administration was in power, and it had no intention of helping France to go nuclear; on the contrary it hoped to induce the British to give up their nuclear program and help create a 'multilateral force' for NATO.

On 4 November 1959, a report on US policy toward France emerged from the National Security Council which dramatized clearly French demands and the American dilemma in meeting them. It was inevitable, from the American point of view, that Algeria would emerge 'with a considerable degree of autonomy if not independence'. De Gaulle's famous statement of 16 September 1959, offering Algeria a choice between integration, association and 'secession', was worthy of support 'if implemented'. But it was not enough by itself: 'some means of assuring the rebels that they can safely enter the political arena is clearly a prerequisite to the cessation of hostilities in Algeria'.

France was vital to NATO; knowing this, de Gaulle demanded equality with the US and UK and their support in Algeria. But while force objectives for France in NATO were 14 divisions, France maintained 3.67 divisions in Germany and 16 in Algeria; until the Algerian crisis was resolved France could not contribute to NATO and SACEUR's ability to accomplish its defense mission was seriously reduced. As long as the Algerian War continued France weakened NATO and would remain a liability to American relations with the African and Asian states and in the Middle East.

A strong and resurgent France was in the American interest, and 'we should do all that we reasonably can to accommodate de Gaulle'. Nuclear cooperation should be 'studied', and tripartite talks continued. But clearly, so long as the Algerian War continued, the United States could go no further.[36]

Relations improved in 1960, and after the explosion of the French atomic bomb in February 1960 Paris made another bid for American nuclear cooperation. But again the Americans cited legislation inhibiting nuclear cooperation, ruling that the explosion of a test bomb by no means demonstrated 'sufficient progress' for France to qualify for nuclear aid. On 27 September 1960, Eisenhower told Herter that he still regarded the great problem of France to be Algeria. Herter said the Tunisians had informed him that they wanted to give Bizerta to NATO and associate Tunisia with the French Community, on condition that France granted the same status to Algeria as that enjoyed by Tunisia, but the French had rejected this.

An American intelligence report on 'Problems and Prospects of the Fifth Republic' again noted that there would be no peace in Algeria without negotiations with the FLN; unless de Gaulle accepted this his policy would be inadequate, and failure in Algeria 'casts a long shadow on efforts to strengthen France by reform at home or grandeur abroad'. France wanted nuclear weapons, independence, and leadership of both African and

European blocs of nations. But African nationalism, French instability, resistance within NATO, and Algeria blocked French progress. French differences with NATO were intensified by the use of NATO-earmarked troops in Algeria, which irritated the rest of the alliance and diminished French influence, leaving France isolated in Europe.[37]

French isolation may well have been, in part, in the American imagination. But neither the active hostility of John F. Kennedy nor the stoical ignoring of de Gaulle by Lyndon Johnson did anything to restore the aggravated state of French-American relations. France would remain very much the bad example in Europe, from Washington's perspective, until Nixon finally succeeded Johnson in 1968.

NOTES

1. Maurice Vaïsse spoke of a 'Copernican Revolution' in French diplomacy at the conference on NATO, Paris, 9 Feb. 1996. Text in *La France et l'OTAN, Actes du colloque tenu à l'Ecole militaire, 8, 9 et 10 février 1996*, sous la direction de Maurice Vaïsse, Pierre Mélandri and Frédéric Bozo (Brussels: Complexe 1996) pp.219–45.
2. Frédéric Bozo, *Deux Stratégies pour l'Europe: De Gaulle, Les Etats Unis, et l'Alliance Atlantique, 1958–1969* (Paris: Plon 1996) pp.16–31.
3. Maurice Vaïsse, *La Grandeur: Politique étrangère du général de Gaulle 1958–1959* (Paris: Fayard 1998) pp.35–61.
4. Charles de Gaulle, *Memoirs of Hope: Renewal and Endeavor* (NY: Simon and Schuster 1971) p.181.
5. Louis Terrenoire quoted de Gaulle to this effect in 1955; see his *De Gaulle et l'Algérie: Témoignage pour l'histoire* (Paris: Fayard 1964) pp.29–30.
6. This point is reinforced repeatedly in Alain Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle* (Paris: Fayard 1994).
7. Indeed, Maurice Couve de Murville's memoir, *Une Politique Etrangère, 1958–1959* (Paris: 1971) does not even deal with Algeria, implying that it can be safely ignored in any effort to explain the success or failure of French diplomatic policies or their formulation..
8. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle* (note 6) pp.56, 74, 89, and *passim*.
9. Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 1995).
10. Philip D. Dine, *Images of the Algerian War*: *French Fiction and Film, 1954–1992* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1994).
11. The relevant quotes are in Peyrefitte (note 6) pp.293–4 and 352.
12. See Terrenoire (note 5); Jean Lacouture, 'Révision dans le désert', and Paul Isoart, 'Le Général de Gaulle et le Tiers Monde', both in *De Gaulle et le Tiers Monde: Actes du Colloque organisé par la Faculté de Droit et des Sciences Economiques et l'Institut du Droit de la Paix et du Développement de l'Université de Nice et l'Institut Charles de Gaulle*, Nice, 25–26 Feb. 1983 (Paris: Plon 1983). Also Alain Ruscio, *La Décolonisation tragique: Une histoire de la décolonisation française, 1945–1962* (Paris: Messidor 1987) and Charles-Robert Ageron, *La Décolonisation française* (Paris : Armand Colin 1994).
13. See Edmond Jouhaud, *Serons nous enfin compris?* (Paris: Albin Michel 1984). Interestingly memoirs by Jacques Foccart, *Foccart Parle: Entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard* (Paris: Fayard 1995), Pierre Lefranc, and Raymond Triboulet, *Un Ministre du Général* (Paris: Plon 1985), all concur in their absolute belief in 1958 that de Gaulle fully intended to keep Algeria French. Foccart admits that if de Gaulle did confide to strangers his belief that Algeria would become independent, he never admitted it to partisans of *Algérie française* among his collaborators: p.154.

14. Persuasively argued by Michéle Cointet, *De Gaulle et l'Algérie Française, 1958–1962*, (Paris: Perrin 1995).
15. Ageron, *La Décolonisation française* (note 12) pp.158–9.
16. On this see Pierre Maillard, *De Gaulle et l'Europe: entre la nation et Maastricht* (Paris 1995) pp.191–201.
17. With the notable exception of Edward Kolodziej, *French International Policy Under de Gaulle and Pompidou* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP 1974) pp.75–6.
18. See Philip Gordon, *A Certain Idea of France: French Security Policy and the Gaullist Legacy* (Princeton UP 1993). In Oct. 1957 Secretary of State John Foster Dulles noted to Paul-Henri Spaak, Secretary General of NATO that France had envisaged contributing 14 divisions to NATO and the Germans 12; instead the breakdown in Germany in 1957 was five German divisions and four understrength French divisions: Memorandum of Conversation, Department of State, Secretary Dulles and Paul-Henri Spaak, 24 Oct. 1957, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS), 1955–1957, IV, West European Security and Integration, pp.176–7.
19. As reported by Ambassador Houghton to the Department of State, 10 Feb. 1958, *National Archives and Records Administration*, Record Group (RG) 59, State Department Decimal Files, 651.72/2-1053.
20. M. Pleven, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, à M. Alphand, Ambassadeur de France aux Etats-Unis, 24 May 1957, in *Documents Diplomatiques Français* (DDF), I, 1958, p.670.
21. The de Gaulle-Dulles meeting may be followed in DDF, II, 1958, Comptes rendus des entretiens franco-américains du 5 juillet 1958', pp.24–32; 'Memorandum of Conversation, Secretary of State Dulles and President de Gaulle', Paris, 5 July 1958, FRUS, 1958–1960, Vol.VII, Part 2, *Western Europe*, pp.53–61.
22. M. Couve de Murville, MAE, à M. Gorse, Ambassadeur de France à Tunis, 18 July 1958, DDF, II, 1958, p.107; Alphand to Couve de Murville, 5 Aug. 1958, pp.22–5; Couve de Murville to Alphand, 9 Sept. 1958, pp.322–4.
23. Alphand to Couve de Murville, 29 July 1958, DDF, II, !958, pp.181–4; Couve de Murville to Alphand, 26 Sept. 1958, pp.431–2.
24. Couve de Murville to all French diplomatic representatives abroad, 20 Sept. 1958, DDF, II, 1958, pp.396–7.
25. Qoted in Bozo, *Deux Stratégies* …, p.39. The text of de Gaulle's memorandum is in Président de Gaulle au Premier Ministre Macmillan (et le Président Eisenhower), 17 Sept. 1958, DDF, II, 1958, p.377.
26. President Eisenhower to Charles de Gaulle, 20 Oct. 1958, FRUS, 1958-1960, Vol VII, Part 2, p.108.
27. Paris to the Foreign Office, 13 March 1958, in archives of the Public Records Office (PRO), PREM File 11, 2561.
28. Premier Ministre Macmillan à Charles de Gaulle, 20 Oct. 1958, DDF, II, 1958, pp.558–9.
29. Couve de Murville to Alphand, 3 Nov. 1958, DDF, II, 1958, pp. 620-621.
30. Alphand to Couve de Murville, 4 Dec. 1958, DDF, II, 1958, pp. 802-808.
31. Note de la Délégation française aux Nations Unies, 14 Dec. 1958, DDF, 1958, II, 412 pp.858–66.
32. Couve de Murville à Alphand, 18 Jan.1959, DDF, 1959, I (1 Jan.–30 June 1959), 33, p.68.
33. Memorandum of Conversation, Alphand and Murphy, 27 Jan. 1958, FRUS, 1958–60, VII, Part 2, pp.167–8. Alphand à Couve de Murville, 3 March 1959, DDF, 1959, I, 125, pp.260–1.
34. 'Directives du Département pour les conversations de Washington', 2 April 1959,DDF, 1959, I, 198, pp.439–43.
35. *Comptes rendus des conversations sur l'Afrique*, 16–21 April 1959, DDF, 1959, I, 235, pp.534–5.
36. NSC Report, US Policy on France, 4 Nov. 1959, FRUS, 1958–1960, VII, Part 2, pp.298–310.
37. Memorandum of Conversation between Secretary of State Herter and President Eisenhower, 27 Sept. 1960, FRUS, 1958–1960, VII, Part 2, 200, p.421; Intelligence Report Prepared in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, 'Problems and Prospects of the Fifth Republic', 201, 6 Dec. 1960, pp.422–8.