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IGNORING 'NOSEY CHARLIE': THE KENNEDY ADMINISTRATION'S REPONSE TO THE GAULLIST CRITIQUE OF AMERICAN POLICY IN VIETNAM (1961-1963

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the Kennedy administration's rejection of French President Charles de Gaulle's critique of American intervention in Vietnam in the early 1960s. In discussions on Vietnam de Gaulle consistently touched on four major themes from his first meeting with Kennedy in May 1961 until Kennedy's assassination in November 1963: recognition of the principle of Vietnamese self-determination, the withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam, acceptance of controlled neutrality for Southeast Asia, and the necessity of dealing with mainland China directly. Kennedy rejected all elements of this platform. He was highly sceptical of neutrality, which he viewed as a stalking horse for communism, and felt that the United States needed to show resolve in Southeast Asia or risk jeopardizing its prestige with allies across the globe. Franco-American relations in the 1960s were characterized by mutual mistrust due to fundamental disagreements over most major bilateral issues ranging from joint decision-making within NATO, terms for negotiating with the Soviet Union, nuclear proliferation, United Nations peacekeeping missions in Africa, Britain's role in the European Economic Community, and Vietnam. Had each president not initially approached the other with high hopes, it would be easy to dismiss their disagreement over Vietnam as typical of what had long been a very troubled relationship.

Part of Kennedy's rejection of de Gaulle's proposals for Vietnam can be explained in American domestic politics during the 1950s and the social science academic backgrounds of the "Best and the Brightest" in his administration. Nevertheless, the way Kennedy's New Frontiersmen framed their rejection of de Gaulle's position on Vietnam reflected long-standing American cultural antipathy towards Europe,

France in particular. After taking the White House, Kennedy was initially drawn in by de Gaulle, but when policy disputes did occur, he and men of his administration reached to traditional American stereotypes of France to explain French positions rather than debate de Gaulle's ideas on their merits. They used feminizing language to varying degrees to dismiss French initiatives as the by-product of serious national character flaws, such as irrationality, jealousy, and selfishness. At no point did the Kennedy administration recognize the Gaullist position on Vietnam as a legitimate expression of relevant French experience, nor did they believe that France was capable of acting as an honest broker and negotiating a real truce between North and South. As a result, the Kennedy administration missed out on a perfect opportunity to disengage from a grim and distant conflict in late summer 1963, when de Gaulle had the resources and the will to broker peace. Much of the bloodshed of the next decade could have been avoided if not for the francophobic prejudices that led the Kennedy administration to mistakenly view a genuine French offer to help the United States avoid a long costly war as an attempt to undermine American aims for the region.

Keywords: John F. Kennedy, Charles de Gaulle, Vietnam War, Cold War, US Foreign Policy, Neutralization, 20th Century

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

- **ARVN:** Army of the Republic of Vietnam
- **CAP:** Common Agricultural Policy (an EEC farm subsidy scheme)
- ***Directoire*:** de Gaulle's proposal for a NATO upper tier composed of Britain, France, and the United States
- **EEC:** European Economic Community (forerunner to the European Union)
- **EDC:** European Defence Community (a proposed pan-European army, the idea originated and was later rejected in France)
- **Excomm:** Executive Committee of the National Security Council
- ***Force de frappe*:** "strike force", the independent French nuclear weapons program
- **MLF:** Multilateral Force (American-sponsored program for joint NATO control over American nuclear weapons)
- **NATO:** North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- **NLF:** National Liberation Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam
- **NSC:** National Security Council (US)
- **SEATO:** Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
- **UN:** United Nations

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

INTRODUCTION

After six long years of trying in vain to convince the Kennedy and Johnson administrations that military intervention in Vietnam would end in failure, French President Charles de Gaulle made an electrifying speech in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh on 1 September 1966 that marked his final attempt to sell his assessment of the Vietnam conflict to the world. Though frequently derided in American circles for the "vagueness" of his suggestions on Southeast Asia, de Gaulle touched on four major themes that he had been consistently hammering away at since his first face to face meeting with Kennedy in May 1961: recognition of the principle of Vietnamese self-determination, the withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam, acceptance of controlled neutrality for Southeast Asia, and the necessity of dealing with mainland China directly. De Gaulle's Phnom Penh speech very succinctly recapitulated not only the nearly unanimous French critique of America's involvement in Vietnam, but also a point of view that resonated with a growing number of Americans who felt the original decision to go to war was a mistake and that the conflict had become unwinnable. As correct as de Gaulle's position was proven to be in subsequent years, his counsel, however, was completely ignored by those in Washington's corridors of power with the ability to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the conflict before American troops had taken on an active combat role.

De Gaulle confounded and infuriated a succession of American presidents from Franklin Delano Roosevelt to Lyndon Johnson. He was neither capitalist nor socialist, neither imperialist nor champion of the Third World. He was a man driven by a strong

yearning to overthrow the Yalta system status quo, yet he pursued his aims via a decidedly non-revolutionary form of traditional European diplomacy. His nationalism seemed authoritarian and hegemonic at times while democratic and liberating at others, making him one of the most difficult world leaders to read both at home and abroad. In official Washington of the Kennedy era, long-standing American anti-Gaullism translated into a strong tendency to equate French opposition to American designs as the insignificant bluster of a second rate ally.

To all but a small number of American sympathizers, de Gaulle, despite his studied and cerebral approach to international relations, was seen as the leader of a country that did not understand its subordinate role in the new superpower order. American pressure and French resistance over a raft of postwar concerns, Vietnam amongst them, had created a legacy of bitterness on both sides to such an extent that it was hardly surprising that de Gaulle was ignored and marginalized in Washington. Nevertheless, the great tragedy is that France's experiences through reconstruction and decolonization from 1945 to 1962 had left it best positioned to offer a penetrating analysis of the West's relationship with newly-independent Third World nations, especially Vietnam, while at the same time rendering it least likely to be able to sway decision makers across the Atlantic.

This dissertation will examine the Kennedy administration's reaction—bitter silence and inaction—to the Gaullist critique of America's growing military and political engagement with South Vietnam from 1961 to Kennedy's assassination in November 1963. It aims to uncover the francophobic prejudices and national stereotypes that helped Kennedy justify his decision to refuse to consider de Gaulle's correct assessment

of America's disastrous anti-Communist intervention in Vietnam. The motives behind de Gaulle's Vietnam critique[1]—chiefly, to keep American attention focused on Europe, to bring the Cold War to an early end, and to prevent American encroachment in a former colony where France still retained considerable influence—will be outlined later but are not the focal point of this dissertation. Rather, this study will focus specifically on the Kennedy administration's reaction to de Gaulle's Vietnam program.

Had each president not initially approached the other with high hopes as their official relationship began, there would be little story to tell. In actuality, Kennedy, like many Americans, viewed his French counterpart as one of the great heroes of World War II, while de Gaulle placed great stock in the abilities of the charismatic young American leader to resolve many of the outstanding Franco-American roadblocks left over from the Eisenhower presidency. Both men sought a cooperative working relationship, but were completely unable to establish one. Consequently, the tale of Franco-American divergence over Vietnam in the Kennedy years took place within the broader context of a failed bilateral relationship.

Soon after extricating France from its own long and bloody counterinsurgency campaign in Algeria, de Gaulle became the most vocal opponent of escalation of the war

[1] Yuko Torikata surveys the literature from French and American scholars in "Reexamining de Gaulle's Peace Initiative on the Vietnam War," *Diplomatic History* 31, no. 5 (2007): 909-38. She argues that American scholars have tended "to see in de Gaulle's criticism another attempt to defy American hegemony in the Western Alliance," while their French counterparts "maintain that de Gaulle's initiatives can be best explained by France's colonial experience in Indochina and learned from the Algerian War." Regarding the period examined in this dissertation, she argues "de Gaulle hoped France's mediation would contribute to a peace settlement; he took every opportunity to intervene in person, putting forward his neutralization plan. Although it is certain that he intended to enhance French prestige by interceding between the two blocs, his main objective was to avoid any serious trouble in the Atlantic Alliance. In particular, he feared that if the United States was dragged into a morass of war in Vietnam, American military forces would probably be reduced in Western Europe; this would definitely threaten France's own security."

in Vietnam within the western camp. As Marianna P. Sullivan argues in *France's Vietnam Policy: a Study in French-American Relations*, the period from the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 was characterized by a marked decline in superpower confrontation, creating an opportunity for a minor ally like France to "deemphasize solidarity with its major ally and... concentrate less on Europe, the focus of Soviet-American conflict[2]." It was in this context that a very trenchant critique of American politico-military intervention in Vietnam emerged from Paris.

In de Gaulle's view, there was little any foreign power could do to suppress the committed Vietnamese nationalists who had so recently humiliated the best of the French army at Dien Bien Phu, and any attempt to do so would prove to be a costly distraction from more pressing western security concerns in Europe. Left to their own devices, he predicted that the Vietnamese would choose an independent, non-threatening course in international affairs somewhat akin to Tito's Yugoslavia. By the time President Richard Nixon arrived in the White House in 1969, de Gaulle's dire forecast that American troops would get bogged down in Vietnam appeared to have been proven sadly accurate to many Americans.

While de Gaulle's highly complex political philosophy and prickly relations with *"les Anglo-Saxons"* have been subject to numerous high-quality studies by renowned scholars in both French and English, the Kennedy administration's reaction to his

[2] Marianna P. Sullivan, *France's Vietnam Policy: a Study in French-American Relations* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), 20.

Vietnam critique has been subjected to little attention[3] despite a deluge of new works that have done much to provide a badly needed international context to the history of the war. After being subjected to close study during the 1970s and early 1980s in the aftermath of American withdrawal, the origins of the Vietnam War came under intense scrutiny once again following the 1995 publication of former Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara's Vietnam memoir, *In Retrospect: the Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*[4]. A raft of major titles by leading historians appeared in the late 1990s, most notably David Kaiser's *American Tragedy: Kennedy, Johnson, and the origins of the Vietnam War*[5], Frederik Logevall's *Choosing War: the lost chance for peace and the escalation of war in Vietnam*[6], Jeffrey Record's *The Wrong War: Why We Lost in Vietnam*[7], and Orrin Schwab's *Defending the Free World: John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and the Vietnam War, 1961-65*[8], amongst others[9].

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[3] There is little to no mention of Vietnam before late summer 1963 in the context of Kennedy-de Gaulle relations in all of the major overviews of Franco-American relations during the Cold War, such as: Charles G. Cogan, *Oldest Allies, Guarded Friends: the United States and France since 1940* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994), and *Forced to choose: France, the Atlantic Alliance, and NATO—then and now* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997); Frank Costigliola, *France and the United States: the cold alliance since World War II* (Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1992); Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *France and the United States from the Beginnings to the Present*, trans. Derek (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Michael M. Harrison, *The Reluctant Ally: France and Atlantic security* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); and Marvin R. Zahniser, *Uncertain Friendship: American-French diplomatic relations through the Cold War* (New York: Wiley, 1975).

[4] Robert S. McNamara and Brian VanDeMark, *In Retrospect: the tragedy and lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Times Books, 1995). This was followed by another collaborative effort, Robert S. McNamara, James G. Blight, and Robert K. Brigham, *Argument Without End: in search of answers to the Vietnam tragedy* (New York : Public Affairs, 1999).

[5] David Kaiser, *American Tragedy: Kennedy, Johnson, and the origins of the Vietnam War* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000).

[6] Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: the lost chance for peace and the escalation of war in Vietnam (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press*, 1999).

[7] Jeffrey Record, *The Wrong War: why we lost in Vietnam* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1998).

[8] Orrin Schwab *Defending the Free World: John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, and the Vietnam War, 1961-1965* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998).

[9] The most notable works to address Kennedy's role from this post-1995 tidal wave of Vietnam War scholarship include Robert Buzzanco, *Masters of War: Military Dissent and Politics in the Vietnam*

The leading historians in this new wave of scholarship were nearly unanimous in their assessment that Kennedy and then Johnson had committed a grave error in leading their country down the path to war in Vietnam, that the conflict could and should have been avoided, that presidential decision-making on Vietnam was faulty to the extreme, and that both presidents pursued the hopeless task of forcing South Vietnamese leaders to conform to an American mode of thought because of their complete failure to understand the intricacies of Vietnamese culture.

While these works were the product of prodigious, and frequently international, multi-lingual archival research, they all show a tendency to overlook the Kennedy administration's rejection of the Gaullist critique of its Vietnam policy in favour of focussing on general factors behind the Kennedy administration's interest in Vietnam,

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Era (New York: Cambridge University Press 1996), and, with Marilyn Young, eds., *A Companion to the Vietnam War*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2002); Lawrence Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Lloyd C. Gardner and Ted Gittinger, eds., *Vietnam: the early decisions* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1997); Lloyd C. Gardner, *Pay Any Price: Lyndon Johnson and the wars for Vietnam* (Chicago, IL: I.R. Dee, 1995); George C. Herring, *LBJ and Vietnam: a different kind of war* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994); Michael H. Hunt, *Lyndon Johnson's War: America's cold war crusade in Vietnam, 1945-1968* (New York : Hill and Wang, 1996); Peter Lowe, ed., *The Vietnam War* (London: Macmillan, 1998); Robert J. McMahon, ed., *Major problems in the history of the Vietnam War : documents and essays*, 3rd ed. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2003) and *The Limits of Empire: The United States and Southeast Asia since World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the lies that led to Vietnam* (New York : Harper Collins, 1997); Edwin E. Moïse, *Tonkin Gulf and the escalation of the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken: the Vietnam war, 1954-1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Bernard C. Nalty, ed., *The Vietnam War: the history of America's conflict in Southeast Asia* (London: Salamander Books, 1998); Gareth Porter, *Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005); Robert D. Schulzinger, *A Time for War: the United States and Vietnam, 1941-1975* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Blema S. Steinberg, *Shame and Humiliation: Presidential Decision Making on Vietnam* (Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996); Frank E. Vandiver, *Shadows of Vietnam: Lyndon Johnson's wars* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1997); and, Francis X. Winters *The Year of the Hare: America in Vietnam, January 25, 1963-February 15, 1964* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1997).

bureaucratic politics, mistaken assumptions, the transition to Johnson, and ultimately fateful decision to go to war after the Tonkin Gulf Incident.

One of the main trends at present in the historiography is a greater emphasis on the role of Vietnamese actors. In his presidential address at the Society for the History of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) annual meeting in San Francisco at the end of 1989, noted historian of the Vietnam War George C. Herring identified the relative absence of individual Vietnamese as one of the main weaknesses of existing scholarship[10]. As Vietnamese archives in Hanoi opened to foreign researchers in the mid-1990s, younger historians were especially eager to respond to his criticism by embracing this previously underexplored facet of the conflict[11]. The move to be more inclusive of Vietnamese actors was not, however, coupled with a parallel impetus to re-evaluate de Gaulle's role in American Vietnam policy during the Kennedy years. This

[10] The text of his address can be found here: George C. Herring, "'Peoples Quite Apart': Americans, South Vietnamese, and the War in Vietnam," *Diplomatic History* 14, no. 1 (1990): 1-23.
[11] See Pierre Asselin, "Choosing Peace: Hanoi and the Geneva Agreement on Vietnam, 1954-1955," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 9, no. 2, (2007): 95-126; Philip E. Catton, Diem's Final Failure: prelude to America's War in Vietnam (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002); Jessica M. Chapman, "Staging Democracy: South Vietnam's 1955 Referendum to Depose Bao Dai," *Diplomatic History* 30, no. 4, (2006): 671-703; James T. Fisher, "The Second Catholic President: Ngo Dinh Diem, John F. Kennedy, and the Vietnam Lobby, 1954-1963," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 15, no. 3 (1997): 119-37; three works from Seth Jacobs, "'Our System Demands the Supreme Being": The U.S. Religious Revival and the "Diem Experiment,' 1954–55," *Diplomatic History* 25, no. 4, (2001): 589-624; *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam: Ngo Dinh Diem, religion, race, and U.S. intervention in Southeast Asia, 1950-1957* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); and *Cold War Mandarin: Ngo Dinh Diem and the origins of America's war in Vietnam, 1950-1963* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006); Howard Jones, *Death of a Generation: how the assassinations of Diem and JFK prolonged the Vietnam War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Matthew Masur, "Exhibiting Signs of Resistance: South Vietnam's Struggle for Legitimacy, 1954–1960," *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 2, (2009): 293-313.

still remains one of the most conspicuous absences in the historiography of the war's origins[12].

France was a signatory to the Geneva Accords with residual responsibilities to its former colony, while de Gaulle was a major international player with a vested interest in a diplomatic solution in Vietnam and a plan to achieve it, making his relative absence from most of the historiography of the early origins of the Vietnam War somewhat perplexing. Logevall's *Choosing War*, one of the most influential recent works on the origins of the Vietnam War, does open with de Gaulle's first public critique of Kennedy's Vietnam policy in August 1963 and argues that Kennedy should have followed de Gaulle's advice, which was the least bad alternative he had at the time. Still, Logevall leaves the two-year build-up to de Gaulle's August 1963 statement untouched before launching into the Johnson-era developments.

An earlier Logevall article[13] written while he was a Ph.D candidate at Yale follows a similar timeline. Charles G. Cogan, a leading Harvard-based American historian of 20th Century Franco-American relations has addressed the topic[14], but he paints Vietnam in the Kennedy-de Gaulle relationship in broad strokes before devoting the bulk of his efforts to the Johnson-de Gaulle period. The earliest and most detailed work on the subject, Marianna P. Sullivan's 1978 work *France's Vietnam Policy: a Study*

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[12] Kathryn C. Statler makes note of the gap in studies of Franco-American disagreement over Vietnam from the Geneva Conference to the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in her excellent study, *Replacing France: The Origins of American Intervention in Vietnam* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 7. Nevertheless, *Replacing France* focuses on American intervention in Vietnam from 1950-1961, before the period in question of this dissertation.

[13] Frederik Logevall, "De Gaulle, Neutralization and American Involvement in Vietnam, 1963-64," *The Pacific Historical Review* 61, no. 1 (1992): 69-102.

[14] Charles G. Cogan, "'How Fuzzy Can One Be?': The American Reaction to De Gaulle's Proposal for the Neutralization of (South) Vietnam)," in *The Search for Peace in Vietnam*, Lloyd C. Gardner and Ted Gittinger, eds., (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2004).

in French-American Relations, similarly chooses to focus on the Johnson-de Gaulle dynamic without giving adequate coverage to the Kennedy-era prelude to it.

The best of the first generation of French scholarship on Vietnam came from former officials and journalists who had an intimate, first hand acquaintance with the conflict and focused on the collapse of the colonial regime. Jean Sainteny, a resistance hero who served as the Fourth Republic's Commissaire for Tonkin and North Annam from October 1945 to December 1947, detailed how his early attempts to negotiate a comprehensive settlement with Ho Chi Minh were compromised by a series of unstable governments in Paris in *Histoire d'une paix manquée, Indochine 1945-1947* and *Face à Hô Chi Minh*[15]. Paul Mus, author of*Viet-Nam, Sociologie d'une Guerre*[16], added his voice as another highly competent colonial official in de Gaulle's first postwar government who was equally convinced that Vietnamese nationalism could not be defeated by force. Étenne Manac'h's three-volume *Mémoires d'extrême Asie*[17] devotes a considerable amount of space to Vietnamese developments from 1960 to 1969, when he served as the Foreign Ministry's Directeur du Département de L'Asie-Océanie before taking over as France's ambassador to mainland China.

Journalists would make a significant contribution as well. Phillipe Devillers, the Indochina correspondent for the notable daily newspaper *Le Monde*, wrote the classic *Histoire Du Viet-Nam De 1940 a 1952*[18]. Bernard Fall, an Austrian Jew and resistance

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[15] Jean Sainteny, *Histoire d'une paix manquée, Indochine, 1945-1947* (Paris: A. Fayard, 1967), and *Face à Ho chi Minh* (Paris: Seghers, 1970).
[16] Paul Mus, *Viêt-Nam, sociologie d'une guerre* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1952).
[17] Etienne Manac'h, *Mémoires d'Extrême Asie* 3 vols., (Paris: Fayard, 1977-1982).
[18] Phillipe Devillers, *Histoire du Viêt-Nam de 1940 à 1952* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil 1952); with Jean LaCouture, *End of a war; Indochina, 1954*, trans. Alexander Lieven and Adam Roberts (New York:

fighter who later joined the French army, became a history professor at Howard University and war correspondent during the French and American counterinsurgency campaigns. A prolific writer best known for *Street Without Joy: Indochina at War, 1946-54*[19], Fall was tragically killed by a landmine in Vietnam in 1967 at age 40. Fall's work was characterized by lucid writing, penetrating analysis and a consistently pessimistic outlook for American forces that was shaped by his front row seat to the collapse of French rule. Georges Chaffard of the newsmagazine *L'Express* penned an early historical account of transition from French rule to American hegemony, *Les Deux Guerres du Vietnam: de Valluy à Westmoreland*[20], but like *Viet-Nam. De la Guerre Française à la Guerre Américaine* from Devillers and Lacouture, it was published with the outcome of the war still very much in doubt. The weightier second generation works continued to place more emphasis on the colonial period than the American-led war of the 1960s[21], which did not provoke the same emotional response as it had for American academics that lived through that turbulent decade.

In typical *longue durée* fashion, the most notable recent French works have tended to take a broader focus on Vietnam in relations between France and the United States from the founding of the 5th Republic in 1958 to the North's triumph in 1975.

Praeger, 1969), and *Viet Nam, de la guerre française à la guerre américaine* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969).

[19] Bernard Fall, *Street Without Joy; Indochina at war, 1946-54* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole Co., 1961).

[20] Georges Chaffard, *Les deux guerres du Vietnam; de Valluy à Westmoreland* (Paris: La Table ronde, 1969).

[21] Chiefly, Jacques Dalloz, *La Guerre D'Indochine: 1945-1954* (Paris: Seuil, 1987), Pierre Brocheux, *The Mekong Delta: Ecology, Economy, and Revolution, 1860-1960,* (Madison, WI: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1995), and Brocheux and Daniel Hémery, *Indochine: La colonisation ambiguë, 1858-1954* (Découverte: 2001). Also of importance are *La Bureaucratie au Viêt Nam* (Paris: L'Harmattan: 1983) and *Cent fleurs éclosent dans la nuit du Viêt Nam* (Paris: Jacques Bertoin, 1991) from the controversial Georges Boudarel, a Marxist who lived in Vietnam until 1964 and was a respected lecturer of Indochinese history at a branch of the University of Paris until it was revealed in 1991 that he had brutalized French prisoners of war as deputy chief of notorious Camp 113 in the 1950s.

Laurent Cesari's *L'Indochine en Guerre, 1945-1993*[22], Christopher Goscha and Maurice Vaïsse's *La guerre du Vietnam et l'Europe 1963–1973* (Brussels: Bruylant,2003)[23], and Pierre Brocheux and Charles Robert Ageron's *Du conflit d'Indochine aux Conflits Indochinois*[24] are amongst the best works from this wave of scholarship. Two promising young French scholars, Thierry Dahan and Pierre Journoud, have made considerable contributions to the historiography of Vietnam in Franco-American relations during the Fifth Republic in recent years[25]. Still, French scholarship, just as its American counterpart, has yet to produce a specific study of how American perceptions of France shaped the Kennedy administration's rejection of de Gaulle's critique of American policy in Vietnam.

This dissertation operates from an approach that combines elements of the national security, cultural and ideological models of foreign relations study to both interpret the views of Kennedy and his advisors towards France and analyze how they in turn shaped the decision to ignore de Gaulle on Vietnam. In seeking to explain how

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[22] Laurent Cesari, *L'Indochine en Guerre, 1945-1993*, (Paris: Belin, 1995).
[23] Christopher Goscha and Maurice Vaïsse, eds. *La guerre du Vietnam et l'Europe 1963–1973* (Brussels: Bruylant, 2003).
[24] Pierre Brocheux and Charles Robert Ageron, *Du conflit d'Indochine aux conflits indochinois* (Brussels : Complexe, 2000).
[25] Dahan argues in his PhD thesis, "La Ve République et le Vietnam, 1959-1976" (PhD diss., L'Universite de Nice, 1998) that Fourth Republic governments grew disinterested with Vietnam after the Geneva Accords were signed, leaving the Americans as the primary foreign sponsor of newly independent South Vietnam. He examines how de Gaulle restored French interest in the country after returning to power as part of his policy of restoring grandeur, how the efforts of a team of French officials in the 1960s towards a peace deal resulted in Paris being chosen as the site of the negotiated settlement that ended American participation in the war in 1973, and the futile efforts of President Giscard d'Estaing to ensure that Vietnamese signatories respect the terms of the Paris Accords from 1973 to the North's ultimate victory in 1975. Journoud's 2007 PhD thesis "Les relations franco-américaines à l'épreuve du Vietnam entre 1954 et 1975. De la défiance dans la guerre à la coopération pour la paix" (PhD diss., Université de Paris I – Sorbonne, 2007) argues that the United States actually defended French economic and cultural interests in South Vietnam after the Geneva Accords despite sharply divergent views of the region's future. He shows that Franco-American discord over Vietnam has perhaps been overstated given that that rapprochement came about easily in the late 1960s once Washington committed to the peace deal that the French government was willing to broker.

policymakers viewed threats to the national interest and set policy to contain them, a national security historian must clarify the difference between perception and reality in the minds of those he is subjecting to study.

As Melvyn Leffler notes, the national security approach has undergone considerable evolution in recent years, moving away from the standard realist approach "that diplomatic behaviour responds (or should respond) to the distribution of power in the international system[26]." Historians of national security are now beginning to incorporate divergent factors such as ideas and ideology, the domestic economy, social and cultural impetus, and the interests of varying internal actors "to bridge the gaps between these divergent interpretative approaches, or, more precisely, to see that these variables must be studied in relation to one another and nuanced judgements made about how they bear on one another[27]." This work accords with the views of a new wave of cultural historians who argue that, within the context of the "cult of national security[28]" that developed during the Cold War militarization of American society, national security policy was shaped by cultural perceptions and ideology.

The role of ideology in policy-making in an American context has been subjected to increased study in recent years. Michael Hunt, author of the ground-breaking 1987

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[26] Melvyn Leffler, "National Security," in Michael J. Hogan and Thomas Paterson, eds., *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 124.

[27] Ibid.

[28] One major unanticipated consequence of the Cold War was a dramatic expansion of presidential power over national security policy as worried Americans looked to the White House to protect them from the Soviet Union and its allies. America's national interests were increasingly defined by the president himself as the legislative branch grew passive on foreign policy matters. At the same time, presidential elections were characterized by apocalyptic accusations that a contender's rival failed to understand the "dangerous world" in which Washington operated and his election would run the risk of igniting another world war.

study, *Ideology and US Foreign Policy*, defines ideology as "an interrelated set of convictions or assumptions that reduces the complexities of a particular slice of reality to easily comprehensible terms and suggests appropriate ways of dealing with that reality[29]." Articulated or not, foreign policy ideology defines a decision maker's view of international relations and guides his or her decision making process. Hunt continues, "[a]ttention to ideology helps historians to give subjectivity its due and thus to underline the constructed and contingent nature of individual and group outlooks."[30] Ideology is rooted in culture, responds to the environment that creates it, and often takes shape at an early age, dictating a broader examination of the given society that produces subjects of study.

Although the French repeatedly emerge as the cultural "other" against which Kennedy administration officials contrasted their goals and prospects for success in Vietnam, this is a work of American history that aims to illuminate a previously unexplored facet of the American experience in Vietnam. This dissertation sets out to examine the origins of American participation in the Vietnam War and a tragic missed opportunity for peace in the summer of 1963, but it also broadly explores the cultural factors that shaped American views of France during the Cold War and provides a case study on the influence of "francophobia" on the Kennedy White House's decision-making. The administration's francophobia emerges as a curious blend of historically-rooted gendered stereotypes, contrasts between the contemporary geopolitical weakness of postwar France and American strength, contempt for France's record as a colonial power, and a "GI Generation's" over-confidence in American military power while the

[29] Michael H. Hunt, "Ideology," in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 222.
[30] Ibid., 239.

French army was suffering repeated defeats across the globe. This subject matter is mostly uncharted territory and it is here that there is room for contribution to the existing literature on the origins of the Vietnam War.

This dissertation will argue that the Kennedy administration was ideologically predisposed against a legitimate dialogue of equals with France and dismissed most Gaullist positions, including that on Vietnam, out of hand without consideration. Francophobia had unwittingly been absorbed into the administration's foreign policy ideology and coloured all dealings between Kennedy and de Gaulle. The main actors in the Kennedy administration were born between 1908 and 1925 and served as witnesses from afar to one of the most turbulent periods in French and European history. As children and young adults they formed a thoroughly negative portrait of France from the 1920s to 1950s that later shaped their official dealings with de Gaulle. These men were born into an era in which most American elites were inculcated with a belief in Anglo-Saxon supremacy. They grew up during the 1920s and 1930s as France was vilified in the United States for its post-Versailles intransigence on a raft of postwar issues from war debt repayment to its "hard" line on Germany. As young men, they witnessed the French collapse in June 1940 as confirmation of most Americans' preconceived notions of French "decadence."

As junior Democrats in the 1940s they idolized President Franklin Roosevelt, whose unconcealed anti-French wartime prejudices had done unfathomable damage to bilateral relations, and Winston Churchill, Britain's great anti-appeaser. In government service in the late 1940s and early 1950s, they witnessed intransigence from weak and divided Fourth Republic governments that were alternatively pacifistic or aggressive,

seemingly whichever caused Washington the greatest difficulty at any given moment. Pierre Mendès-France rejected the American-sponsored European Defence Community (EDC) scheme to integrate West German armed forces into a pan-European framework and then rebuffed the Eisenhower administration's entreaties to continue fighting in Vietnam after Dien Bien Phu. Guy Mollet's government infuriated Eisenhower and did tremendous damage to Western credibility in the emerging Third World by conspiring with Israel and Britain in a blatant neo-colonial attempt to wrest control of the Suez canal from Gamal Abdul Nasser's nationalist regime in Egypt during the autumn of 1956. Meanwhile, every government from the outbreak of hostilities in 1954 to de Gaulle's return to power ignored Washington's lobbying efforts for a negotiated peace in Algeria.

By the time they reached the White House, Kennedy's men had formed an overwhelmingly negative picture of France which created a reflexive ideological blockade to any major policy proposal that came from de Gaulle. Robert Dean's *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy*[31] provides a fascinating explanatory framework in arguing that the strikingly homogenous group of American decision making elites of the era was socially conditioned by all-male boarding schools to expect deference from those who were less powerful and to view independence or non-conformity as a threat. To most Americans, de Gaulle appeared to be the embodiment of both. The inability or unwillingness of de Gaulle's France to accept a compliant, subordinate role in the western alliance—as all the other former great powers of Europe had—confounded and angered many Kennedy and Johnson-era elites. Not knowing how to force conformity out of de Gaulle, ignoring the French president

[31] Robert D. Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: gender and the making of Cold War foreign policy* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).

appeared to be the best means of reining in his mischief-making capacity. Dean's conception of the administration's "ideology of masculinity" is highly relevant as it relates to francophobia and corresponding feminized stereotypes of France and French policymakers, warranting discussion in greater detail later.

This dissertation breaks with other studies of the origins of the Vietnam War by focussing on late summer 1963 as a crucial missed opportunity for American disengagement from a hopeless conflict rather than the events of the "Long 1964" that have preoccupied many scholars. The Johnson administration had a narrower set of alternatives during its critical junctures in Vietnam, such as when it decided to formally enter the war after the Tonkin Gulf Incident in August 1964 and then to escalate in February 1965. In July and August of 1963, however, the Kennedy administration had its choice of a full range of options from direct American military intervention, increased aid, forced regime change in South Vietnam, to limited or total withdrawal of American personnel and resources. On the latter possibility, at this point de Gaulle was both willing and able to help facilitate a face-saving American exit, while American public opinion was growing increasingly sour towards the conflict and could likely have been reconciled to cutting loose an unresponsive and heavy-handed client. Once the Kennedy administration made the ill-fated decision to authorize a coup against the Diem regime that had ruled the country since independence, Saigon essentially became a protectorate of Washington and the possibility of a relatively clean American disengagement all but evaporated.

Had the Kennedy administration been operating from a strictly realist approach to international relations, it certainly would have concurred with de Gaulle—and various

disunited individual and institutional voices within the bureaucracy—that American interests in Southeast Asia were not worth fighting for and that a diplomatic solution for an independent, neutralized and united Vietnam would have adequately achieved American aims at a marginal cost. This dissertation will argue that the Kennedy administration's gendered perceptions of France as an effete, decaying old world power would feed its mistaken view that it could succeed in Vietnam where Paris had failed. Kennedy's men, over-confident in the supposed effects of the vigour and drive that they brought to the conflict, summarily rejected de Gaulle's realist position in part because of the man it emerged from and the national banner he carried.

A series of questions arise from this conclusion: could *any* foreign leader have deterred the Kennedy team[32]? Why was the French experience in Vietnam so summarily dismissed? Why were other, more appropriate, choices not made? Would de Gaulle's words of caution have carried more weight in Washington had the messenger been one

[32] Perhaps even to a greater extent than de Gaulle, Canadian Prime Minister John Diefenbaker (1895-1979), a nationalistic prairie populist who headed three governments from 1957 to 1963, had one the worst relationships with Kennedy of all NATO country leaders. Diefenbaker unsuccessfully tried to lessen Canadian economic dependence on the United States by reorienting Canadian trade towards Britain and the Commonwealth, opposed the deployment of American nuclear warheads on Canadian soil, and refused an American request to put Canadian forces on high alert during the Cuban Missile Crisis to protest the Kennedy administration's unwillingness to consult with Ottawa on ongoing developments. The Diefenbaker period in Canadian-American relations was, however, mostly an aberration; unlike France, Canada was generally a pliant, loyal American ally through the Cold War despite periodic personal tensions between individual presidents and prime ministers. While Kennedy resented Diefenbaker's "irrationality", he had not made his name in the Senate criticizing Canadian foreign policy and did not fall back on cultural or gender stereotypes as he would to explain disputes with French officials. It should be noted that Diefenbaker's hostile moves towards the Kennedy administration were opposed by some members of his own government and ultimately led the New Democratic Party and Social Credit Party to withdraw their support for his last minority government in February 1963. See: Knowlton Nash, *Kennedy and Diefenbaker: fear and loathing across the undefended border* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990). De Gaulle, by contrast, was firmly entrenched in power and enjoyed support for his foreign policy across the political spectrum far beyond his electoral base.

who more closely conformed to elite American ideals of masculinity and lacked the long, difficult relationship with America that he brought to the negotiation table?

There is some temptation to search for more traditional answers in the peer-influence "groupthink" theory of Irving L. Janis[33], who provides case studies of major American foreign policy decisions in the mid-20th Century in two significant works on the subject. Janis defines groupthink as "a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action[34]." To prevent groupthink, leaders should consider various alternatives, allow subordinates to voice dissenting views, have separate groups work independently on the same problem, and consult with trusted observers outside the group.

The greatest obstacle to accusing the Kennedy administration of groupthink on Vietnam comes out of a contradiction that Janis himself identifies: the Bay of Pigs fiasco in spring of 1961 provides a textbook example of the disastrous consequences of groupthink, while Kennedy's handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis the following autumn demonstrated exemplary non-groupthink decision-making. Janis argues that the Bay of Pigs prompted Kennedy to take active measures to combat groupthink that bore fruit during the Cuban Missile Crisis[35]. Surveying recent literature on the early Vietnam decisions of President Johnson—who left Kennedy's foreign policy team intact—John

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[33] Irving L. Janis' *Groupthink: Psychological Studies of Policy Decisions and Fiascoes* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1982) is an elaborated version of his earlier work, *Victims of Groupthink: a psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascoes* (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin, 1972).
[34] Janis, *Victims of Groupthink*, 3.
[35] Ibid., 148-9.

Garofano finds that "arguments about groupthink or bureaucratic or organizational roadblocks do not stand up to the archival evidence[36]."

Finding more satisfying answers to the questions posed above and explaining why de Gaulle was never able to become a trusted outside opinion requires a deeper study of the breakdown in Franco-American relations in the early 1960s and the inability of de Gaulle and Kennedy to connect on a personal level. There was a long germination period for Kennedy's suspicions of France, while fellow New Frontiersmen independently brought their own similar reservations to the White House. In due course, it will emerge that the Kennedy administration's gendered, francophobic, stereotype-laden perceptions of France and de Gaulle were a direct cause of its failure to consider a course of action in Vietnam that was far better tailored to the realities of the American national interest.

In seeking to explain the administration's rejection of de Gaulle's Vietnam position, the childhood images of France internalized by Kennedy and the prevalent views of France in American culture must be explored. The long-term approach in this work historicizes the men of the Kennedy administration and helps contextualize their rigid approach to de Gaulle in the early 1960s. Elite American perceptions of France during the turbulent first four decades of the 20th Century help demonstrate the sort of prejudices of France the Kennedy men likely unwittingly absorbed during their early years. As this dissertation shifts to the Kennedy presidency, relevant official documents from the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston, the National Archives in

[36] John Garofano, "Tragedy or Choice in Vietnam? Learning to Think Outside the Archival Box," *International Security* 26, no. 4: 157.

College Park, Maryland, and *Foreign Relations of the United States* help illustrate how francophobic prejudices translated into policy.

At present there is no published, publically available document in which any member of the administration openly disclosed that francophobia and anti-Gaullism motivated his Vietnam decisions. One of the most frustrating aspects for historians researching Kennedy is that by the time he reached middle age his handwriting had become mostly indecipherable. There are bits and fragments that hint at President Kennedy's real views of France and de Gaulle in his notes and doodles, but none are legible enough to confidently present as confirmation of his prejudices.

Earlier Kennedy diaries from his pre-presidential years, however, do definitively illustrate that he subscribed to popular negative American stereotypes of France. These views are subtly reflected in several speeches from Congress and the Senate in the 1950s. After assuming the White House, Kennedy understandably became more guarded about speaking or writing about his real impressions of de Gaulle's France but most official American correspondence on Vietnam contained a very strong thread of irritation at French assessments of the situation in Southeast Asia, a nearly automatic willingness to place sinister motives on French actions, and a belief that de Gaulle's mode of thought was incomprehensible to Americans. As will be explained in chapters 2, 3 and 4, Kennedy was highly intolerant of dissent within his administration and the anti-France tone of his subordinates was a reflection of suspicions the president himself had expressed earlier in his political career.

Three years of embassy telegrams, White House memos, and minutes of related meetings, have been carefully examined for language that sheds light on the administration's core assumptions about and prejudices of France. This approach reveals "emotives", described by Frank Costigliola as "performative statements that translate into language—and in the process clarify, reinforce, and communicate—emotions that often were previously inchoate[37]." Costigliola continues, "discerning the role of emotions in shaping the judgement of policy makers at particular instances can yield a more nearly complete understanding of foreign relations history[38]." These emotives reveal themselves on numerous occasions as Kennedy and his subordinates used feminizing language or resorted to irrelevant cultural stereotypes that reflected a deep-seeded antipathy towards France. Through much internal administration correspondence on de Gaulle and France there is a recurring, unspoken assumption—subtly reflected in word choices and turns or phrase—that France was flawed, inferior, and hardly worth taking seriously. As such, a language-based approach is a particularly useful tool in examining the Kennedy administration's rejection of de Gaulle's Vietnam critique.

The Kennedy administration approached Vietnam with an ideology that fused anti-Communism and neo-Wilsonian internationalism, while de Gaulle did so as part of a larger project to restore France to grandeur. For the United States, this translated into a readiness to use force far from American shores when Washington's interests were perceived to be at risk, as they were to be in Vietnam, and a crusade to remake contested Cold War regions in America's image. For France, this implied an attempt to reassert a

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[37] Frank Costigliola and Thomas Paterson, "Defining and doing the history of American foreign relations: a primer," in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations,* 285.
[38] Ibid., 284.

sphere of influence in its former colonies, a role for Paris as the leader of continental Europe, and interlocutor status between the superpowers.

The existence of these two diametrically opposed world views translated into very little solicited, meaningful dialogue on Vietnam between Paris and Washington during the period in question and well beyond the Kennedy era. Neither side had made any significant departure from positions dating back to the Geneva Accords of 1954[39], nor was any reappraisal seriously considered by either party. Kennedy had not come to accept the French assessment of the weakness of the West's position in Vietnam and de Gaulle was unable to persuade him. Unsurprisingly, the Vietnam dossier soon became subsumed in a wider breakdown in Franco-American relations that had been brewing since de Gaulle returned to the French presidency in 1958.

France and the United States both held to radically different views on the best way forward in Vietnam because of fundamentally opposite approaches to the Cold War. Geopolitical rivalry with the Soviet Union reinvigorated postwar American elites by offering them a new mission to compensate for Washington's sorry record of "softness" during the 1930s. As Anders Stephanson writes, Americans perceived Soviet communism as "[a] satanic force, dedicated to the overthrow of very sound and proven American principles, [that] was abroad in the world, most frighteningly even at home through its fifth columns. To refrain from doing one's utmost to extinguish this evil was

[39] The French held firm in their belief that a maximum effort had been made on the battlefield and that political negotiations were the sole means forward, whereas the Americans were loath to negotiate with communists under any circumstances and refused to contemplate entering into talks until military advantage had been secured.

tantamount to sin and would end in self-destruction[40]." While the Eisenhower administration felt relatively secure in America's geopolitical position *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union, the Kennedy administration saw the Cold War balance as fragile[41]. All global communist movements were perceived as hostile Moscow-controlled extensions of Soviet power—regardless of local circumstances—that must be resisted. The strength of these convictions rendered it difficult, if not impossible, for the Kennedy administration to choose tactical retreat or compromise even when it held a weak hand in relation to communists.

De Gaulle, viewing ideology as a transitory phenomenon that did not fundamentally alter the national interest, refused to accept the permanence of the Cold War division of Europe[42]. This translated into a willingness to accept neutralism, which de Gaulle considered the sole means of keeping Southeast Asia out of Communist hands. De Gaulle's foreign minister, Comte Couve de Murville, characterized the Franco-American dispute over Vietnam as one rooted in the very definition of the conflict. To the French, it was a civil war; to the Americans it simply fell under the catch-all category of communist aggression. In de Gaulle's mind the political nature of the problems facing Vietnam meant that a military solution—especially when escalation risked drawing China and the Soviet Union deeper into the conflict—was wholly inappropriate. The

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[40] Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American expansionism and the empire of right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 124.
[41] John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: a critical appraisal of American national security policy during the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 200-1.
[42] He came to the belief that the artificial tensions of the superpower system existed primarily as unspoken justification for extending American and Soviet hegemony over their respective halves of Europe. As leader of a major Western European nation that was expected to defer to NATO policy determined by Washington alone, de Gaulle knew that his counterparts in the East similarly chafed under the weight of Soviet *diktat*, belying any notion of a unified, monolithic Moscow-run communist bloc. See Sullivan, 5.

intervention of western armed forces would only serve to stiffen North Vietnamese resolve and undermine the creation of a truly representative government in the South, thus making a negotiated end all the more difficult[43].

In the early 1960s, France and the United States were locked into contradictory positions on the gravity of the Cold War, the stakes in Southeast Asia, and American hegemony within the Western alliance. To Kennedy's White House, even a small local triumph for Vietnamese communists would cause great damage to American prestige and credibility with its allies. Ironically though, none of these allies shared Washington's willingness to use military force in Vietnam, much less viewed it as an essential test of American credibility. For Kennedy, the thought of negotiations with Ho Chi Minh held connotations of weakness and demonstrated a failure to learn "the lessons of Munich[44]", an unthinkable abrogation of America's global duty from a president who idolized Winston Churchill. De Gaulle, viewing the Cold War as an artificial construction, preferred a pro-Western regime in Vietnam, but knew that a second attempt to use outside military force would not produce one. This broad philosophical divergence between de Gaulle and Kennedy on Vietnam was further complicated by an unspoken American doctrine of non-consultation with European allies.

Frank Costigliola concluded in his excellent examination of American decision-making during the Cuban Missile Crisis, "Kennedy, the European Allies and the Failure

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[43] Sullivan, 72-3.

[44] In France, these lessons were not necessarily applicable to the Soviet Union when Russia had traditionally been a French ally. Neither was negotiating with communists taboo considering that the PCF was a major domestic electoral force. French communists had propped up Popular Front governments in France in the late 1930s and briefly served in Paul Ramadier's First Ministry in 1947.

to Consult"[45] that Kennedy's ExComm "summarily dismissed any idea of sharing with the allies decisions that could have led to the nuclear destruction of Western Europe as well as North America. Costigliola argues that the language used by American decision-makers indicated a perception of Western Europeans:

> as the shaky, often impractical and emotional 'others' of the NATO family, unequal and inexperienced partners who were too ready to compromise with the Soviets (or, conversely, prone to resist the compromises decided upon by Americans) and who, therefore, had to be manipulated rather than consulted by the hard-headed, responsible officials of Washington.

The Kennedy administration saw itself as uniquely equipped to manage international crises, sought to assert American control over NATO decision-making, and rejected any notion of consulting other allied leaders[46]. The same prejudices that shaped American rejection of any Western European role in alliance decision-making during the Cuban Missile Crisis were equally responsible for Kennedy's non-consultation with de Gaulle over Vietnam.

Personal factors compounded the structural and ideological causes of Franco-American divergence on Vietnam. Kennedy firmly rejected France's position on Vietnam from the moment de Gaulle first articulated it in Paris in the spring of 1961. In many respects Kennedy's stance marked a continuation of a long-standing postwar American pattern of deliberately opposing French designs when it came to major foreign policy issues of joint concern. De Gaulle naturally resented being treated by Washington as the leader of a junior ally incapable or too irresponsible to shape its own destiny.

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[45] Frank Costigliola, "Kennedy the European Allies and the Failure to Consult," *Political Science Quarterly* 110, no. 1 (1995): 105-23.
[46] Ibid., 107.

De Gaulle's frustration over the wrong-headed American position on Vietnam reached a boiling point when lumped in with old grievances over American moral support for Algerian rebels fighting against French rule[47], Kennedy's rejection of his proposal for a top-tier NATO decision-making *directoire* of Britain, France and the United States, and American unwillingness to help assist in the building of an independent French nuclear "*force de frappe*" (strike force[48].) Regardless of whether he felt he could shape American policy or not, de Gaulle became emboldened by a series of major sleights from Kennedy and total disregard for his discrete counsel on Vietnam. On 28 August 1963, just as the Kennedy administration was debating how it would resolve the sorry state in which South Vietnamese President Diem had placed his country, de Gaulle released an unusually direct public statement calling for the withdrawal of all foreign powers from Vietnam and neutralization for the divided country.

The timing of de Gaulle's August 1963 statement on the need for a negotiated, non-military settlement in South Vietnam caused considerable alarm and discomfort for Kennedy. Late summer 1963 was a high stress period for the administration and Vietnam was its principal headache. Kennedy was agonizing over whether to green light a coup against South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem and felt that his administration was

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[47] Kennedy earned the nickname "the Senator from Algeria" in the late 1950s for his support for Algerian independence. See: Frank Kelley, "Kennedy Talk on Algeria Stirs Protests in France," *The The Washington Post*, 4 July 1957, B10.

[48] The issues surrounding the American difficulties with the *force de frappe* are inevitably surveyed in most works on Franco-American relations in the early 1960s. For articles that focus specifically on French nuclear policy before and during the Kennedy years, see Wilfrid Kohl, *French Nuclear Diplomacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971); Hans-Peter Schwarz, "Adenauer, le nucleaire, et la France," *Revue d'histoire diplomatique* 106, no.4 (1992): 297-311; Georges Henri-Soutou, "Les problems de sécurité dans les rapports franco-allemand de 1956 a 1963," *Relations Internationales*, no. 58 (1989): 227-51; David Tal, "From the Open Skies Proposal of 1955 to the Norstad Plan of 1960:A Plan Too Far," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 10, no. 4 (2008): 66–93; and, Mervyn O'Driscoll, "Explosive Challenge: Diplomatic Triangles, the United Nations, and the Problem of French Nuclear Testing, 1959–1960," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 11, no. 1 (2009): 28–56.

too heavily invested to simply withdraw. Kennedy contained his anger over de Gaulle's actions in an interview with legendary CBS journalist Walter Cronkite the following week, but made clear that he felt France had little right to interfere with American efforts in Southeast Asia so long as its economic and military assistance to the region paled in comparison to Washington's.

The point was moot to de Gaulle, who had no interest in prosecuting Diem's war or siding with his regime over Ho Chi Minh's. Kennedy had personalized de Gaulle's critique of American management of the counterinsurgency campaign in Vietnam and was unable to consider the real question of whether the war was worth fighting. This indirect exchange between two presidents clearly indicated that after a little over two years both governments had found themselves completely unable to communicate with, understand or sympathize with the other. De Gaulle's statement was much discussed over the following weeks, but Kennedy's men gritted their teeth and chose to tune de Gaulle out completely rather than issue a tart reply, a policy that would take on semi-official status when Lyndon Johnson became president.

It was at this point that all of the unspoken American prejudices against the French emerged in embassy cables, conversation memos, telegrams, and the like. The French were trying to interfere in South Vietnam despite having offered little to nothing by way of military or economic aid over the previous decade; they went to the press because they lacked the "guts[49]" to take their position to the Americans face to face; they were pushing the same neutralization plan that was failing in Laos on Vietnam; and worst

[49] This was Kennedy's charge against French ambassador Herve Alphand on 3 September 1963. U.S. Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, IV, Vietnam, August-December 1963 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1991): 54, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/kennedyjf/iv/12646.htm.

of all, they were intriguing with Diem's brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, and the North Vietnamese to do an end run around Washington and reach a neutralization deal with Soviet support.

McGeorge Bundy, Kennedy's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, summed up the administration's frustration with de Gaulle best when he wrote a draft memo to Kennedy that stated "we find only our own personal irritation as an argument against well-established conclusion that we do best when we ignore Nosey Charlie[50]." Kennedy was to die by an assassin's bullet little over two months and a half months later, leaving his public breach with de Gaulle over Vietnam in late summer 1963 as the final salvo of a pitched Franco-American battle over the shape of NATO and Cold War policy that had been raging since 1961.

[50] U.S. Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, IV, Vietnam, August-December 1963 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1991): 43, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/kennedyjf/iv/12645.htm.

CHAPTER 1: Cultural Imaging of the French "Other"

In broad terms, belief in the existence of "national character" dates back to at least the writings of Greek traveller-historian Herodotus. Enlightenment writers such as Vico, Montesquieu, Hume, Voltaire, Herder, and Diderot began to apply pseudo-scientific ideas to their examinations of national character in the 17th and 18th Centuries[51], but their subject increasingly became a matter of public debate along with the rise of Social Darwinism in the 19th Century[52]. William L. Chew, who has studied "imagology[53]" in a general historical and Franco-American context, argues that national stereotypes—while changeable over time—are in large part rooted in "historical circumstances[54]." While Americans have long clung to a traditional antipathy towards Europeans in general that is rooted in notions of "American exceptionalism" and a desire to separate the United States from the corrupt old world, France has often been singled out as one of the most offensive nations on the continent for a variety of reasons which will be explained in detail. Historically, Americans were long cautious of conniving French diplomats, alarmed at France's sexual and racial permissiveness, and dismissive of France's supposedly weak republican system of government.

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[51] For a good examination of popular stereotypes of the French around the time of the American Revolutions, see: Eugen Weber, "Of Stereotypes and of the French," *Journal of Contemporary History* 25, No. 2/3 (1990): 169-203.

[52] William L. Chew III, "Literature, History and the Social Sciences," in William L. Chew III, ed., *National Stereotypes in Perspective: Americans in France, Frenchmen in America* (New York: Rodopi, 2001), 4.

[53] Ibid. He defines this as the study of "national stereotypes so current in our collective memory [that] color, to a large extent, not only our self-perception (our 'auto-image') via the image of the other (our 'hetero-image'), but determine for better and, regrettably, more often, for worse our behavior toward the other."

[54] Ibid., 11.

British colonialists naturally imported their age-old rivalry with France to the Thirteen Colonies in the 17th and 18th centuries. However, while France and America have been intimately acquainted as independent countries and occasional allies for centuries, many of the views of "the other" that their respective citizenry formed during the early days of the American Republic have endured mostly intact up to the present day. When Franco-American relations are healthy, American observers typically invoke the revolutionary services of the Marquis de Lafayette, after whom countless American towns and counties are named, and the Statue of Liberty, a late 19th Century French gift to celebrate the heady early days of the bilateral alliance; when they are strained, one is reminded that brief Franco-American partnership in war almost always gives way to bitterness in peace, be it after the American Revolution or following both the World Wars.

In many respects, Thomas Jefferson typified the American view of France. Curious by nature in a broad range of arts and sciences, Jefferson was unable to resist the intellectual and cultural pull of Paris, yet he clung to his convictions that America's noble mission set it apart from the wily Europeans of the Old World. Despite the French *douceur de vivre*, the fine food, excellent wine, gala balls, the female court admirers, and stimulating conversations with close friends like Lafayette, Jefferson never abandoned preference for the American way of life during his time in Paris[55]. Like many Americans, Jefferson was initially enthusiastic that the French Revolution appeared to imitate the American example and set a precedent for other European peoples living under

[55] Duroselle, *France and the United States from the Beginnings to the Present*, 27-33.

unrepresentative monarchs, but he quickly became disillusioned with the mob violence and slide towards Napoleonic despotism that accompanied it[56].

However, it was not until the late 19th Century that the core perceptions of each nation's respective elites would firmly take hold in a fashion that had implications for mid-20th century foreign relations. Set against a backdrop of Social Darwinism, intense nationalism, Anglo-Saxonism, and conceptions of a racial hierarchy, the parent generation of the future men of the Kennedy administration began to ascribe hard, negative attributes to France and the French that they would pass down to their offspring. By casting the French as overly emotional, excessively proud, vain, cruel, conservative, backward, and effeminate, these elites were better able to rationalize their own perceived racial superiority and legacy as inheritors of sound British traditions. This chapter sets out to explain how the evolution of American views of France with the intention of illustrating the perceptions and stereotypes that were common currency during Kennedy's formative years. The candid notations in Kennedy's 1937 diary from his summer trip to Europe—during which he spent several weeks in France—clearly illustrates that he had absorbed many of the popular francophobic themes in circulation during the interwar years.

As the United States drew closer to Britain in the later 19th Century, the halcyon days of Franco-American cooperation during the Revolutionary era grew increasingly remote in popular memory. Early American francophilia was built on very shallow

[56] Richard B. Bernstein, *Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 78.

foundations and resurfaced later usually only during time of conflict with Britain, which was increasingly rare after the conclusion of the Civil War[57].

Writing during a period of high Franco-American tension during the mid-1920s, historian John Gazley argues that "hatred for France" dating back to the early reign of Napoleon III was a large contributing factor behind American sympathy for Prussia during the Franco-Prussian war[58]. Americans greeted news of the 1848 revolution in France and the establishment of a new republican government in imitation of their own with almost universal enthusiasm[59]. This goodwill turned to distrust with Louis Napoleon's 1851 coup as many Americans shifted to the view that "the French people were unfit for republican institutions. They were fickle, unstable, impractical... for they had little political education and were enamored of a unified, centralized government[60]."

In American eyes centralization was viewed as the enemy of republicanism and the election of Louis Napoleon demonstrated that the French were incapable of real democracy. Subsequent commentary across the American press in the early 1850s lambasting the faults of French national and political character clearly demonstrated that the temporary surge of pro-French sentiment was solely based on the mistaken belief that France was about to import an unadulterated version of the American political model.

In the later stages of the Civil War a decade and a half later, many Northerners hoped that their big Union army would be dispatched south to Mexico, then under the

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[57] Simon Serfaty, *La France vue par les Etats-Unis: Réflexions sur la Francophobie a Washington*, (Paris: IFRI, Institut français des relations internationales, 2002), 19.
[58] John G. Gazley, *American Opinion of German Unification, 1848-1871* (New York: Columbia University, 1926), 232.
[59] Ibid., 239-41.
[60] Ibid., 252.

control of a French-sponsored monarchy, to punish Napoleon III for his flirtation with the Confederacy[61]. Anti-French sentiment ran high, even in liberal eastern quarters, through the 1860s. Thanks to the developments in cable telegraphy technology that allowed American newspapers to receive prompt reporting from their European correspondents, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 was probably followed more closely than any other foreign event during the late 19th Century. American public opinion was strongly pro-German and anti-French at the outset of the conflict. Pro-German sentiment was fuelled by American perceptions that Germany was progressive, if not democratic, and that German immigrants were of the highest quality in terms of their education, disposition towards the United States, and propensity for democracy[62].

Napoleon III's ignominious defeat at the hands of Otto von Bismarck removed the most visible cause of anti-French sentiment in the United States, but it failed to usher in any reassessment of popularly-held negative perceptions of France. Anglo-Saxonists on both sides of the Atlantic saw little of note from a political, economic or civilizational standpoint in the rapid postwar expansion of the French empire into Southeast Asia, North, West and Central Africa—generally large, but economically marginal, territories that Britain had passed over.

In more concrete terms, Anglo-Saxonists viewed the French, owners of a colonial empire second in size only to Britain's, as their primary competitor, though they did not view them as a serious threat to the English-speaking peoples. A variety of factors ranging from military defeats dating back to the Napoleonic era, industrial backwardness,

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[61] Ibid., 300.
[62] Ibid., 321.

second-rate colonies, and demographic stagnation stoked Anglo-Saxonist perceptions of French inferiority. To many, it appeared that France had not only ceded its position as the dominant power in continental Europe to Bismarck's Germany, but was also sliding down the path to Spanish mediocrity[63].

The Anglo-American diplomatic rapprochement in the late 19th Century that was spurred on by renewed sentiments of racial affiliation had a spill over effect on American perceptions of France[64]. As the century progressed and America grew more polyglot, the absence of French immigration to the United States also meant that there was no domestic ethnic lobby to promote sentimental ties with Paris[65]. Other significant immigrant communities, most notably the Italians, Germans and Irish, used the strength of their number to aggressively promote their own interests and lobby for their respective country of origin. As a result Franco-American relations were stable, but cool, from the end of the Napoleonic Wars up to the outbreak of World War I[66]. The one unambiguously pro-French segment of American society at this period were wealthy

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[63] Anderson, 65.

[64] Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *France and the United States*, 46. Duroselle locates the Treaty of Ghent, the settlement that ended the War of 1812, as the turning point in the Franco-British-American triangle during the long 19th Century. It put to rest any French dreams of restoring a North American empire, eliminated Britain as the sole major threat to American security and gave future presidents the luxury of avoiding "entangling alliances" as George Washington had advised in his 1796 Farwell Address. Duroselle argues that this new period of stability between the United States and the Great Powers of Europe led to a decreased interest in France on a "psychological and intellectual plane" beyond small Francophile groups in America.

[65] Ibid., 48. It should be noted that there were substantial francophone communities in the United States around 1900, most notably the long-established Cajuns in Louisiana and more recent Quebecois economic migrants to New England mill towns. Duroselle does not deny their existence; rather, he would argue that the fact that they were many generations removed from their ancestral home differentiated them politically from more recent immigrant groups from other European countries.

[66] Both did more trade with Britain and had very little capital invested in the other. While there was some rivalry for control over the Panama Canal, there were no serious colonial or territorial disputes to poison relations between them comparable to those that almost brought Britain and France to war at Fashoda, Sudan, in 1898. If there was nothing to push France and the United States apart at this juncture, it must also be said that there was nothing to draw them together either.

white women who looked to Parisian fashion designers to help them project a cosmopolitan image, and the middle class women with upward pretensions who sought to copy them by wearing knock-off designs[67].

In *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Michael Hunt presents a persuasive case that American ideology[68] has been shaped in large part by perceptions of a racial hierarchy. By the mid to late 19th Century, American race thinking increasingly revolved around notions of "Anglo-Saxonism[69]", a belief that Americans and Britons shared positive racial characteristics that explained the success of the American republic and the British Empire[70]. These views formed decades before the men of the Kennedy administration

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[67] Kristen Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 66-9.

[68] Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and US Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), preface xi. Hunt defines "ideology" as "an interrelated set of convictions or assumptions that reduces complexities of a particular slice of reality to easily comprehensible terms and suggests appropriate ways of dealing with that reality."

[69] The two earliest general works on American Anglo-Saxonism in the 19th Century still stand out as the best examinations of the subject: Stuart Anderson, *Race and Rapprochement: Anglo-Saxonism and Anglo-American Relations, 1895-1904*, (London: Associated University Presses, 1981); and Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: the origins of American racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981). Other relevant works include Paul McCartney, "Anglo-Saxonism and U.S. Foreign Policy during the Spanish-American War," in Ethnic Identity Groups and U.S. Foreign Policy, Thomas Ambrosio, ed. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002); Stuart Anderson, "Racial Anglo-Saxonism and the American Response to the Boer War," *Diplomatic History* 2, no. 3 (1978): 219-36; essays by J. R. Hall, "Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Anglo-Saxonism: The Question of Language," and Gregory A. VanHoosier-Carey, "Byrhtnoth in Dixie: The Emergence of Anglo-Saxon Studies in the Postbellum South" in Anglo-Saxonism and the Construction of Social Identity, Allen J. Frantzen and John D. Niles, eds. (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1997); Paul A. Kramer, "Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires," *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 4 (2002):1315-53; Eric T.L. Love, *Race Over Empire: racism and U.S. imperialism, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Cynthia J. Davis, "Nation's Nature: "Billy Budd, Sailor," Anglo-Saxonism, and the Canon," and Maria DeGuzman, "Consolidating Anglo-American Imperial Identity Around the Spanish-American War (1898)," in Reynolds J. Scott-Childress, ed., *Race and the production of modern American nationalism* (New York: Garland Pub., 1999); and Audrey Smedley, *Race in North America: origin and evolution of a worldview*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2007).

[70] Anderson explains 'Anglo-Saxonism' as "the belief—part of the prevailing orthodoxy in Great Britain and the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—that the civilization of the English-speaking nations was superior to that of any other group of people on the planet; and

were born were remarkably enduring and shaped American foreign policy into the 20th Century.

Anglo-Saxonism proved equally popular across class lines on both sides of the Atlantic mainly because it was simple, abstract, and based on the premise of an innate superiority of the British and American peoples[71]. While there was some significant opposition in American quarters to using Anglo-Saxonism as a justification for taking on Britain's 'white man's burden' of civilizing the "lesser races" of the world, it did resonate with a younger generation of American elites who led the imperial drive of the 1890s[72]. Anglo-Saxonism had a firm believer in the White House in Theodore Roosevelt and gained further traction in the United States as white Anglo-Saxon Protestants, especially those in elite circles on the Eastern seaboard, reacted against the arrival of thousands of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe[73].

Anderson and Hunt both demonstrate that Americans conceived of Anglo-Saxons as industrious, intelligent, driven by moral purpose, and possessing an innate talent for government. The combination of these qualities supposedly contributed to respective successes of English-speaking civilizations. Germans were admired as racial cousins, but they could not be considered equals as "they had lost their love of liberty[74]." The Latin peoples of Europe, of which the French were considered the most formidable, were ever lower down the race hierarchy because "[t]hey lacked vigor; they were sentimental,

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that the primacy of English and American civilization was largely due to the innate racial superiority of the people who were descended from the ancient Anglo-Saxon invaders of Britain (12)."

[71] Ibid., 19.

[72] Ibid., 24.

[73] Ibid., 46. The Kennedy family was Irish Catholic, but as integrated, wealthy elites their sensibilities were similar to those of east coast White Anglo-Saxon Protestants.

[74] Hunt, *Ideology and US Foreign Policy*, 78-9.

undisciplined and superstitious; and consequently they were of small account in international affairs[75]."

Looking back to their own early history, Anglo-Saxonists viewed the Normans of northern France as invaders who had stolen their forbearers' freedom and suppressed the thriving grassroots democracy they cherished[76]. As the Anglo-Saxonists blamed the French for corrupting their sense of liberty, they took a corresponding interest in their Germanic cousins who were believed to have nurtured Anglo-Saxon traditions before settling in England[77]. This Anglo-Saxonist version of history, coupled with the arrival of just over five million politically organized Germans in the 19th Century[78], helped create an instinctive sympathy for Germany and corresponding distrust for France across a wide swath of American opinion through the interwar years[79]. Once his political career began, Kennedy naturally empathized with the Cold War plight of West Germans while railing against the French for failing to grant independence first to Vietnam and then to Algeria.

If not couched in overtly racial terms, the French held equally strong negative stereotypes of Americans. Even Alexis de Tocqueville, the oft-quoted 19th Century French aristocrat who penned the classic examination of American institutions and characteristics, *Democracy in America*, had mixed views of the United States. De Tocqueville lamented in great detail how the institution of slavery had debased southern

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[75] Ibid.
[76] Horsman, 22.
[77] Ibid., 26.
[78] Joseph Wandel, *The German Dimension of American History* (Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall, 1979), 2.
[79] Horsman, 26.

whites[80] and would threaten to tear the Union apart[81]. Despite their many positive characteristics, de Tocqueville saw Americans as money obsessed[82], reduced "to preferring equality in slavery to inequality with freedom[83]", lacking in "true independence of mind[84]", and unable to separate an interpretation of Christianity "which seems to vegetate in the soul rather than to live" from notions of liberty[85].

By the founding of the Third Republic in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War, the United States was no longer held up as the beacon of liberty it had been seen as during de Tocqueville's lifetime[86]. The United States was much observed in France during the early industrial era and its political aura began to wane as it rapidly shed the idealized agrarian, patriarchal, and colonial features that had endeared it to the French in the early 19th Century. Americans themselves were increasingly perceived to be driven by the lure of a quick dollar and a ceaseless hunger for technological innovations that undermined time-tested traditions. Most of the contact between the two cultures took place in France, where American businessmen and expatriates frequently came across as obnoxious and pampered. The French formed ideas about Americans based on these interactions, which predictably framed French opinion about the United States as a whole[87]. That individual Americans were crass and uncivilized made it all the more

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[80] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve (London: Longmans, 1875), 370. There is a long discussion of slavery in the chapter "Present and Future Conditions of Negroes," 360-88.
[81] Ibid., see chapter "Chances of Duration of the Union," 389-425.
[82] Ibid., 48. "I know of no country, indeed, where the love of money has taken stronger hold on the affections of men."
[83] Ibid., 51.
[84] Ibid., 267.
[85] Ibid., 311.
[86] Jacques Portes, *Fascination and Misgivings: The United States in French Opinion, 1870-1914*, trans by Elborg Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2-3.
[87] Ibid., 22.

difficult to contend with the exponential growth of American military and industrial power.

Both countries had roughly the same population and economic base in 1870, but France remained relatively stagnant compared to the explosive growth in both areas in the United States. The shock of the American declaration of war on Spain in 1898 was seen from France as a challenge from an aggressive powerful New World rival that might well end up dominating the world if the British threw their lot in with their Anglo-Saxon cousins. Jealousy and contempt for upstart America naturally ensued in this crucial era, during which French policymakers of the post-1914 period—de Gaulle included—established their formative views of the United States[88].

Predictably, pre-Great War stereotypes proved equally enduring in France as in the United States[89]. French opinion from the conservative right to the socialist left disdained American society's extreme emphasis on individual happiness at the expense of the collective good, while most of the French deplored America's Calvinistic pursuit of trade and profits as a good in the themselves, in an addition to its decentralized, minimalist role for the state[90]. That France was unique amongst larger European nations in lacking a sizable emigrant community in the United States has often been cited as a further obstacle to mutual understanding.

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[88] Philippe Roger, *L'ennemi américain: généalogie de l'antiaméricanisme français* (Paris: Seuil, 2002), 56.
[89] Irwin Wall writes, "America was regarded as uncultured, a society of overgrown children imbued with naïve optimism, a country of pragmatists devoid of theoretical understanding." in *The United States and the Making of Postwar France, 1945-1954* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 11-2.
[90] Cogan, *Oldest Allies*, 9-11.

When applied to the sphere of international relations, the racial assumptions that drove Anglo-Saxonism as a belief system contributed to the informal Anglo-American partnership that developed at the turn of the 20th Century[91]. Canada was granted dominion status to remove the temptation for Lincoln's successors to turn their large Union army northwards against British North America at the conclusion of the Civil War, lingering border issues between Alaska and British Columbia were resolved in Washington's favour, Britain supported the United States during its war with Spain in 1898, and the United States reciprocated when Britain launched its war against the Boers the following year.

This growing spirit of Anglo-American cooperation transformed into an increasingly close relationship as the Republican administrations of the 1920s placed new emphasis on collaboration between private businesses as a means of addressing major international economic concerns[92]. Put into practice, key bankers and businessmen in the United States and Britain increasingly looked to coordinate their efforts on financial matters, the radio and cable industries, and oil diplomacy. This partnership survived the

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[91] For recent works Anglo-American rapprochement in the late 19th and early 20th Century, see: Kathleen Burk, *Old World, New World : the story of Britain and America* (London : Little, Brown, 2007); Duncan Andrew Campbell, *Unlikely Allies: Britain, America and the Victorian origins of the special relationship* (New York: Hambledon Continuum, 2007); Alan P. Dobson, ed., *Anglo-American Relations in the Twentieth Century: of friendship, conflict and the rise and decline of superpowers* (New York: Routledge, 1995); B.J.C. McKercher, ed., *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920's: the struggle for supremacy* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1991); Anne Orde, *The Eclipse of Great Britain: the United States and British imperial decline, 1895-1956* (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1996); David Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1937-1941: a study in competitive co-operation* (Raleigh, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982) and, with David Dimbleby, *An Ocean Apart: the relationship between Britain and America in the twentieth century* (New York: Random House, 1988); and Priscilla Roberts, "The Anglo-American Theme: American Visions of an Atlantic Alliance, 1914–1933," *Diplomatic History* 21, no. 3 (1997): 333-64.

[92] This is the general theme of Michael J. Hogan's *Informal Entente: the private structure of cooperation in Anglo-American economic diplomacy, 1918-1928* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1977).

Great Depression and deepened in the run up to America's entry into World War II as the theme of "cooperative competition" gave way to a new Anglo-American partnership that was marked by an unprecedented peaceful transfer of international dominance[93].

By 1945, the fruits of a half-century of close Anglo-American cooperation seemed to have validated the essential tenets of Anglo-Saxonism to American observers. In effect, when the United States looked to Europe for support, it could be reasonably certain that it would find a loyal ally in Britain. The relative ease with which the United States conducted its affairs with Britain could not have been contrasted any more starkly than with its dealings with France. The genuine expression of mutual respect and admiration between France and the United States was almost shockingly brief. With President Woodrow Wilson shaping World War I as an epic battle between democratic forces and the authoritarian militarism of the Kaiser's Germany, many Americans began to look on France as a sister republic with shared values and similar institutions—in short, an ally worth fighting for. The French generally reciprocated these sentiments, though by 1917 they would have welcomed help from any quarter to stave off collapse[94]. Britain's bloody suppression of the Easter Rising in Ireland was widely condemned in the United States, driving modern Anglo-American relations to an unprecedented low and creating an opening for further Franco-American rapprochement. France was temporarily holding Britain's place warm, however. Events at the Versailles peace negotiations underlined how much more easily the United States was able to find common cause with Britain than France.

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[93] Reynolds, 3.
[94] Robert Bruce, *A Fraternity of Arms: America and France in the Great War* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 48-9.

For all his lofty pronouncements on remaking the world, there was little in his background that indicated Wilson would take on a major international role in peacetime: his academic background at Princeton revealed a narrow provincialism, he was an Anglophile who spoke no foreign languages, knew little of different forms of government in the wider world and held little interest in foreign affairs upon assuming the presidency. William Keylor argues that "[i]n every respect Wilson was a product of that smug, self-assured, self-confident parochial tradition of Anglo-Saxonism that dominated American culture after the Civil War[95]." Wilson's compromise peace failed to satisfy the most basic of French security needs and Paris was soon ostracized by the Anglo-American bloc when it tried to enforce the treaty the three nominal allies had crafted together.

Robert J. Young describes the boost in pro-French feeling in the United States during the latter stages of WWI as a "national mood swing" rather than a long-term re-evaluation of national stereotypes. Well before 1919 was over Anglo-American opinion had already adopted the German line that the Treaty of Versailles was excessively harsh, while the American press had begun to turn on France before peace negotiations had even wrapped up[96]. The general mood in the United States had shifted and a supposedly vindictive France was increasingly viewed as more of an obstacle to normalization than defeated Germany[97]. Recognizing postwar French weakness, successive French governments put great stock in maintaining the wartime entente with the United States, naively banking on American support for linkage between reparations and war debt

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[95] William R. Keylor, "The Messiah and the Tiger: Woodrow Wilson, Georges Clemenceau, and the Cultural Stereotypes of America and France at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919," in *National Stereotypes in Perspective: Americans in France, Frenchmen in America*, 286.
[96] Robert J. Young, *Marketing Marianne: French Propaganda in America, 1900-1940* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 65.
[97] Ibid., 68.

repayment, privileged access to American markets and resources, and postwar assistance. The reality they were confronted with after the Versailles peace talks, however, was one of constant peppering from American officials over how and when Paris would commit to a repayment scheme with specific schedules and interest rates for the $3 billion war debt it had accumulated[98].

The French launched a propaganda campaign designed to "tap the residual Francophilia" into peacetime in the hopes of reminding Americans of the blood the two peoples had shed together and the importance of continued cooperation to prevent German revanchism[99]. Potential allies within American society included veterans' groups, charitable organizations, Wall Street bankers who had sold French government securities before 1917 and counted on French recovery to recoup investments, East Coast luxury retailers of French goods, academics, and some journalists[100]. Despite their best efforts, however, the French were completely unable to reverse the unflattering images that had become commonplace in the American press. The French were portrayed as secretive manipulators with imperialist designs on the Middle East, their press was corrupt and heavily censored, and its diplomats were practitioners of the worst sort of the traditional European diplomacy that President Wilson was trying to sweep away[101].

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[98] William R. Keylor, "How They Advertised France: The French Propaganda Campaign in the United States during the Breakup of the Franco-American Entente, 1918-1923," *Diplomatic History* 17, no. 3 (1993): 355.
[99] Ibid., 10.
[100] Ibid., 10-3.
[101] Ibid., 14.

Regardless of the legitimacy of France's post-war aims[102], a series of events in the 1920s served to further sweep away the vestiges of short-lived wartime solidarity and buttress traditional negative American stereotypes of France[103]. Through the decade of Kennedy's formative childhood years, French foreign policy was continually attacked by large swaths of the American press that had little to no sympathy for the political, economic and security difficulties Paris was facing. As evidenced by Kennedy's writings in the 1930s, there is good reason to speculate that at some point during this period popular negative cultural imaging of France permeated its way into the young boy's consciousness.

The laundry list of American complaints against France was long, running from issues of national policy, such as its unwillingness to pay its war debts, militarism in the

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[102] Margaret MacMillan's *Paris 1919: six months that changed the world* (New York: Random House, 2002) is the most significant recent account of deliberations in Paris. The most thorough international collection of essays on the Treaty of Versailles remains Manfred F. Boemeke, Gerald D. Feldman, and Elisabeth Glaser, eds., *The Treaty of Versailles: a reassessment after 75 years* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For French security aims at Versailles and after, see especially: Anthony Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery: France's bid for power in Europe, 1914-1940* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995); Robert Boyce, ed., *French Foreign and Defence policy, 1918-1940: the decline and fall of a great power* (New York: LSE/Routledge, 1998); Wm. Laird Kleine-Ahlbrandt, *The Burden of Victory: France, Britain, and the enforcement of the Versailles peace, 1919-1925* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1995); and David Stevenson, *French war aims against Germany, 1914-1919* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

[103] The myth of French "vindictiveness" towards Germany at Versailles has proven especially enduring in the United States. Even Costigliola, whose work often highlights the clumsiness of American cultural diplomacy and insensitivity to European concerns, portrays France as vindictive and determined to use reparations as a means of keeping Germany down in *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919-1933* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984) in spite of serious attacks against this view in the late 1970s from fellow American historians such as Sally Marks, *The Illusion of Peace: international relations in Europe, 1918-1933* (London: Macmillan, 1976), Marc Trachtenberg, *Reparation in world politics: France and European economic diplomacy, 1916-1923* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), Stephen Schuker, *The End of French predominance in Europe: the financial crisis of 1924 and the adoption of the Dawes plan* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1976), Charles S. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the decade after World War I* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), and Melvyn Leffler, *The Elusive Quest: America's pursuit of European stability and French security, 1919-1933* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

Ruhr, a 'Napoleon Complex', and vengefulness against Germany. There were other sweeping assumptions of a cultural nature, such as indolence, while many returning American soldiers brought lurid tales of French sexual permissiveness[104] and racial tolerance[105]. Washington's inability to offer France the security pact that Wilson had promised and bitterness over the inability to find a mutually acceptable compromise over the complicated war debts-reparations triangle were at the heart of the postwar breakdown in Franco-American relations.

In Kennedy's early years, the major New England newspapers, the *Boston Daily Globe* and the *Hartford Courant*, were broadly sympathetic to France during the Ruhr Crisis of 1923-1924, when a French-led force occupied Germany's industrial heartland in response to the Weimar regime's refusal to pay reparations. *The Globe* lamented Washington's role in the crisis in failing to honour Wilson's promise of a peacetime American security guarantee to France[106], was sympathetic towards attempts of French industrial magnate Eugene Schneider to create a mutually beneficial steel cartel with

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[104] Duroselle argues that American soldiers in France in 1917-18 in frequent contact with prostitutes formed the unfair stereotype that all French women in general were of loose morals (117). Also see, for example, Byron Farwell, *Over There: the United States in the Great War, 1917-1918* (New York: Norton, 1999), especially chapter 14, "Venereal Disease."

[105] For examinations of francophilia amongst African American troops and artists during and after World War I, see: Arthur E. Barbeau and Florette Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers: African-American Troops in World War I* (New York: Da Capo, 1996); Michel Fabre, *From Harlem to Paris: Black American Writers in France,1840–1980* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991); Tyler Stovall, *Paris Noir: African Americans in the City of Light* (Boston, MA: Houghton, 1996) and "The Color Line behind the Lines: Racial Violence in France during the Great War," *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 3 (1998): 737-769; and Mark Whalan, "'The Only Real White Democracy' and the Language of Liberation: the Great War, France, and African-American Culture in the 1920s," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 51, no. 4 (2005): 775-800.

[106] John L. Balderson, "US Now Blamed for Ruhr Crisis," *Boston Daily Globe*, 28 January 1923, 15. He writes, "America is blamed for [forcing France to invade the Ruhr because]... the United States drove France to desperation by refusing to ratify the Versailles treaty and withdrawing from the Anglo-American guarantee of French security," goes on to lamenting that "America, after getting rich... from three years of neutrality and having made comparatively few sacrifices 'let down' the Allies over the peace treaty and now expects to be paid [war debts]."

German concerns and bring peace to Ruhr[107], while *The Courant* cheered on the French bid to make the intractable Germans back down and honour the treaty[108]. Even moderately critical reporting on French actions in the Ruhr was often tempered by the acknowledgement that President Calvin Coolidge was not working constructively to bring the crisis to an end either[109]. This relatively favourable coverage of France came when Kennedy was only six years old, too early to shape his worldview. By the time Kennedy began following the news in his early adolescent years, however, the focus of the American press shifted to a far more emotive issue, that of European repayment of war debts to American creditors.

The Republican administrations of Warren G. Harding (1921-1923), Coolidge (1923-1929), and Herbert Hoover (1929-1933) put their faith in the unregulated private market as the best corrective and conducted their business with Europe through unofficial economic channels in a fashion that would take maximum benefit from American strengths at minimum risk. France was viewed by many as the chief obstacle to Washington's designs because of its resistance to American disarmament initiatives—the

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[107] Drew Pearson, "Ruhr Crisis Due to Politics, French Steel King Says," *Boston Daily Globe*, 8 June 1924, 66.

[108] "A View of Germany," *The Hartford Courant*, 5 February 1923, 8. The editorial states,"[i]t is obvious that [Germany] is dodging her responsibilities. Look at the expenditures that have been made by that suffering and impoverished country—impoverished, by the way, by what she has not paid as promised... As the days go by, it looks more and more as if France, in spite of the inexplicably hostile attitude of other countries, was going to carry her point."

[109] See, for example, Maj. Gen. Henry T. Allen's Globe column "My Rhineland Journal." Allen, the commander of American occupation forces in the Ruhr, used his final column "Allen's Move For New Franco-German Negotiations Halted by Hughes," *Boston Daily Globe*, 25 November 1923, 31, to reprint part of his final speech to American troops in Germany. He stated, "[w]e both sympathize heartily with the French and would do anything possible to help toward the two results they ought to get—reparations and security. We neither of us share the general American opinion that France needs no army and that force is a thing of the past, but we are equally of the opinion that France is not using her victory or her force wisely either for her own interests or for the interests and peace of the world; and we are equally of the opinion that the United States has not acted wisely, and in particular, in recent months, has failed to act with the definiteness which might have changed the whole course of events, and which, whether it changed them or not, was necessary from every possible point of view."

French had an acute fear of a German neighbour that had invaded their territory twice in living memory and would not cede their military advantage without an adequate security guarantee—and its frequent attempts to evade repayment on its war debts.

For Americans, repayment was an emotional issue rooted in the sanctity of honouring business contracts, and they were wounded by "Uncle Shylock" barbs from Frenchmen who argued these debts had occurred fighting for a common cause and should have been wiped off the books. That the United States and France found themselves at diplomatic loggerheads is less the issue than the reality that these affairs of state fuelled and perpetuated crude cultural stereotypes on both sides of the Atlantic during Kennedy's formative years. The shared disappointments and bitterness that characterized interwar Franco-American diplomacy seemed to confirm the worst perceptions each nation had formed of the other in the first half of the 20th century.

After a summer trip to England and France in 1926, Will Rogers, a popular contemporary comedian/actor and syndicated social commentator, summarized the everyman position on war debts in a column that was printed in *The Courant*. He lamented how badly war loans had poisoned relations between Washington and "the Natives that we were so rude as to lend money to." Rogers, however, was like many Americans sceptical of French claims that Paris lacked the financial resources to repay its American debts, noting:

> the funny part about the whole thing is you go anywhere like the races, or the Opera, or any place where the prices are high, and you will see it packed and people spending more money than they ever do at home. I have dodged more big Rolls Royces and Fiats over

> here than I ever saw big cars at home. There is lots of them over here got plenty of dough, but they are not giving any of it to their Governments to put out the taxes[110].

Rogers advised his readers against being sympathetic towards European pleas, suggesting that the governments that protested war debts the loudest were simply trying to avoid the politically unpopular move of raising taxes. If there was a lesson to "these people [in government] that [sic] are always trying to fix the world" it was "stay at home and tend to our own business! Don't attend a conference, not even a luncheon[111]!" Again, while newspapers in New England[112] and the *New York Times*[113] generally attempted to explain a complex financial web and French security concerns, attacks against French ingratitude were far more common elsewhere, with increasing hostility to Europe the farther one ventured from the Eastern beltway.

While Anglo-Saxonism fell out of official favour in the early years of the 20th Century, it had created in the United States an enduring sense of partnership with Britain and helped entrench popular condescension for France that has lasted to the present. Frank Costigliola argues convincingly in *France and the United States: The Cold Alliance, 1940-1990* that American perceptions of the French as a lesser people endured well into the Cold War years largely on the same grounds cited by turn of the century Anglo-Saxonists[114]. Negative stereotypes of France did not emerge from nowhere; they had definite roots in the events of the interwar period and earlier. The men of the

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[110] Will Rogers, "How Rude of us to Lend France Money!," *The Hartford Courant*, 15 August 1926, C1.
[111] Ibid.
[112] See, for example, Frank H. Simonds, "Europeans Are Drawing Together With America As Common Enemy," *The Hartford Courant*, 31 October 1926, D2.
[113] See, for example, Edwin L. James, "The America that Europe Sees," *The New York Times*, 10 April 1927, SM1.
[114] Costigliola, *France and the United States: The Cold Alliance, 1940-1990*, 4.

Kennedy administration, despite mostly being from the liberal eastern beltway, were not immune from these views.

1. John F. Kennedy, the first American president born in the 20th century, at age 10. Born into privilege, Kennedy moved that year from Brookline, Mass., to a mansion in Riverdale, New York.
Photo: Hulton Archive/Getty Images
1 January 1927

John F. Kennedy[115] was born on 29 May 1917 in the leafy West Boston suburb of Brookline, Massachusetts to Joseph Patrick Kennedy, a rising star in the local banking industry, and Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy, daughter of an establishment family from the north end of the city. He was the second of nine Kennedy children, four of whom were boys—Joseph Patrick Jr., John Fitzgerald, Robert "Bobby" Francis, and Edward "Teddy" Moore [116]—who succeeded, or would have succeeded had war not intervened, in American politics.

The Kennedy boys had politics in their blood. Their maternal grandfather, John Francis "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald, was a former United States congressman and Boston mayor, while their paternal grandfather Patrick Joseph Kennedy was a state senator, congressman, and powerful ward boss in East Boston. John's father was well-connected in the Boston business community, but chose to forgo an active political career so he could become a millionaire thanks to clever wartime dealings with Columbia Trust, the Massachusetts Electric Company, Bethlehem Steel, and later dabbling in the early American film, real estate, and liquor import industries. He astutely offered financial backing to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 1932 presidential campaign and followed with a

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[115] For the best recent Kennedy biographies that avoid the "Camelot School's" deliberate lack of criticism, see: Robert Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Co., 2003); Nigel Hamilton, *JFK: Reckless Youth* (New York: Random House, 1992); Seymour Hersch, *The Dark Side of Camelot* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1997); Doris Kearns Goodwin, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991); Barbara Leaming, *Jack Kennedy: the Education of a Statesman* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006); Thomas Maier, *The Kennedys: America's Emerald Kings* (New York: Basic Books, 2003); Thomas C. Reeves, *A Question of Character: a Life of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1991); and Gary Wills, *The Kennedy Imprisonment: A Meditation on Power* (Toronto: Little, Brown, 1982).

[116] Joseph Patrick Jr. (1915-1944) would almost certainly have embarked on a political career had he not been killed when the bomber he was piloting exploded over Southeast England in August 1944. Bobby (1925-1968) joined his brother's administration as Attorney General at the tender age of 36 and was later assassinated while running for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1968. The youngest of the Kennedy boys, Teddy (1932-2009), was a widely-respected US Senator for Massachusetts from 1962 until his death.

1936 book, *I'm for Roosevelt*[117], that helped persuade fellow business magnates to cast their vote for the New Deal. Joe Sr. earned himself a prize diplomatic posting as ambassador to the Court of St. James in December 1937 as compensation for his efforts.

Joe Sr., obsessed with the family name and legacy, was determined to set his sons up for the political success that had eluded him. The Kennedy children spent leisurely summers swimming and playing sports at the family's second home in the affluent village of Hyannis Port on Cape Cod, but were bundled off to elite boarding schools every September.

John studied at the Canterbury School and then Choate, both in Connecticut, receiving poor marks in all subjects except the two that really interested him: English and History. Being popular, relatively athletic, and son to a rich, politically-connected businessman, this did not, however, present an obstacle to further study, and John entered Harvard in the autumn of 1936. Entry into an elite Ivy League school did little at first to improve John's work ethic, and it appeared that his elder brother Joe, already an upperclassman at Harvard, was far more likely to enjoy the success Joe Sr. desired. With looming crises in Germany and Japan as he began his second year at Harvard, John's interest in continental affairs and international politics began to grow and he started to take his studies more seriously. His father's appointment as ambassador to Britain in December that year further stoked his curiosity.

The Irish Catholic Kennedy clan of Boston made a surprisingly easy transition to aristocratic society of late 1930s England, revelling in their liberation from American

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[117] Joseph P. Kennedy, *I'm for Roosevelt* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1936).

provincialism. Joe Kennedy lacked the instinctive Anglophobia of most Boston Irish, taking pride in his opulent suite at Windsor Castle and boasting of his connections with British nobility[118]. Joe Sr. had long been trying to shake the "Irish" label that had dogged him through all of his business and political dealings at home, and it was in Britain that he was finally accepted as an American[119].

2. John sits with his father, Joseph Kennedy, 1938. A powerful financier, Joe Kennedy was appointed ambassador to the UK that year.
Photo: Pictorial Parade/Getty Images
1 January 1938

Joe Sr. did make a tremendous first impression in London for breaking many of the staid diplomatic conventions that had become clearly anachronistic by the early 20th

[118] Kearns Goodwin, 512-7.
[119] Maier, 136.

Century[120]. Kennedy senior soon ingratiated himself with the like-minded isolationist elites in the right-wing Cliveden Set, and later supported the marriage of his daughter Kathleen, a darling of the London social circles, to Billy Cavendish, the Anglican Marquess of Hartington[121]. Still, Joe Kennedy had lobbied President Roosevelt hard to serve in the Court of St. James, the most prestigious of diplomatic postings, because he saw it as confirmation of his social superiority over established Boston Brahmins and as a springboard to create future opportunities for his children. Joe Sr. had more charm than understanding of foreign relations and he would soon prove an embarrassment to the professional diplomats in the State Department. The British would never forgive him for his pessimistic assessments of London's ability to withstand German aggression and he was forced to give up his ambassadorship in 1940[122].

Nevertheless, life had been good for the Kennedys in Britain, at least before war broke out and Joe fell from grace. Young John in particular became an ardent Anglophile during his time in England and built life-long friendships with aristocratic acquaintances of his sister Kathleen, such as future ambassador to the United States David Ormsby-Gore[123]. British elitism dovetailed nicely with the sense of social superiority Joe Kennedy had been trying to instil in his children.

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[120] Kearns Goodwin, 516. She writes, "[h]e appeared to possess that kind of health and strength which figured in the ideal image the English already held of Americans at their best. Friendly, frank, and well disposed, he created an immediate sensation in the press when, playing his first round of golf in England, he lofted an iron shot off the tee and into the cup for a hole in one."
[121] Wills, 76-7.
[122] Hersch, 61-3.
[123] Leaming, 21-4. Leaming's work generally provides the most detailed examination of Kennedy's deepening Anglophilia during his time in Britain in 1938.

More importantly, Joe used his position in London to get John a summer job working at the American embassy there in 1938[124]. This was, Barbara Leaming argues, also a time when the arch anti-appeaser, Winston Churchill, would play a "monumental influence" turning Kennedy away from his father's worldview of narrow isolationism and willingness to cohabitate with aggressive dictatorships. She finds evidence that a frail, bookish Kennedy first became acquainted with Churchill's ideas in detail at age 15, reading his account of the First World War, *The World Crisis*, while he was laid up in a Boston hospital. She credits *The World Crisis* with introducing Kennedy to ideas like "duty and honor before self-interest", arguing that his "encounter with the work was the start of his lifelong fascination with how wars begin—and how to prevent them[125]."

In 1940 Kennedy's senior thesis at Harvard on Britain's unpreparedness for war with Germany became the basis of his first book, *Why England Slept*[126]. The work's title paid homage to Churchill's survey of international relations from 1932 to 1938, *While England Slept: A Survey of World Affairs*[127], while its central argument reflected much of his father's world view. Joe Kennedy's influence over *Why England Slept* was pervasive. Joe had selected the topic for his son's senior Harvard thesis—eventually completed with the aid of a personal secretary and five stenographers—and the final product "echoed the ambassador's sympathetic attitude toward Neville Chamberlain[128]." Thomas C. Reeves implies further intervention from Kennedy senior, noting that the two faculty readers at

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[124] Dallek, 53-4. He writes, "[t]he work itself was less memorable than the social whirl Jack enjoyed. He found a warm welcome from England's aristocracy and had ready access to the teas, balls, dances, regattas, and races that were part of their summer ritual."
[125] Leaming, 21-4.
[126] John F. Kennedy, *Why England Slept* (New York: Wilfred Funk, Inc., 1961).
[127] Winston S. Churchill, *While England Slept; a survey of world affairs, 1932-1938* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1938).
[128] Reeves, 49.

Harvard agreed to award John magna cum laude standing for his work, despite "poor writing and faulty analysis." Joe then arranged for John to send a copy of the thesis to New York Times journalist Arthur Krock, who Joe had been feeding information in exchange for friendly reporting, for assistance transforming the hastily-written project into a book. With heavy editing from Joe's personal speech writer and Krock, a promotional campaign from family friend Henry Luce at *Time-Life* magazines, favourable reviews in family-friendly newspapers, and a fortuitous summer 1940 publication date just months in advance of the Luftwaffe's blitz against Britain, a best-seller was born[129].

The experience of appeasement did not dampen Kennedy's Anglophilia, and he rather apologetically shaped the politics of 1930s Britain as "a case of a democratic form of government, with a capitalistic economy, trying to compete with the new totalitarian system, based on an economy of rigid state control[130]." His book was meant to serve as a cautionary tale to the United States, which shared similar values, institutions and economic principles, and was generally forgiving to Britain. Even where there was inept leadership from Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin and flawed assumptions from Neville Chamberlain, there were more courageous men like Anthony Eden and Winston Churchill to replace them[131]. Garry Wills writes that the book illustrated just how much "[Kennedy] admired [British] adventurer aristocrats, who could save the people by guiding them, sometimes without their knowledge[132]."

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[129] John F. Kennedy, *Why England Slept*, 50-1.
[130] Ibid., 217.
[131] Ibid., 218-24.
[132] Wills, 82.

As revealing as *Why England Slept* is in regards to Kennedy's views of Britain, there is very little corresponding work from his Harvard years that sheds light on his perceptions of France[133]. It is, however, abundantly clear from Kennedy's 15-page travel diary from his three-week summer tour of France with life-long friend LeMoyne "Lem" Billings as a 20-year-old in 1937 that Kennedy had absorbed the crude French stereotypes common of his generation and had already acquired a distaste for France long before ever setting foot in the country. Stanley Allen Renshon, a professor of the Psychology of Social and Political Behaviour at The City University of New York who has written extensively on presidential leadership, argues "that the child acquires basic beliefs about the nature of the world at an early age… [and] that this process of basic belief acquisition has crucial implications for the political socialisation process[134]." Essentially, what we learn about the world at an early age is both enduring and hugely influential on our views through adulthood. As an elected official after the war, Kennedy was understandably wise enough not to put these prejudices to paper, making this travel diary doubly important.

In the early 20th Century an unprecedented number of middle and upper class Americans like Kennedy travelled to Europe, an experience that unintentionally helped them shape their own national identity. Christopher Endy writes, "[v]oyaging to Europe compelled travelers to reflect on what it meant to be an American… it was a process of

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[133] Hamilton finds that Kennedy's written work on France at Harvard before he embarked for Europe demonstrated more enthusiasm for the sexual exploits of 16th Century playboy-king Francis I than the grammatical nuances of the French language (170).

[134] Stanley Allen Renshon, "The Role of Personality Development in Political Socialization," in Schwartz and Schwartz, eds., *New Directions in Political Socialization* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 37.

testing a worldview or sense of national self by encountering a European 'other[135].'" He argues that European travel reinforced the traditional stereotypes about the differences that separated Americans from their European cousins, though many travellers relished in exploring a traditional, aesthetically-conscious society that was different from the characterless, hyper- modern industrial homeland they left behind[136]. For most Americans, travel to France around the turn of the century "strengthened U.S. sympathy for [the country] in part because of France's ability to satisfy Americans' expectations of a romantic Old World[137]." In Kennedy's case in the 1930s, experiencing the quaintness of France first hand led him to the quite opposite conclusions that the country was conservative, backward in thinking and economically, and most importantly, ill-prepared for trouble ahead with Hitler's Germany.

On 1 July 1937 Kennedy embarked on his first major trip to Europe, a six-week tour that would begin in France and take him to Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany. Kennedy's interest in international relations, which deepened around the time of his European trip, was well-established by the late 1930s and his views had matured to the point evidenced that he was outwardly capable of producing a competent analysis of high British politics. A recurring theme throughout his entries was French complacency in the face of major upheaval in neighbouring Germany. Spiritually, economically, and politically, the French were simply unprepared to defend the hard fought gains of World War I[138]. On an individual level, Kennedy did encounter plenty of kindness for the

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[135] Christopher Endy, Travel and World Power: Americans in Europe, 1890–1917," *Diplomatic History* 22, no. 4 (1998): 565-94.
[136] Ibid., 571-2.
[137] Ibid., 585.
[138] Hamilton, 179.

French, but noted it in passing. He saved more colourful language for pointing out flaws in the French national character, of which he found many.

Kennedy's travel journal begins with his arrival by sea at the bustling English Channel seaport Le Havre and follows a leisurely journey southward to Monte Carlo. His first entry on 9 July marked his impressions of Rheims Cathedral, a World War I fort, and the Roman-built red chalk caves of the Champagne region. As Kennedy put pen to paper, he contrasted the general air of political disorder in France[139] to the progressive, unifying reform program of President Roosevelt back home in the United States.

Though he felt that he was "treated very well" by the locals, his conversation with the kindly manager of the restaurant in which he had lunch (and, to his delight, was offered a free bottle of champagne) led him to this conclusion:

> The general impression seems to be that while they would like Roosevelt, his type of government would not succeed in a country like France which seems to lack the ability of seeing a problem as a whole—They don't like Blum as he takes away their money and gives it to someone else. That to a Frenchman is tres 'mauvais'. The general impression also seems to be that there will not [original underlined] be a war in the near future and that France is much too well prepared for Germany. The permanence of the alliance of Germany and Italy is also questionable[140].

Kennedy's remark that the French "lack the ability to see problems as a whole" is a damning assessment of a serious national character defect, assigning a fundamental lack of logical thinking in an entire people as a whole. Though he does not explicitly compare

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[139] French Prime Minister Léon Blum, a socialist Jew who polarized France equally with his political and religious background, had resigned in June after months of agonizing over whether his government should intervene on behalf of the motley collection of Republican Common Fronters fighting against German and Italian-backed fascists in the Spanish Civil War. The Popular Front survived Blum's fall, but continued on as a shaky coalition with considerable infighting between its socialist, Radical and Communist members.

[140] Diary European Trip, 1937, The Personal Papers of John F. Kennedy (1917-1963), Series 2 Early Years, 1928-1940, box 1, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum [hereafter: JFKL], 4-5.

the French to Americans (or the British) in this passage, this presumably was not a common fault one encountered amongst fellow Americans. That Kennedy made these sweeping observations based on one conversation with a bourgeois restaurateur two days after setting foot in the country is clear indication that many of his views of France had been formed well before his trip began.

In noting that the Socialist Blum "takes away their money", Kennedy was echoing a common American swipe at the French, who were frequently derided in the American press for the ease at which they were taken in by the destructive policies of the Radical, socialist, and communist parties. Furthermore, the issue of low French taxation was a sore point in the United States in the 1920s, where a wide segment of American opinion held to the view that France had been deliberate in keeping its taxation rates low as a means of crying poor and avoiding repayment of its war debts to the United States. Kennedy's final comment on the French belief that there would be no war with Germany in the near future because France was "much too well prepared" further hints that he likely bought into popular interwar American perceptions that the French were both militaristic and excessively proud of their martial prowess.

The following day, 10 July, Kennedy moved on from quiet, provincial Rheims to bustling Paris. What he found there was highly disagreeable. Kennedy's journal entries from Paris demonstrated that he took a cynical view of French claims to civilization. The historical landmarks in Paris that delighted other American travellers felt to him artificial. On an individual level, even urban-dwelling French had the hygiene habits of peasants, were backward in every sense of the word, and were thoroughly corrupt and greedy. Shortly after he reached the city, Kennedy had this encounter:

> Arrived at 1:00. Found a new place to stay for 40 Francs. Have now acquired the habit of leaving the car around the block to keep the price from going up. Had the lights fixed and got another screwing—These French will try to rob at every turn[141].

The French had earned a reputation for swindling American tourists who flocked to Paris seeking bargains in the 1920s, and here Kennedy showed that he felt nothing has changed a decade later.

The following day Kennedy made the following observations of French hygiene:

> Went to church then after lunch went out to Fontainebleau. Very interesting but not given to what you would expect as all seems very artificial. Rather crowded and the distinguishing mark of the Frenchman is his cabbage breath and the fact that there are no bath-tubs[142].

He went on to mention that café fare did not agree with him and he was "having difficulty with the eggs as it necessary to ask for them about six minutes as the stove is a bit off[143]." His impression of Fontainebleau seems to indicate that he viewed the trappings of French civilization more of the garish, tourist-drawing sort rather than authentic manifestations of the high culture the French aspired to project abroad. Additionally, he seemed to take a school boy's pleasure in observing the irony that the French, who viewed themselves and their culture in such high esteem, frequently lacked even most basic of amenities such as a bathtub or properly working stove and were completely oblivious to their own appalling personal hygiene.

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[141] Ibid., 7.
[142] Ibid., 8. American travellers to Italy and France frequently railed against poor standards of sanitary facilities there and the poor personal hygiene of the locals. Many viewed this as evidence that the "Latins" were not full member of the civilized community of nations like Americans and Britons. See, Endy, *Travel and World Power*, 582-3.
[143] Ibid.

The following week Kennedy traveled south to Orléans, where inspection of the rural hinterland provided further fuel for his perception of French backwardness. While Kennedy found Orléans itself to be "amazing", he immediately after noted that "France is really quite a primitive nation[144]." He elaborates in these comments on the French countryside:

> Very impressed by the little farms we have been driving thru. America does not realize how fortunate they are. These people are satisfied with very little and they have very little so it is really a very conservative country, at least outside of Paris[145].

The choice of the word "impressed" is a curious one considering that he seems more surprised by rural French poverty and the noticeably inferior state of French agriculture to that of the United States. If Kennedy felt French peasants might have been living a seemingly idyllic life in the country's bucolic regions, they were simply too *borné* to realize how poorly off they were in comparison to farmers in other advanced western countries. The juxtaposition of French claims of high civilization to a large swath of the country made up of peasants who lived in primitive conditions must have seemed ironic to Kennedy.

Kennedy then moved further south to St. Jean de Luc, a small community roughly 100 kilometres from the frontier with war-torn Spain. Various atrocities committed during the Civil War raging to the south were on his mind as Kennedy took in his first bull fight, a sport typically associated with Spain that, now as then, is only popular in a handful of towns in Southern France. Nevertheless, he used the spectacle to again make

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[144] Ibid., 11.
[145] Ibid., 12.

sweeping generalizations about the French that served as further evidence of a defect in their national character:

> In the afternoon went to a bull-fight. Very interesting but very cruel, especially when the bull gored the horse. Believe all the atrocity stories now, as these southerners, such as the French and Spanish, are happiest at scenes of cruelty. They thought funniest sight was when horse ran out of the ring with his guts trailing. Managed to try some spears later for 20¢ each[146].

Perhaps most ironic though is that while Kennedy claims that he found the practice of bullfighting disgusting, he was still curious enough to try his hand at spear-throwing. Interesting also was that he lumps the French and Spanish, "these southerners", together as though they belonged to the same civilization, which was quite typical of late 19th Century Anglo-Saxonists who saw both peoples as members of a common "Latin" race. This sort of observation would not at all be uncommon amongst members of his parents' generation.

Other entries show that Kennedy was unimpressed by French women, who were both excessively conservative and insufficiently attractive for the young playboy's tastes, but these impressions were most likely the result of frustration from his lack of sexual conquests during the French leg of the trip[147]. Being a country that was typically ascribed womanly traits in American eyes, one can only speculate that his unfavourable impression of French womanhood provided further fodder for his negative views of the people and country as a whole. Just after he said goodbye to the country on 1 August, when he crossed over into Italy, Kennedy offered one final parting shot for posterity that

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[146] Ibid., 14.
[147] Ibid., 13. He wrote, "Went for a swim and then that night, after a cocktail party of Wilson's, played Boule—lost seventy francs. Was out with French girl. Their customs very strict requiring a chaperone until 21 or so."

now seems quite embarrassing. He wrote, "[w]ent to the beach... Saw our first good-looking foreign girls...The Italian streets are much more full and lively than those of French and the whole race seeming more attractive. Fascism seems to treat them well[148]."

Earlier in the trip Kennedy had expressed his disapproval of France's leftist Popular Front government, but he held no similar qualms about Mussolini's fascist regime, such was his relief at finally leaving the country behind. At the tail end of his voyage, Kennedy travelled up the German Rhine on his way back to England, noting "[v]ery beautiful as there are many castles all along the way. All the towns are very attractive, showing that the Nordic races certainly seem superior to the Latins. The Germans really are too good—it makes people gang against them for protection[149]." Kennedy's racial hierarchy at the time held Britons out as the most exemplary people of Europe, followed by Germans—who did unnerve him with their militaristic over-confidence, then Italians, and finally the French.

Kennedy's European travel journal demonstrates clearly that he did conform to popular American prejudices of France by his early adult years. His European trip took place during a particularly turbulent period of world history, but also at a time when Kennedy was developing an identity of his own[150]. Hamilton argues that when Kennedy returned to Harvard in the autumn of 1937, he had adopted a "deeper emotional coolness [that] accorded with Anglo-Saxon society... [and] [i]ncreasingly... saw England as the political anchor of Europe, the guarantor of peace between arrogant Germans, complacent

[148] Ibid., 15.
[149] Hamilton, 194.
[150] Ibid., 183.

French, noisy Latins, and Communist Russians[151]." He would carry the national stereotypes that appeared to be confirmed by these travels into the White House, where they shaped his presidential dealings with European countries. Kennedy's perceptions of France formed at this juncture remained largely intact through his political career, and revealed themselves more subtly when he spoke out against European colonialism—its French form in particular—as a young Senator in Washington after the war.

[151] Ibid., 199.

CHAPTER 2: Building the Perfect Candidate

By the end of WWII John F. Kennedy had emerged as a well-connected Harvard graduate, author of a popular book, decorated navy veteran of the Pacific War, and a budding young journalist with the Hearst chain assigned to cover the peace conferences in the summer of 1945. He was clearly a rising star in the making and his political career began officially the following year when he was elected Congressman for Massachusetts' 11th Congressional District, a position he would hold for the next six years. In 1952, he was elected to the Senate, where he soon gained a reputation for sharp anti-colonial rhetoric at a time when France was fighting a losing battle to retain control of Vietnam and local nationalist movements were organizing themselves to fight against European rule elsewhere. Throughout his pre-presidential political career from 1946 to 1960, Kennedy's most biting commentary was consistently reserved for the French, be it for their policy in Vietnam[152] or later Algeria[153]. While Britain had successfully negotiated

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[152] Valuable English-language additions to the French literature on the First Indochina War noted on pp. 9-11 include: Lawrence S. Kaplan, Denise Artaud, and Mark R. Rubin, eds., *Dien Bien Phu and the Crisis of Franco-American relations, 1954-1955* (Wilmington, DC: SR Books, 1990); Mark Atwood Lawrence and Fredrik Logevall, eds., *The First Vietnam War: colonial conflict and cold war crisis* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2007); Martin Shipway, *The Road to War: France and Vietnam, 1944-1947* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1996); Kathryn C. Statler, *Replacing France: The Origins of American Intervention in Vietnam* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2007); and Stein Tønnesson, *Vietnam 1946: how the war began* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009).

[153] For accounts of the French counterinsurgency in Algeria and the American view of the conflict, see: Martin S. Alexander and John F.V. Keiger *France and the Algerian War, 1954-62: strategy, operations and diplomacy* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002); David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria, 1956-1958* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006); Constantine A. Pagedas, *Anglo-American strategic relations and the French Problem, 1960-1963: a troubled partnership* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000); Todd Shepard, *The Invention of Decolonization: the Algerian War and the remaking of France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Benjamin Stora, *Imaginaires de guerre: Algérie, Viêt-Nam, en France et aux Etats-Unis* (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 1997); John Talbott, *The War Without a Name: France in Algeria, 1954-1962* (New York: Knopf, 1980); Martin Thomas, *The French North African Crisis: colonial breakdown and Anglo-French relations, 1945-62*

its peaceful disengagement from India and was taking the fight to Malayan rebels, Kennedy worried openly that ham-fisted French colonial rule would drive the most rebellious of the 4th Republic's subjects into communist arms, undermining America's Cold War campaign to woo Third World nationalists away from the Soviet bloc.

Discussion of the French colonial legacy in Indochina[154] or the strengths and weaknesses of the Fourth Republic[155] are tangential to American foreign policy in

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(New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); and Irwin Wall, *France, the United States, and the Algerian War* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

[154] For Vietnamese views of French rule, see the exhaustive Arthur J. Dommen, *The Indochinese Experience of the French and the Americans: nationalism and communism in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001). Peter Zinoman's, *The Colonial Bastille: a history of imprisonment in Vietnam, 1862-1940* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001) is a fascinating look at how draconian conditions in the colonial prison system stoked nationalist sentiment and unintentionally served as an institutional setting for revolutionary education. Relevant general studies include: Nicola Cooper, *France in Indochina: colonial encounters* (Oxford: Berg, 2001); J.P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: religion, republicanism, and the making of French colonialism, 1880-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Alec G. Hargreaves, ed., *Memory, empire, and postcolonialism: legacies of French colonialism* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005); John E. Dreifort, *Myopic Grandeur: the ambivalence of French foreign policy toward the Far East, 1919-1945* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1991) and, Truong Buu Lam, *Colonialism Experienced: Vietnamese writings on colonialism, 1900-1931* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

[155] While the Fourth Republic has traditionally been viewed as weak and fractious—see, for example, Raymond Aron, *France: Steadfast and Changing: the Fourth to the Fifth Republic,* trans. J. Irwin and Luigi Einaudi (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960)—newer interpretations are somewhat more kind. Works from Alan Milward and William Hitchcock have shattered illusions that weak and divided Fourth Republic governments meekly accepted American direction and by implication that de Gaulle later allowed his own wartime bitterness dictate his foreign policy. Milward's *The Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1945-51* (London: Methuen, 1984) shows that Marshall Plan-era French governments proved surprisingly adept at thwarting American objectives and applied American aid in a fashion that better suited their own national economic agendas. Building on Milward's work, William I. Hitchcock argues in *France Restored: Cold War Diplomacy and the Quest for Leadership in Europe, 1944-1954* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998) that the institutional weakness of early Fourth Republic did allow for innovation and manoeuvre in policy-making as political division inspired seemingly technocratic, apolitical solutions. He finds that there was a similar effect on French foreign policy, and that France was able to build consensus on regional stabilization that led to reconciliation with Germany on terms designed to suit France's economic needs. He believes that Fourth Republic governments crafted a more coherent and successful national recovery strategy than they were given credit for, reinforcing Milward's view that France was able to use Marshall Plan aid to pursue its own national interests.
Generally concurring with this view are most notably, Richard Vinen, *France, 1934-1970* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); Tyler E. Stovall, *France Since the Second World War* (New York: Longman, 2002); and Irwin Wall, *The United States and the Making of Postwar France, 1945-1954* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Southeast Asia during the Kennedy administration, but an exploration of the manner in which Kennedy viewed French colonial rule in the 1950s helps establish a link between his negative pre-war perceptions of France and his unwillingness to collaborate with de Gaulle on peace in Vietnam in the early 1960s.

3. Lieutenant John Kennedy on PT-109
Navy Lt. John F. Kennedy commands a torpedo boat in the Southwest Pacific, December, 1942. In 1943, JFK saved a crewman after the boat was rammed by a Japanese ship, earning him a medal and acclaim as a war hero.
Photo: MPI/Getty Images
1 January 1943

Kennedy's negative views of French colonial policy in turn shaped his outlook of French leaders as advice givers and later predisposed him against de Gaulle's counsel when it came to this particular corner of its former empire. Kennedy's 1945 postwar

diary of his second extended trip to Europe reveals that while his views of France had become more politically mature since his first visit to the country in the late 1930s, he still retained many of the underlying assumptions that fuelled his earlier negative assessment of French national character. This diary confirms that France was seen at best as a distraction from more pressing issues facing Washington and at worst a source of annoyance. Kennedy reserved some back-handed compliments for de Gaulle, but generally clung to the view that France was a decadent exporter of luxury goods and a bumbling, overly-ambitious colonial ruler that contributed nothing of value to the development of its empire.

In a series of public addresses through the 1950s, Kennedy repeatedly charged France with standing in the way of the establishment of a "free and independent" Vietnam that would be able to resist communist advances. He also firmly rejected suggestions that the United States could reach a modus operandi with Ho Chi Minh that would see the establishment of a unified, but non-aligned, socialist Vietnam along the lines of Tito's Yugoslavia[156]. After France suffered its humiliating penultimate defeat at the hands of the Vietminh at Dien Bien Phu and withdrew from the country in 1954, Kennedy turned his sights to rebelling Algeria, which he sympathetically viewed as

[156] Kennedy met with Tito on several occasions both before and after becoming president. He found the Yugoslav leader to be a generally agreeable man with whom the United States could do business despite his socialist reorganization of Yugoslavian society. The great tragedy of Kennedy's Vietnam policy was that he was unwilling to make the same bargain with Ho Chi Minh, who unlike Tito had not broken off relations with the Soviet Union. For American relations with Tito's regime, see, Henry W. Brands Jr., "Redefining the Cold War: American Policy toward Yugoslavia, 1948–60," *Diplomatic History* 11, no. 1 (1987): 41-54; Beatrice Heuser, *Western Containment Policies in the Cold War: the Yugoslav case, 1948-53* (New York: Routledge, 1989); David L. Larson, *United States Foreign Policy Toward Yugoslavia, 1943-1963* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979); John R. Lampe, Russell O. Prickett, and Ljubiša S. Adamović, *Yugoslav-American Economic Relations since World War II* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990).

another badly mismanaged corner of the French empire in danger of falling under the sway of radicals who made easy prey for Moscow.

By the time he became president, Kennedy had come to the hard and fast conclusion that French colonial rule had been completely without merit and that Paris had nothing to teach him on how to deal with nascent Third World regimes. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that no matter how well-structured or logical de Gaulle's cautionary advice against deeper American intervention in Vietnam in subsequent years or how pleasant the personality of the messenger who brought it to Washington, Kennedy had totally closed his ears to any French advice on the region.

Kennedy's postwar diaries span from late June to early August 1945, during which time he ventured from San Francisco to Berlin via London, Dublin and Paris as a Hearst correspondent charged with making sense of the negotiations that wrapped up the war from a GI's perspective. Hugh Sidney, the friendly Kennedy biographer and *Time* magazine journalist who edited the diary in the mid-1990s, calls it "the only known personal record of the future President at this stage of his development[157]." His diary, spanning 62 mostly type-written pages, reveals a more mature, thoughtful Kennedy than the young man who had visited Europe almost a decade earlier. Surveying firsthand the massive wartime destruction across the heart of Western Europe, Kennedy was naturally fixated on postwar elections, establishing political stability and the mean task ahead for those responsible for bringing about economic recovery. He was deeply concerned for

[157] John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Hugh Sidney, Deirdre Henderson, *Prelude to Leadership: the Postwar Diary of John F. Kennedy* (Washington, DC: Regnery Pub., 1995), xiii.

the future and recognized that the short-term outlook for the continental powers was grim.

Surveying the major European power, Kennedy lamentably noted the rise of Labour Party rule in Britain and the electoral defeat of his idol, Winston Churchill, but remained confident that socialist experimentation would not snuff out the best British traditions of individual liberty. As dire as the situation was in Berlin[158] Kennedy was pleased at how orderly ordinary Germans were in the Western occupation zone. He viewed German bureaucrats and workers as highly skilled and efficient, characteristics that augured well for their future integration into the western alliance[159]. When it came to France, however, Kennedy demonstrated an inability to comprehend the importance of de Gaulle's leadership to this extremely fractious and geopolitically invaluable American ally. Sidney argues that Kennedy had reached the conclusion that France was "a difficult woman" and the United States was better off "leav[ing] de Gaulle and his France alone and pass on to other more important things... sentiments [that] seemed to echo right down to Kennedy's White House[160]."

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[158] Ibid., 58. There was no residual warmth for America's former wartime ally, the Soviet Union, in this diary. He reached the somewhat ironic conclusion that "[i]n many ways the 'SS' were as bad as the Russians" who had terrorized the civilian population with an orgy of stealing, raping and looting.
[159] For American planning for postwar Germany and cultural interaction between Germans and Americans in the 1940s, see especially: Michael Ermarth, ed., *America and the Shaping of German Society, 1945-1955* (Providence, RI: Berg, 1993); Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans : culture, gender and foreign relations, 1945-1949* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003); Richard L. Merritt, *Democracy Imposed: U.S. occupation policy and the German public, 1945-1949* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); Frank Ninkovich, *Germany and the United States: the transformation of the German question since 1945* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1988); Reiner Pommerin, *The American impact on postwar Germany* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995); Alexander Stephan, ed., *Americanization and anti-Americanism: the German encounter with American culture after 1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005); and, James C. Van Hook, *Rebuilding Germany: the creation of the social market economy, 1945-1957* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
[160] John Fitzgerald Kennedy, et al., *Prelude to Leadership*, xl-xli.

As outlined earlier, Anglophilism and Francophobia are frequently two sides of the same coin, and this remained the case for Kennedy after the war. In his 29 June 1945 diary entry for a high society soirée in Eastbourne at the estate of the Duke of Devonshire, then Under Secretary of State for Colonies, he made unfavourable comparisons between British and French policy in India[161] and the Levant[162] respectively. Kennedy had a mixed assessment of the Duke, referring to him as "a statesman of mediocre ability but outstanding integrity[163]", though he nodded approvingly at the Duke's comments implying that Britain had little choice but to disengage from India.

Whereas the British were seemingly bracing themselves for the loss of what had long been the jewel of their empire, Kennedy noted critically that the French were vainly fighting tooth and nail to retain their position in the Eastern Mediterranean. Kennedy wrote, "[i]n the Levant, France had been consistently warned. It was France's traditional policy of domination of this part of the middle East [sic] which was carried out at a time when French prestige and power was too weak to successfully carry it through[164]." The

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[161] For British decolonization in India, see: D. George Boyce, *Decolonisation and the British Empire, 1775-1997* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); Piers Brendon, *The Decline and Fall of the British Empire, 1781-1997* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008); Wm. Roger Louis, *Ends of British Imperialism: the scramble for empire, Suez and decolonization: collected essays* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Peter Robb, *A History of India* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); John. Springhall, *Decolonization since 1945: the collapse of European overseas empires* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001); and, A. Martin Wainwright, *Inheritance of Empire: Britain, India, and the balance of power in Asia, 1938-55* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994).

[162] For the end of French rule in the Levant and Anglo-French rivalry in the region, see especially: Henry H. Cumming, *Franco-British Rivalry in the Post-war Near East: the decline of French influence* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986); A.B. Gaunson, *The Anglo-French clash in Lebanon and Syria, 1940-45* (London: Macmillan, 1987); Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon under French Mandate* (New York, Octagon Books, 1972); John Marlowe, *Perfidious Albion: the origins of Anglo-French rivalry in the Levant* (London: Elek Books, 1971); Nadine Méouchy and Peter Sluglet, eds., *The British and French Mandates in Comparative Perspectives* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2004); and, Martin Thomas, *The French Empire at War, 1940-45* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1998).

[163] John Fitzgerald Kennedy, et al., *Prelude to Leadership*, 11.

[164] Ibid., 13.

comment is left to dangle without further elaboration, but there is some irony to Kennedy's implied approval of British realism in India contrasted to the hopelessly wrong-headed selfishness that motivated France in Lebanon and Syria during the later stages of World War II.

By 1945, Britain simply lacked the money and resources to hold roughly 300 million colonial subjects in South Asia against their will and sensibly chose to withdraw from an increasingly untenable position. This in no way indicated any general policy of turning over other colonies to national liberation movements just yet, as London proved itself quite willing and able to meet Malaysian rebels (1948 to 1960)[165] and Mau Maus in Kenya (1952 to 1960)[166] with force when colonial subjects tried to push the independence agenda faster than Britain was willing to move. The wartime split between rival Vichy and Free French governments spelled the end of French rule in Lebanon and Syria—both post-WWI mandates where French control had never run deep and the economic gain for Paris was marginal at best—and facing the inevitable the French did withdraw the last of their forces relatively bloodlessly from the Levant in early 1946. Comparing the two, Kennedy would have had little reason to believe that one policy was conducted any better than the other unless he was prejudiced that the British were innately capable of pulling off a limited colonial withdrawal better than the French.

Later entries from France show that Kennedy projected a late wartime Anglo-Saxon dissatisfaction with an increasingly assertive de Gaulle onto the French people as a

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[165] See: Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Wars: the end of Britain's Asian Empire* (New York: Allen Lane, 2007); and Karl Hack, *Defence and Decolonisation in South-East Asia: Britain, Malaya and Singapore, 1941-1968* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 2000).

[166] See: Caroline Elkins, *Britain's Gulag: the brutal end of empire in Kenya* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005); and, David A. Percox, *Britain, Kenya and the Cold War: imperial defence, colonial security and decolonisation* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2004).

whole[167]. On 28 July 1945, he wrote "[p]eople are disappointed with DeGaulle [sic]. He has not pleased any group (which may be a sign of fair government) and has made himself extremely unpopular with most[168]." The latter comment is a sort of back-handed compliment, and Kennedy implied that a conservative de Gaulle was at least a lesser of two evils when he wrote "[a]ny movement against DeGaulle [sic] will take the form of a swing to the Left—the victory of the socialists in Britain may accentuate this swing[169]."

Kennedy did show some sympathy for the plight of French civilians and recognized that American actions in France could be seen as heavy-handed. He wrote:

> Food is hard to get for people in the city because of lack of transportation... United States unpopularity is strengthened by the fact that we control most of the rolling stock (railroad, cars, trucks, etc.) and use it to feed and supply our own forces. The French have nothing.

Subsequent notes indicate that he chose to perceive France as a decadent exporter of luxury goods[170], a view that came with a corresponding set of unspoken assumptions regarding the feminine nature of the French as a people. France certainly was internationally known for a wide range of luxury goods, contrasting it sharply with more

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[167] For social conditions in France in 1944-1945, see especially: Anthony Beevor and Artemis Cooper, *Paris after the Liberation, 1944-1949* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004); Shannon L. Fogg, *The Politics of Everyday Life in Vichy France: foreigners, undesirables, and strangers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Robert Gildea, *France since 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); and, Rod Kedward, *La vie en bleu: France and the French since 1900* (London: Allen Lane, 2005).

[168] John Fitzgerald Kennedy, et al., *Prelude to Leadership*, 41.

[169] Ibid.

[170] For French economic conditions at the end of World War II, see especially: William James Adams, *Restructuring the French Economy: government and the rise of market competition since World War II* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1989); Frances M.B. Lynch, *France and the International Economy: from Vichy to the Treaty of Rome* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Alan S. Milward, *New Order and the French Economy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970); and,Valérie-Anne Montassier, *Les années d'après-guerre, 1944-1949: la vie politique en France, l'économie les relations internationales, l'Union française* (Paris: Fayard, 1980).

industrialized Britain and Germany, but it was also heavily engaged in more traditionally masculine economic pursuits such as agriculture, auto building, and banking that did not fit into Kennedy's preconceived gender-laden notions.

In a very brief entry on monetary matters such as exchange rates, tariffs, and their implications for importers/exporters, Kennedy notes, "[p]erfume and luxury goods are no longer of first class quality. Perfumes are not the musk base of former days. The musk supply, which comes from the East, has been turned off[171]." When addressing the challenges facing French exporters, he wrote that brandy and wine merchants would take the biggest hit because of the franc's artificial postwar exchange rate. No mention was made of the French automotive industry or mining concerns, elements of which had been as modern or professionally-run as those found anywhere else in the world before the war. A later entry lamented "the laxity of Paris" compared to "perfect" Army discipline through Germany, further underlining his view of France as a country lacking the masculine, Anglo-Saxon characteristics of vigour, determination, and efficiency.

Unsurprisingly, Kennedy demonstrated a keen interest in foreign affairs from the moment he won election as the representative for Massachusetts' eleventh congressional district in 1946. As a junior Congressman gearing up for a Senate run in 1952, Kennedy delivered his first major foreign policy speech broadcast nationwide on 6 February 1951. Kennedy had spent five weeks in Europe during the winter of 1950-51 surveying the military preparedness of NATO allies Britain, France and Italy as well as anti-Soviet,

[171] John Fitzgerald Kennedy, et al., *Prelude to Leadership*, 42.

pro-Western states outside the NATO umbrella such as West Germany, Yugoslavia, and Spain[172].

Kennedy devoted nearly as much air time to addressing the issue of each respective nation's "will to resist" Soviet aggression as he did more quantifiable issues related to armaments, manpower, and training. In shaping the "Issues in the Defense of the West" address as such Kennedy left himself considerable room for subjective deliberations that subtly reflected his core perceptions of various European peoples. His conclusions generally conformed to his pre-existing beliefs regarding each nation's national character: the British were war-weary and cautious, but sensible and willing to fight if pushed; the Germans were competent, efficient, redeemable despite past transgressions, and would be a welcome addition to the western alliance; the French, however, were still as weak, timid, and riven by factionalism as they had been before the war.

The language of this radio address revealed the masculine characteristics Kennedy hoped to find in the most vigorous nations and reliable allies outside the Communist bloc: determination, willingness to sacrifice, efficiency, and so on[173]. Kennedy found that one

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[172] For early American NATO policy and the construction of the western alliance, see especially: John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: a critical appraisal of American national security policy during the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain, and the reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947-1952* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1987) and *A Cross of Iron : Harry S. Truman and the origins of the national security state, 1945-1954* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Geir Lundestad, *"Empire" by Integration: the United States and European integration, 1945-1997* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) and, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945: from "empire" by invitation to transatlantic drift* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); and, Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: the making of the European settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[173] John F. Kennedy, "Issues in the Defense of the West" address, 2/6/51, Pre-Presidential Papers: House of Representatives (#2.1) Series 2.2 Boston Office Speech Files, 1946-1952, box 95, JFKL, 1. Kennedy said, ``The issue of whether and how Western Europe can be defended, with or without

of America's greatest difficulties was convincing Europeans to fully commit to their own self-defence, "to make sacrifices, to face deprivation, even to starve in defence of freedom." He continued "[t]hese are the things without which armies destined for victory cannot be built, and we must find them within ourselves and our allies and those who might become our allies[174]." Of the traditional European powers most capable of making a significant contribution to the collective security of the West, Kennedy found France to be the most lacking in the qualities he—and the United States as leader of the Western Alliance—was searching for. He confessed that "France gives me a sense of division and confusion, of hesitation and doubt[175]", an outlook that would carry on through to his presidency.

As a supporter of West German rearmament, Kennedy saw France paralyzed in a hypocritical contradiction. He noted that "she looks longingly to German manpower for assistance and relief from her burden [as the backbone of the Western European defensive alliance], but at the same time she is unwilling to pay the price that Germany demands for rearming[176]." After conversations with Jules Moch, the Minister of War, and former premier Georges Bidault, Kennedy concluded that the French were unwilling to allow West Germany independent control over a "national army[177]", but felt Bonn had little reason to run the risk of becoming embroiled in wider conflicts with the communist bloc if not offered the carrot of increased autonomy from Allied occupiers.

American aid, depends as everyone agrees… on the existence in these countries of a will to resist—a determination to build up within them singly and collectively forces that, together with such aid as we may supply them, have a reasonable chance of dealing with the threatened aggression from the East."

[174] Ibid., 2.

[175] Ibid., 4.

[176] Ibid., 3.

[177] Ibid., 4.

Kennedy's sympathies clearly fell with what he perceived to be entirely reasonable demands from the West Germans, implying that waffling on German rearmament by Fourth Republic governments threatened to undermine Western European defences. Kennedy noted approvingly that the West German brass "had a more realistic and less fearsome appreciation of Russian military power... [because] they had met the Russian armies in the field and felt they knew them and their weaknesses." By arguing that the 'realistic' Western Germans were "distrustful of France's military strength [with]... the rout in 1940... still vivid in their minds[178]", he agreed with their dismissive assessment of the French army rather than recognize that it was then the largest on the continent and an essential component to the defence of Western Europe. More importantly, Kennedy indirectly reflected the Rooseveltian view of the Fall of France as a "supine capitulation" that undercut France's Great Power status.

Kennedy did approve of the more robust Cold War stance of the Gaullist opposition[179] in France, though it was politically isolated through much of the Fourth Republic period thanks to the concerted efforts of centrist and socialist parties determined to keep it and the Communist Party out of power. He was pleased to note that Gaullists rejected the fears of successive *Troisième Force* coalition governments that German rearmament might provoke a pre-emptive attack from the Soviet Union. He reported that General Billotte, a military aide to de Gaulle, promised that if Gaullists took power they

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[178] Ibid., 5.

[179] De Gaulle, the hugely popular "liberator" of France, had served as president of the provisional republic at the end of World War II and helped shape the constitution for the Fourth Republic, but resigned when he was unable to secure the strong presidency he desired from deputies. He formed a party in 1947, the RPF (Rassemblement du peuple français, or "Rally of the French People") which was, like the PCF, unable to form a government thanks to the combined opposition of a coalition of centre left and right parties. Frustrated with the political system of the Fourth Republic, he withdrew into retirement again in 1953 and turned to writing his memoirs.

would reverse the "weak" war effort of the current government by almost quadrupling the number of divisions in the French army from 20 to 75 and concede greater independence to West Germany in exchange for rearmament. By contrast, Kennedy argued that coalition governments were not only under-manning the army but had also done nothing to prepare the economy for war[180]. In this passive approach to war preparations, French governments demonstrated a distinct lack of determination, or "will to resist" in Kennedy's words, that exposed them as weak, passive, cowardly and effete when faced with the Soviet menace.

Kennedy took even greater satisfaction with the Gaullist camp for its divergence with the government on how best to deal with the Soviet-controlled *Parti Communiste Français* (PCF). French coalition governments were content to band together to keep the PCF on the political sidelines, but Kennedy remained highly concerned with this passive approach towards a five million-strong potential Fifth Column that could in future sabotage war efforts against the Eastern Bloc. Kennedy blamed the French government's economic mismanagement (low wages, inflation, insufficient price controls) on the continued appeal of the PCF, charging that "[a] prevalent criticism of France's government is that it is unable to get through to working people whereas the Communists succeed in doing so[181]." Billotte's pledge that he and de Gaulle would take "stern measures to destroy the party were they to come to power" was music to Kennedy's ears when compared to the waffling ineffectiveness of the government's *laissez faire*

[180] "Issues in the Defense of the West" address, JFKL, 4. Returning to long-standing American grievances about the nature of the French tax system, Kennedy stated, "The control of materials and the diversion of production into military channels has not really begun nor is it even being adequately planned. The tax structure, where only 15% of tax receipts come from direct taxation with the balance derived from hidden taxes, seems to slant away from bringing home to the public the burdens that a defense effort must entail."
[181] Ibid., 4.

approach[182]. As appealing as the Gaullist military platform and firm stance against communism was to Kennedy, the United States still had to deal with what it considered soft *Troisième Force* governments until the Algerian Crisis brought de Gaulle to power in 1958. This undoubtedly helped stoke his perceptions of France as an unreliable sick man of Europe that lacked the sort of vigour and determination Americans should expect from their closest allies.

The Senator and Colonial Vietnam

Vietnam was a mostly unknown backwater of the French empire to most Americans when World War II broke out, but within 20 years the country had taken on a strong emotional association in the American psyche with the geopolitical origins of Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, the "loss" of China to Mao's Communists, and the bloody stalemate in Korea. American interest in Vietnam grew in the run up to Pearl Harbor as observers commented on its geographic suitability as a jumping off point for a Japanese push into resource-rich Malaya and Indonesia (then colonies of Britain and the Netherlands respectively) and as a southern cordon of China[183]. These assessments were accurate.

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[182] Ibid.
[183] Richard H. Immerman, "Introduction" in *Dien Bien Phu and the Crisis of Franco-American Relations, 1954-1955*, eds. Lawrence S. Kaplan, Denise Artaud and Mark R. Rubin, (Wilmington, DL: SR Books, 1990), 1.

The Pearl Harbor attack on 7 December 1941 that brought the United States into World War II was designed to cover Japan's push into Southeast Asia as it grabbed resources, strategic air bases, and communications hubs. Future generations of Americans would not forget the strategic importance of the region, especially after China was taken over by a hostile communist party in 1949. In particularly vivid language in a September 1954 address on Communist advances in Indochina, Cardinal Spellman, the top ranking Catholic in North America, told an American Legion audience, "[t]ime is running out for us also, because, given the present pace of the Communist advance, it cannot be long before its encircling pincers will be turning upon ourselves. The danger of another Pearl Harbor embracing the whole American people is definitely possible and possibly imminent[184]. Determined never be taken by surprise again, Washington signed a series of political/defense pacts—most notably the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)[185]—with big regional allies like Japan, South Korea, Australia, Taiwan, Philippines, and Thailand, filling Britain's old role as the regional hegemon[186].

During the war President Roosevelt, strongly disposed against France in general and de Gaulle in particular, sympathized with Vietnamese nationalists who were trying to

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[184] Ibid., 2. See for example, Walter Lippman, "Judgements & Prophecies: the second U.S. foreign policy failure of 1954," *Time*, 13 September 1954, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,820155,00.html.

[185] On the formation of SEATO, see Leszek Buszynski, *SEATO, The Failure of an Alliance Strategy* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1983). Regarding ANZUS, see W. David McIntyre, *Background to the Anzus pact : policy-making, strategy, and diplomacy, 1945-55* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

[186] Roger Buckley, *The United States in the Asia-Pacific since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 78. Regarding Vietnam in particular, it is Buckley's view that later that Johnson's decision to go war was in character with the previous two decades of American East Asia policy and a long tradition of forceful containment of communism in the region. This view is qualified by Robert J. McMahon in *The Limits of Empire. The United States and Southeast Asia Since World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). He argues that the Truman administration abandoned its "quasi neutral approach" (36) to Indochina from mid-1949 to early 1950, a period that was seen as "the gravest global crisis of the entire post-war period (37)."

free themselves from the French yoke. Roosevelt frequently brought up the subject of Indochina of his own accord and originally envisioned some form of UN trusteeship for France's colonies after the war as punishment for the 'supine capitulation' in 1940[187]. On this understanding, he reached an anti-colonial consensus with Stalin—who then seemed unwilling to risk conflict over peripheral regions—at the Tehran and Cairo Conferences[188], but died before dismantling the French empire.

Harry Truman, by contrast, had very little interest in Southeast Asia when he assumed the presidency and, unaware of the extent of Roosevelt's colonial dealings with Stalin, preferred to defer any major decisions on the region until the war's end[189]. Truman later yielded to Churchill's pressure to allow the European powers to retain their colonies and placate France as a strong partner to Britain's postwar plans in Europe. Despite private sympathy for Vietnamese nationalists, he recognized French sovereignty as the war drew to a close in the Pacific out of a belief that American geopolitical interests demanded stability in Southeast Asia. Abrupt changes there would have negative reverberations for American designs for postwar Europe[190].

Seeking to tie a fragile postwar France to the western alliance and fearful that a Vietminh triumph would give ammunition to McCarthyites who would blame his administration for 'losing' Vietnam just as it had supposedly lost China[191], Truman felt he had no alternative but to provide material support for the French counterinsurgency

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[187] Schulzinger, 14. See also, Walter La Feber, "Roosevelt, Churchill, and Indochina: 1942-45," *The American Historical Review* 80, no. 5. (1975): 1277-95.
[188] Ibid., 13.
[189] Ibid., 17.
[190] Immerman, *Dien Bien Phu and the Crisis of Franco-American Relations, 1954-1955*, 3.
[191] Ibid., 14.

effort designed to sustain an anachronistic European colonial system[192]. The outbreak of war in Korea in June 1950 "reinforced perceptions of America's stake in Indochina... by confirming that the Communists, unchecked, were capable of military expansion [while the Chinese intervention] magnified the threat of the Sino-Soviet alliance[193]." So important was Vietnam in the Domino Theory as the gateway to the rubber, tin, and rice of nearby Malaya and Thailand that Eisenhower continued to prop up the doomed French effort until 1954, when Paris finally agreed to withdraw its forces and grant independence after suffering a humiliating defeat to the Viet Minh at Dien Bien Phu.

American frustration with developments in Vietnam grew during this time as Washington was caught in a position where it had to work through the French—who were producing little in the field despite massive American subsidies—but could not push them too hard for fear of alienating France from NATO. Many Americans felt betrayed by the Geneva Accords because Premier Joseph Laniel's government had promised that France would continue the war to victory in order to secure American financing for the Navarre Plan[194]. Fourth Republic governments measured their duration in months rather

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[192] Mark Atwood Lawrence argues in *Assuming the Burden: Europe and the American Commitment to War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) that France "usually held the initiative and set the agenda" (5) in the late 1940s and early 1950s, manipulating the United States into entering a French colonial conflict and paving the way for the American military intervention of the 1960s. He concludes that "[t]he tragedy of American policymakers in the 1944-50 period lies in the fact that the Truman administration squandered the considerable leverage it held over France to force a better outcome to the Indochina problem. That leverage was jettisoned by officials who accepted the overriding need to protect French prestige and influence at all costs (286)."

[193] Immerman, *Dien Bien Phu and the Crisis of Franco-American Relations, 1954-1955*, 11-2.

[194] Gary R. Hess, "Redefining the American Position in Southeast Asia: The United States and the Geneva and Manila Conferences" in *Dien Bien Phu and the Crisis of Franco-American Relations, 1954-1955*, 125. The plan was designed to deliver a quick victory by shifting from a defensive to offensive strategy and, amongst other things, drawing the Viet Minh into a set-piece battle against a reinforced French garrison at the Dien Bien Phu fortress on a crucial enemy supply route. The French badly underestimated Vietnamese mobility, especially when it came to heavy artillery, and Gen. Giap's forces pounded the fortress mercilessly once heavy rains began and the French were no longer

than years, however, and Laniel's successor and signatory to the Accords, Pierre Mendès-France, had been committed to a negotiated withdrawal long before growing public opposition in France forced the conflict to a close.

Whereas most in France were ready to put the war behind them by 1954 and withdraw with some measure of national prestige intact, the Geneva Accords were never accepted in Washington. Eisenhower and opposition Senator Kennedy shared a belief that the West should not negotiate from a position of military weakness, while a negotiated partition would lead to civil war, heighten the prestige of Ho Chi Minh, and provide the Soviets with an opportunity to engineer a Czechoslovakian-style power grab[195]. In actuality, the Soviet Union and China—cautious of being drawn into a peripheral conflict with the United States—pressured the North into taking a lesser settlement from France than they deserved based on the advantage they had secured on the battlefield[196], but the Eisenhower administration was unable to move beyond its strategic conception of a monolithic communist bloc making a push for Southeast Asian resources. Still, the new Diem government offered the prospect of a blank slate for those who sought a more robust defence of perceived American interests in Vietnam without French interference.

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able to resupply by air—the only possible means of doing so. The set-piece battle that was supposed to lead to French victory actually ended in humiliating defeat.

[195] Ibid., 126.

[196] Ibid., 140. Ilya V. Gaiduk argues in *Confronting Vietnam: Soviet Policy toward the Indochina Conflict, 1945–1963* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2003) that Stalin was wary of intervening in Vietnam during the Korean War era because past experience had shown that it was difficult for Moscow to control other Asian Communist movements it had been involved with since the 1920s After Stalin died, Nikita Khrushchev too tried to keep his distance from the region by deescalating the conflict with diplomacy. See Ch. 3 especially.

In *Replacing France: the Origins of American Intervention in Vietnam*, Kathryn C. Statler demonstrates that the Eisenhower administration accelerated its program to "systematically replace... French control in South Vietnam with American influence[197]." Statler's work is based on the premise that France and the United States had proven themselves fundamentally incapable of agreeing on a program to halt the communist advance in Vietnam from the earliest stages of the Indochina War. This roadblock fed a view in Washington that "replacing France in Indochina was one way for the United States to score against both communism and colonialism[198]." Americans had demanded a voice in shaping French Vietnam policy corresponding with the growing aid flow to Paris before Geneva Accords and accelerated their program once the French granted independence. Eisenhower saw France as "an unreliable and weak ally... [and] perceived the French as dupes of communist political warfare that raised false hopes for a relaxation of tensions and sowed dissension in the Western alliance[199]."

As Statler argues, Eisenhower "reject[ed] the lessons that the French experience in Indochina had to offer [and] saw French eagerness to negotiate an end to the First Indochina War as a betrayal of the Western alliance[200]." As a result, he set out on a path Kennedy could build on in which the United States would replace "the French political, military, economic, and cultural presence in Vietnam with an American one and then escalat[e] the conflict despite repeated warnings by French leaders that escalation would

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[197] Statler, 1-2. She argues, "[l]ong before decisions made in the 1960s led to the Americanization of the war in Vietnam, an entire bureaucracy was set in motion on the political, military, economic and cultural levels that paved the way for the Americanization of Vietnam itself."
[198] Ibid., 5.
[199] Ibid., 4.
[200] Ibid.

not lead to victory[201]." Rather than allow the conflict to play out with national elections by 1956 as prescribed in the Geneva peace settlement, Eisenhower instead shifted American efforts into building up a client state in the South that would be strong enough to resist pressure from the communist North[202]. By the late 1950s, the United States had billions of dollars invested in its South Vietnamese "nation-building operation" and "the American presence eventually pervaded every aspect of South Vietnamese life[203]."

Despite viciously attacking the president's foreign policy record from his perch in the Senate, Kennedy did agree with Eisenhower's Vietnam policy[204]. Even if Kennedy was more hesitant to commit American troops than Eisenhower as many historians have conceded, he did retain his predecessor's full commitment to holding the line against communist advance in the region and similarly rejected the notion that France could still play a constructive role in the country's future. Logevall is sceptical of the 'incipient withdrawal thesis' that Kennedy had decided to disengage from the conflict by the time of his assassination and would not have Americanized the war in early 1965 as Johnson did. In addition to the dearth of evidence to support the thesis, Logevall cites "a pronounced fear of a premature negotiated settlement [and]... a strong determination to remove Ngo Dinh Nhu from effective policy-making power, if necessary by removing

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[201] Ibid.
[202] Ibid., 6.
[203] Ibid., 5
[204] In *American Tragedy*, Kaiser paints Kennedy as a moderate who courageously resisted the hawkish policy he inherited from Eisenhower and the national security establishment, arguing that the long-term roots of American intervention in Vietnam began with "Cold War policies adopted by the State and Defense Departments in 1954-1956 and approved secretly by President Eisenhower—policies that called for a military response to Communist aggression almost anywhere that it might occur, and specifically in Southeast Asia (1)." This does not accord with the position of Fred I. Greenstein and Richard H. Immerman, who argue in "What Did Eisenhower Tell Kennedy about Indochina? The Politics of Misperception," *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 2 (1992): 568-87 that Eisenhower, while ambiguous, did not advise Kennedy to intervene militarily in Vietnam, but rather to make contingency plans for a unilateral intervention in Laos to prevent a communist takeover.

President Diem himself" as further indication that Kennedy had in fact decided strongly against American disengagement in the fall of 1963. Logevall adds, "the administration's fear that Nhu and Diem might opt for a deal with the enemy, perhaps with French help, made the administration all the more determined to oust them[205]."

Long before these decisions could be made, however, Kennedy had already fixated on Vietnam as one the most pressing trouble spots of America's Cold War campaign. In 1952 Kennedy won election to the Senate and quickly earned himself a reputation as a rising star in the Democratic Party with a keen interest in foreign policy issues. It was during this time that his obsession with Indochina deepened and his perception of French misrule there grew more concrete. Kennedy's Senate Files contain 71 pages of hand-written and typed notes he took on Philippe Devillers' *Histoire du Viêt-Nam de 1940 a 1952* (published in 1952), which he presumably read in preparation for his "Indochina Mutual Security Act Amendment Speech" to the Senate on 30 June 1953. Devillers was the Indochina correspondent for *Le Monde*—a French equivalent to the *New York Times*—in the late 1940s who later became a preeminent French historian of the era and an expert on the final decade of French rule in Indochina. *Histoire du Vietnam* is still considered a classic in the field of Asian Studies[206], though Kennedy laughed off many of Devillers arguments, especially his position that the West needed to negotiate with Ho because the communists were the legitimate carriers of the nationalist banner[207].

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[205] Logevall, *Choosing War*, 44.
[206] Christopher E. Goscha, review of *The Road to War: France and Vietnam, 1944-1947*, by Martin Shipway, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 3 (1998): 922-3.
[207] DeVillers locates the rightward shift of French domestic politics in 1946 culminating in the ascendance of the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire* (MRP) as the turning point postwar in Franco-Vietnamese relations. The MRP controlled foreign and colonial policies in 1940s *Troisième Force* coalition governments and made the fateful decision to abandon concessions towards real autonomy in

Kennedy's private, unguarded notes on the book reveal much of his thinking on France, de Gaulle and Indochina because they were not meant for public consumption. He condemned France's colonial record, slammed any suggestion of Titoism/neutralism for an independent Vietnam, and personally blamed de Gaulle for failing to make serious concessions as head of the provisional government in 1945. Very early on Kennedy makes clear that his sympathies lay with the Vietnamese rebels rather than French officials desperately seeking to salve badly wounded national pride. Kennedy took great interest in passages where Devillers' illustrated poor decision-making—or, as Kennedy like to call it, a "lack of realism"—from the French or implied selfish motives behind their colonial rule and desire to return to Vietnam in 1945[208].

On his first page Kennedy made a handwritten note of approval on the following quote from André Malraux, a postwar Gaullist minister with a long-standing opposition to French colonial policy in Indochina, "[a] courageous Annamite could not help but be a revolutionary[209]." Kennedy expressed similar approval for the tone of a Bao Dai message

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the colony that had been promised by leftists Jean Sainteny (author of a 1946 deal with Ho Chi Minh that would have given Vietnam considerable autonomy in exchange for staying in the Union Française) and Gen. Jacques-Philippe Leclerc (the top military man in Indochina in 1946 and equally amenable to negotiating with Ho) just as Mao's Communists were marching ever closer to victory in neighbouring China. As events in Vietnam became subsumed in larger Cold War developments in Asia, the MRP turned a limited war of reconquest into a full-scale civil war in a blundering bid to retain power through a puppet government under Bao Dai. Arguing from a realist approach that reflected a shifting balance of power in the region, deVillers concludes that French authorities should have stuck with the Sainteny-Leclerc approach and negotiated autonomy in good faith despite Ho's status as a communist.

[208] "Indo-China,"undated, John F. Kennedy Pre-Presidential Papers: Senate Files (#2.3) Series 6.8. General Files, 1953-1960, box 488, JFKL, 43.

[209] Ibid., 1.

to de Gaulle of 20 August 1945 which urged the French to show more empathy for the Vietnamese cause[210].

Kennedy believed that de Gaulle, who as head of the provisional government in 1945 made the decision to send an expeditionary force to retake Vietnam by force, was acting out of national pride rather than the best interests of his people or France's colonial subjects. He noted that de Gaulle's creation of a semi-autonomous Indochinese Federation on 24 March 1945 "came 15 years too late[211]... What de Gaulle really wanted was for France to join as one of the great powers in the fight against Japan. Knowing how the wind blew in Washington, he thought this was the best way to get back into Indo China[212]." These words provide an early indication that Kennedy believed de Gaulle had suspect motives in Vietnam from the beginning, a position that likely shaped his view of everything the French president had to say about the country in later years.

Kennedy employed negative gendered stereotypes of the French deeper into his notes on *Histoire du Viet-Nam.* In reference to France's precarious position in Vietnam in February 1945, he wrote, "[s]outh of the 16th parallel France is mistress but there's still plenty of trouble in the North[213]." By choosing to tag France as a "mistress" rather than a "master" was most likely a conscious one; this label acknowledges a position of power, but carries with it connotations of feminine deviousness, intrigue, and domination for the purposes of pleasure. Kennedy later accused France of one of the gravest, purported

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[210] Ibid., 3. Kennedy copied this passage from Bao Dai's letter: "You have suffered too much in 4 mortal years, not to realize that the Vietnamese people, who have 20 centuries of history and a past frequently glorious, cannot and will not stand for any domination or any foreign intervention. You would understand this even better if you could see what is happening here, if you could feel the will for independence which smoulders in every heart, which no human force can repress."
[211] Ibid., 5.
[212] Ibid., 6.
[213] Ibid., 8.

female character flaws: irrationality. Commenting on the failure of negotiations towards autonomy for a united Vietnam in 1946, Kennedy writes, "France shows her lack of realism—refuses [Vietnamese demands for the establishment of a neutral provisionary Cochin Chinese government in advance of a future referendum on the territory's future]—Viets leave in tears—conference ends in disaccord[214]."

Kennedy contrasted this "lack of realism" from the French with his own self-proclaimed "Objective Analysis." It was his view that:

> Paris should have, in the spring of 1947, talked to Indo China the way London had just talked to India...If [Kennedy's underlining] – France had made a 'Declaration of Policy'—like England—new parties in Indo China would have negotiated with her without being suspected by the Viet Minh of 'collaborating with the colonialists[215]'.

While this comparison fails to acknowledge even a modicum of local nuance—Britain had little choice but to withdraw from India or face a costly insurrection that would stretch its battered finances to the limit whereas the form of Vietnam's future affiliation with France was still very much in play through the early 1950s—it conforms to Kennedy's well-established Anglophilia and corresponding Francophobia. When coupled with earlier observations, Kennedy's comparison here underlines a worldview in which "realism" was the preserve of vigorous, masculine Anglo-Saxons and beyond the grasp of the feminine French.

These notes also contain the earliest written germination of Kennedy's political blueprint for a united non-communist Vietnam. Little would change from the ideas sketched out roughly here and those he sought to implement as president almost a decade later. Kennedy felt that the French had got it all wrong, zeroing in on three main faults:

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[214] Ibid., 17.
[215] Ibid., 43.

unwillingness to grant full independence, attempts to partition the country, and willingness to accept Ho Chi Minh as a legitimate representative of the North Vietnamese. Kennedy highlighted Devillers' apportioning of blame on the French for radicalizing the conflict, concurring with his assessment that war could have been avoided had they conceded a fair, negotiated settlement before the CCP's triumph in China in 1949. He accused the government of Paul Ramadier, a socialist, of the dual fault of "[h]ypnotiz[ing itself] with Ho's communistic convictions" and failing to recognize that "[o]nly nationalism, independence and unity could rally the Viets [sic][216]."

Kennedy disagreed vehemently, however, with Devillers' suggestion that communists be admitted to the negotiating table given that their camp contained the most capable, respected statesmen in nationalist circles. He felt that an immediate and full French withdrawal with a transfer of sovereignty "to a representative Vietnam group [excluding communists]... wouldn't have brought civil war, but would have stabilized the regime[217]." Devillers saw the major problem for the West—one that Kennedy did not understand or acknowledge—was that there simply was no good candidate to rally non-communist nationalists who enjoyed Ho's level of prestige or popular support. Unlike in Taiwan and Korea, there was no capable non-communist strongman like Jiang Jieshi or Syngman Rhee respectively through which United States could project its aspirations for Vietnam. Nevertheless, Kennedy fallaciously believed that with this move "[t]he French administrative and military apparatus could have been withdrawn on a friendly basis

[216] Ibid., 43.
[217] Ibid.

[and] The Union Francaise would then have been truly formed" with the willing participation of a united Vietnam[218].

At the heart of Kennedy's plans for Vietnam was a conviction that there was a strong, liberal, progressive, non-communist element within the country that yearned for freedom and needed support from the West. Thus, Kennedy agreed wholeheartedly with Devillers' assessment that France had failed miserably, radicalizing a solvable problem and bolstering the Ho Chi Minh camp[219]. By escalating the conflict and failing to recognize real Vietnamese independence, France was, in Kennedy's mind, squeezing the nascent liberal, democratic element of Vietnamese society further to the political margins. He argued rather simplistically that "France has solemnly recognized Viet independence… [and] should now follow up her words with actions—in letting the people freely choose their own destiny[220]", a move which would suddenly usher in a new era of peace and stability.

This viewpoint, however, flew in the face of Devillers' position that the Communists were well-organized, highly committed, had a superior calibre of political leadership, while enjoying the support of the youth, intelligentsia, and most ordinary Vietnamese. Foreshadowing de Gaulle's own assessment years later, Devillers' rejected the notion that a communist regime in Vietnam would be automatically pro-Soviet or closed to the West, arguing that peace could only be secured if outside powers dealt

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[218] Ibid., 44.
[219] Ibid., 62-63. Kennedy notes, "The [Vietnamese] left is communist because french [sic] policy has pushed the progressives into the communists arms. But the majority of Vietnamese are still the same peaceful moral people. Experience has proved that every time France or Viet Minh resorted to violence they have played the game their enemies wanted them to play. These people have grown up more in the past 10 years than they did in the preceding century. They want a new way of life—no foreign domination, no corrupt mandarinat [sic], no miserable living conditions."
[220] Ibid., 63.

directly with the most dynamic political bloc in the country rather than attempting to prop up a weaker internal rival. To this, Kennedy noted rather flippantly, "[t]his is lovely—I dare you to say in your speech that we should give Indo-China to the communists because they are the ones with the most integrity[221]!" Here we have an early indication that Kennedy had no intention whatsoever of pursuing the main thrust of de Gaulle's Vietnam program: negotiations with Ho Chi Minh designed at securing a Cold War neutral Vietnam.

Kennedy read DeVillers in preparation for his *Indochina Mutual Security Act Amendment Speech* delivered before the Senate on 30 June 1953. In this address Kennedy publically elaborated on many of the key themes from his notes on Deviller's work, picking apart the French colonial record in Vietnam, rejecting claims that "Ho Chi Minh was ripe for Titoism[222]", and pinning the blame on de Gaulle for failing to go deep enough in concessions in 1945 during a brief stint as president of the provisional French government. Kennedy began this speech by stating unequivocally that the French must withdraw politically, culturally and eventually militarily if there was to be any hope that massive American subsidies of the French war effort might result in a defeat for the communists. He argued, "regardless of our united effort, it is a truism that the war can never be successful unless the people of Vietnam are won over from their sullen neutrality and open hostility to it and fully support its successful conclusion. This can never be done unless they are assured beyond doubt that complete independence will be

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[221] Ibid., 65.
[222] "Indo-China: Mutual Security Act Amendment Speech," 6/30/53, Pre-Presidential Papers: Senate Files, Series 6.8 General Files, 1953-1960, box 481, JFKL, 4.

theirs at the conclusion of the war[223]." As colonial masters, he continued, the French had historically treated the region as little more than a rich plantation zone ripe for economic exploitation. French control was paramount and the Vietnamese had no say in how they were ruled[224].

After summarizing wartime developments during the Japanese occupation that culminated in Ho Chi Minh's declaration of independence in August 1945, Kennedy explained his unwillingness to accept that communists could negotiate in good faith despite gestures from Ho's camp that were clearly designed to curry favour with the United States. He stated:

> Many people have since argued that Ho Chi Minh was at that time ripe for Titoism if the French had been willing to grant him sufficient political concessions. It is difficult to be wholly convinced of this, although it is true that in November 1945 he did dissolve the Indochinese Communist party and took similar conciliatory steps to gain the support of a majority of the people. But his long previous attachment to Communist causes argues against this theory, and the seizure of control by the Communists in China at a later date would have placed him in a most difficult position if he had attempted to break his ties with Moscow[225].

Although this line of thinking—that all communists operated nefariously in all instances—was common currency in postwar America at the high point of the Cold War, it did reveal a lack of understanding of the profound distrust Vietnamese nationalists like Ho held for China, which had controlled Vietnam as a vassal state for more than half of the previous two millennium. In any event, Kennedy implied that the Japanese occupation should have been a bookend to French rule in Indochina, singling out de Gaulle for botching the transition to Vietnamese independence in March 1945.

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[223] Ibid., 2.
[224] Ibid., 2-3.
[225] Ibid., 4.

Kennedy derided de Gaulle's deliberately vague proposals for an Indochinese Federation where a French governor general and French ministers held real power over a local assembly that had little role aside from rubber-stamping decisions made in Paris[226]. While de Gaulle did leave office in January 1946 without having secured any formal deal on Vietnam, the accord Ho Chi Minh signed with the French two months later differed little from the program de Gaulle had proposed a year earlier. Kennedy decried the lack of military, diplomatic, and economic concessions from the French in 1946, overtly criticizing de Gaulle for failing to reach an equitable solution when he had the means and political capital at his disposal[227]. After war broke out in late 1946 the French began to offer more substantive concessions while still maintaining as much control as possible. He noted ironically, "[t]he concessions which the French have made to the successive governments have been considerable, and if extended to Ho Chi Minh in 1945 and 1946 might have changed the entire history of that area[228]."

Kennedy went on argue that subsequent "French offers of limited independence to the people of Vietnam have always been too little and too late[229]." The consequences of this failure to compromise were dire; with little prospect of real independence, non-communist Vietnamese lacked a real cause to fight for while French lives and American money were being wasted for nothing[230]. Through the early 1950s, Kennedy noted that France had given Vietnam some of the trappings of independence without adding any

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[226] Ibid., 5.
[227] Ibid.
[228] Ibid, 7.
[229] Ibid, 10.
[230] Ibid. Kennedy stated, "Unless the people of this area are assured that they are fighting for their own independence and not for the maintenance of French control when victory is won, all of our military assistance and all the French sacrifices of their youth and their treasure will go for naught."

substance to them. France still controlled its foreign and defence policy[231], higher education was conducted in French[232], while French citizens controlled nearly every facet of the economy, enjoyed extraterritoriality and potential exemption from local taxes[233]. There was no popular assembly to represent Vietnamese interests and all major policy decisions were made in Paris[234]. In continuing to prop up the French war effort in Indochina, Kennedy argued, the United States was not only delaying the implementation of real reforms that would bring peace, but also doing great damage to its own reputation across Asia[235]. As lamentable as an American breach with France may have been, Kennedy argued that the consequences of the *status quo ante* were far worse for both the Vietnamese as a people and America's Cold War campaign.

Kennedy refined and then reiterated this message before the Senate on 6 April 1954 as French forces at the jungle fortress of Dien Bien Phu were locked into the fierce fight with the Viet Minh that would become the decisive engagement of Paris' colonial war in Indochina. His "Indochina Speech" was delivered at roughly the half way point of the three-month battle as French prospects from victory were growing increasingly grim as the days passed. The humiliating French defeat there effectively ended the war and ushered in a complete French military withdrawal, rendering Kennedy's exhortations against continued American support for the French effort moot. Nevertheless, the speech reinforces the argument that Kennedy saw France as an impediment towards the

[231] Ibid., 10-1.
[232] Ibid., 12.
[233] Ibid., 13.
[234] Ibid., 14.
[235] Ibid., 14-5.

establishment of pro-Western regimes in Southeast Asia, an obstacle that needed to be removed before the damage it had done became permanent.

Though taking care "not to disparage [French] valor", Kennedy clearly stated that France was simply not up to the task of "achiev[ing] the necessary victory over the forces of communism, and thus preserv[ing] the security and freedom of all of southeast Asia[236]." Coming from a diehard Cold Warrior such as Kennedy, there can be little doubt that beneath these carefully-chosen words was a barely concealed condescension towards a broken great power that lacked the psychological "will to resist" and was short of the resources required to shape world events rather than simply respond passively to them. Kennedy lamented that every time the French came calling for more money and weapons to prosecute the war in Indochina, Washington always conceded, time and time again choosing to believe the rosy prognostications that victory was just around the corner. The end to this charade, he believed, had to come sooner rather than later[237].

Kennedy repeated an argument that he had been making publicly for over three years: France had failed to win over enough of the Vietnamese public to triumph in the war and as such had no hope of military victory even with a limitless American commitment to prop up its war effort[238]. He went on to add that the French had reneged

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[236] "Indochina Speech of 1954,"4/6/54, Pre-Presidential Papers: Senate Files, Series 12.1 Speech Files, 1953-1960, box 894, JFKL, 5.
[237] Ibid., 3-4.
[238] Ibid., 5. Kennedy stated, "I am frankly of the belief that no amount of American military assistance in Indochina can conquer an enemy which is everywhere and at the same time nowhere, 'an enemy of the people' which has the sympathy and covert support of the people... Moreover, without political independence for the associated states, the other Asiatic nations have made it clear that they regard this as a war of colonialism; and the 'united action' which is said to be so desperately needed for victory in that area is likely to end up as unilateral action by our own country. Such intervention, without participation by the armed forces of the other nations of Asia, without the support of the great masses of the peoples of the associated states, with increasing reluctance and discouragement on the part of the French—and, I might add, with hordes of Chinese Communist troops poised just across the

on all of the promises to grant real independence in Indochina made that were tied to pledges of aid from Washington. Vietnam still lacked a popular assembly, was subject to arbitrary decisions made in Paris, and its economy was almost entirely controlled by French interests. To Kennedy, "[a]ll of this flies in the face of repeated assurances to the American people by our own officials that complete independence has been or will be granted[239]."

Without a popular assembly, Vietnamese negotiators had a difficult time reflecting the will of the people, thus enabling the French to continue postponing a real political settlement[240]. Here Kennedy made perfectly clear that he believed France, aided and abetted by short-sighted supporters in Washington, was compromising the Western cause in the Cold War. He had demonstrated an understanding of the difficulty of fighting on Indochinese terrain and the shortcomings of using modern western weaponry against an enemy that was highly mobile, blended in with the population, and enjoyed widespread public support. Still, Kennedy did not accept France's inability to reassert its control over Indochina as a cautionary tale for the United States, while his later actions from the White House demonstrate that he believed his administration could succeed where successive governments of the Fourth Republic had failed. Ironically, seven years

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border in anticipation of our unilateral entry into their kind of battleground—such intervention, Mr. President, would be virtually impossible in the type of military situation which prevails in Indochina."

[239] Ibid., 6.

[240] Ibid., 7-8. Kennedy stated, "In Indochina, as in Korea, the battle against communism should be a battle not for economic or political gain, but for the security of the free world, and for the values and institutions which are held dear in France and throughout the non-communist world, as well as in the United States… If however… the French persist in their refusal to grant the legitimate independence and freedom desired by the peoples of the Associated States; and if those peoples and the other peoples of Asia remain aloof from the conflict, as they have in the past, then it is my hope that Secretary [of State John Foster] Dulles, before pledging our assistance at Geneva [where Franco-Vietnamese negotiations were taking place], will recognize the futility of channelling American men and machines into that hopeless internecine struggle."

later de Gaulle—as wary of American meddling in Vietnam as Senator Kennedy had been of France's—would find a surprising degree of resistance when he repeated these very same sound, logical arguments from the Indochina speech back to Kennedy and his administration.

Kennedy's interest in Vietnam did not wane with the 1954 Geneva Accord that brought independence from France and partitioned the country into communist and non-communist halves with provisions for full elections within two years. In a foreign policy speech at Temple Emmanuel in New York City on 19 November 1957 Kennedy identified Indochina as no less of a concern than other more prominent divided nations such as Germany and Korea. While he held little doubt that the United States could match the Soviet Union scientifically and militarily, he argued that the Third World would become the new central front of the Cold War[241]. Countries like Vietnam were not, in Kennedy's mind, backwaters that could be comfortably ignored. Kennedy's future rival, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev, was thinking along the same strategic, geopolitical lines[242] when he pledged Soviet support for "wars of national liberation" in a

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[241] "Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy at Temple Emmanuel in New York City," 19 November 1957, JFKL, http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/JFK/JFK+Pre-Pres/1957/002PREPRES12SPEECHES_57NOV19.htm. Kennedy stated, "The more exacting test will be found in the jungles and deserts of Asia, the Middle East and Africa where the Communists also have us on the defensive. It is here that the Communists, I believe, mean to defeat us. As they recognize that a mutuality of terror exists between ourselves and the Russians, they mean to turn our flank there by subversion, propaganda and diplomatic initiative."

[242] For Khrushchev's Third World policy, see: Galia Golan, *The Soviet Union and National Liberation Movements in the Third World* (Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1988); and Andrzej Korbonski and Francis Fukuyama, eds., *The Soviet Union and the Third World: the last three decades* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987); and Joseph G. Whelan and Michael J. Dixon, *The Soviet Union in the Third World: threat to world peace?* (Toronto: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1986).

6 January 1961 speech from Moscow that was subjected to heavy analysis by the Kennedy White House[243].

Fellow supporters of a strong American Third World policy in the late 1950s would find their call to arms in Eugene Burdick and William Lederer's *The Ugly American*[244], a fictionalized account of the failure of American Third World aid efforts and France's disastrous counter-insurgency campaign in Vietnam. This best-selling novel was deliberately controversial; it contained an alarmist message that the United States was losing the war for hearts and minds in the nascent Third World to the Soviets. Burdick and Lederer located a scapegoat that provoked considerable debate in official Washington: American bureaucats dispatched there were soft careerists in search of easy living rather than dedicated, capable Cold Warriors. Robert Dean argues that *The Ugly American* became one of Kennedy's favourite books "as an ideological buttress to his political exhortations… congruent with his calls for a tougher, smarter policy of confrontation with the communists in post-colonial regions." The aspiring presidential candidate was so moved by this piece of fiction that he would in fact send a copy to every member of the Senate[245].

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[243] Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 20-1.
[244] Eugene Burdick and William Lederer, *The Ugly American* (Thorndike, ME: G.K. Hall, 1994).
[245] Dean, 173. For example, Kennedy evoked "The Ugly American" in a 4 May 1960 campaign trail speech in West Virginia in which he decried the inadequacy of foreign language training in American schools. "Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy at Athens, West Virginia," 4 May 1960, JFKL, http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/JFK/JFK+Pre-Pres/1960/002PREPRES12SPEECHES_60MAY04.htm.

4. John and Jackie Kennedy Campaign in East Boston, 1958
Sen. Jack Kennedy and his wife Jackie press the flesh during his senatorial re-election campaign.
Photo: Carl Mydans/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
14 October 1958

Dean devotes a large part of chapter seven of *Imperial Brotherhood* analysing how *The Ugly American* related to the "masculine imperial narrative" that shaped the Kennedy administration's foreign policy, but the novel also contains a significant feminizing portrayal of French colonial officials that he does not address in any detail. Although the story takes place mostly in the fictional nation Southeast Asian country Sarkhan, Burdick and Lederer devoted three chapters to the French guerrilla war in Vietnam. Their stereotypes of the French conformed entirely to those Kennedy already held and almost certainly reinforced Kennedy's previously-held assumptions about

French national character, the flaws of French counterinsurgency strategy, and the illegitimacy of the French colonial project in Vietnam.

The general tone of these *The Ugly American* chapters on colonial Vietnam is that while individual French soldiers—a motley lot, including some former Nazi collaborators—were tough as nails, well-trained, well-armed, and commanded by generally competent, tactically sound officers. Hard-headed French generals, however, were convinced they knew everything about warfare from their extensive readings of military classics from Clausewitz and others and had nothing to learn from Communist tacticians.

Burdick and Lederer use two officers, Major Monet of the French Army in Vietnam and Major 'Tex' Wolchek of the US Army, as a vehicle for comparing and contrasting French and American approaches to guerrilla warfare. The sophisticated Major Monet, a St. Cyr graduate from a proud military family, is arrogant, haughty and bookish in comparison to salt-of-the-earth Texan Major Wolchek, the son of poor Lithuanian immigrants who was innately capable of solving complex problems with simple logic rather than extensive study. As their part of the story unfolds, Burdick and Lederer allege that the French were not open to new ideas about guerrilla warfare and foolishly chose to keep on trying failed old tactics over and over again until their inevitable defeat rather than re-evaluate their approach. This was very much a cautionary message to American leaders who later engaged the same foe on the same terrain, but it was also explicitly framed as one related to a French national character flaw: stubbornness.

As the Cold War approached a stalemate in nuclear and conventional forces around the time *The Ugly American* was published, Kennedy turned his attention to special forces and counterinsurgency efforts coupled with Third World modernization programs aimed at 'winning hearts and minds' (such as clean, progressive government, liberal capitalism, professionalism from the military, hope for progress, and so on) as a new means of making forward progress. Kennedy truly took *The Ugly American's* message to heart; he felt that Americans had to borrow communist tactics, read Mao and Che Guevera's work on guerrilla warfare, and generally approach the Third World with a greater sense of urgency and professionalism[246]. Much of the language used by Burdick and Lederer to describe the French effort in Vietnam echoes Kennedy's assumptions about the ineffectiveness of the French approach to Third World nationalism and, by contrast, highlights how a robust new generation of American leaders could fare better.

In a long passage from chapter 11, Major Wolchek describes the problem behind the French counterinsurgency efforts with Ambassador Harrison MacWhite and Major Monet over a bottle in Hanoi with a pitched battle being fought outside the city. A flustered, downcast Monet admits "I feel I'm living in a nightmare, but I don't know what the plan or the key to it is", prompting Wolchek to begin a simplistic lecture on why everything the French army had done in Indochina was wrong. Wolchek compared the battle to "trying to fight a mountain of syrup blindfolded" and complimented Monet's ability to lead his men in combat, but provoked the Frenchman's ire by castigating him for following "the rules of the classic western warfare" when he should have been reading up on communist guerrilla warfare strategies. Monet "wearily" dismissed

[246] Freedman, 287-8.

Wolchek's suggestion that he read Chairman Mao's military writings because "everything that can be written on war was already written long before him. Clausewitz and Jomini went over the whole thing. It's impossible to write anything new on war." MacWhite lent his support to Wolchek based on his impression of Mao as a political leader who was "a shrewd student of men" and the author of a "kind of fight [that]... may have become the model by which all Asian Communists fight." While Monet still refused to concede the point, however, as Wolchek was forced to accept "that Monet did not want to be forced to learn a new kind of warfare[247]. Using simple metaphors and inelegant prose Burdick and Lederer provide a very succinct theory as to why the stubborn, classically-minded French were indeed "yesterday's men" when it came to the Third World.

The Ugly American does not simply assume that the French failed in Vietnam for a lack of creativity on the battlefield, but perhaps unintentionally subsumed this component of the defeat into a broader portrait of American perceptions of French cultural shortcomings. The stereotypes contained in the chapters that deal directly with the French fully conform with those held by Anglo-Saxonists over a half-century earlier and echoed in Kennedy's own writings as a young man. There is no doubt that France's humiliating collapse in 1940 had not been forgotten by Burdick and Lederer. They saw France as a nation that took to the battlefield with the "smell of defeat[248]" already in the air before a shot had been fired. When Major Wolchek, a decorated American war hero injured in Korea, discussed dropping into Dien Bien Phu for a closer look at the fighting,

[247] Burdick and Lederer, 105-8.
[248] Ibid., 104.

Major Monet was forced to make the humiliating admission that he had never parachuted into enemy fire because "[t]here has never been an opportunity[249]."

When fighting began, the French lacked the masculine toughness of their American counterparts. When Majors Wolchek and Monet were both injured during the defence of Hanoi, Monet left his command to have the bones in his left elbow set after being shot with burp gun. By contrast, "Tex was hit by hand-grenade fragments in the buttocks; with a sigh he told the French corpsman not to bother taking a probe to him. Tex now had the iron of three wars in his body and in some dim way he knew he had expected all along[250]." When the tide turned against them, the French would give way to self-pity and indulge in past glories rather than use adversity as a pretext for self-examination. With Hanoi about to fall, Monet lamented, "[i]magine a nation which produced Napoleon, Foch, and Lyautey being beaten by so primitive an enemy[251]."

The Ugly American perpetuated other myths about the French counterinsurgency campaign in Vietnam that encouraged Americans to summarily dismiss the notion they had anything to learn about the Third World from Paris. The French, so confident of their civilizational superiority, supposedly never attempted to make use of local manpower in the struggle against communism. Instead, they employed "mercenaries"—in Vietnam, these were North Africans, mostly Algerians, many of whom battle-hardened veterans of World War II—rather than use local manpower even if this meant alienating the Vietnamese. Burdick and Lederer assumed that the French chose to deploy "foreign" troops to Vietnam because they assumed that the passive, undisciplined Vietnamese were

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[249] Ibid., 99-100.
[250] Ibid., 108.
[251] Ibid., 107.

unfit as a people for soldiering alongside French troops despite clear evidence that Vietnamese communists were capable of fighting with ferocity and ragged determination[252]. At no point do they acknowledge that there was some sound strategic thinking behind French reluctance to arm large numbers of Vietnamese of dubious loyalty to Paris and give the Viet Minh a perfect opportunity to infiltrate the French army.

Burdick and Lederer tried to fit Vietnam into the American revolutionary tradition by arguing that the French sparked even more Vietnamese resentment through their bureaucratic, mercantilist economic policies that lead to monopolies and excessive red tape that retarded Vietnamese economic growth and perpetuated backwardness[253]. If Burdick and Lederer did concede that the French had one skill, it was the feminine ability to seduce gullible American senators into offering their support for continued American aid for the French campaign by plying them with fine food and wine[254].

The Ugly American was more than a work of simple fiction, however; it was a window into underlying cultural assumptions that reflected and confirmed Kennedy's views on France's role in Southeast Asia. These themes were subtly referenced in speeches from the future president during the 1950s and ultimately reinforced his decision to reject of de Gaulle's neutralization program for Vietnam.

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[252] Ibid., 217-8.
[253] Ibid., 177, 180.
[254] Ibid., 216, 220.

CHAPTER 3: Masculinity and Modernization in Democratic Party Politics during the 1950s

The men of the Kennedy administration were products of a dominant postwar political framework that demanded a certain ideal of robust manhood in response to international and domestic circumstances[255]. In her article, "Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity", K.A. Cuordileone charts the development of "a political culture that put a premium on hard masculine toughness and rendered anything less than that soft and feminine and, as such, a real or potential threat to the security of the nation[256]." This rediscovered emphasis on toughness had its roots in the upheaval of World War II and the rise of totalitarian ideologies—both of which had taken place on the Democrats' watch—factors which led postwar liberal Democrats to revamp the entire way they viewed the world.

During the same period running from the late 1940s to mid-1950s—while de Gaulle was on the political sidelines or in retirement—France was led by a series of

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[255] For good regional examinations of how gender politics shaped American foreign policy in other areas during this period, see Michelle Mart, "Tough Guys and American Cold War Policy: Images of Israel, 1948-1960," *Diplomatic History* 20, no. 3 (1996): 357-80; and Andrew J. Rotter, "Gender Relations, Foreign Relations: The United States and South Asia, 1947-1964," *Journal of American History* 81, no. 2 (1994): 518-42. More generally, see Carol Cohn, "Sex and Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals," *Signs* 12, no. 4 (1987): 687-718; Frank Costigliola, "The Nuclear Family: Tropes of Gender and Pathology in the Western Alliance," *Diplomatic History* 21, no. 2 (1997): 163-83, and, "Unceasing Pressure for Penetration": Gender, Pathology, and Emotion in George Kennan's Formation of the Cold War," *The Journal of American History* 83, no. 4 (1997): 1309-39; K. A. Cuordileone, "'Politics in an Age of Anxiety': Cold War Political Culture and the Crisis in American Masculinity, 1949-1960," *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 2. (2000): 515-45; Robert D. Dean, "Masculinity as Ideology: John F. Kennedy and the Domestic Politics of Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic History* 22, no. 1 (1998): 29-62; Amy Kaplan, "Commentary: Domesticating Foreign Policy," *Diplomatic History*, 18, no .1 (1994): 97-105; Emily S. Rosenberg, "Gender," *Journal of American History* 77, no. 1 (1990): 116-24 and, "'Foreign Affairs' after World War II: Connecting Sexual and International Politics," *Diplomatic History* 18, no. 1 (1994): 59-70.

[256] Cuordileone, 518.

seemingly weak, unstable Fourth Republic coalition governments. This did not, however, prevent Paris from mounting a successful opposition to American initiatives such as the EDC[257], negotiating peace with communists in Vietnam against Washington's wishes, and generally resisting American "coca-colonization" of Europe. According to Costigliola, Americans generally "referred to the French in ways that suggested a flighty, not-so-capable female: emotional, hypersensitive, frivolous, impractical, unrestrained, too concerned with food, drink, fashion, art, and love. Meanwhile Americans usually cast themselves in a 'masculine' mode—rational, calm, pragmatic, and efficient[258]." These perceptions of French decadence and irrationality were coupled with fears that acts of resistance from Fourth Republic governments were undermining Washington's efforts to win the Cold War.

Many Democrats shared Arthur Schlesinger's view[259] that liberals in the United States and Britain had shied away from conflict for far too long, and that they had been

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[257] The EDC was a highly ambitious project that called for the creation of an integrated West European Army that would reconcile French fears of German rearmament to the strategic advantage of incorporating West German units into NATO forces. The reasoning behind this American-sponsored initiative was as much a product of political symbolism as rationalizing the command structure of NATO armies, but many Europeans, French especially, felt uncomfortable with surrendering a considerable degree of national sovereignty so soon after the end of World War II. Even though the scheme was originally thought of and promoted by French statesmen such as René Pleven and Robert Schuman, the French National Assembly refused to ratify the EDC treaty on 30 August 1954 after many months of heated debated. Its failure did lead Europeans to turn their attention to political rather than military forms of integration and contributed to the signing of the Western European Unity Treaty (6 May, 1955), which created the Western European Union. For the defeat of the EDC, see the Irwin Wall's aforementioned *The United States and the Making of Postwar France, 1945-1954*; Martin J. Dedman, *The Origins and Development of the European Union, 1945-95: a history of European integration* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Edward Fursdon, *The European Defence Community, a history* (London: Macmillan, 1980); Daniel Lerner and Raymond Aron, eds., *France defeats EDC* (New York: Praeger, 1957); and, Kevin Ruane, *The Rise and Fall of the European Defence Community: Anglo-American relations and the crisis of European defence, 1950-55* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

[258] Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 4.

[259] Arthur Schlesinger Jr. later served as Special Assistant to President Kennedy and earned a Pulitzer in 1965 for writing the most comprehensive early examination of the administration, *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965). For further elaboration

complacent and cowardly in appeasing Hitler. Clinging to old views that man was inherently rational and failing to reconcile with humankind's capacity for depravity were mistakes that could not be repeated in a Cold War age of anxiety. The liberal prescription Schlesinger advocated in *The Vital Center*[260] was designed to "masculinize the liberal reform tradition and the radical democrats who rightly stood to inherit it[261]." Teddy, not Franklin, Roosevelt became the new model of liberal manhood for young Democrats coming of age in the 1950s.

Liberal democrats were already motivated to re-evaluate their own ideological approach to international relations as a result of the "lessons of Munich", but constant attacks from conservatives provided added impetus for a shift towards an overemphasized "toughness." They found themselves on the defensive through the early postwar period, attacked for their privilege and "softness" by McCarthyites and right-wing conservatives. The Right typically attacked liberal intellectuals as "overly emotional and feminine... eggheads" and "bleeding hearts" who were jealous of the more experienced, rational and masculine men of the Republican party[262]. Democrats subsequently attempted to deflect charges of softness by embracing the Republican position that the new ideological context of the early Cold War dictated more "outward physical manliness" in response to a totalitarian challenge that was viewed as gravely as that posed by Nazi Germany. McCarthyism had strong lingering effects on Democrats into the 1960s, prompting

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on his world view, see: John Patrick Diggins, ed., The Liberal Persuasion: *Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and the challenge of the American past* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

[260] Arthur M. Schlesigner, Jr., *The Vital Center: the politics of freedom* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1949).

[261] Cuordileone, 521.

[262] Ibid., 523.

leading liberal Democrats to adopt an exaggerated "tough" approach just as Kennedy was beginning to make his mark in American politics[263].

The Democratic Party[264] split between two rival foreign policy camps in the early 1950s over the issue of whether Washington should adopt a more aggressive policy with the Communist bloc[265]. The "realists" were led by Truman-era Secretary of State Dean Acheson[266], while a group of "idealists" rallied around twice-failed Democratic presidential nominee Adalai Stevenson. Acheson, with the support of Paul Nitze, a former head of the State Department policy planning staff who in 1950 authored the hard line Cold War strategy in NSC-68, argued that the Cold War was reality, that negotiations with the Soviet Union were futile and dangerous because of the nature of the Soviet state. This faction—backed by former president Truman, future president Lyndon Johnson, and Speaker of the House of Representatives Sam Rayburn—believed that the United States

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[263] Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*, 167. He writes, "The purge strongly encouraged adherence to a hard-line imperial anticommunism devoid of nuance. The subterranean politics of countersubversion and counterperversion touched, in some way, nearly all of the men who later became prominent national security policymakers and functionaries in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations... The lessons learned during the purges of the Red Scare profoundly shaped the way these men calculated the possible personal and political costs and benefits of foreign policy 'options' they later faced."

[264] For a good recent account of internal Democrat politics in the Kennedy era, see: Sean J. Savage, *JFK, LBJ, and the Democratic Party* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004).

[265] Gareth Porter, *Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 2.

[266] As Undersecretary of State and Secretary of State under President Truman, Acheson played a major role in developing the European Recovery Program (ERP) that anchored Western Europe to the United States, and the Truman Doctrine, which pledged hundreds of millions of dollars of economic and military aid to countries resisting communist pressure. Nevertheless, he was the frequent target of vicious attacks from Senator Joseph McCarthy for being "a pompous diplomat in striped pants" and "soft on a communism." In retirement Acheson wrote several works reflecting on his role in shaping Cold War American foreign policy, the most notable of which is *Present at the Creation: my years in the State Department* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987). For biographies and examinations of his policies, see: Robert L. Beisner, *Dean Acheson: a life in the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Douglas Brinkley, ed., *Dean Acheson and the making of U.S. foreign policy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993) and *Dean Acheson: the Cold War years, 1953-71* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); David S. McLellan, *Dean Acheson: the State Department years* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1976); Ronald L. McGlothlen, *Controlling the Waves: Dean Acheson and U.S. foreign policy in Asia* (New York: Norton, 1993); and, Gaddis Smith, *Dean Acheson* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1972).

could best maintain its position by building up its military power and strengthening NATO.

5. Secretary of State Dean Acheson walking through a swinging door wearing a hat and carrying an attaché case.
Photo: Michael Rougier/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 March 1950

The Stevenson-Chester Bowles[267] faction countered that American foreign policy aims were best served by delivering economic aid to underdeveloped countries, expanding international trade, and maintaining good relations with the neutrals in the United Nations. Supporters—including Senators Hubert H. Humphrey and J. William Fulbright, Roosevelt-Truman era diplomat William Averell Harriman and economist JK Galbraith—tended to be optimists when it came to prospects for a *modus vivendi* with the Soviet Union, but they did not deny that Washington had the right to use military force to counter aggression from the communist bloc[268]. The factional struggle was settled by American voters, who rejected Stevenson in considerable numbers for Eisenhower in both the 1952 and 1956 presidential elections, creating an opportunity for Acheson to steer the Democratic foreign policy platform back in a conservative, uncompromising Truman-era direction in advance of Kennedy's selection as the party's presidential nominee in 1960.

In the early 1950s the Democratic leadership was even more supportive of Eisenhower's foreign policy—which they viewed largely as a continuation of Truman's—than Republicans were. Still, some Democrats did begin to oppose Eisenhower early in his first team, but they were for the most part divided and ineffective, which created the appearance that party leadership was behind a cooperative bipartisan approach. It was not until after Eisenhower's re-election in 1956 that Democrats began to

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[267] Bowles, chosen as Kennedy's first Undersecretary of State, was politically marginalized for his opposition to the Bay of Pigs Invasion and deepening American military intervention in South Vietnam. See: Howard B. Schaffer, *Chester Bowles: new dealer in the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); and, Chester Bowles, *The Conscience of a Liberal: selected writings and speeches*, ed. Henry Steele Commager (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974).
[268] Douglas Brinkley, *Dean Acheson: the Cold War Years, 1953-1971* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 57-8.

rally around an alternative foreign policy program that would return one of their own to the White House in 1960[269].

6. President Dwight D. Eisenhower greets Sen. John F. Kennedy at a corn-picking contest in Iowa, 1958.
Photo: Ed Clark/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 October 1958

Acheson saw the Soviet Union's successful launch of the Sputnik spacecraft in October 1957 as a means of reuniting Democrats around the issue of military build up after the humiliation of the failed American Project Vanguard satellite launches in December and February 1958. Acheson successfully drew major media attention to the so-called missile gap between the United States and the Soviet Union—which he knew to be a future threat rather than present danger—as a means of scoring political points against the Eisenhower administration. It was at this point that the Democrats began to turn the tables on Republicans, accusing them of being soft on communism, promising to

[269] Gary W. Reichard, "Divisions and Dissent: Democrats and Foreign Policy, 1952-1956,"*Political Science Quarterly* 93, no. 1 (1978): 51-72.

reverse Republican cuts to military spending, pushing NATO allies to bolster their military capacities, encouraging neutrals to join the Western camp, and developing a limited war capability to replace the Mutually Assured Destruction nuclear strategy.

By the late 1950s Acheson had effectively outmanoeuvred party liberals who saw rapprochement with Moscow as a more productive long-term strategy, shifting the Democratic foreign policy program back to its NSC-68 incarnation[270]. John Kenneth Galbraith writes in his memoirs that he and other vocal liberal Democrats in the Democratic Advisory Committee (DAC) in the late 1950s were uncomfortable with how Acheson and Nitze placed greater importance on positioning the party to retake the White House than holding a rational internal debate on Cold War policy. Their objections to the party's kneejerk condemnations of every Eisenhower administration foreign policy action as "soft on communism" were mostly futile. He writes, "[m]any, in fact, recognized the need for accommodation with the Soviets, but it was going too far to say this out loud. That the Soviets, either directly or through their Chinese puppets (as the latter were automatically regarded), were moving to dominate the former colonial world was not contested[271]." Galbraith argued that this climate within the party—one that emphasized conformity over debate—contributed to fateful decisions in Vietnam under later Democrat presidents[272].

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[270] Ibid., 59-61.

[271] John Kenneth Galbraith, *A Life In Our Times: memoirs* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 359.

[272] Ibid. He writes, "It was not that the issue was debated and the wrong decision taken; it was rather that there was no debate. The old liberal fear of being thought soft on Communism, the fear of being attacked by professional patriots and the knowledge of the political punishment that awaits any departure from the Establishment view (as manifested against Stevenson on the draft and the H-bomb) all united to eliminate discussion. Democracy has, as ever, its own forms of authoritarianism."

The defeat of party liberals suited Kennedy—who sided with Acheson and was positioning himself as a hard-line anti-communist candidate for the presidential nomination—just fine[273]. Acheson had never got on well with Kennedy, whom he dismissed as a spoiled, vapid youth who had bought his way into Congress with the proceeds of his appeasing father's money from various shady business dealings. They had disagreed sharply over France; Acheson encouraged greater sympathy for an ally undergoing a painful decolonization process in contrast to Kennedy's demand that it grant Algerian independence immediately.

By early 1963 Acheson had become thoroughly disillusioned with the "Best" and the "Brightest" of the administration[274], but he had thrown his weight behind the Kennedy-Johnson ticket in 1960 because it held the best hope of defeating the Republicans. Acheson had in fact initially backed Senator Stuart Symington for the Democratic Presidential nomination in an attempt to block Kennedy, but Kennedy still retained "more admiration for the cool toughness and unflinching pragmatism of... Acheson than he did for his more liberal advisors, men like Bowles and Galbraith, whom he considered idealistic but slightly mushy[275]." Whatever regrets he may have had later, Acheson bears the responsibility for setting Kennedy up to take the White House.

By the late 1950s, a sense of "cultural malaise and national softness" began to deepen with the Soviet launch on Sputnik in 1957. As a result, many of the major themes that dominated the crisis in American masculinity emerged in the 1960 presidential

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[273] Ibid., 106-7.
[274] Brinkley, *Dean Acheson: The Cold War Years 1953-1971*, 196. Acheson saw Kennedy as dangerously indecisive, Bundy, McNamara, Rostow, and Rusk as overrated, with only George Ball and Paul Nitze possessing real talent.
[275] Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 590-1.

election. Liberals rallied behind John Kennedy because they wanted to see a 'liberal superman' president as counter to the soft, conformist bureaucrats of the Eisenhower administration. Liberals sought a leader who was "capable of restoring muscularity to what were once political liabilities: intellectuality, wealth, style, and Ivy League pedigree, and not least of all a liberal Democratic politics[276]." Backing down from the Communist challenge in Vietnam, as de Gaulle later seemed to advocate with his proposals for a negotiated neutralization of the South, flew in the face of the central tenets of the new Democratic "cult of toughness" that Kennedy rode to the White House. The Kennedy administration simply could not fathom taking the advice of a foreign leader it perceived as advocating the same stance as the vacillating Frenchmen who signed off on the disastrous Munich Pact two decades earlier.

As Democrats were taking on an exaggerated masculine posture in advance of the 1960 presidential election, Americans in general looked at political developments in France with growing disdain. By Stalin's death in 1953, Cold War dividing lines had solidified in Europe and PCF had been effectively marginalized by centrist coalitions, both factors that contributed to a growing sense in France that Paris no longer had to choose between East and West and could opt for a neutral course[277]. France—like Britain—turned its attention to re-establishing itself as a great power, especially in relation to a reviving West Germany—whereas the principal American aims in Europe

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[276] Cuordileone, 544. She writes, "the Kennedy administration's much commented-upon cult of toughness did not arise in a vacuum, but amid a political culture that turned muscularity into a prerequisite for Democrats, style into a commodity, and failure to act boldly and decisively into another Munich, another failure of nerve, another *male character defect*... In foreclosing the possibility of more searching, effective, open dialogue and decision making within the White House and the national security bureaucracy, the premium placed on courage and hardness may have rendered the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba and the flexing of liberal muscle in Vietnam a seeming masculine imperative (545)."

[277] Vinen, 101.

were to contain the Soviet Union and tie West Germany to the Atlantic alliance[278]. Successive postwar French governments were primarily concerned with rapidly modernizing a country that had long lagged behind its more dynamic European rivals, Germany especially. This economics-first focus was, however, primarily a natural response to the very real prospect of falling from the ranks of the great powers after the humiliation of 1940 and the collapse of the Third Republic[279]. Costigliola argues that Americans, viewing France as inferior and feminine, simply could not accept that the French had "legitimate national interests and perspectives significantly different from those of the United States[280]." This fundamental contradiction over postwar priorities helped exacerbate long-standing cultural stereotypes that fed Franco-American tensions.

The European Defence Community (EDC) affair demonstrated that there had been considerable—and effective—French efforts to curb American hegemony long before de Gaulle returned to power in 1958. By negotiating a French withdrawal from Vietnam in July 1954 in the face of American efforts to keep France fighting, Mendès France had openly placed French interests above relations with the United States, a first for a Fourth Republic prime minister and a harbinger of the Gaullist nationalism to come. Thereafter, "neutralism-tinged nationalism" characterized French dealings with the United States.

The French National Assembly's refusal to ratify the EDC treaty the following month led many Americans to believe that Washington should rely more on West Germany as its principal continental European partner. *Time* accused Mendès France of indecisiveness and a failure to give direction to the assembly, while crediting "ailing old

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[278] John Newhouse, *De Gaulle and the Anglo-Saxons* (New York: Viking Press, 1970), 20-21.
[279] Kenneth Moure and Martin S. Alexander, "Introduction," in *Crisis and Renewal in France 1918-1962* eds. Kenneth Moure and Martin S. Alexander (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002), 3.
[280] Costigliola, *France and the United States: The Cold Alliance, 1940-1990*, 2.

Edouard Herriot, honorary President of the Assembly, who for years has appealed more to French emotions than to French intelligence" with tipping the balance against the treaty after an overly dramatic anti-EDC speech[281]. It also noted that the "impulse [in Washington] was to say: '[t]he French be damned'", but lamented that "France still would have to be taken into account" solely by virtue of its geographical importance to NATO logistics in Western Europe. In any event, "[t]he West could never again accept France at quite the same valuation, which was a sad fact but one that the French nation had created for itself[282]."

Of the major dailies, the conservative *Washington Post* argued that "[a]ll of the weaknesses of the French political system became more evident during the long and wearisome debate over ratification of the European Defence Community treaty." Despite living in a "state of paralysis under the threat of weapons of absolute destruction… [French] people are preoccupied with other things, with high prices, with the effort to get a little pleasure out of the few days at the end of summer when the sun has at last appeared after an unprecedented spell of cold, gloomy weather[283]." The usually liberal, pro-European *Hartford Courant* overdramatically accused "a psychotic France" of "cut[ting] the ground out from under the moderate, internationalist, western-minded, and thoroughly civilized Chancellor Adenauer—its best friend in Germany."

The French vote seemed to confirm irrational France's status as "a declining civilization" that looked to past alliances with the Anglo-Saxon powers during the World

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[281] "France: The Assassination," *Time*, 13 September 1954, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,820157,00.html.
[282] "Western Europe: The Death Struggle," *Time,* 6 September 1954, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,820080,00.html.
[283] Marquis Childs, "Stakes High, But Paris Is Apathetic," *The Washington Post and Times Herald*, 7 September 1954, 16.

Wars that were completely inappropriate given the political realities of the 1950s[284]. The *Wall Street Journal*, noted that Mendès France led a country that "long ceased to be a great military power" and was now sending dangerous mixed messages to young Germans who hoped to integrate their country into the West[285]. Only the sober *New York Times* argued that "it would be stupid and politically immoral to turn on France now or to regard her as anything but the valued friend and ally that she has always been", but quietly noted "[j]ust about everybody in the free world outside France thinks the French are wrong[286]."

The Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of the Suez Canal[287] in October 1956 exacerbated tensions in the Franco-American relationship even further. The Eisenhower administration was alarmed by Nasser's hasty decision to nationalize the canal as punishment for the withdrawal of an offer of Anglo-American financing for the Aswan High Dam project, but not to the same extent as its counterparts in Paris or in London, who feared that he would choke Europe off from its oil supply in the Persian Gulf. The Eisenhower administration was furious that the invasion coincided with a brutal Soviet

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[284] "The Death of EDC Has Left a Vacuum," *The Hartford Courant*, 9 September 1954, 12.
[285] William Henry Chamberlain, "Pall Over Europe," *Wall Street* Journal, 30 August 1954, 4.
[286] "French Politics and the E.D.C.," *The New York Times*, 28 August 1954, 14.
[287] The Suez Crisis marked the penultimate event in the transition from British to American hegemony in the Middle East. At issue for Washington was less the fact that Britain and France were acting like unreformed 19th century imperial powers—the Eisenhower administration had no qualms about removing democratically-elected but unfriendly governments in Iran in 1953 and Guatemala in 1954—but that they had done so without first consulting their superpower patron. See: Nigel John Ashton, *Eisenhower, Macmillan, and the Problem of Nasser: Anglo-American relations and Arab nationalism, 1955-59* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); Diane B. Kunz, *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); W. Scott Lucas, *Divided We Stand: Britain, the US and the Suez crisis* (Toronto: John Curtis Book, Hodder & Stoughton, 1991); Ritchie Ovendale, *Britain, the United States, and the Transfer of Power in the Middle East, 1945-1962* (New York: Leicester University Press, 1996); Tore T. Petersen, *The Middle East between the Great Powers: Anglo-American conflict and cooperation, 1952-7* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); and, Ray Takeyh, *The Origins of the Eisenhower Doctrine: the US, Britain, and Nasser's Egypt, 1953-57* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

repression of an anti-communist uprising in Hungary and drew world attention away from what should have been a propaganda win for the West.

France, seeking to punish Nasser for his moral and material support for Algerian rebels fighting for independence, had won British and Israeli support for a joint military scheme, which was executed flawlessly. Paris was furious when Washington denied it France's first undeniable military victory since World War I, viewing Eisenhower's call for an immediate ceasefire as a betrayal in the face of a common Western enemy[288]. The whole affair had completely opposite effects in Paris and London; the Suez humiliation forced Britain to retreat even further into its so-called "special relationship" with the United States, but marked a definite break between France and its erstwhile Anglo-Saxon allies. The biggest long-term consequence of Suez was an even more decisive French turn towards a policy of independence, closer ties with Europe rather than Washington, and even greater assertiveness on colonial and Third World issues[289].

Americans—Kennedy included as evidenced in the previous chapter by the public addresses he gave from the Senate—were generally unwilling to forgive this series of policy disputes from the EDC to Suez as part of France's awkward transition towards a post-colonial era. Costigliola argues that the United States has generally had great difficulty acknowledging—much less debating—differing points of view within the western alliance since taking on the self-proclaimed role of "leader of the free world." European opposition to American designs has frequently been described in feminizing language that reflected a shifting power dynamic with the United States; it could be

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[288] Wall, *France, the United States and the Algerian War*, 57.
[289] Thomas, *The French North African Crisis*, 211.

argued that this phenomenon was essentially a Cold War (and beyond) update of older stereotypes that reflected traditional American indifference towards the Old World[290].

Costigliola shows, for example, that George F. Kennan's "long telegram" of February 1946 painted the Soviet Union as a rapist seeking to take advantage of weak, effete European nations. At the outset of the Cold War, Americans understood themselves to be the masculine hero who would ride in to the rescue, leading them to view the western alliance more in terms of a marriage headed by a clear-thinking patriarchal leader than a partnership of equals[291]. In relation to France specifically, Costigliola finds a "pattern in which U.S. officials represented France's resistance to American policy as evidence that Fourth Republic France suffered from mental sickness, from an insufficiency of masculinity, and from a moral corruption in its politics and society[292]."

Subsequently, the legitimate, rational reasoning that led the French government to scupper the EDC as an unacceptable infringement on national independence were overlooked by "outraged U.S. officials who trivialized French concerns by representing

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[290] See Alan S. Rosenthal, "The Gender-Coded Stereotype: An American Perception of France and the French," *The French Review* 72, no. 5 (1999): 897-908. This excellent short article connects historical and contemporary American gendered stereotyping of France.

[291] Frank Costigliola, "The Nuclear Family: Tropes of Gender and Pathology in the Western Alliance," *Diplomatic History* 21, no. 2 (1997): 163-83. He writes, "U.S. officials often responded to an ally's resistance to American policy with emotive language that depoliticized and trivialized the difference of opinion. Such emotion-laden language read political disagreements as evidence that the ally was unreasonable or incapable… With varying and probably unknowable degrees of intentionality, U.S. officials used language that depicted difficult allies as beings that were in some way diminished from the norm of a healthy heterosexual male: sick patients, hysterical women, naive children, emasculated men. Such images of the needy activated altruistic language and so helped transform American control into American caring (166)."

[292] Ibid., 169. This was reflected "[f]rom 1940 to 1958, [when] Americans often represented France or the French government as one or more of a series of stock characters who were wayward but ultimately unthreatening and who were usually maligned women: the whimsical airhead, the flirt, the hysteric, the seductress, the female who was willful and wrongheaded, and the woman who was out of place in the public sphere (171)."

them as evidence of irrationality[293]." Two years later when France expressed its displeasure at Washington's condemnation of the Franco-British conduct during the Suez Crisis, "U.S. officials again represented French resentment as evidence of a client's psychological problem… because it fit their conception of the Western alliance: an association of nations with differences in mental stability as well as military power[294]." When de Gaulle reclaimed the French presidency in 1958 this gender-coded language to describe France dropped off sharply as Americans offered grudging respect for his restoration of a sense of national purpose, but the pop psychology approach to his decidedly nationalistic agenda persisted into the 1960s[295].

The New Frontiersmen

After defeating Vice President Richard Nixon by a razor thin margin in November 1960, Kennedy set about to filling his cabinet with fellow "New Frontiersman[296]" who

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[293] Ibid., 173.
[294] Ibid., 175.
[295] Ibid., 176-7.
[296] The most readable account of Kennedy's New Frontiersmen remains David Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House 1972), while Arthur M. Schlesinger's *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1965) stands out as the most notable work from an individual member of the administration. Theodore C. Sorenson, Kennedy's speechwriter, has recently added his memoirs, *Counsellor: a life at the edge of history* (New York: Harper, 2008), though they shed little light on Kennedy's dealings with Paris beyond adding that the president assumed the French had bugged his quarters during his spring 1961 summit with de Gaulle. For internal administration politics and evaluations of the New Frontier program, see: Moya Ann Ball, *Vietnam-on-the-Potomac* (New York: Praeger, 1992); Irving Bernstein, *Promises kept: John F. Kennedy's new frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); James N. Giglio, *The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2006); and Mark J. White, ed., *Kennedy: the New Frontier Revisited* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 1998). For Kennedy's relationship with his brother and fellow New Frontiersman, Attorney General Robert

would reinvigorate American foreign policy after eight years of drift from Eisenhower's old, weak, decadent, and effeminate "organization men." Each of Kennedy's New Frontiersmen "had performed brilliantly as a scholar and athlete at an Ivy League university... had been decorated for bravery during service as a junior officer in the Second World War, and... had gone on to serve the nation through a brilliant 'establishment' career in government, academia, law, or banking[297]." As Robert Dean writes, "[c]entral to the self-definition of Kennedy's stoic warrior-intellectual foreign policy administrators was a commitment to struggle, engagement, and relentless competition with America's imperial rivals, the Communist 'bloc[298].'" There was a striking degree of conformity to what Dean calls Kennedy's "elite ideology of masculinity" amongst the New Frontiersman that led to complete agreement on accepted Cold War wisdom[299]. This was valuable indeed to a president who valued loyalty from his aides, but hardly conducive to lively debate on major policy issues.

In practice, administration debates on Vietnam typically focussed on the form American intervention should take rather than the broader question of whether Washington's national security needs really demanded the establishment of a stable, pro-Western client regime in Saigon. The greatest fault of the New Frontiersmen, Kennedy especially, was that they had defined themselves so thoroughly by their global ideological struggle against the Soviet Union that they were unable to see a post-Cold War world through the various crises they scrambled to manage.

Kennedy, see: David Talbot, *Brothers: the hidden history of the Kennedy years* (New York: Free Press, 2007).

[297] Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood,* 170.

[298] Ibid.

[299] Ibid., 179.

In explaining the dysfunctional Franco-American relationship in the early 1960s, one must take into account the generational gap between the elderly de Gaulle (b. 1890) and the relatively youthful Kennedy administration (most members were 20 to 30 years de Gaulle's junior) as a contributing factor in American unwillingness to heed de Gaulle's advice. De Gaulle was an unabashed product of 19th Century Europe, his worldview shaped by the pre-Soviet era of intense Darwinian national rivalries. As a general, rebel leader, and president, his experience spanned a period of incredible turmoil that saw the collapse of empires, revolution, and the rise of totalitarian ideologies of the right and left. The members of the Kennedy administration, however, had not known a pre-communist era. They came of age during the 1930s, when their country was preoccupied by the domestic troubles of the Great Depression and had detached itself from international affairs. They were young men while the United States was locked in mortal struggle with Nazi Germany and imperial Japan, and then became adults as their country emerged from the crucible of war only to find itself bogged down in strange, new conflict with the Soviet Union. During their formative years they had seen aggressive totalitarian states on the move, leading them to the conclusion that the United States could never forget "the lessons of Munich", especially after "the loss of China" to Mao's communists. Whereas de Gaulle was able to see a world beyond Communism because he had lived in a pre-communist era, the Kennedy administration was totally absorbed by the immediate, short-term implications of its geopolitical rivalry with the Soviet Union.

The generational gap between de Gaulle and the Kennedy administration did more than offer differing frames of historical reference; it also produced a wholly different tone and methodology for the diplomacy they conducted. The Kennedy men had the confident

aggressiveness of a younger generation of leaders and saw no limit on their problem solving abilities. In his inaugural address, Kennedy served notice that his would be an active administration that took special interest in supporting newly-independent regimes in the emerging third world. He and his men would not shirk from the enormous responsibility for protecting the "free world" they had placed on their own shoulders[300]. This rhetoric was not empty and there were implications for Franco-American relations. It signalled an impatience with traditional European diplomacy—was the backwardness of Southeast Asia not the fault of selfish French colonialists, and did this backwardness not encourage locals to flirt with communism?—and "yesterday's men" who practiced it. De Gaulle was seen as the worst offender, the sort of leader who simply could not understand how the administration's urgent modernization plans for Vietnam fit into a broader Cold War strategy.

The Kennedy administration's actions, if not always its words, strongly indicated that it did not view France as a world power—at least one on par with Britain—nor did it

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[300] "Inaugural Address of President John F. Kennedy, " January 20, 1961, Washington, DC, JFKL, http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/JFK/003POF03Inaugural01201961.htm. Kennedy's 1961 inaugural address was one of the most memorable of the 20th Century, mixing conviction, idealism, and confidence. Regarding He stated, "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty… To those people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required—not because the communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich… In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility—I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it—and the glow from that fire can truly light the world."

believe Paris had any credibility in Southeast Asia. One might be tempted to speculate that some of President Franklin Roosevelt's legendary francophobia filtered down to Kennedy as a young Democrat, but after launching his political career Kennedy's opposition to the French policy was at least publicly contained to the impersonal level of grand strategy as opposed to the crude, school boy barbs Roosevelt lobbed at de Gaulle during the war. In his 1954 Indochina speech to the Senate, Kennedy had emphasized his standard Cold War line that the struggle against communism was a necessary struggle, while success would be predicated upon winning hearts and minds in the emerging Third World. As colonizers, he charged the French with never having lived up to their promises of autonomy/independence, maintaining near total economic control, failure to train a political class to run the country post-independence, that French motives in region had always been exploitative, with the unspoken implication that this was a major obstacle in the sort of hearts and minds campaign necessary for victory over the Communist camp[301].

Kennedy later applied the same themes with increasing frequency to France's efforts to retain control over Algeria, which he saw as a by product of "a residue of defensive nationalism[302]" after the Anglo-French debacle at Suez in 1956. For well over a half-decade before becoming president, Kennedy continually spoke of his frustration with France's decision to cling to an anachronistic colonial policy in the face of such violent opposition from its subjects. That Paris resisted what he saw as an obvious

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[301] John F. Kennedy, "Indochina Speech of 1954," JFKL.
[302] Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy, "The New Dimensions of American Foreign Policy," November 1, 1957, JFKL, http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/JFK/JFK+Pre-Pres/1957/002PREPRES12SPEECHES_57NOV01.htm.

reality—that Europeans would have to give up their empires to third world nationalist movements—left France totally discredited when it came to Third World issues. These views were so deeply ingrained in Kennedy's mind by 1961 that it was unlikely that any amount of framing from de Gaulle or any other French leader could have convinced him that France, despite past mistakes, still had regional expertise that deserved to be taken into account. The New Frontiersmen concurred.

Dean Rusk[303], Kennedy's obdurate Secretary of State, was born in Cherokee County, Georgia in 1909, lifting himself out of rural southern poverty through a mix of hard-work and rough charm. He spent two years working as a lawyer in Atlanta to finance his undergraduate education at a small, but well-regarded, liberal arts school, Davidson College, in North Carolina. He showed his ambition early, becoming freshman class president, ROTC commander, and president of the YMCA while busying himself with athletics despite continuing to work full time to pay for his studies. He graduated from Davidson in 1933 and then set off for St. John's College at Oxford, where he obtained a MA the following year, as a Rhodes Scholar. Rusk spent the next six years as an Associate Professor of government and Dean of Faculty at another small liberal arts school, Mills College, in Oakland, California, before being called to active duty for the unglamorous position of junior staff officer in the US Army in 1940.

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[303] Rusk's own account of his service under Kennedy and Johnson is *As I Saw It; Dean Rusk as told to Richard Rusk,* ed. Daniel S. Papp (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), while the best biography is Warren I. Cohen's *Dean Rusk* (Totowa, NJ: Cooper Square Publishers, 1980). Also relevant are: Thomas J. Schoenbaum, *Waging Peace and War: Dean Rusk in the Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson years* (Toronto: Simon and Schuster, 1988); and, Lawrence W. Serewicz, *America at the Brink of Empire: Rusk, Kissinger, and the Vietnam War* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2007).

7. France delegate Maurice Couve De Murville (L) speaking with Secretary of State Dean Rusk (R) during SEATO meeting.
Photo: Stan Wayman/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 March 1961

As with many of Rusk's college-educated contemporaries, however, wartime military service opened up tremendous new opportunities to escape from academic obscurity. Over the course of the war the industrious Rusk was promoted to the rank of Colonel, eventually becoming the deputy chief of staff in the China-Burma-India Theatre, where he was awarded the Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster. Rusk's military and academic background opened the door for postwar government service and he served in a

variety of relatively high-level roles—Chief of the U.S. State Department's International Security Affairs Division, Special Assistant to the Secretary of War, Director of the U.S. State Department's Office of U.N. Affairs, Deputy Undersecretary of State, and Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs—during the Truman years. Rusk rode out the Eisenhower presidency as head of the Rockefeller Foundation and his appointment as Kennedy's Secretary of State at age 52 took most observers by surprise.

While he was more patient than other New Frontiersmen, Rusk emerges from Warren Cohen's biography as indifferent to public opinion and unwilling to challenge authority even when he held deep reservations, such as he did during the Bay of Pigs invasion. Rusk was, however, a well-intentioned, loyal, and hard-working bureaucrat. Cohen described him as "the consummate Wilsonian… responding to Lenin with the precepts of American liberalism[304]." Rusk had established himself as a Wilsonian liberal internationalist by advocating a stronger American role in Europe from the 1930s, but was a firmly anti-intellectual New Frontiersman despite his Oxford background. He would later disparage academic theories and research projects, preferring to apply himself in an administrator's role. As such, Rusk was generally not well-disposed to cerebral leaders like de Gaulle.

Rusk's world view was thoroughly shaped by the conclusions he had drawn on World War II. When questioned on his support for expanding the war in Vietnam after he became Secretary of State, he would cite the strongly isolationist feeling during Oxford student debates of the late 1930s on whether Britain should take a more robust stance against Hitler as part of the reason why London was forced into a war for national

[304] Cohen, 109.

survival in the early 1940s. Although Rusk was widely viewed as an expert on Asia and foreign affairs, he genuinely believed that early action against communists in Vietnam would keep the United States out of a larger war later on[305]. In the 1940s and 1950s, he had followed the Democratic pack by taking generic anti-Communist, global interventionist positions[306].

John Kenneth Galbraith, a Kennedy advisor and leading economist of the era, lamented in his memoirs that Rusk was chosen as Secretary of State by default because the other leading candidates were totally inappropriate for the office. Arkansas Senator J. William Fulbright was a white supremacist who would not have been well-received in the Third World, twice-defeated presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson was too independent and got on awkwardly with Kennedy, while Connecticut Representative Chester Bowles was seen as overly sentimental and talkative. Rusk's main attributes were that he was the least known and thus least offensive of the candidates. There was little serious consideration of whether he had the right makeup for the position[307]. Unsurprisingly, Rusk would emerge as one of the administration's strongest advocates of expanding the American intervention in South Vietnam and showed little regret for his actions even decades after he had left office.

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[305] Eric Pace, "Dean Rusk, Secretary of State In Vietnam War, Is Dead at 85," *The New York Times*, 22 December 1994, A1.

[306] Bruce Kuklick, *Blind Oracles: intellectuals and war from Kennan to Kissinger* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2006), 133.

[307] Galbraith, *A Life In Our Times*, 404. He writes, "His excessive respect for military men and military power made him dangerously sanguine about military accomplishment. And he had a strongly dichotomous view of the world. On the one hand, the free nations; on the other, the comprehensively united Communists. China was not a separate entity; it was, he averred, "a Soviet Manchukuo" without any of the effective attributes of sovereignty. On this as on other matters Rusk was not responsive to contrary argument or information. When, with the passage of time, the rifts began to appear between the Chinese sand the Soviet Union, Rusk was unperturbed. He merely adjusted the facts to his faith. Were the Communist states divided, he insisted, it was only over how best to destroy the free world."

Just before being named Secretary of State, Rusk wrote an article in *Foreign Affairs* outlining his belief that primacy in foreign policy formation should be granted to the president and that there should be a clear military hierarchy to the bureaucracy, which was made up of subordinates who were often much more reluctant to carry out orders than men in uniform[308]. Rusk was the sort of ultra-loyalist who viewed those who withdrew their initial support for the President's Vietnam policy—men like Senator Mike Mansfield and Undersecretary of State George Ball—as "Benedict Arnolds[309]." He professed a general dislike for "the inevitable entanglement of summit diplomacy with domestic politics" in head of state summits with friend and foe alike, and posed what was to him a rhetorical question: is the President of the United States to be caught up personally in the difficult task of satisfying General de Gaulle's appetite for grandeur[310]?

On policy formation, Rusk would later invoke Winston Churchill[311] to rationalize his predisposition against ever ceding any ground as his State Department faced "the endless, laborious, challenging human job of getting on with the day's work to create a decent world order[312]." Logevall finds irony in Kennedy's selection of a chief diplomat who "had little faith in the power of diplomacy to settle international disputes, at least where communists were involved", noting that there was little record of any contingency planning for diplomatic efforts in Vietnam in Rusk's State Department from 1961-

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[308] Dean Rusk, "The President," *Foreign Affairs* 38, no. 3 (1960): 355-6.
[309] John B. Henry II and William Espinosa, "The Tragedy of Dean Rusk," *Foreign Policy*, no. 8 (Autumn, 1972), 166.
[310] Rusk, "The President," 366-8.
[311] Dean Rusk, "The Bases of United States Foreign Policy," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 27, no. 2 (1962), 183. He wrote, "Those who are possessed of a definite body of doctrine and of deeply rooted convictions will be in a much better position to deal with the shifts and surprises of daily affairs than those who are merely taking short views and indulging their natural impulses as they are evoked by what they read from day to day."
[312] Ibid., 187.

1965[313]. It was surprising that a diplomat so predisposed against the actual act of diplomacy later compared meetings with de Gaulle, which were accompanied by an inevitable critique of American policy, to "crawling up a mountainside on your knees, opening a little portal at the top, and waiting for the oracle to speak[314]."

McGeorge Bundy[315], Kennedy's proud, intelligent, and athletic National Security Advisor, was a Republican and late convert to the Kennedy team, which he joined only in 1960 out of dissatisfaction with his party's nomination of Richard Nixon for the presidency. Like Kennedy, Bundy had been born into a respected establishment family in Boston in 1919, later making his way to army intelligence in 1941 via Yale and Harvard. After the war he briefly served as an assistant to and ghost writer for Roosevelt and Truman's former Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, then worked for a spell as a political analyst at the influential Council on Foreign Relations. He returned to Harvard as a visiting lecturer in 1949, quickly working his way up to Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in 1953, a position he held until joining the Kennedy Cabinet.

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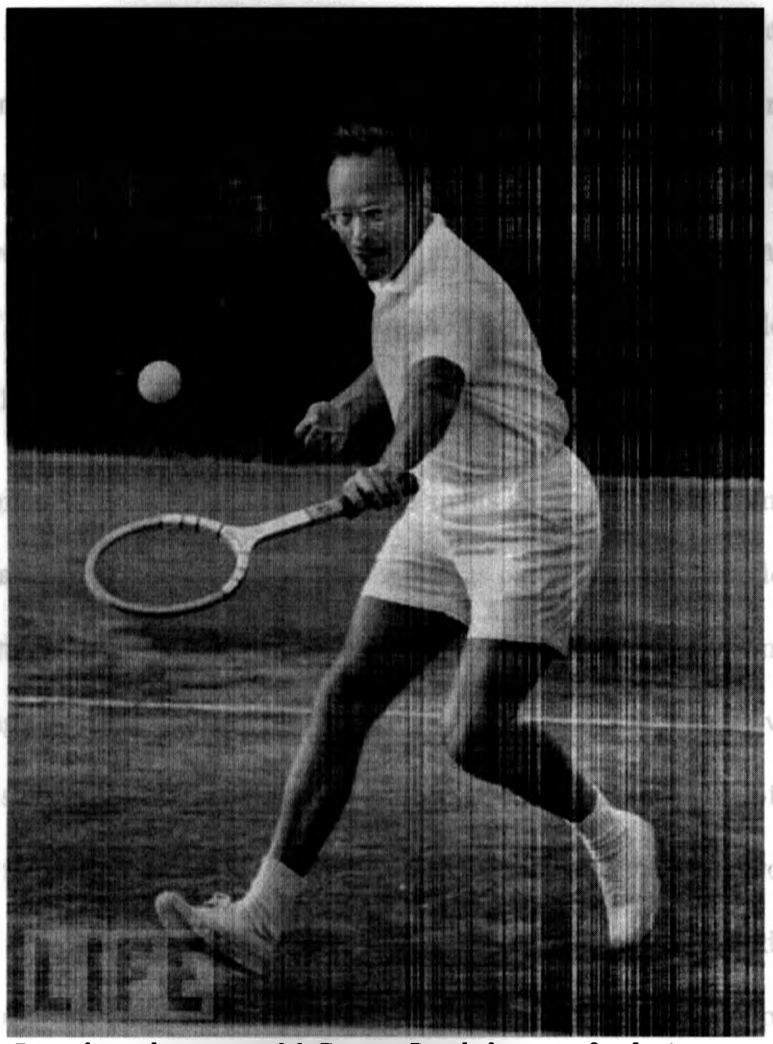
[313] Logevall, *Choosing War*, 35-6.
[314] Rusk, *As I Saw It*, 240.
[315] Before joining the Kennedy administration, Bundy collaborated with Henry L. Stimson, Roosevelt's Secretary of War, to write *On Active Service in Peace and War* (London: Hutchinson, 1949), and later produced *The Pattern of Responsibility; edited by McGeorge Bundy from the record of Secretary of State Dean Acheson* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1952). After retiring from politics he gave lectures and wrote several books on general strategic and geopolitical issues, but did not directly address his role in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Notable biographies and examinations of his role as a policy maker include: Kai Bird, *The Color of Truth: McGeorge Bundy and William Bundy: brothers in arms: a biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998); Gordon M. Goldstein, *Lessons in Disaster: McGeorge Bundy and the path to war in Vietnam* (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt and Co., 2008); and Andrew Preston, *The War Council: McGeorge Bundy, the NSC, and Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).



8. Presidential assistant McGeorge Bundy keeping fit playing tennis.
Photo: Art Rickerby/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 August 1962

While Bundy was considered by many to hold the most impressive mind of the "Best" and the "Brightest", he—like Rusk—was disdainful of political theory and philosophy[316]. As a Harvard dean he had quietly purged "politically suspect untenured employees and graduate students who refused to name names" despite public declarations against McCarthyism and loyalty purges[317]. Still, Bundy was a man of stature in American academia who had taken all the hard positions Kennedy expected of his New

[316] Kuklick, 133.
[317] Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*, 162.

Frontiersmen. Bundy was Kennedy's personal choice for Secretary of State for a time, but the president could not offer him the position in the end because of his relative youth and a Republican background that would alienate Adlai Stevenson Democrats[318]. Schlesinger described Bundy as a man of "unlimited self-confidence… trenchant and uninhibited[319]", characteristics that shine through in his writings on the Cold War during the 1940s and 1950s[320].

Ideologically, Bundy was more cautious in his internationalism than Rusk, but backed taking a strong stance against "aggressors" as part of "getting" the lessons of World War II right. Bundy followed the pack when it came to his views on foreign policy, rejecting scholarly theory. Like Kennedy, he was a crisis manager who expected that "the good statesman would be a pragmatic anti-Communist" capable of thinking clearly under extreme pressure[321]. Though he and Rusk shared the same worldview and broadly agreed on most policy issues, the elitist, combative Bundy "sens[ed] in Rusk something second-rate" and did not like Kennedy's secretary of state on a personal level[322].

De Gaulle too was irksome to Bundy, who took pleasure at a banquet during the spring 1961 Paris summit in embarrassing the general's slow, deliberate attempt at conversation with a display of "easy and fluent" French[323]. He later expressed mischievous delight at the annoyance it would cause France when the Peace Corps was

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[318] Halberstam, 30-1.
[319] Schlesinger, 208-9.
[320] For example, see: "The Test of Yalta," *Foreign Affairs* 27, no. 4 (1949): 618-29, and "November 1952: Imperatives of Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 31, no. 1 (1952): 1-14.
[321] Kuklick, 135-6.
[322] Halberstam, 32.
[323] Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days,* 350-1.

deployed to post-independence Algeria[324]. Hawkish on Vietnam, Bundy left the Johnson administration—where his influence had waned as Rusk's grew—in 1966 out of frustration with its conduct of the war, particularly the decision not to expand retaliatory bombings on North Vietnam.

Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara[325], the most immediately recognizable New Frontiersman thanks to his slicked back hair and rimless glasses, shared Bundy's Harvard background and Republican leanings, but was unique in the sense that he came to the administration from the private sector rather than academia. He was born into a comfortably middle class family in San Francisco in 1916, gaining a BA from the University of California, Berkeley at age 21 and a MBA from Harvard by 23. Harvard took the unprecedented step of naming a 24-year-old McNamara, with only a year's experience at Price Waterhouse in San Francisco, as an Assistant Professor of Business Administration the following year. McNamara remained at Harvard until 1943, when he joined the Army Air Force at the rank of captain. Like Rusk and Bundy, however, NcNamara's war service came in a strictly administrative capacity—he applied his background in statistical analysis to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of American bombers, an experience he recounted in Errol Morris' Oscar-winning 2003 documentary

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[324] Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood,* 198.

[325] For biographies and individual examinations of his role as a policymaker, see: Paul Hendrickson, *The Living and the Dead: Robert McNamara and five lives of a lost war* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996); H.R. McMaster, *Dereliction of duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the lies that led to Vietnam* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997); and, Deborah Shapley, *Promise and Power: the life and times of Robert McNamara* (Toronto: Little, Brown, 1993).

The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara[326]—and he never led troops in combat.

9. McNamara (centre) and Army Chief-Of-Staff Taylor Confer With Kennedy Prior to a Visit to South Vietnam
Photo: AFP/AFP/Getty Images
24 September 1963

McNamara left the service in 1946 to join the Ford Motor Company with ten fellow "Whiz Kids" who had introduced statistical control to the Air Force. He steadily rose up the corporate ladder until 1960, when he became the first president in company history to come from outside the Ford family. By all accounts he was quite satisfied at having reached the top of the American automotive industry in Detroit, where he had been directly responsible for introducing some of the most popular cars of the 1950s. Nevertheless, he found it impossible to resist Kennedy's appeal to his sense of national duty and joined the administration in early 1961. As one of the most dynamic business

[326] *The Fog of War: Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara*, DVD, directed by Errol Morris (New York: Sony Pictures Classics, 2003).

executives in the country, McNamara was expected to use his strong managerial expertise to organize and rationalize the Department of Defense on corporate lines.

Time magazine's profile of McNamara in December 1960 emphasized his stern Presbyterian work ethic, modesty bordering on cheapness, distaste for typical executive glad handling, and willingness to sacrifice a lucrative career in the private sector for public service[327]. McNamara was a different sort from the other New Frontiersmen in both background and temperament. Whereas Rusk and Bundy were inclined to believe that the war in Vietnam was not progressing as expected by the later 1960s because it was not being prosecuted aggressively enough, McNamara became haunted by nagging doubts that his government had committed a grave error by extending itself so deeply in the country. McNamara harboured his reservations privately, though, resigning from the Johnson administration in 1968 and later attempting to publicly analyze the conflict as a cautionary tale for future generations.

In June 1997 he took an unprecedented step for a former Secretary of Defense by travelling to Hanoi with a pair of retired American generals, a half dozen historians and others to discuss the war with a delegation of former North Vietnamese officials, generals, and academics led by ex-Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach, who had unsuccessfully campaigned to normalize Vietnamese-American relations during the Reagan years. McNamara had publicly admitted that "we were wrong, terribly wrong[328]" in his Vietnam memoir *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* two years earlier. The conference was dominated by his acceptance that "each of us could have

[327] "Six For the Kennedy Cabinet," *Time,* Monday, 26 December, 1960, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,895133-1,00.html.
[328] Robert S. McNamara with Brian VanDeMark, *In Retrospect: the Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Times Books, 1995), preface.

achieved our geopolitical objectives without that terrible loss of life" and that both sides had failed to capitalize on several opportunities to negotiate peace while McNamara was in office[329]. From his distant vantage point in the Department of Defense, McNamara had approached the conflict as a challenging numbers game: with a superior product and exemplary management, the competition could be bested. McNamara did not personalize the conflict as Kennedy, Rusk, Bundy and others had, and as such did not share their emotional response to de Gaulle's opposition to American Vietnam policy.

Of the junior men in the president's foreign policy coterie, Walt Whitman Rostow[330] brought the most decidedly academic profile to the White House. Rostow was born in New York to Russian-Jewish socialists in 1916, excelling academically at Yale and as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford before joining the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) as a major in 1942. He spent most of the later 1940s in Europe working on various economic recovery programs and lecturing on American history at Oxford and Cambridge. In the 1950s he worked as an economic history professor at MIT, where his prodigious writings on economic modernization drew Senator Kennedy's attention. Rostow joined the Kennedy campaign in 1958—he was credited with developing the Kennedy campaign slogan "Let's get the country moving again"—and developed an easy rapport with the future president. He had authored *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*[331] (1960), an hugely influential liberal democratic blueprint

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[329] David K. Shipler, "Robert McNamara and the Ghosts of Vietnam," *The New York Times*, 10 August 1997, SM30.

[330] A prolific writer at all stages of his adult life, Rostow penned dozens of works on development economics and various other pet projects after he left politics. For the best examination of his role in the Kennedy administration, see: Kimber Charles Pearce, *Rostow, Kennedy, and the Rhetoric of Foreign Aid* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2001).

[331] Walt W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

for Third World modernization. Rostow, a prolific economic historian, argued in *The Stages of Economic Growth* that the United States should accelerate the modernization of countries like Vietnam by stimulating key economic sectors and shielding vulnerable regimes from Communist incursion by any means necessary. Supremely confident in his modernization theory and obsessed by statistical data, Rostow was a consistent, unwavering supporter of escalating the war at every turn through both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

Rostow was described as a "perpetual optimist, easy-going and ebullient, unfailingly polite… a whirlwind of supreme self-confidence, talkative to the point of verbosity, certain of the moral rectitude of his positions and unwavering in the face of criticism[332]." He was, however, viewed as too intellectual for a senior position by the other members of the Kennedy administration. Kennedy initially hoped to find a home for him in the State Department, but met with strong opposition from the usually deferential Rusk, who found Rostow a "particularly irritating… verbose theoretical man who intended to make all his theories work[333]."

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[332] Todd S. Purdum, "Walt Rostow, Adviser to Kennedy and Johnson, Dies at 86," *The New York Times,* 15 February 2003, A23.
[333] Halberstam, 43.

10. Walt Whitman Rostow attending Life Magazine-sponsored Economic council.
Photo: Ralph Morse/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 May 1963

Bundy, who held many reservations of his own about Rostow, nevertheless agreed to take him on as a Deputy Special Assistant to the President for national security affairs as penance for failing to provide Kennedy with active support during the 1960 presidential campaign[334]. When the administration began drawing up a counterinsurgency plan for Vietnam in 1961, the bookish Rostow proposed committing thousands of American combat troops to the country and a bombing campaign against the North, a program that was far too aggressive for Kennedy's taste. Kennedy quickly

[334] Ibid., 44.

distanced himself from Rostow, who was given a sideways promotion to chair of the State Department's Policy Planning Council. His ideas had little influence over Kennedy, Rusk, Bundy or McNamara and were mostly ignored from late 1961 onwards[335]. His stock rose when Johnson became president and he was elected to the position of national security advisor when Bundy resigned in 1966. Rostow remained an unrepentant cheerleader for the righteousness of the American campaign even as victory grew ever more elusive and domestic opposition more organized as the decade wore on.

11. Under-Secretary of State George W. Ball briefing press on Vietnam War at Pentagon.
Photo: Francis Miller/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 January 1965

[335] Freedman, 337.

In the early 1970s Undersecretary of State George Ball[336], along with Senator Mike Mansfield[337], emerged from *The Pentagon Papers*[338] as one of the few courageous opponents of escalation during the tragic march to war. Ball, born in Des Moines, Iowa in 1909 and raised in Illinois, was somewhat of an outsider who identified with Midwestern anti-eastern establishment traditions and never really accepted the inherent elitism of the "Best and the Brightest". He studied literature and classics at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL rather than pursue an east coast, Ivy League education and put on anti-intellectual airs. Ball was dispatched to France to assist with American Marshall Plan reconstruction efforts in the late 1940s and formed a deep friendship with French EEC architect Jean Monnet, who shared his passion of for a new, increasingly integrated Western European political entity firmly anchored in the Atlantic Community. Later, de Gaulle's opposition to surrendering French sovereignty to supranational institutions and independent streak put him at odds with everything Ball believed was in the best interests of both the United States and Western Europe. As a staunch Europeanist with little background or interest in Southeast Asia, Ball was by far the most pessimistic voice in the administration about the prospects for success in Vietnam after the decision had been made for military escalation.

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[336] Ball recounted his reservations over Vietnam in *The Past has Another Pattern: memoirs* (New York: Norton, 1982). The best secondary account is David L. DiLeo's *George Ball, Vietnam, and the Rethinking of Containment* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

[337] For his transformation for Diem cheerleader in the 1950s to outspoken critic of Johnson's decision to go to war, see: Gregory Allen Olson, *Mansfield and Vietnam: a study in rhetorical adaptation* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1995). For biographies and general accounts of his political career, see: Louis Baldwin, *Hon. Politician, Mike Mansfield of Montana* (Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Pub. Co., 1979); and, Francis R. Valeo, *Mike Mansfield, Majority leader: a different kind of Senate, 1961-1976* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999).

[338] Neil Sheehan, et al. *The Pentagon Papers: as published by The New York Times* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971).

Fearing that an intensification of the air campaign against the North would leave Washington unable to choose its exit strategy, he was one of few officials who favoured a political solution and "covert probing of a deal with the Viet Cong elements[339]." Ball never accepted the Kennedy-Rusk-Bundy position that an American defeat in Southeast Asia would do untold damage to America's standing in Western Europe, holding that an unwarranted commitment in Vietnam would raise more questions about the American leadership of NATO than it answered. In the end, however, the problem with Ball's advice on Vietnam was that it was neither sharp nor consistent, failed to answer practical questions about how to de-escalate, and was presented with the lack of confidence one would expect from one of the few official voices challenging the president's wisdom[340] .

Despite popular conceptions of Ball as pro-European, he was more of a pro-British Anglo-Saxonist—to the point that he felt some British institutions were superior to those of his own country—who had absorbed much of his disdain for "French pretension and anachronistic dreams of hegemony" from his English-born paternal grandfather, Amos Ball, Sr[341]. Ball was a protégé of Adlai Stevenson and was deeply sceptical of the notion that there was ever such a thing as a just war. He became very close to Jean Monet, the famous French economist and founding father of the European Economic Community (EEC), during his time in Europe as a lawyer crafting trade legislation with the French government after the war, but loathed de Gaulle for his challenge of deeper European integration[342]. A parallel to Ball's Eurocentrism was his

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[339] Schulzinger, *A Time for War*, 163.
[340] Ibid., 176-7.
[341] DiLeo, 7.
[342] For all their disagreement over European issues, Ball recognized that de Gaulle had outlined his world view in his memoirs and his actions in office were largely consistent with his published writings. When it came to Vietnam, the two broadly agreed on major philosophical issues: that the

dim view of the Third World, scepticism towards development theories, and a general ambivalence to Southeast Asia that distinguished him from other members of the administration. Ball was an anti-Rostowian, yet another position he unconsciously shared with de Gaulle. He agreed in principle with aid to help newly independent countries resist communism, but opposed the seemingly limitless 'nation-building' assistance associated with popular developmental economics of the Kennedy era and far-flung military commitments incommensurate with Washington's resources[343].

Ball did little to conceal his views early after taking office and never really fit with the tone or style of New Frontier administration. Nevertheless, he was tolerated as the voice of "domesticated dissent"[344]. He was elevated to the position of Undersecretary of State for political affairs in the wake of the late 1961 ouster of Chester Bowles, whose punishment for leaking his opposition to the Bay of Pigs invasion served as a cautionary tale for other subordinates willing to challenge the president's authority. Ball was privately worried about Kennedy's foreign policy, specifically by signals that he would make Southeast Asia a test case for resisting communism. He thought Vietnam was a trap and had long admired former French Prime Minister Pierre Mendès-France for finding a way out of an unwinnable conflict.

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country was of peripheral interest to the West, that American military intervention would not succeed where France had failed, and that large dollops of aid money were unlikely to be well spent by the Diem regime. However, subsequent elements of de Gaulle's European policy—such as rejection of the Multilateral Force (MLF) nuclear weapons sharing deal, the veto of British entry into the EEC, the withdrawal of French forces from NATO's integrated command—left Ball totally disinclined to risk his career by promoting the French president's position on Vietnam to the rest of the Kennedy administration.

[343] Freedman, 28. He writes, "[w]hen [Ball] commented later on the 'young movers and shakers' of the Kennedy administration, he contrasted their 'surfeit of theories regarding the economic development of the Third World' with their 'lack of settled views on the structure of relations among the Western industrialized democracies."

[344] Mark Peceny, *Democracy at the Point of Bayonets* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 89.

Ball voiced his opposition to American escalation in Vietnam directly with Kennedy only once, on 7 November 1961. He described the recently released Rostow-Taylor Report, which recommended an expansion of the military aid program to the Diem regime and the introduction of 6000 to 8000 American combat troops under the guise of flood relief work, as an "enormous mistake" that would ultimately lead to the repetition of the French calamity a decade earlier. Ball went on to predict that if Kennedy approved the plan the United States would have 300,000 troops bogged down in "hostile country" within five years—a number that ended up being 200,000 men too few—to which Kennedy replied, "George, I always thought you were one of the brightest guys in town, but you're crazier than hell, this isn't going to happen[345]." Ball was shocked by the president's tart response and quickly surmised that internal administration debate centred on how to deny victory to the communists rather than whether to intervene militarily, an approach that severely limited policy options. Hemmed in by more powerful figures in McNamara, Rusk and Kennedy, he chose silence over sustained opposition that would have certainly led to his early dismissal[346].

Kennedy arrived in the White House in January 1961 with the rest of the New Frontiersmen possessing a long record of interest in Vietnam; he was a strong supporter of Diem in the Senate as a member of The American Friends of Vietnam, an influential lobby group, and first gained national attention as a foreign policy expert in the early 1950s for his speeches on Southeast Asia. Kennedy saw nationalism as the penultimate

[345] Gerald S. Strober, *The Kennedy Presidency* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 413.
[346] DiLeo, 53.

force of the period and the Third World as the key battleground of the future[347], and, of equal importance, he was determined to undertake a new foreign policy that neither showed signs of weakness nor was bound by the economic constraints that stayed Eisenhower's hand. In Ngo Dinh Diem, Kennedy saw exactly the sort of anti-communist nationalist leader he and fellow Third Worlders in the administration could heartily support[348]. The reality, however, was that his views of the Vietnamese were shaped by paternalistic middle-class liberal views of Asian backwardness and Washington's obligation to provide uplift to the Vietnamese[349].

Kennedy's willingness to commit to South Vietnam was fuelled both by his faith in contemporary modernization theories[350] and over-confidence in his administration's

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[347] Freedman, 32.

[348] In recent years there has been fierce debate over the viability of Diem's regime. Revisionist scholar Mark Moyar argues in *Triumph Forsaken* that the overthrow of Diem was "by far the worst American mistake of the Vietnam War (xvii)." In his view, Diem knew Vietnam's political culture better than any American and governed appropriately under the circumstances. The real mistake was that Americans naively measured Diem against Western ideals that were totally incompatible with Vietnamese realities. Most contentiously, he argues that the South could have bested the North on its own had Americans not interfered so deeply during the Diem years. James Carter totally rejects this line of thinking in *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). It is his view that, "[i]n reality, 'South Vietnam,' to the extent that it came into being at all, was a failed American invention (13)." He sees the failure of American state-building efforts despite substantial material and moral backing from Washington as the biggest problem related to the conflict Vietnam. When state-building efforts failed to produce a viable state capable of conducting the war on its own, the United States felt it was forced to intervene militarily on its behalf.

[349] Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 189. She argues, "Kennedy exhorted Americans to commit themselves to South Vietnam—and to expansionist foreign policy throughout Asia—by recasting a fundamentally political relationship into the personal terms of adoptive parenthood."

[350] For examinations of Kennedy-era modernization thinking on Vietnam, see: Mark T. Berger, "Decolonisation, Modernisation and Nation-Building: Political Development Theory and the Appeal of Communism in Southeast Asia, 1945-1975," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34, No. 3, (2003): 421-448; Samuel Hale Butterfield, *U.S. Development Aid—an Historic First: achievements and failures in the twentieth century* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004); Marc Frey, "Tools of Empire: Persuasion and the United States's Modernizing Mission in Southeast Asia," *Diplomatic History* 27, no. 4, (2003): 543-68; Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: modernization theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era*

managerial abilities. While the administration viewed victory in the Vietnam conflict as crucial to setting a precedent for the defeat of other communist national liberation movements, it still felt it was "a small and relatively manageable part of a worldwide contest[351]." In the early 1950s Kennedy concluded that South Vietnam's liberal, democratic nationalist elites were trapped between French colonialists and Communist rebels and were waiting for an opportunity to break free. He assumed that these nationalists would be eager to work with anti-colonial American advisers who would help them steer South Vietnam in a pro-Western direction[352]. In retrospect, it would soon become apparent that both of these two assumptions were fatally flawed.

Kennedy's men felt excessively confident that their approach to Vietnam would succeed where France had failed because it was grounded in rational, logical American social science and was motivated by an altruistic modernization program rather than colonial greed. World War II, the Korean War, and the nuclear arms race fuelled the rapid development of a 'national security structure' that bound together a large number of public and private institutions into a larger framework. Under this new structure, intellectuals from foreign policy institutes and elite universities were able to play an every larger role in shaping the political and cultural assumptions that drove American foreign policy. The conclusion they coalesced around by the late 1950s was that

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(Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000) and "Ideology, Social Science, and Destiny: Modernization and the Kennedy-Era Alliance for Progress," *Diplomatic History* 22, no. 2 (1998): 199-229; and, Jonathan Nashel, "The Road to Vietnam: Modernization Theory in Fact and Fiction," in *Cold War Constructions: the political culture of United States imperialism, 1945-1966*, ed. Christian G. Appy (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000).

[351] Brian VanDeMark, "A Way of Thinking: The Kennedy Administration's Initial Assumptions about Vietnam and Their Consequences" in Lloyd C. Gardner and Ted Gittinger, eds, *Vietnam: The Early Decisions*, 26-7.

[352] Lawrence J. Bassett and Stephen E. Pelz, "The Failed Search for Victory: Vietnam and the Politics of War" in Thomas G. Paterson, ed., *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American foreign policy, 1961-1963* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989), 224.

American leadership of the Free World required a technocratic approach to national security that married the needs of foreign, economic and domestic policies. Orrin Schwab writes, "[t]he state needed to be multifaceted and multidimensional, organizing the Free World's response to communism militarily, economically, politically, and psychologically; it needed to work intensively within countries, within regions, and within the United States itself[353]." Kennedy's men embraced these new ideas and set about applying them once they reached the White House.

Kennedy-era policy makers looked to modernization theory as a promising new means of containing revolutionary communist expansion. Through the 1950s a small army of social scientists—most notably Rostow, Lucian Pye, Daniel Lerner, Gabriel Almond, and James Coleman—had been studying how economics, political systems and social values had shaped development across the globe, leading to the creation of the new, influential academic field of modernization by the early 1960s. As Michael E. Latham argues in *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era*, modernization theory was built on the beliefs that:

> (1) traditional' and 'modern' societies are separated by a sharp dichotomy; (2) economic, political and social changes are integrated and interdependent; (3) development tends to proceed toward the modern state along a common, linear path; and (4) the process of developing societies can be dramatically accelerated through contact with developed ones[354].

At its core, modernization theory was essentially a combination of established American views on the backwardness of non-European races and the White Man's Burden dressed

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[353] Schwab, 1-2.
[354] Latham, 3-4.

in the academic language of social scientists[355]. The modernization theorists' core assumption was that the industrial capitalist democracies of the West—most of all the United States—set the benchmark developing countries should strive for which appealed to the Kennedy administration's sense of global mission and was eagerly integrated into the New Frontiersmen's foreign policy program.

Modernization ideology was based on a belief in the altruism, benevolence, and determination of the American people that was rooted in the exceptional historical circumstances that had shaped them. Believing its own foreign policy to be rooted in sound, pragmatic American social science, the Kennedy administration rejected the model of Gaullist foreign policy formation, which they viewed as little more than a byproduct of French intuition and emotion. The administration was convinced that it was promoting a universal, science-based path to development that would enable it to solve the myriad problems facing Third World nations and thwart Soviet attempts to swing them to the communist camp. Rival foreign visions of how to manage western relations in the Third World could be dismissed as the products of selfishness. Implicit in American modernization ideology as it was applied to Southeast Asia was a complete and total rejection of the counterproductive French colonial model; as such, it provided further justification for the administration's determination to box de Gaulle out of Vietnamese affairs.

The administration bought into the myth that the Viet Cong could be defeated if Washington proposed a comprehensive modernization/Westernization program for South

[355] Michael H. Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 208.

Vietnam based on the introduction of American technology and management strategies to alleviate economic backwardness, along with the introduction of new liberal democratic institutions that would help integrate the country into the western community. It was assumed that American methodology and values were universally applicable, though the administration made little effort to familiarize itself with local history and culture or even consult the Vietnamese on what sort of future they wanted for their country[356]. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's January 1961 speech declaring Soviet support for anti-colonial movements and wars of national liberation—coupled with communist advances in Cuba, Congo and South Vietnam—exacerbated the Kennedy administration's concerns over the fragility of the developing world and intensified its commitment to making this new strategy of containment work.

Through 1961 an informal hard-line anti-communist coalition consisting of Kennedy, liberal internationalists in the State Department, right-wing members of the senior officer corps, and modernization theorists in the social sciences threw its support behind the doctrine of counterinsurgency[357]. It was assumed both in the White House and the Pentagon that the Soviet Union was orchestrating an aggressive campaign against the West and pro-Western regimes across the globe. Key policy makers saw communist pressure in both Vietnam and Berlin as related elements of this struggle and committed themselves to holding on to both despite all odds[358]. The Rostowian modernization theory that shaped the administration's early approach to Vietnam was based on "[hope]

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[356] Ibid., 29.
[357] Schwab, 7. He describes counterinsurgency doctrine as "a theory of war that departed from the military's traditional concept but captured the support of civilian foreign policy experts throughout the executive branch."
[358] Ibid., 17-8.

that the United States and its allies could stake a claim to the ideological allegiance of decolonizing nations in the developing world[359]", but required target states to surrender a considerable degree of their newly-won sovereignty to American advisors.

In his first year in office Kennedy reshuffled the bureaucracy, installing hawks in positions of influence and sidelining doves and neutralists, in preparation for an expansion of the American program in Vietnam to support Diem. On Thanksgiving, Averell Harriman was promoted in the State Department to Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs, while Michael Forrestal, Harriman's adopted son, took over the Indochina desk at the National Security Council. These two men had increasing influence with Kennedy, who began to feel more confident with policy direction in Vietnam by the end of the year. Their dovish rivals never wielded much clout; Galbraith came across as a pacifist, Bowles had committed career suicide, while Abram Chayes had relatively little influence over policy formation in his role as Legal Adviser for the U.S. Department of State.

Neutralization would have broken with seven years of American policy and been viewed as a repudiation of the Diem regime, an unacceptable reversal for Kennedy in 1961[360]. By the end of his first year in office he had boosted American aid to South Vietnam from $42 million to $220 million, agreed to General Maxwell Taylor's proposal for "more assertive use of armed forces", dispatched 400 Green Berets to lead the Montagnards guarding North Vietnamese infiltration routes, dispatched hundreds of additional training officers to ARVN (3,205 by end of 1961 and 9,000 by end of 1962),

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[359] Preston, 76.
[360] Freedman, 337-42.

authorized CIA commando raids on the North, and permitted the delivery of weapons to anti-Communist militias[361].

The corollary to playing such an ambitious role in the modernization process of Third World countries was, as Andrew Preston notes, an increased likelihood that the United States would be drawn into long bush wars to prop up willing client regimes. Rostow and Kennedy understood this risk, but it did not deter them; they felt the United States had an undeniable responsibility to protect the weakest nations targeted by communist "scavengers of the modernization process[362]." For their part, Western European leaders were naturally concerned that Kennedy's new rigorous focus on the Third World was a distraction from the central front of the Cold War, Berlin, and that more robust American intervention in developing countries threatened to draw NATO into a global conflict with the communist bloc over peripheral concerns.

The combination of modernization theory and the threat of American military intervention to suppress communist insurgencies would, Kennedy and Rostow assumed, demonstrate American resolve and check Soviet advances in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. The chief obstacle to a robust implementation of American modernization theory encountered by the administration in South Vietnam, however, was one of security: the insurgency proved so widespread that Americans could not effectively institute the new programs designed to improve the local standard of living that would deliver South Vietnam to the Western camp. Rostowians did not abandon modernization theory in the face of the Viet Cong's challenge; rather, they shifted their focus to more conventional

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[361] Robert D. Schulzinger, "'It's Easy to Win on Paper': the United States and Vietnam, 1961-1968" in Diane B. Kunz, ed., *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade: American Foreign Relations during the 1960s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 184-5.
[362] Preston, 77.

military thinking in order to defeat it on the battlefield as a necessary precursor to the establishment of their cherished economic programs[363]. From this compromise emerged a framework for the subsequent reports, plans, and programs that would draw the Kennedy administration deeper and deeper into Vietnam over the next two years to de Gaulle's great chagrin.

Modernization theory and counterinsurgency doctrine did not emerge from sinister motives despite the havoc American intervention ultimately wreaked across Southeast Asia[364], though they were embraced so unquestioningly by the men of the Kennedy administration because many Democrats had felt that they needed to exaggerate their toughness to counter McCarthyite charges of softness in the 1950s. In practice, there was so little regard for local sensibilities in modernization planning that it is hardly surprising that the administration's highly ambitious program for Vietnam fell far short of its lofty aims. Despite their ostensibly good intentions, Kennedy and the New Frontiersmen let their confidence in idealistic and untested economic and nation-building theories lock them into a rigid mode of thought on Vietnam. The industrialization efforts, resettlement programs, agricultural aid, and helicopter raids against the Viet Cong held very little appeal for the average Vietnamese peasant. Propping up the deeply unpopular Diem regime and assisting his security forces as they extended new forms of landlord

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[363] Ibid., 76-8.

[364] Michael H. Hunt, *The American Ascendancy*, 208. He writes, "Social Science techniques promised to restore to America the luster of good intentions, to offer an effective program for using the redirected economic support, and ultimately to provide an antidote to radical trends in unsettled lands."

rule in the countryside alienated the United States from the peasants who made up the bulk of South Vietnam's population[365].

[365] Lawrence J. Bassett and Stephen E. Pelz, "The Failed Search for Victory: Vietnam and the Politics of War" in Thomas G. Paterson, ed, *Kennedy's Quest for Victory* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989), 224.

CHAPTER 4: Vers la Première Rencontre

Franco-American relations during the first four months of the Kennedy presidency were characterized by cautious, guarded assessment of de Gaulle by the White House in advance of a major Franco-American summit meeting between the two presidents in Paris starting at the end of May[366]. Though the attention of both men was diverted by major crises during this period—in April, Kennedy oversaw the debacle that was the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, while de Gaulle successfully faced down a coup attempt from generals in Algeria angered by his willingness to grant independence to the rebelling colony—there was some measure of optimism that their first meeting would go a long way towards resolving many of the issues that had troubled their governments' bilateral relationship during the latter years of the Eisenhower administration. This was not to be the case.

As the months unfolded in advance of the summit, early genuine enthusiasm for greater Franco-American dialogue on Kennedy's part was quickly tempered by de

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[366] The best general examinations of Kennedy's relationship with de Gaulle's France are: Frank Costigliola's "The Failed Design: Kennedy, de Gaulle, and the Struggle for Europe," *Diplomatic History* 8, no. 3 (1984): 227-52; Erin R. Mahan's *Kennedy, de Gaulle, and Western Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); and, Pascaline Winand, *Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the United States of Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996). Also see the aforementioned Brinkley and Griffiths' *John F. Kennedy and Europe*; White's *Kennedy: the New Frontier revisited*; Kunz's *Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade*; and Paterson's *Kennedy's Quest for Victory*. Also, see: Wilfried Loth, *Europe, Cold War and Coexistence, 1953-1965* (London: Frank Cass, 2004).

Gaulle's total disagreement with the American president's plan to reconstitute the chaotic UN peacekeeping operation in post-independence Congo. Nevertheless, American policy makers close to Kennedy continued to emphasize during this period that there were plenty of potential areas for Franco-American agreement (such as the EEC, Africa, Latin America, Berlin, and the omnibus category of "East-West affairs") that outweighed areas of divergence (such as UN legitimacy, the French nuclear weapons program, and "NATO" broadly conceived).

While the youthful Kennedy was eager to break from the past and try radical, hyper-modern Cold War approaches with the emerging Third World, de Gaulle's conceptions of how international diplomacy should be conducted harkened back to the long era of European international supremacy when French norms were accepted in other advanced countries[367]. Born in the northern city of Lille near the Belgian frontier in 1890—just two decades after the Franco-Prussian War—de Gaulle retained a distinctly "long 19th Century" view of French security interests throughout his political life and was most wary of neighbouring Germany, not Russia or the Soviet Union. His conception of France's traditional role in the world made him enormously sensitive to any gesture that would exclude Paris from the ranks of the Great Powers, thus explaining his obsession with status[368] that led to a tremendous degree of friction with both Roosevelt and Churchill during the war years. While Churchill often sparred with de Gaulle, there was

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[367] Respected British diplomat-historian Harold Nicholson in *The Evolution of Diplomacy* (New York: Collier Books, 1966), describes the "French method" that dominated international relations from the era of Cardinal Richelieu in the 17th Century to World War I as "courteous and dignified; it was continuous and gradual; it attached importance to knowledge and experience; it took account of the realities of existing power; and it defined good faith, lucidity and precision as the qualities essential to any sound negotiations (99-100)."

[368] By the 1950s nuclear weapons, not colonies, were the new status symbol of Great Powers, hence de Gaulle's determination to build an independent French *force de frappe* over Anglo-American objections.

a grudging respect between the two men and Churchill always understood that British interests would be served in restoring France as a counterbalance to Germany at war's end. Roosevelt, by contrast, initially refused to acknowledge de Gaulle as the French leader in liberated North Africa in late 1942, poisoning relations by backing his rival Gen. Henri Giraud. Almost completely unknown outside his own country before 1940, de Gaulle's prickly relations with the Anglo-Saxon powers during this period largely and permanently shaped the way Americans subsequently viewed him. The reality was, however, that de Gaulle had gained valuable political experience during the war and the early years of the Fourth Republic, eventually becoming much more confident of his and France's position by 1958. Stanley Hoffman describes him at this point as "not only older, but also more relaxed, avuncular, and serene—rounder both physically and in manner[369]."

Temperamentally, Kennedy was a pragmatist who focussed on Cold War crisis management without dwelling heavily on long-term trends. This sharply distinguished the president and other New Frontiersmen from de Gaulle, who rarely allowed immediate problems to disturb his meditation on the outlook for the international system decades into the future[370]. These contrasting approaches to diplomacy, however, emerged from differing national mythologies rooted in France's *mission civilisatrice* and America's Manifest Destiny as much as the makeup of individual policymakers. Phil Melling and Jon Roper write, "France, with its experience of a fractured revolutionary past, had a

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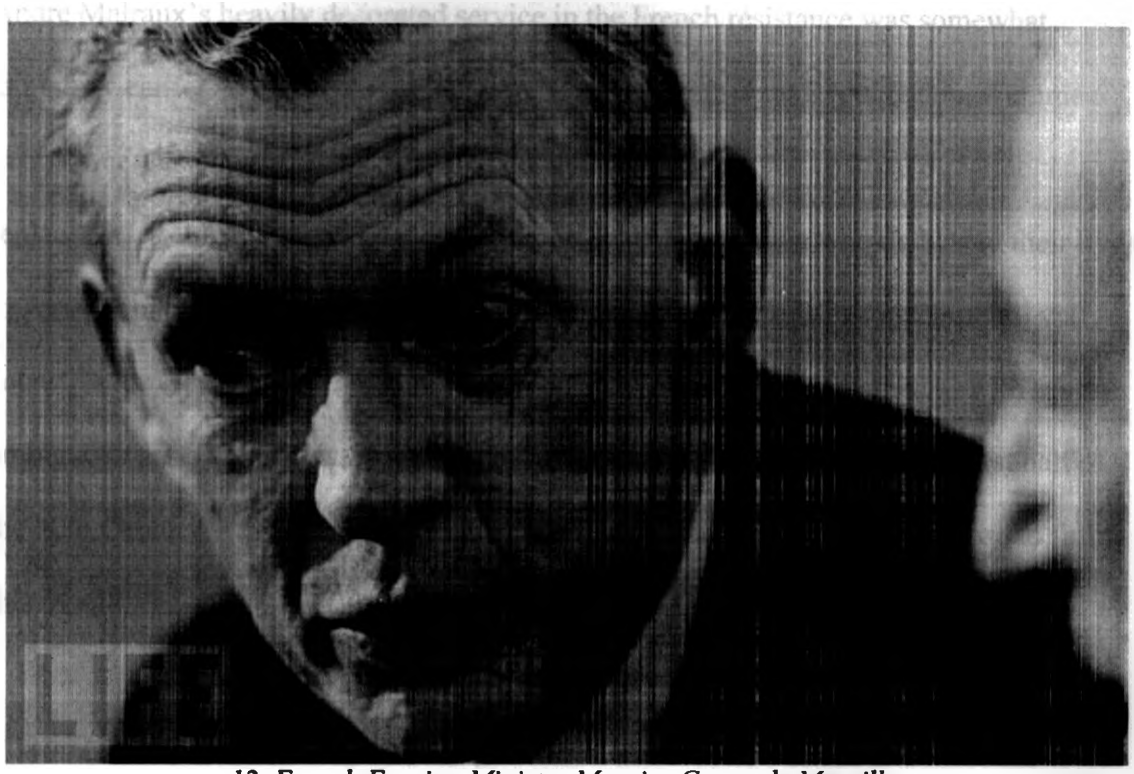
[369] Stanley Hoffman, "The Foreign Policy of de Gaulle" in *The Diplomats, 1939-1979*, eds. Gordon A. Craig and Francis L. Loewenheim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 231. This confidence, Hoffman argues, came from satisfaction knowing that his unheeded warnings on the need to mechanize the French army in the 1930s and grant strong presidential powers in the mid-1940s were both proven correct.

[370] Josephine Brain, "Dealing with de Gaulle," in *Kennedy: The New Frontier Revisited*, 160-161.

more tolerant attitude towards diverse ideologies and different cultures, seeking at least to investigate colonial societies before attempting to assimilate them. The United States, with a self-confidence endorsed in its ideologically monolithic 'liberal tradition' did not travel in search of utopia[371]." Under different circumstances, these two different approaches to international relations could have complimented each other nicely and theoretically been merged together for a more nuanced western approach to the Cold War. In practice, however, they served to underline the differences that had long separated Paris and Washington.



12. French Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville.
Photo: Dominique Berretty/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 January 1965

While Eisenhower Republicans were the ostensible foil to the New Frontiersmen, the de Gaulle era French political elite similarly failed to live up to the New

[371] Roper and Melling, "Introduction" in *America, France and Vietnam: Cultural History and Ideas of Conflict*, Phil Melling and Jon Roper, eds. (Brookfield, VT: Gower Pub. Co., 1991), 5-6.

Frontiersmen's masculine ideal and did not automatically command American respect. De Gaulle was a resolute and courageous wartime leader, but had quarrelled endlessly with his Anglo-American counterparts and shown a lack of pragmatism by negotiating with Moscow when it suited his interests. Foreign Minister Couve de Murville had served the Vichy government until the Americans landed in North Africa in early 1943. Ambassador to the United States Hervé Alphand had spent the war as an economics attaché in Washington and later became economic director for the Free French in London instead of serving in the military. De Gaulle confidant and Minister of Cultural Affairs André Malraux's heavily decorated service in the French résistance was somewhat tainted by earlier adventurism in Spain on behalf of a left-wing Republican government many Americans found more offensive than the ultra-conservative Franco regime that replaced it. Kennedy's idealized list of heroic soldier-statesmen who dedicated their lives to American notions of freedom ran from Thomas Jefferson to Winston Churchill via John Quincy Adams and Theodore Roosevelt[372]. None of the Frenchmen —with ambiguous pasts that reflected the turmoil France had undergone during the first half of the 20th Century—that the New Frontiersmen encountered came remotely close to fitting this mould.

[372] Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*, 179.

13. President of France, General Charles De Gaulle, during his visit to the United States with officials. (De Murville at left in the second row, Ambassador Herve Alphand is at de Gaulle's right.)
Photo: Joseph Scherschel/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 April 1960

The immediate questions for the Kennedy administration regarding de Gaulle's[373] France revolved around determining what he really wanted from Washington[374] and then

[373] De Gaulle is undoubtedly one of the most fascinating political leaders of the 20th century and, like Kennedy, has been the subject of dozens of biographies that range from highly critical to fawning. The best of this long list are: Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, 2 Vols, (New York: Norton, 1990-1992); Bernard Ledwidge, *DeGaulle* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982); Daniel J. Mahoney, *De Gaulle: statesmanship, grandeur, and modern democracy* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996); and Charles Williams, *Last great Frenchman: a life of General De Gaulle* (London: Little Brown, 1993). Author of several notable works on military strategy and geopolitics as an army officer in the interwar years, de Gaulle completed *The Complete War Memoirs* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), before returning to the presidency in 1958. He later added *Memoirs of Hope: renewal and endeavour*, trans. Terence Kilmartin (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971) on the first four years of the Fifth Republic. Confidants and fellow travellers to leave their accounts of de Gaulle include: Pierre Maillard, *De Gaulle et le problème allemand: les leçons d'un grand dessein* (Paris: F.-X. Guibert, 2001); Jean Monnet, *Mémoires* (Paris: Fayard, 1976); Maurice Couve de Murville, *Une politique étrangère, 1958-1969* (Paris: Plon, 1971); and, Alain Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle*, 3 Vols, (Paris: Fayard, 1994-2000).

deciding whether it was worth conceding his demands. De Gaulle had for the previous two years been waging a sustained campaign to convince the Eisenhower administration of the merits of his *directoire* plan, which the Americans attempted to bury in low level committee discussions to de Gaulle's great annoyance rather than dismiss outright. De Gaulle dispatched Jacques Chaban-Delmas, president of the National Assembly, to Washington in early 1961 in a bid to resurrect the *directoire* plan with the new administration and impress upon Kennedy the importance of shared decision-making within the Western alliance. The results, however, were no different than they had been under the old regime.

De Gaulle continued pushing for a top tier of NATO composed of the United States, Britain, and France until 1962, when it became clear that Kennedy had no interest in the proposal. There was so little American interest that it was never determined how such a *directoire* was meant to function, though it appeared by 1961 that de Gaulle was hoping for little more than a consultative body. While such a rearrangement would undoubtedly have brought a wave of protest from West Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, there was in Gaullist eyes an apparent logic beyond merely extending

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[374] Edward A. Kolodziej's *French International Policy under De Gaulle and Pompidou: the politics of grandeur* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974) stands out as the best work from the first generation of histories of de Gaulle's foreign policy, but W.W. Kulski's critical *De Gaulle and the world; the foreign policy of the Fifth French Republic* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press,1966) stands out, although it was published before the end of de Gaulle's presidency. Also relevant from this period are: Edward L. Morse's *Foreign Policy and Interdependence in Gaullist France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), and, Simon Serfaty's *France, De Gaulle, and Europe; the policy of the Fourth and Fifth Republics toward the Continent* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968). The most significant of more recent works include Philip G. Cerny, *The Politics of Grandeur: ideological aspects of de Gaulle's foreign policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Philip H. Gordon, *A Certain Idea of France: French security policy and the Gaullist legacy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Frédéric Bozo, *Two strategies for Europe: De Gaulle, the United States, and the Atlantic Alliance*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001); and, Maurice Vaïsse, *La Grandeur: politique étrangère du général de Gaulle, 1958-1969* (Paris: Fayard, 1998).

French influence to having NATO's big three, all permanent members of the UN Security Council and nuclear powers, collaborate more closely. De Gaulle, a proud man who hated to ask for anything, awkwardly broached the proposal again with Kennedy after it appeared that Eisenhower had agreed in principle to an unofficial consultative *directoire* just before leaving office. Kennedy was less receptive, however, and chose to ignore the most pressing French concern with NATO in the early 1960s[375].

Kennedy, like Eisenhower, was unreceptive to charges that Washington's imperial management of NATO was threatening to undermine its relationship with Western Europe when de Gaulle's program appeared as a blatant scheme to assert French dominion over Germany and win a veto over American foreign policy. American leaders generally appreciated the stabilizing influence de Gaulle restored to France, but resented his initiatives to usurp American management of NATO or, when they failed, to distance Paris from Washington[376]. As Kennedy arrived in the White House, the United States and France were moving in two different directions: Washington's idealistic, hegemonic, and ready to 'bear all burdens' in defence of the free world, while Paris was shedding its

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[375] According to Gaullist mythology, de Gaulle neither wanted the Americans to accept his *directoire* proposal nor expected anything to come of it, but needed a rejection to justify removing France from NATO's integrated command. French journalist Raymond Tournoux wrote in *La Tragédie du Général* (Paris: Plon, 1967) that de Gaulle had confided to him, "I was looking for a means to get out of the Atlantic alliance and to resume a freedom of action which had been handed over by the Fourth Republic when it signed the NATO treaty. I therefore asked for the moon. I was certain they wouldn't give it to me... But by not replying to my letter they enabled me to take measures to get out of the Atlantic alliance, which I couldn't have done if I hadn't first suffered this rebuff (321-322)." It is unlikely that the General was being completely honest with Tournoux on this point; if the *directoire* proposal was nothing more than a diplomatic ploy, he certainly would not have continued promoting it well into the second year of the Kennedy administration. Irwin Wall makes a compelling argument in *France, the United States and the Algerian War* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001) that de Gaulle believed France could retain Algeria if he secured Anglo-Saxon backing for a *directoire*, which was one of the main reasons why London and Washington rejected the proposal (169). In any event, the rejection of the *directoire* made clear to de Gaulle that he had little influence with Kennedy and should not expect even symbolic concessions from Washington.

[376] Costigliola, *France and the United States: the Cold Alliance since World War II*, 124-5.

empire, redefining its place in the world, and adopting a more national focus. Kennedy's "Grand Design" and de Gaulle's "Grand Vision" set the stage for a clash between Paris and Washington over the nature of the Atlantic alliance and Europe[377].

Still, there is growing consensus in the best recent literature on de Gaulle's political philosophy that his policy of *grandeur* was more a show for domestic audiences and that his aims were actually quite limited[378]. Philip G. Cerny argues that Gaullism was not a revolutionary approach to international affairs. Rather, it was meant to modify the existing balance rather than overthrow it. He claims that "for de Gaulle, *grandeur* was a qualitative, not a quantitative, concept, and that, as a consequence, the Franco-American conflict of the sixties appears in a rather different light. French goals were essentially symbolic and did little to alter the substantive power relationship between France and the United States[379]." De Gaulle's *grandeur* emerged as a "limitationist ideology" mostly concerned with "internal moral unity and worthiness[380]."

Maurice Vaisse portrays de Gaulle as a resolute pragmatist who dedicated himself above all to transforming the bipolar Cold War order on East-West lines into a multi-polar system in which an independent Europe would sit astride the two superpowers. It was de Gaulle's aim to see that this new European grouping would build strong ties to the emerging Third World, a move that dictated French withdrawal from Algeria and sub-

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[377] Bozo, 60.
[378] It should be noted that the historians in this wave are almost exclusively French, Andrew Moravcsik of Princeton being the most notable American exception. The first wave of major Anglo-American studies of de Gaulle during the late 1960s and early 1970s generally took de Gaulle's various pronouncements at face value and ridiculed his pretensions. See, for example: John Newhouse, *De Gaulle and the Anglo-Saxons* (New York: Viking Press, 1970); Brian Crozier, *De Gaulle* (New York: Scribner, 1973); F. Roy Willis, *De Gaulle: anachronism, realist, or prophet?* (Huntington, NY: R. E. Krieger Pub. Co., 1967).
[379] Cerny, 5.
[380] Ibid.

Saharan Africa. Accordingly, his stance towards the United States, Britain and NATO should be understood within the context of his efforts to build an independent and French-dominated Europe[381]. Frédéric Bozo adds, "[i]n contrast to his predecessors, de Gaulle's objective was not to place France on a par with Great Britain as second fiddle to the United States, but actually to make its allies recognize its status as a world power—a goal he judged incompatible with integration within NATO[382]."

Chief amongst de Gaulle's concerns was that the Americans would not come to Western Europe's defence if doing so would provoke a Soviet nuclear missile strike on the United States, that the rigidity of the bloc system threatened to drag allies such as France into war with the Warsaw Pact over issues that were of no concern to it (such as Taiwan), and that the superpowers had a shared interest in keeping tensions artificially high as a means of maintaining full control over the countries in their respective spheres of interest. To break up this highly volatile arrangement, de Gaulle envisioned a post-Cold War world in which the newly independent states of the Third World and 'old Europe' would counterbalance the superpowers. His foreign policy had "two complementary faces": one was revisionist and outward-looking, that of the champion of smaller states, while the other was inward-looking, seeing foreign policy as a means of entrenching a strong state in the national interest when historically France had been prone to divisiveness[383].

It is crucial to note that these conclusions, in general terms, were not relegated to hindsight as the work of historians who had spent years digging through archives and

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[381] Vaisse, 59.
[382] Bozo, xi.
[383] Cerny, 2.

various other sources. The Kennedy administration's own frequently-consulted in-house France expert, Nicholas Wahl of Harvard, shared a similar assessment with Secretary of State Rusk as early as the summer of 1961 that will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five. The fundamental problem of Franco-American relations of the early 1960s was not that de Gaulle was concealing his motives—this most certainly was not the case with the *directoire* proposal—but that addressing them would have forced the Kennedy administration to launch an unpleasant self-critique of American foreign policy.

The New Frontiersmen brought to the White House specific ideas about America's role as "leader of the Free World." These beliefs shaped their conviction that Washington had a duty to defend Diem's South Vietnam against communist aggression, and, by extension, coloured their views of de Gaulle's contrarian position. It seems odd in retrospect that a group of elite Americans whose country had been mostly untouched by the fighting during World War II aside from the Japanese raid on their Hawaiian colonial outpost would view the "lessons of Munich" as sacrosanct, but Kennedy's "GI Generation" advisors were nearly unanimous in their view that they had a duty to resist Communist expansion everywhere across the globe and that negotiation with Communists was fraught with danger[384]. In the New Frontiersmen's World War II analogies, Diem was the unquestioned "Winston Churchill of Asia[385]," and Vietnam was no less important than pre-Munich Conference Czechoslovakia. As Washington's commitment to the Saigon government grew progressively deeper, the administration became increasingly annoyed with suggestions that it entertain a compromise settlement to wind down the conflict.

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[384] Kaiser, 89.
[385] Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam*, 1.

Anne Sa'adah argues that the views de Gaulle expressed on Vietnam at the 1961 summit were separate from other NATO issues and were shaped more by ideological differences rather than any concrete action taken by the Kennedy administration. She defines the disagreement as part of what de Gaulle saw as "an American *idée simple*—unity of interest in the Free World" and the "Gaullist *idée fixe*—national independence[386]." De Gaulle believed that he had identified a pattern of diplomatic behaviour rooted in notions of American exceptionalism that both restricted French independence and thwarted his foreign policy aims. Sa'adah believes that de Gaulle was probably unaware that Kennedy had already authorized an expansion of the American aid program in Vietnam beyond the limits set out in the Geneva Accords when they met in Paris. He was mainly concerned that "American intervention... reflected an inability to recognize neutrality as a respectable political posture in the international arena, and represented a misapplication of force. It was, in other words, part of a familiar pattern of American behavior[387]."

While acknowledging that "[t]he vagueness of de Gaulle's plan might have been imaginatively utilized by an administration genuinely interested in negotiations [and] it would certainly have been utilized by a president determined to withdraw from South

[386] Ch. 13, Anne Sa'adah, "Idées Simples and Idées Fixes: De Gaulle, the United States, and Vietnam" in *De Gaulle and the United States: A Centennial Reappraisal*, Robert O. Paxton and Nicholas Wahl, eds. (Providence, RI: Berg, 1994), 295-6. She believes that much of de Gaulle's frustration with the United States came from his belief that the concept of Realism in International Relations was beyond the grasp of the American officials with whom he dealt. She writes, "Americans, de Gaulle believed, were unable to accept the notion that international politics is an arena in which all states rightly and inevitably pursue their national interests through unceasing, though not necessarily violent, conflict. Convinced that all nations had a shared interest in an international common good, Americans were inveterately incapable of recognizing (much less legitimizing) their own hegemonic ambitions, and they regularly misread the motives and intentions of other powers. Misunderstanding the nature of international politics, they chased after illusory goals while failing to notice real opportunities. They were stubbornly disinclined to view world politics as a complex game of power whose results tended to be both ambiguous and temporary and whose processes required sustained and expert attention."
[387] Ibid., 307.

Vietnam," Logevall argues that the Kennedy administration's campaign to sabotage foreign peace initiatives is more significant than its rejection of the de Gaulle program[388]. Strangely, the more difficult the situation in the South Vietnam grew, the more unwilling the administration grew to negotiating an end to the conflict. He attributes this to administration's desire to fully manage the conflict and aversion to allowing either French or Vietnamese actors to steal credit for solving it. This position raises the question over whether francophobia had anything to do with the administration's dismissal of de Gaulle's plan or if it was simply determined to apply force in Vietnam regardless of other alternatives.

The New Frontiersman took offense not to a French position that they knew to be wrong, but to the fact that Paris had the temerity to vocalize its opposition to American designs. The administration's emotional response to de Gaulle's first public call for peace in Vietnam at the end of August 1963 illustrates that the New Frontiersmen rejected the notion that the French—the craven appeasers and capitulators of World War II–had any moral right to influence American policy in Vietnam. It is nearly unfathomable to envision a similar reaction had London been equally forthright with its reservations over the conduct of the war[389], and impossible to explain the rejection of de Gaulle's peace plan without examining it within the broader context of American disdain for France.

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[388] Logevall, *Choosing War*, 72.

[389] The central argument of Peter Busch's *All the Way With JFK?: Britain, the US and the Vietnam War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) is that "Britain did nothing to steer Washington away from the path that led to the Vietnam quagmire" despite sharing much of de Gaulle's pessimistic outlook for the prospects of military intervention while enjoying privileged access to American corridors of power (206).

Vietnam was, however, far removed from the focal point of the Cold War in early 1961, when plans for a reorganization and expansion of the American effort there had only just been outlined. Kennedy had not committed American combat troops; concerns that would later occupy de Gaulle—such as American usurpation of French influence in a former colony, the dangers of unnecessarily drawing the Soviets and Chinese into the conflict, and binding emerging Third World states to an independent European grouping that stood astride the superpowers—were nebulous and long-term. De Gaulle likely attached little to no material importance to the future political orientation of Vietnam. Jean Lacouture writes, "Lieutenant, then Captain, then Major de Gaulle, saw the problems of his work and life only in 'European' terms and in the perspective of the industrial universe of which he was a part. No Frenchman was less concerned with what is now called the 'third world' than this Parisian native of Lille[390]."

Perceptions of Kennedy at the top of the French diplomatic corps in the spring of 1961 were characterized by pessimism. Hervé Alphand, the French ambassador in Washington, shared his pre-summit impressions of Kennedy in a communiqué to Foreign Minister Couve de Murville on 11 May 1961. Citing American setbacks in Cuba, Laos, Congo, and South Vietnam, he wrote that "it appeared that the administration lost control of its foreign policy, at the same time that they lacked experience and judgment before the manoeuvres of an adversary infinitely more perspicacious and better armed[391]." While Kennedy was able to maintain his calm, self-confidence, and problem-solving abilities through adversity, he did display some alarming character traits in crisis

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[390] Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, 167.
[391] Ministère des affaires étrangères, *Documents diplomatiques français 1961* Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin (Paris: Impr. nationale, 1997), 581.

situations, most notably impulsiveness, indecisiveness, and a general lack of reflection on the potential consequences of his actions[392]. Alphand concluded on a somewhat fatalistic note that one hoped that Kennedy had learned some valuable lessons from this first round of setbacks that could be applied to future decision-making.

De Gaulle expressed a profound glumness about Kennedy's upcoming round of international summitry with Khrushchev to German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer[393] in conversations in Germany nine days later. During this exchange of two elderly European statesmen separated from Kennedy by age, temperament and world view, de Gaulle was quick to assume the worst case scenario while Adenauer sought to gently reassure his colleague. Adenauer said that he was favourably disposed to the young American president, expressing his view that he appeared "intelligent, energetic, understanding quickly and knowing how to listen, if lacking in experience[394]." De Gaulle responded by explaining his view that the Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting in Vienna immediately after

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[392] Ibid., 581-582. Alphand wrote, "at one time, as a brilliant student of Harvard, he likes to study, surround himself with the most diverse and extensive advice, at another time, the reactions of an Irish politician reappeared so brusquely, without taking into account the multitude of opinions, sometimes contradictory that are presented to him generously, he acts without great reflection. During the Cuban affair that had been launched after extensive deliberation but on false intelligence, it seems to be that, in a few minutes, and under pressure from Mr. Stevenson that the president made the decision to forbid all support from American forces and to issue it officially... [via] a simple phone call from Mr. Stevenson without any consultation. These impulsive, confused moves contradict the necessity for serious studies of problems which should justify the proliferation of committees, study groups, expert missions created on all subjects."

[393] In the early 1960s Adenauer was caught between rival attempts from Kennedy and de Gaulle to secure West Germany's backing for their respective vision of the western alliance. Adenauer was torn, but ultimately chose Washington for the military protection it offered from the Soviet Union even though his instincts might have otherwise coincided with de Gaulle's. For relations between de Gaulle and Adenauer, see: Oliver Bange, *The EEC Crisis of 1963: Kennedy, Macmillan, de Gaulle and Adenauer in conflict* (New York : St. Martin's Press, 2000); Philip H. Gordon, *France, Germany, and the Western Alliance* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995); and Ronald J. Granieri, *The Ambivalent Alliance: Konrad Adenauer, The CDU/CSU and the West, 1949–1966* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003)

[394] Ministère des affaires étrangères, *Documents diplomatiques français 1961* Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin (Paris: Impr. nationale, 1997), 612.

the Paris summit was premature, and that Khrushchev would talk of peaceful coexistence to lull Kennedy into a false sense of security before launching a "major operation" in Western Europe. De Gaulle was concerned that Kennedy would not be prepared for the coming crisis and that Europeans did not know how far he would go to defend them[395]. Adenauer responded that he was not worried about the Vienna meeting, which would be "a useful test allowing us to judge Mr. Kennedy on the job[396]."

When de Gaulle fretted that "Mr. Kennedy had never been the man of Europe... and more particularly the problem of Berlin does not belong to the issues that interest him greatly[397]", Adenauer tried to assuage his worries by arguing that Kennedy was surrounded by men like Johnson, Acheson and Henry Kissinger—Johnson had little role in the administration's foreign policy formation, while the latter two were mistakenly assumed to be active members of Kennedy's inner circle—who knew Europe well and would make sure he was adequately prepared for Vienna[398]. Adenauer's hopeful tone that NATO would become more responsive to European concerns did not sway de Gaulle, who remained convinced that Americans saw themselves as solely responsible for the defence of the free world and would reserve an exclusive decision-making prerogative[399].

Pre-summit reports on de Gaulle solicited by the White House emphasized character traits that set him up as old-fashioned, stodgy, encumbered by protocol and appearances, highlighting the generational and cultural gap between the septuagenarian

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[395] Ibid., 613.
[396] Ibid.
[397] Ibid., 614.
[398] Ibid., 615.
[399] Ibid., 616.

general and his youthful American counterpart. There was no acknowledgement that he had mellowed considerably with age and was no longer facing the same wartime stresses that shaped his dealings with Churchill and Roosevelt. Still, de Gaulle had gone a long way towards re-establishing his credentials as a great statesman in Kennedy's eyes by taking bold steps designed to bring peace and independence to Algeria. Kennedy approached the summit with de Gaulle with equal measures of curiosity and caution, unsure of what sort of outcome to expect. While Vietnam was on the agenda in Paris, it was not a policy sphere where Kennedy—still contemptuous of the French colonial record in Indochina—sought French input. At this juncture de Gaulle had fixed ideas on the proper course of action in Vietnam, but the opposition to American military intervention he articulated in his first conversation with Kennedy was not as forceful as he would later portray it to be.

The tone of Kennedy's first letter to de Gaulle on 2 February 1961 stands out as very much as that of a confident, yet inexperienced, rookie seeking and expecting the approval of an older, more experienced counterpart. Whether de Gaulle appreciated Kennedy's original humble deference, it was not in his nature to cultivate their relationship on this level if it meant endorsing policies he could not support. Kennedy's memo on the Congo crisis[400] stands out from future correspondence in that unlike future correspondence it was clearly penned by the president himself. He wrote in a tone that hinted at self-satisfaction with his intellectual capacity for solving major international problems as well as an impatient eagerness for approval from a respected peer. No doubt

[400] John F. Kennedy, "letter to de Gaulle," 2/2/1961, President's Office Files (#3); Series 9 Countries, box 116a—France Security 1961 (A), JFKL. It should be noted that this memo dates to within days of Kennedy's inauguration, indicating that it is reasonable to assume that he considered the commencement of an exchange of foreign policy ideas with de Gaulle to be an important priority.

Kennedy felt that his approach to the Congo was characterized by the sort of thoughtful consideration that de Gaulle practiced in the Élysée. This personal, flattering approach to de Gaulle was not to last the week, however. Stung by de Gaulle's sudden, total rejection of a plan he had crafted with great care and attention, Kennedy turned over responsibility for future correspondence with de Gaulle to his aides, most of whom carried anti-French or anti-de Gaulle prejudices. The emotional element of his first letter was replaced by official tones and detached correctness in subsequent correspondence.

Although the Kennedy White House saw little imminent threat of communist penetration in Africa and was generally content to let Britain and France take the lead on "Western" policy on the continent, the Congo was an exception because of its size, large population, and lucrative natural resources. Almost immediately after winning its independence from Belgium in June 1960, the Congo descended into a chaotic mash of anti-European violence, army mutiny, and political disintegration with the CIA, the Belgians, and the Soviets muddying the waters by providing support for rival factions[401]. The UN dispatched peace-keepers the following month, but failed to agree upon a clear mandate for the country, leaving the UN force powerless to stop the secession of the mineral rich Katanga province and the murder of Soviet-backed Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba by Belgian-supported rebels. The worst of the crisis took place while Kennedy was on the campaign trail in 1960, but renewed international efforts to salvage the UN mission and find a workable political settlement were to begin in earnest around

[401] On the UN's role in the Congo Crisis, see: Trevor Findlay, *The Blue Helmets' First War?: use of force by the UN in the Congo, 1960-64* (Clementsport, NS: Canadian Peacekeeping Press, 1999); Eric Packham, *Freedom and anarchy* (Commack, NY: Nova Science Publishers, 1996), and, *Success or failure?: the UN intervention in the Congo after independence* (Commack, NY: Nova Science Publishers, 1998).

the time of his inauguration. As such, the Congo Crisis served as an early foreign policy test for Kennedy, though the stakes there were relatively low because Africa was still at this point a tertiary Cold War theatre. Kennedy hoped to author a plan that would end the crisis, re-establish UN credibility, and provide him with an early opportunity for Franco-American cooperation. These lofty goals proved unattainable, as de Gaulle slapped down key proposals Kennedy offered to resolve the crisis.

In his 2 February 1961 letter to de Gaulle, Kennedy emphasized the importance he placed on the Congo and expressed his hopes for a "continuing exchange of views" on the troubled country. Kennedy fretted over the failure of the UN mission and Soviet/United Arab Republic[402] support for dissidents, and speculated that a communist takeover in the Congo could have a domino effect for the rest of Africa[403]. Though admitting that it had failed miserably to date, Kennedy expressed his desire to continue working under the aegis of the UN and asked for de Gaulle's support for a new UN mandate to neutralize the Congolese Army and rebel elements, get soldiers out of politics, retrain politicized soldiers, and "prevent all outside assistance from coming into the Congo[404]." He went on to outline an ambitious program that called for the formation of a coalition government, constitutional reforms, federalism, and a ban on secession followed by the release of all political prisoners. UN advisors would play a "much greater administrative role" to prevent Lumumba from seizing levers of power (news of his 17

[402] The UAR was a short-lived union (1958-1961) of Egypt and Syria that was headed by Egypt's populist, pan-Arab leader, Gamal Abdul Nasser. It was viewed in Washington as a mischief-making Soviet proxy and threat to the pro-Western Hashemite monarchy in Jordan, itself federated briefly with neighbouring Iraq in 1958.
[403] John F. Kennedy, "letter to de Gaulle," 2/2/1961, JFKL, 1.
[404] Ibid., 2.

January execution had not yet been made public at the time Kennedy was writing) and the West would provide technical help to the beleaguered country[405].

Kennedy acknowledged that de Gaulle had previously expressed his opposition to the UN role in the Congo, but hoped he would change his mind or at least not oppose American attempts to buttress the UN effort. He closed with a personal appeal for greater Franco-American cooperation using nostalgic language that evoked the two nations' fruitful partnership during the American Revolution and emphasized shared "ideals and objectives." Kennedy went beyond the required niceties by expressing his "deep appreciation of the great role [de Gaulle was] playing in the world", and referred to him as "a Captain in this climactic struggle for two decades."

Kennedy expressed hopes "that it w[ould] be possible in 1961 for France and the United States to stand side by side, in terms of the closest comradeship, in the defense of the West", and sheepishly asked permission to start a running dialogue "on matters which are broader in nature and of fundamental, if less immediate concern to us both[406]." Kennedy's reference to de Gaulle, universally known as "le général" by the lower rank of captain is odd, but was perhaps an innocent by-product of his naval background. It is unclear whether Kennedy was subconsciously implying that France carried significant responsibilities but was clearly not at the head of the chain of command or if this was merely a turn of phrase. Nevertheless, Kennedy's general tone in his first official correspondence with de Gaulle illustrated a desire for greater cooperation with a man he had grown to respect as a voice of authority who towered above squablling Fourth

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[405] Ibid., 3.
[406] Ibid., 4.

Republic politicians and a senior statesman within the western camp. This departure from Kennedy's earlier reservations about de Gaulle was a reflection of the considerable amount of political capital he had accumulated by bringing strong leadership to a weak, divided country and the bold action he was taking to bring the Algerian War to a close.

De Gaulle's response was correct in tone, expressing an appreciation for Kennedy's effort, pleasure with this exchange of ideas, and a willingness to put himself at the American president's disposal. This did not stop him from dissecting Kennedy's plan, most of which he found to be unworkable or inadvisable, with the sort of care an engaged teacher would have for a brighter pupil. De Gaulle expressed his willingness for an exchange of ideas on major international questions facing the West, promising to "respond with the most complete straightforwardness" in that regard[407]. After politely outlining his preferred course of action, de Gaulle professed his surprise that Kennedy preferred an UN-centred approach after admitting himself that it had failed to re-establish order or lay the foundation for a political solution. De Gaulle gently chided Kennedy here, explaining that he had no faith in a reinforced UN peacekeeping force knowing full well that it would inevitably contain a strong contingent from Soviet proxies and allies like the UAR, Indonesia, Ghana, Guinea, and others that could not be expected to act impartially[408]. He stated that his preference was tripartite consultation between Paris, London and Washington because "[t]he actual composition of the UN excludes, in

[407] Charles de Gaulle, "letter to John F. Kennedy," 6/2/1961, President's Office Files (#3); Series 9 Countries, box 116a—France Security 1961 (A), JFKL, 1.
[408] Ibid., 3.

reality, the organization's capability of acting in a coherent, effective and politically unbiased manner[409]."

De Gaulle thought it better that Paris, London and Washington exclude the UN, which he viewed as a Trojan horse for the Soviet bloc, and concentrate their diplomatic efforts on pressuring the Congolese and Belgians into completely respecting the independence treaty they had already signed[410]. He claimed that "in general, a coordinated policy of the US, Great Britain and France on the issues facing the world would be the best guarantee, and even the only guarantee, that these issues do not degenerate into angry and dangerous events." De Gaulle did approve of elements of Kennedy's Congo plan, especially his pledge to offer support to President Joseph Kasavubu's government that would enable it to successfully resist intrigue from the Soviet bloc supported faction[411]. He agreed that a broad-based Congolese government was needed, as was military reorganization and de-politicization, and a guarantee of the indivisibility of national territory. Nevertheless, he felt these were initiatives that had to come from within the Congo, from the national government, with support from the West. He argued that the West should present this united view to President Kasavubu and let him accept it willingly rather than impose terms. De Gaulle expected that he would come around and France would use its local resources discretely to this end[412].

In broad terms, de Gaulle felt that Kennedy's plan was overly ambitious and that the administrative role he envisioned likely contravened the UN charter by interfering so greatly in sovereign affairs of state, observations that foreshadowed future opposition to

[409] Ibid., 2.
[410] Ibid., 1.
[411] Ibid., 2.
[412] Ibid., 5.

Kennedy's policy in Vietnam. De Gaulle warned that if Kennedy did proceed in this direction he would set a precedent for future UN operations that went well beyond the organization's capabilities and would jeopardize the very survival of a world body he valued so much by transforming it into a vehicle for pursuing Western aims in Africa[413]. He concluded by expressing hope that Kennedy's government would not present a motion for a new UN mandate for the Congo because France would not be able to offer her support[414].

This exchange on the Congo may have been brief, but it undoubtedly had an impact in the White House that would have implications on later Franco-American discussions on Vietnam. De Gaulle most likely came away moderately alarmed by Kennedy's display of excessive ambition, his disregard for national sovereignty, and a willingness for strong-arm solutions when an *approche douce* was more likely to yield the desired result. Kennedy most likely came away suspicious that de Gaulle was a knee-jerk contrarian; his aides certainly had already come to the conclusion that de Gaulle's France was a roadblock that must be carefully avoided as much as possible. Dean Rusk, Kennedy's Secretary of State, concluded in a 9 February 1961 memo to Kennedy that "General de Gaulle's letter to you of February 6 is almost wholly negative, not only in response to your request for his views on our proposed course of action on the Congo problem, but also with respect to our reliance on the United Nations from the beginning of the Congo crisis[415]." Rusk did feel that de Gaulle had carefully worded his statement

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[413] Ibid., 4.
[414] Ibid., 5.
[415] Dean Rusk, "Suggested Reply to General de Gaulle," 9/2/1961, President's Office Files (#3); Series 9 Countries, box 116a—France Security 1961 (A), JFKL.

"presumably to give France sufficient flexibility to abstain in the Security Council instead of flatly opposing our efforts", which was a small American victory of sorts.

Rusk recommended that "no purpose would be served in encouraging further correspondence with [de Gaulle] on the Congo at this time" and that American interests would better be served by focusing instead on securing a French abstention for a future UN vote to extend the mandate there[416]. McGeorge Bundy concurred with Rusk that "the President should not continue his dialogue with de Gaulle at this time[417]." Bundy even went further, suggesting that Kennedy cut the ambassador to France, James Gavin, out of the loop on the administration's thinking on the Congo so as to ensure a definite end to the exchange.

The Rusk-Bundy response comes across as somewhat drastic considering that Kennedy had initiated the dialogue—which amounted to only one exceedingly polite letter each—by writing de Gaulle to seek his feedback on a proposed Congo plan. De Gaulle had responded to Kennedy by offering a thorough, perceptive review of his ideas, just as he had been requested. It seemed that while the Kennedy White House would thank de Gaulle for his frankness, they clearly did not appreciate the sentiment when it meant suggesting alterations to predetermined American policy. This early episode augured ill for de Gaulle's future attempts to sway the administration's Vietnam policy in a similar direction.

As the bilateral discussion of the Congo came to an abrupt halt, new dialogue began on other Third World regions that fell under the French sphere of influence,

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[416] Ibid.
[417] McGeorge Bundy. "Memo for Mr. (Ralph) Dungan," 10/2/1961, President's Office Files (#3); Series 9 Countries, box 116a—France Security 1961 (A), JFKL.

principally Laos and Algeria, where de Gaulle's ideas were more favourably received in official Washington. Small, land-locked Laos[418] had been granted full independence from France with the Geneva Accord in 1954, but its weak, neutrally-inclined government found itself under pressure from a low-level communist insurgency directed from North Vietnam. The Pathet Lao under the leadership of the "Red Prince" Souphanouvong, however, did not threaten the national government to the same degree as its comrades across the border in South Vietnam. Laotian communists were also at least willing to enter into discussions with centrist parties on neutrality agreements and the formation of a coalition government in the early 1960s. While the Americans had far fewer local resources in Laos than in South Vietnam, the communist opposition there was considerably weaker. The Kennedy administration recognized the unique set of circumstances in Laos and opted for a diplomatic approach, cautiously supportive of de Gaulle's program—"a ceasefire… the convening of the International Control Commission and an international conference—for negotiated Laotian Cold War neutrality[419]."

At the same point the *Front de Libération Nationale*'s (FLN) nationalist revolt against French rule in Algeria was winding down with a costly military victory for

[418] The best recent English-language survey of Laotian history is: Martin Stuart-Fox, *A History of Laos* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Somewhat dated but still useful examinations of Laos' relationship to the civil conflict in Vietnam are: Arthur J. Dommen, *Conflict in Laos; the politics of neutralization.* (New York: Praeger, 1971); and, Norman B. Hannah, *The Key to Failure: Laos and the Vietnam war* (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1987). For specific examinations of Washington's role in the country during the Kennedy era, see: Jane Hamilton-Merritt, *Tragic Mountains: the Hmong, the Americans, and the secret wars for Laos, 1942-1992* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993); Roger Warner, *Backfire: The CIA's Secret War in Laos and its Link to the War in Vietnam* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995); and, Edmund F. Wehrle, "'A Good, Bad Deal': John F. Kennedy, W. Averell Harriman, and the Neutralization of Laos, 1961-1962," *The Pacific Historical Review* 67, no. 3 (1998): 349-77.

[419] L.D. Battle, "Memo for Mr. Ralph A. Dungan: Correspondence between the President and General de Gaulle," 28/3/1961, President's Office Files (#3); Series 9 Countries, box 116a—France Security 1961 (A), JFKL.

Paris[420]. To win on the battlefield, the French army was forced to resort to a series of brutal tactics—ranging from torture, mass civilian relocations, and the use of concentrations camps—that brought international condemnation and pushed France itself to the brink of civil war. De Gaulle, facing growing domestic opposition to a war prosecuted mostly by conscripted troops, was forced to reconcile his countrymen with the political reality that any further delay on independence for the colony was unsustainable. He had been slow to publicly accept the principle of Algerian self-determination, but committed to it fully in the wake of a brief insurrection from radical *pieds noirs* settlers[421] and rightist army officers during *La semaine des barricades* at the end of January 1960. Though his actions were not designed to curry foreign favour, de Gaulle had built up considerable political capital with Kennedy during the final act of the Algerian War of Independence by taking the difficult steps necessary to secure a resolution to the long-running conflict[422].

While Algerian revolutionaries did enjoy strong support from the communist bloc, communist elements within the nationalist camp had been effectively marginalized early on in the war. As brutal as the Algerian anti-colonial struggle had become, this left the Kennedy administration with some satisfaction in the knowledge that the risk of

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[420] The best accounts of Algeria's war for independence are Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria, 1954-1962* (London: Macmillan, 1977); and, John Talbott, *The War Without a Name: France in Algeria, 1954-1962* (New York: Knopf, 1980).

[421] Literally "black feet." The *pieds noirs* were French nationals living in Algeria, but were a polyglot group drawn from all across the European half of the Mediterranean basin. They numbered just over 1 million in 1962, composing roughly 10 per cent of the population of Algeria. Politically, they were dead-set against independence and formed their own militias that perpetrated atrocities against the Algerian population, escalating the conflict. At the conclusion of the war almost all fled to metropolitan France—along with a smaller number of *harkis*, Algerian soldiers who had fought with the French against the rebels—where their political/economic impact has been likened to the arrival of millions of Germans from Central Europe to the Federal Republic of Germany in the late 1940s.

[422] Dean Acheson, "letter to John F. Kennedy," 19/3/61, President's Office Files (#3); Series 2 Special Correspondence, box 27, JFKL.

seeing communists hijack the newly-independent regimes across the formerly French stretch of North Africa had been effectively minimized by de Gaulle. More broadly, the lack of a strong, overt communist element within African nationalist movements left the White House comfortable enough conceding the continent as a Franco-British sphere of interest so American resources could be allocated in more sensitive regions.

A curious debate related to Laos, Algeria and broader Franco-American cooperation in post-colonial regions began in the White House in late March 1961 and continued through the lead up to the Paris summit. In internal discussions through the spring, Kennedy and many of his key aides conceded the logic of tripartism—de Gaulle's frequently invoked solution for international crises from Congo to Laos—and stressed the importance of greater coordination of Franco-British-American policy in sensitive regions of the Third World. Nevertheless, they still chose to deny de Gaulle the satisfaction of formally backing his *directoire* plan.

Tripartism emerged as a subject of discussion in White House as the American trained and supplied Royal Lao army wilted in the face of a Pathet Lao-North Vietnamese advance that left most of Northern Laos in communist hands by mid-March 1961. Recognizing that emergency American material support alone to the government would have done little to turn the tide in the absence of motivated, experienced troops capable of taking the fight to the communists[423], the Kennedy administration had little alternative

[423] Kennedy's friend and advisor John Kenneth Galbraith, then serving as the American ambassador in India, memorably observed that the Royal Laotian Army was "clearly inferior to a battalion of conscientious objectors from World War I." See: John Kenneth Galbraith, *Letters to Kennedy*, ed. James Goodman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 70.

but to turn its sights to a diplomatic solution[424]. Kennedy's inability to influence the situation in Laos on his own in turn created an opportunity for de Gaulle, who had responsibilities to the country as a signatory to the Geneva Accords, the will to intervene, a considerable degree of influence with the Laotian government—though Kennedy and his aides were thoroughly nonplussed with the job France had done training the Laotian army—and avenues to the Pathet Lao's sponsors in Hanoi. Given the limits of American power, the administration found little to object to in de Gaulle's overtures for a coordinated Franco-British-American response.

De Gaulle wrote Kennedy on 26 March to propose an international discussion modeled on the Geneva Conference to secure recognition of Laotian neutrality and national unity, a Control Commission (such as the one comprising Canada, India, Poland called for in the Geneva Accords) to stop arms shipments and monitor a ceasefire between the government and the communists, and the formation of a broad-based government under neutralist Prince Souvanna Phouma[425]. Consistent with his opposition to operating through the UN in the Congo, de Gaulle made clear that he was not disposed towards using SEATO as cover for direct Western intervention in Laos. He argued that the two presidents and British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan should agree to stand shoulder to shoulder on Laos before launching a whole-hearted tripartite diplomatic effort with Moscow rather than escalating the crisis with a military intervention[426].

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[424] Wehrle praises Kennedy for resisting pressure from his advisors to opt for military solution, instead using creative diplomacy to secure a ceasefire deal that brought relatively stability to the country for several years, 350-1.
[425] Charles de Gaulle, "26/3/1961 letter to John F. Kennedy," President's Office Files (#3); Series 9 Countries, box 116a—France Security 1961 (B), JFKL, 2.
[426] Ibid.

This call for unity, coupled with de Gaulle's strong condemnation of Moscow's role in precipitating the crisis, shielded his neutralization and pacification plan from charges of "softness" in American quarters. Conference diplomacy would bear fruit later that spring, leading to the creation of a shaky coalition government with Pathet Lao participation. By mid-decade, the government fell as Laos was subsumed by the intensifying conflict in Vietnam, but the Gaullist approach had at the very least bought time when the Americans lacked the ability to secure a better alternative.

The constructive role de Gaulle played during the Laotian Crisis prompted the Kennedy administration to discuss the merits of his *directoire* plan as they understood it, which later proved to be less than well. Walt Rostow wrote a 29 March 1961 memo to Kennedy suggesting that "[the United States and France] ought to talk long before crises are hot" when it came to areas presently or formerly in the French sphere of influence[427]. Rostow had just met with Michel Habib-Deloncle, a Gaullist member of the National Assembly who was lobbying him on de Gaulle's behalf for the *directoire*. Rostow reported that Habib-Deloncle cautioned him on the dangers of western disunity in the Third World, chiefly "running very grave risks of repeating the situation in Laos in other parts of the underdeveloped areas… [if] there was no serious effort made to concert British, French, and American policy", and suggested that establishing the principle of consultation would make problems regarding NATO and nuclear weapons "vastly easier to solve."

[427] Walt Rostow, "Memo to the President of conversation with Habib Deloncle," 26/3/1961, President's Office Files (#3); Series 9 Countries, box 116a—France Security 1961 (B), JFKL.

Rostow added his own thoughts for the president's behalf, conceding that "where there are French interests—notably in Africa—we ought to talk with them as serious dignified partners… They know a lot—including a lot painfully learned about guerrilla warfare[428]." Nevertheless, Rostow advised Kennedy that "[the administration] need not accept de Gaulle's tripartitism in theory or carry it out with Gallic logic", despite his acceptance of the merits of greater coordination with the French in Third World trouble spots. He concluded by recommending that tripartite discussion be buried "in the functional sub-committees of the NATO Council[429]", an offer that undoubtedly would not have satisfied de Gaulle's bid for greater consultation with Washington.

Rostow returned to the theme of tripartism in a 5 May 1961 memo to Bundy that seemed to indicate that Kennedy was on the verge of making a major concession to de Gaulle just weeks in advance of their bilateral summit. Rostow called for increased coordination between the United States, Britain and France in Africa and Southeast Asia because communists were exploiting their divisions and "may draw us close to a test of military strength[430]." The president considered the risk of war grave enough to warrant a closing of the ranks, arguing that "high level tripartite discussions of a Western strategy in Africa and Asia are urgent." Rostow added, "[i]n this matter he finds himself close to the views of General de Gaulle[431]." Kennedy told Rostow that he wanted to let Britain and France take the lead in Africa, which was in the midst of revolutionary upheaval, because he felt confident that they could neutralize any potential military-political threat

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[428] Ibid.
[429] Ibid.
[430] Walt Rostow, "Memo to McGeorge Bundy on meeting with de Gaulle, Part I," 13/5/1961, President's Office Files (#3); Series 9 Countries; Box 116a—France Security 1961 (C), JFKL, 1.
[431] Ibid.

emerging from the continent and might be able to eventually reincorporate it as "a constructive part of the Western system[432]."

The president's plan for Africa was motivated by American over-extension elsewhere and his unwillingness to take on new responsibilities "where [Washington's] allies, much strengthened by their remarkable growth in the 1950's can deal with the situation[433]." Kennedy envisioned a tripartite Africa policy where all parties agreed to "a common strategy and how the day to day tactics and tasks of execution may best be allocated and managed… where positions of potential political stability and strength exist." From these bases, "[Britain, France and the United States] should work with all the wisdom and resources we can muster to create islands of responsibility", preventing communists from hijacking revolutionary movements and keeping the decolonization process as bloodless as possible[434].

While perceived communist advances in the Third World spurred the Kennedy administration to re-examine tripartitism, de Gaulle had built up a considerable amount of political capital in official Washington by winding down the war in Algeria. Rostow noted, "[w]ith respect to North Africa, the President has been impressed by General de Gaulle's vision of the kind of regional development which would be possible after the Algerian settlement is achieved." Kennedy had such a positive view of de Gaulle's efforts at achieving a "constructive regional solution in the long run… [that] could conceivably contribute to the pacification of the North African area" that "[he] would be interested to hear De Gaulle's [sic] views on the appropriate broad strategy which we

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[432] Ibid.
[433] Ibid.
[434] Ibid., 2.

should all pursue in Africa; and believes that these matters should promptly be explored on a communal basis by the Western nations most concerned." While de Gaulle conceived of the *directoire* as a clearing house for all pressing foreign policy matters of joint concern, the Kennedy administration took a much narrower view. Its newfound respect for de Gaulle's counsel would be confined solely to African affairs rather than alliance policy as a whole.

The administration viewed Southeast Asia—where Soviet-backed communists posed a greater, more immediate threat and proximity to Mao's China allowed for much easier re-supply—as an entirely different game. The stakes were perceived to be much higher there and while the Kennedy administration was willing at this point to let the British and French play a minor supportive role in the region, they would not allow them to take the lead as in Africa. Kennedy ranked the "defense [of] Viet-Nam[435] among highest priorities US foreign policy" and on 1 March 1961 he approved a Counterinsurgency Plan (CIP) to ramp up American anti-guerrilla training programs, increase the number of Ranger companies at the expense of regular infantry units, improve border patrols, infiltrate the Viet Cong, and establish "safe areas" where the loyalties of Vietnamese peasants could be bought with schools, doctors, land, and farm supplies. Interestingly enough, Kennedy stipulated that this CIP was to commence immediately, regardless of whether the Saigon government had given its approval[436].

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[435] In January 1961 discussions on Vietnam Kennedy expressed scepticism that ramping up the military effort by having Washington pay for a 20,000 troop expansion to the South Vietnamese Army "would really permit a shift from the defense to the offense" in and of itself without a corresponding overhaul of the political landscape and a major public morale boost. See: U.S. Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, I Vietnam, 1961 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1988), 4, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_i_1961/a.html.
[436] Ibid., 16, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_i_1961/b.html.

The White House hoped that these efforts would see South Vietnam through an 18 to 24 month danger period of increased communist pressure.

In April Kennedy's attention was temporarily diverted from Vietnam by the disastrous Bay of Pigs Invasion[437] of Castro's Cuba by American-trained anti-communist exiles, but by the end of the month he had refocused American efforts in Southeast Asia. On 20 April he formed a Presidential Task Force charged with developing "a program of action to prevent Communist domination of South Viet-Nam[438]." This Task Force, headed by Roswell L. Gilpatric, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, was charged with building on the CIP Kennedy had approved the previous month by focusing greater attention on the socio-economic factors that were perceived to be feeding the Viet Cong insurgency.

Gilpatric's review of American political, economic and military policy in Vietnam was aimed at, amongst other things, increasing coordination amongst the White House, Department of Defense, State Department, CIA, and USIA (United States Information Agency, the government's public diplomacy organ). The Task Force Report produced within a week met with general philosophical agreement by all parties involved in its formation, but there were concerns regarding the vagueness of timetables and cost estimates[439], how to secure Diem's acquiescence and cooperation from neighbouring

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[437] See: James G. Blight and Peter Kornbluh, eds. *Politics of Illusion: the Bay of Pigs invasion reexamined* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Pub., 1998); Trumbull Higgins, *The Perfect Failure: Kennedy, Eisenhower, and the C.I.A. at the Bay of Pigs* (New York: Norton, 1987); and, Howard Jones, *The Bay of Pigs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[438] Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, I Vietnam, 1961 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1988), 31, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_i_1961/d.html.
[439] Ibid., 37.

countries[440], and bureaucratic questions over whether the State Department, military, or ambassador would coordinate plan[441]. It was felt that these matters would have to be clarified by a vice-presidential visit to South Vietnam, though there was no opposition to the broader contours of the report.

Gilpatric's program called for a major intensification of American efforts in Vietnam and clearly signalled that Washington would be taking the initiative for "saving" the country from communism. The report "includ[ed] a range of mutually supporting actions of a political, military, economic, psychological and covert character which can be refined periodically on the basis of further recommendations from the Ambassador in the field[442]." So serious were American concerns that an unspoken assumption that input from the South Vietnamese was neither necessary nor desirable ran throughout Gilpatric's writing[443]. While Gilpatric accepted that the United States would have to work with Diem—who had hitherto resisted American suggestions on how to win the battle for the hearts and minds of his countrymen—he viewed him more as an obstacle than a partner in the democratization and economic development of the country. Securing Diem's cooperation would "require very astute dealing between U.S. Government personnel and the Vietnamese…[and a] combination of positive

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[440] Ibid., 38.
[441] Ibid., 39.
[442] Ibid., 42, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_i_1961/e.html.
[443] Ibid. Gilpatric wrote, "There is neither the time available nor any sound justification for 'starting from scratch.' Rather the need is to focus the U.S. effort in South Viet-Nam on the immediate internal security problem; to infuse it with a sense of urgency and a dedication to the over-all U.S. objective; to achieve, through cooperative inter-departmental support both in the field and in Washington, the operational flexibility needed to apply the available U.S. assets in a manner best calculated to achieve our objective in Viet-Nam; and finally, to impress on our friends, the Viet-Namese [sic], and on our foes, the Viet Cong, that come what may, the U.S. intends to win this battle."

inducements plus… discreet pressure[444]." Securing these aims was understood to be a tall order, but Kennedy had declared Vietnam a "critical area" that demanded nothing less than an all-out effort from all relevant arms of the American government.

Gilpatric's report made brief reference to multilateral support for the American program in Vietnam, but it was the British—and to a lesser degree Australians, Malayans and Filipinos—not the French, whose assistance he hoped to enlist. In February Lord Hood, Minister-Counsellor at the British Embassy in Washington, shared his pessimism at the general direction in which South Vietnam was heading to the State Department, but expressed British willingness to cooperate with the Americans by sharing the counterinsurgency expertise they had gained in Malaysia. After the Suez Crisis, Britain's window for independent manoeuvre had essentially closed and London was generally disinclined to press opposition to American policy. The prospect of British cooperation was viewed favourably in the State Department, which was hoping to enlist Franco-British support in normalizing South Vietnamese-Cambodian relations to secure at least one of Diem's borders[445].

The Gilpatric report acknowledged the British offer to provide counterinsurgency training and financial support to the South Vietnamese and concluded that "the political benefits to be obtained within the western alliance by sharing responsibility for this

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[444] Ibid. Gilpatric set out the following objectives: "Increase the confidence of President Diem and his government in the United States"; "Strengthen President Diem's popular support within Viet-Nam"; "Improve Viet-Nam's relationship with other countries and its status in world opinion"; "The anti-guerilla effort should be accompanied and followed up by economic and political consolidation"; "Undertake economic programs having both a short-term, immediate impact as well as contributing to the longer range economic viability of the country"; "A long range development program" (Thailand was to serve as the model); and, "Undertake military security arrangements which establish beyond doubt our intention to stand behind Viet-Nam's resistance to Communist aggression. Mobilizing S.E. Asia toward this end."

[445] Ibid.,13, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_i_1961/b.html.

difficult problem" were worth the "administrative problems" caused by "the use of third country personnel[446]." No mention was made of enlisting France to a similar end, most likely because of the perceived ineffectiveness of its counterinsurgency campaign in Indochina in the early 1950s and the French inability to give the Vietnamese a cause worth fighting for[447], deficiencies that looked considerably worse when contrasted with British success in Malaysia. It was also easier for American decision makers to accept a British role when London shared Washington's view of the best way forward (albeit more pessimistic about the prospects for success) and would not pose awkward philosophical questions about what Americans were doing in the country.

Kennedy already had a much clearer sense at this early juncture of what he wanted to accomplish and more confidence in his ability to succeed here than in other former European colonies. He was committed to taking great measures in support of Diem, who despite his weaknesses, was seen to be manning the front line in a global struggle in which the "non-Communist base in the Indian Peninsula and the control of the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific was ultimately at stake[448]." The conviction and urgency Washington brought to its pursuit of the inter-related goals in Vietnam of beating the guerrillas, overcoming the social, political, and economic problems that fuelled the insurgency, and containing China left no room for serious multilateral consultation with tentative European allies. This did not, however, indicate that his administration had taken the view that France was entirely without use in Southeast Asia just yet.

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[446] Ibid., 42, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_i_1961/e.html.
[447] Ibid., 43.
[448] Walt Rostow, "Memo to McGeorge Bundy on meeting with de Gaulle, Part I," 13/5/1961, JFKL, 3.

Rostow reiterated in a 13 May memo that Kennedy viewed American policy in Laos as a complete shambles and that western interests in the country could only be defended by the development of a common tripartite policy in advance of the difficult conference diplomacy to come. Kennedy recognized America's "weak position on the ground" and accepted the need to apply French "bargaining resources" to keep the country out of communist hands[449]. As Rostow put it, "[w]e are all together now in the effort to negotiate a neutral Laos… and the United States is quite prepared to see France and Britain assume increased long-run responsibilities in Laos[450]." It appeared as though Kennedy was willing to give tripartism a conditional test run in Vietnam's neighbour.

Just days before Kennedy was to fly off to Paris to meet de Gaulle, Vice President Lyndon Johnson submitted his assessment of the situation in Vietnam after a two-week whistle stop tour of Southeast Asia and the Indian subcontinent. While Johnson's report now reads as a surprisingly balanced, nuanced account from the man who would later make the fateful decision to opt for a full out American military intervention, he did pre-emptively reject the notion of considering the sort of neutralization program for Vietnam that de Gaulle could have been expected to present to Kennedy in Paris. Johnson admitted that there was "a serious danger in Viet Nam… of the progressive disintegration of the government's hold on the nation", but cautioned that "[t]he picture we receive at home has been colored by journalistic sensationalism[451]."

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[449] Ibid.
[450] Ibid.
[451] Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, I Vietnam, 1961 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1988), 60. http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_i_1961/f.html.

Nevertheless, the general thrust of Johnson's evaluation was prescient[452]. Johnson noted that "danger flags [were] flying", evidenced by the rapid increase of the Viet Minh from 3000-4000 to 12,000 despite reports government forces were inflicting heavy casualties on it, "the increasing tendency of the palace bureaucracy to isolate itself and President Diem from the people", and an intelligentsia that was becoming increasingly alienated from the government and at risk of drifting over to the communist camp. Nevertheless, Johnson "emphasized that this point of no return has not yet been reached."

Johnson did not underestimate the difficulty Washington faced in South Vietnam, cautioning that increased American aid was no guarantee of success if not accompanied by greater accountability and responsiveness from the Diem regime. He felt that the lack of viable, rival leadership candidates to Diem—who, faults and all, was resolutely committed to defeating the Viet Minh—within the non-communist camp meant that "in present circumstances there is no visible solution to the instability in Viet Nam on the basis of neutralization." Recognizing Diem's weaknesses, the vice president recommended implementing a three-year plan (this would coincide with Kennedy's first term in office) where increased military and economic aid was to be allocated on

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[452] Ibid. Johnson wrote, "In any event, if the present trend continues, there is the danger that the government will become a glittering facade. It will come to rest in the end, not on its people, but on a modern military establishment and an oriental bureaucracy both maintained for the indefinite future primarily by the United States Treasury. The power which is inherent in the ordinary Vietnamese people will be left to others to organize. In present circumstances, 'others' can only be the Communist Vietnamese since there is little promise that effective leadership will emerge from the non-communist opposition to Ngo Dinh Diem at this time. If the point of no return in the present trend is reached-that is, if the preponderance of the people move from support of or at least acquiescence in the rule of the government to support of or acquiescence in the Viet Minh movement-a grave dilemma will be posed for our policies. Then, whatever aid we supply to the government to fight communism in the abstract will also be directed, in the specific, against the Vietnamese people. And if we use our own forces to help put down Communist rebellion in South Viet Nam we will also bear the onus of helping to put down the Vietnamese people."

American terms, with the expectation that specific, measurable benchmarks would be met from the village level on up to the presidential palace.

It was hoped that, with close American guidance and supervision, "in time, the Saigon government may become less dependent on aid and lay a valid claim to represent the entire Vietnamese people, north and south." Still, Johnson strongly advised making clear to Diem that, "barring an unmistakable and massive invasion of South Viet Nam from without we have no intention of employing combat U.S. forces in Viet Nam or using even naval or air-support which is but the first step in that direction." Johnson cryptically warned that if the Saigon regime prove unable to establish its legitimacy in the public's eyes and defend itself even with dollops of American aid, Washington "had better remember the experience of the French who wound up with several hundred thousand men in Vietnam and were still unable to do it… without engaging a single Chinese or Russian" as it considered taking on an active combat role. "Before we take any such plunge," Johnson argued, "we had better be sure we are prepared to become bogged down chasing irregulars and guerrillas over the rice fields and jungles of Southeast Asia while our principal enemies China and the Soviet Union stand outside the fray and husband their strength[453]."

In advance of his summit meeting with de Gaulle Kennedy had been both made aware of the potential consequences of deepening American involvement in Vietnam by his vice president and counselled to consult more closely with France on Third World matters by one of his principal national security advisors. Kennedy had asked de Gaulle for a frank dialogue on the Congo and was somewhat disappointed with the results, but

[453] Ibid.

when he committed to finding a diplomatic solution in Laos he found his French counterpart to be a constructive partner. Still, as de Gaulle would learn to his great frustration later in 1961, Kennedy would compartmentalize allied offers of assistance, accepting value in some spheres without granting status as a full partner on all matters of joint concern. In early 1961 Kennedy was willing to accept diplomatic help from France only where he was weak (Laos), or relatively unworried (Africa and South America), but not in key regions where he felt that the United States had the resources to achieve its goals alone. As important as de Gaulle's actions had been in Algeria, they were not sufficient to lead Kennedy to re-evaluate his core perceptions of France's role in Vietnam, which remained wholly negative.

CHAPTER 5: "Le vin est tiré, il faut le boire." – de Gaulle

The Kennedy-de Gaulle disagreement over Vietnam began innocently enough during the Paris Summit in the spring of 1961, but was exacerbated in subsequent months by fundamental disagreements over the nature of the Atlantic alliance and tolerance for neutral regimes outside the bloc system. On 31 May the two presidents sat down for a calm, dispassionate discussion of their respective views on how best to proceed there as they moved down a checklist of roughly half a dozen topics of conversation. Kennedy had well-established reservations about French policy in Vietnam, but was willing to listen to de Gaulle out of respect for the bold manner in which his leadership was bringing a resolution to the Algerian War. Kennedy made a strong case that there were legitimate strategic concerns that focused his attention on South Vietnam, while a Western defeat there would do untold damage to America's global prestige. De Gaulle emphasized the region's unsuitability for a military confrontation with the communists and its peripheral importance to the Cold War. What separated the two presidents at this point was de Gaulle's preference for a low risk diplomatic course of action that acknowledged the possibility—which he believed to be small—of strategic defeat, while Kennedy was willing to gamble on an idealistic, maximum effort campaign to forestall a communist victory.

The dispute began at the summit as a clash of perception, but quickly evolved into one where the Kennedy administration relied on clichéd views of de Gaulle to dismiss the French position rather than undertake the awkward, difficult task of questioning the assumptions that brought them to Vietnam. Frank Costigliola argues that

while the coded, feminized descriptions of France disappeared from official American documents after de Gaulle returned to power, the penchant for overly simplistic stereotyped explanations of French behaviour remained. He writes, "Washington officials found overbearing de Gaulle's insistence on an equal voice for France in managing NATO and his push for a more autonomous French policy. They often coded de Gaulle's stubbornly nationalist policy as pathological self-aggrandizement and the crotchets of a too-old leader, as the product of the general's overblown sense of France's natural place and his underdeveloped appreciation for the 'reality' of America's power and wisdom[454]."

While Kennedy and de Gaulle were able to exchange their Vietnam views respectfully despite sharp disagreement, two of Kennedy's aides, Schlesinger and Bundy, fed him Francophobic and anti-de Gaulle pre-summit reports that focused attention on de Gaulle's character defects rather than the actual substance of the proposals he was expected to make. They would have the president believe that if de Gaulle's France was no longer outwardly effeminate, it was still a troublesome, uncooperative partner with a deeply flawed leader with suspect mental capabilities. Cumulatively, these reports conveniently reinforced pre-existing prejudices—that de Gaulle was a doddering, old, uncooperative anti-American, that French rule in Vietnam had been a shambles and had nothing to teach the administration, and that France had delusions of grandeur that manifested themselves in an attempt to play an overly ambitious role in the world—made it easier for Kennedy to dismiss de Gaulle's opposition to American policy in Vietnam. The more time that passed from the summit, the easier it was for Kennedy to

[454] Costigliola, *France and the United States: the Cold Alliance since World War II*, 121.

retreat into comfortable stereotypes about French foreign policy and look past the more trenchant points de Gaulle had made in face to face conversation.

If judged by the enthusiastic response Kennedy met with from the adoring throngs in Paris, his three day summit with de Gaulle was a smashing public relations success. Even the normally reserved de Gaulle allowed himself to be swept away by the charms of Kennedy's "French wife", Jackie, a secret weapon of sorts who melted hearts across Europe while her husband was engaged in tough summit diplomacy[455]. The outward warmth of summit participants was a natural extension of this honeymoon period as the new players in post-Eisenhower bilateral relations sought to become better acquainted with one another. Kennedy had seen his first major foreign policy test in Cuba in April, but had still been in office for only five months and this would be his first official trip to Europe as president. De Gaulle had been in office for three years, but was still shoring up his position domestically by wrapping up the war in Algeria and by attempting to sell his consultation plan to the new American president.

The contentious issues that would truly force a near breach between Paris and Washington—ranging from American MLF proposals to give Europeans a role in the

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[455] In its 1962 Man of the Year cover story on Kennedy, *Time* wrote of Jackie Kennedy, "[f]ew diplomats have scored more triumphs than Jacqueline Kennedy in her year as the nation's First Lady. She has charmed Britain's Macmillan, France's De Gaulle, Germany's Adenauer and, for that matter, Khrushchev himself (said Khrushchev of Jackie's gown: 'It's beautiful!'). 'Jackie wants to be as great a First Lady in her own right as Jack wants to be a great President," says a friend. Toward that end, Jackie has worked hard and effectively. She has done over the White House with unexceptionable taste. She has introduced into the White House, for the first time in years, good food, great music, Shakespeare, warmth and informality—all along with a deep respect for American tradition. In so doing, she has managed to stay very much herself.' See, "John F. Kennedy," *Time*, 5 January 1962, http://www.time.com/time/subscriber/personoftheyear/archive/stories/1961.html. De Gaulle truly delighted in conversation with Mrs. Kennedy, who spoke good French and was well-versed in French history. She presented de Gaulle with a letter from George Washington to Vicomte de Noailles which had been bought for $90,000, an incredibly generous gift that further enamoured her to the French president. See: Sally Bedell Smith, *Grace and Power: The Private World of the Kennedy White House* (New York: Random House, 2004), 228-31.

deployment of NATO nuclear weapons to French opposition to British entry into the EEC—were still on the horizon. This was the high point in Franco-American relations in the 1960s, while the 1961 summit was of great importance for both presidents as it was scheduled just days ahead of what was expected to be a blistering round of talks between Kennedy and Khrushchev in Vienna. De Gaulle spared no detail in making the Kennedys feel welcome. The pomp and ceremony of the lavish banquets, the last-minute paint job for the car they would be riding in, and stocking Kennedy's quarters with his favourite cigars and beer would ensure that there would at least be no superficial unpleasantness for de Gaulle's honoured American guests.

Summit diplomacy, which grew exponentially during the Roosevelt presidency partly out of wartime exigency, had become a permanent fixture of American foreign policy by the 1960s and was embraced by both Kennedy and Johnson[456]. While bringing heads of state together for direct negotiations opens the possibility of relatively quick settlements on major issues, summit diplomacy also contains the risk of setting overly enthusiastic domestic audiences up for disappointment if it stalls[457]. De Gaulle's tour of the United States in 1960 had been a veritable public relations smash—his popularity rating there was never higher—but he failed to secure any concessions on the *directoire* or nuclear matters from Eisenhower[458]. Even if no one in the White House expected Kennedy to iron out a handful of substantive policy disagreements after only three days in Paris, there was some hope that he could at least take an important first step towards restoring some of the cordiality in Franco-American relations that had been lost during

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[456] Elmer Plischke, *U.S. Department of State: A Reference History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999), 402.
[457] Ibid., 409.
[458] Bozo, 47-8.

the later years of the Eisenhower administration. This relatively modest expectation was shared by de Gaulle, who had been preparing for the summit with the palpable anticipation of a man who saw an opportunity to break an impasse that had dragged on from the earliest days of his presidency.

During the Cold War presidential visits took on symbolic and emotional importance for both American audiences and the people of the host country. Kennedy's carefully crafted "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech in June 1963—a masterstroke of political theatre[459] and possibly the most memorable presidential moment in the history of the Cold War[460]—emphasized to half a million German spectators that United States would not abandon them for détente with the communist bloc[461]. Reassuring as this was to the cheering masses, it was a forceful political display of solidarity at a time of growing tensions between Washington and Bonn over America's commitment to its continental European allies. Many Americans feared that Washington was losing its grip over West Germany after de Gaulle and Adenauer signed the symbolic Franco-German Treaty of Cooperation (also known as the Élysée Treaty) in January[462]. While the treaty had little

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[459] Andreas W. Daum argues in *Kennedy in Berlin* (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute, 2008) that "the use of symbolic politics was a decisive factor at critical moments in German-American relations in overcoming crises and maintaining the transatlantic bond between the United States and the Federal Republic (9)."

[460] President Ronald Reagan's famous June 12, 1987 speech at the base of the Brandenburg Gate, near the Berlin Wall, in which he implored, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" stands out to a lesser extent.

[461] The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 had very nearly resulted in nuclear holocaust, prompting decision makers in both Washington and Moscow to tone down their combative policies. In his 10 June Commencement Address at the American University in Washington, DC, Kennedy reversed course and spoke in favour of détente with the Soviet Union, causing alarm in West Germany. (The test of the speech can be found here: John F. Kennedy, "Commencement Address at American University," Washington, DC, 10 June 10 1963, JFKL, http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/JFK/003POF03AmericanUniversity06101963.htm.

[462] The treaty was designed as a sweeping gesture of Franco-German reconciliation. Politically, it established a framework for Franco-German consultation on issues of joint concern during bi-annual

long-term impact beyond the two countries, it appeared to many observers as though de Gaulle, having been rebuffed in his attempts to secure a consultative apparatus with Britain and the United States, had found another dissatisfied NATO partner to collaborate with when cooperative attempts at reform had failed[463]. Kennedy's unambiguous reiteration of his support for the rights of Berliners to choose their own political destiny five months later, however, gave birth in West Germany to "a new degree of political loyalty and legitimacy on behalf of the transatlantic alliance[464]."

The symbolic importance of Kennedy's 1961 trip to Paris lay more with what it omitted. Unlike his more memorable "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech in Berlin two years later, he lacked any words of substance to offer French audiences beyond the usual platitudes. France was drifting at least as far, if not further, from the American orbit than West Germany had by the summer of 1963, but Kennedy had no stirring public declaration of shared political values and hopes for the future, nor did he show any empathy for French soul-searching caused by the Algerian war. Berlin fit better in Kennedy's view of Cold War as a black-white divide between the "free" and communist camps; he found it easier to relate to Germans living on the front line of the Cold War than with Frenchmen who clung to the imperial past because they were fearful of the future. This instinctive sympathy towards Germans and cautiousness towards the French had been apparent in numerous public speeches from Congress and the Senate before he became president. If Kennedy's 1963 Berlin trip was a carefully orchestrated piece of

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summit meets. The treaty also called for various cultural exchange initiatives to promote mutual understanding between the two countries.

[463] The text of the treaty can be found in Christopher Hill and Karen Elizabeth Smith, *European Foreign Policy: Key Documents* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 62-5.

[464] Daum, 174.

political theatre, Paris in 1961 was simply an early dress rehearsal. This visit was an obligatory courtesy call while Kennedy was on way to see Khrushchev for more pressing business in Vienna.

Kennedy had been prepared in his pre-summit briefs for an awkward meeting with de Gaulle in Paris and the American press cautioned the public to limit their expectations[465], but the president found himself greeted with an overwhelming display of affection from adoring throngs. *The Washington Post* reported that as Kennedy disembarked from his plane at Orly airport, "de Gaulle put his arm around the American President's shoulder and firmly guided him to the place of honor for the playing of the French and American national anthems[466]." In the city itself, an estimated 200,000 people—more than Eisenhower or Khrushchev had drawn for their visits to the French capital—lined streets along the Kennedy's motorcade route into the city in the hopes of getting a glimpse of the handsome, young presidential couple.

Red, white and blue bunting lined the avenues, handmade signs welcoming the Kennedys were displayed in café windows, and bohemian students in the Left Bank held up a crude Harvard banner as a salute to Kennedy's alma mater[467]. Kennedy rode through the city in de Gaulle's open-top Citroen limousine escorted by sabre-toting mounted Republican Guardsmen in red-plumed helmets and full breastplates, while the first ladies traveled separately in a closed car. As the cheers grew louder and gave no sign of abating, de Gaulle encouraged Kennedy to stand in the back seat to give the

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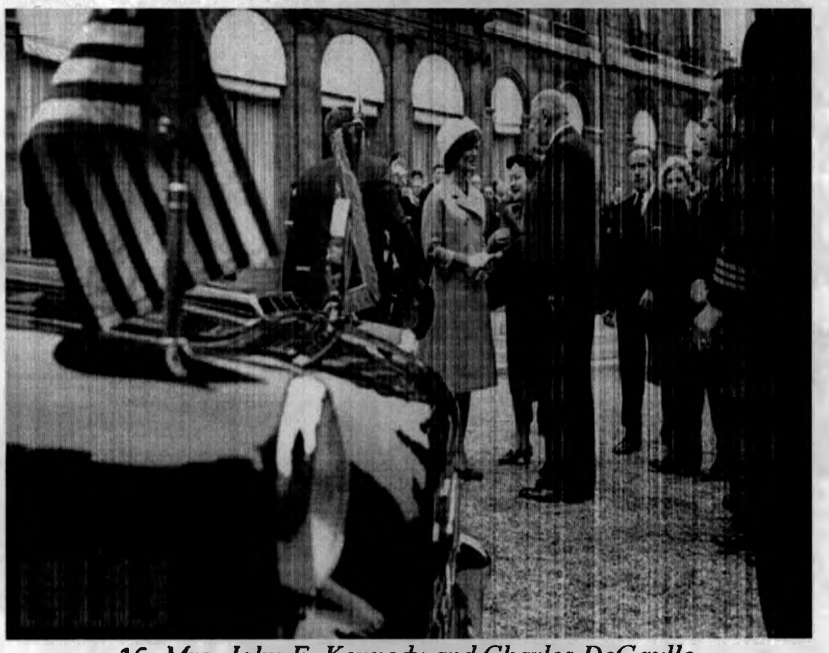
[465] Typical view from major dailies: Robert C. Doty, "The Man the Monument Called de Gaulle," *The New York Times,* 28 May 1961, SM10; Murrey Marder, "Kennedy is Facing an intransigent de Gaulle," *The Washington Post*, 28 May 1961, E1.
[466] "200,000 in Paris Give Kennedy's Big Welcome," *The The Washington Post*, 1 June 1961, A17.
[467] Bill Henry, "Kennedy Turns on the Charm," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 June 1961, B1.

crowd a better look at him. Confetti showered down upon them from second and third story windows along the Rue de Rivoli in the posh commercial district. Later, a thunderstorm would roll through as the convoy approached the Champs Elysée on its way to the Arc de Triomphe, but the crowds remained undeterred by the foul weather that drenched both presidents riding in the convertible[468].

14. FRANCE - 1961: Guard of Honor escorting President John F. Kennedy during his Paris visit.
Photo: Hank Walker/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 June 1961

[468] "200,000 in Paris Give Kennedy's Big Welcome," *The Washington Post*, 1 June 1961.

15. Pres. John F. Kennedy with Charles De Gaulle during Kennedy's visit.
Photo: Paul Schutzer/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 June 1961



16. *Mrs. John F. Kennedy and Charles DeGaulle*
Photo: Paul Schutzer/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 June 1961

17. Pres. John F. Kennedy and wife with Pres. Charles DeGaulle and wife at Opera House of Versailles.
Photo: Paul Schutzer/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 June 1961

18. Pres. John F. Kennedy and wife with Pres. Charles DeGaulle and wife.
Photo: Paul Schutzer/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 June 1961

No creature comfort would be spared during the Kennedys' stay in Paris. Kennedy's "favourite brands of cigars and beer and American cream" were shipped off from Washington to the president's quarters in advance of the summit. After learning that Jackie Kennedy had expressed hopes that she would have the occasion to visit at least one of Paris' museums, de Gaulle himself issued orders that a selection of famous paintings by Renoir, Nicolas Lancret and Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin be sent over from the Louvre to decorate the couple's guest apartment at the Quai d'Orsay[469]. After an obligatory trip to the Arc de Triomphe to pay tribute to French veterans, Kennedy spent his first evening in Paris at a white tie state dinner in his honour where he spoke of the usual litany of historical ties that had bonded France and America together from their revolutionary days.

Kennedy adopted a terribly ineffective strategy of trying to charm de Gaulle with effusive flattery that sounded embarrassingly deferential coming from an American president[470]. He laid the rhetoric on especially thick at his first opportunity to depart from his prepared statement before supper, saying of de Gaulle, "[a]lready he lives in history—history he has both made and written. Any yet he never dwells in the past. His mind is firmly fixed on the future. His face is radiant with the sunrise he intently watches[471]." Kennedy later toasted de Gaulle's "wise and courageous leadership", promising that the United States would not abandon France in time of need as President Franklin Roosevelt had in 1940 without offering any real specifics. De Gaulle, forced to

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[469] "Kennedy Flies to Paris," *Chicago Tribune*, 31 May 1961, 1.
[470] Mahan, 45.
[471] Chalmers M. Roberts, "Kennedy heaps praise on Charles de Gaulle," *The Washington Post,* 1 June 1961, A1.

respond to the excessive praise of his guest, offered back that Kennedy was "the true statesman who selects his course and holds to it without letting himself be stopped nor deviated because of incidents[472]." This proved to be the more realistic presidential appraisal of the evening; de Gaulle would later find that none of his words of caution would deter Kennedy from the massive American nation-building program in South Vietnam that the White House had decided on earlier in the spring.

Kennedy's charm offensive did nothing to bridge the generational and temperamental gaps between the two presidents, nor did it contribute to the resolution of any outstanding bilateral disagreements[473]. They did part company in strong agreement that France and the United States would not abrogate western rights in Berlin in the face of Soviet pressure, but failed to reach an understanding on the independent French nuclear program, which had much greater significance in their bilateral relationship. Paris' pursuit of an independent *force de frappe* was motivated by a desire to restore France's global prestige and reflected a lack of confidence in the American security guarantee, but Kennedy said nothing in public or private to assuage de Gaulle's worries—nor did he think doing so was necessary[474]. All of the banquet glad-handling had been for the benefit of the cameras, while the legitimacy of these fundamental French concerns was not easily understood or accepted by Kennedy. Deeper rapprochement ultimately proved elusive, but, as Schlesinger noted, "[i]n 1961 each man was primarily

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[472] Ibid.
[473] Mahan, 7.
[474] De Gaulle bluntly queried Kennedy, "would you be willing to trade New York for Paris?" He and his countrymen painfully remembered that the United States had sat out two World Wars until the latter stages, allowing France to be overrun before intervening in the most recent. Kennedy felt insulted by the insinuation that its response to a Soviet invasion of Western Europe would be less than total. Schlesinger, 350, 354.

concerned with exploring the mind of the other… [and] the talks turned up no insuperable obstacles to cooperation[475]."

Unsurprisingly, Kennedy and de Gaulle's relatively brief discussion of Vietnam became subsumed in a broader communications breakdown that occurred after the summit. Kennedy left Paris with the mistaken impression that de Gaulle would not oppose American plans in South Vietnam even though he did not agree with them, similar to the non-interference pledge de Gaulle had made during their exchange on the Congo months before. The brevity of de Gaulle's comments on Vietnam might suggest that he felt the logic against deeper American involvement was self-evident to the point that it hardly warranted more detailed discussion.

French diplomatic records, however, show that the Foreign Ministry was of the impression that de Gaulle had clearly expressed the view that the problem in Vietnam was political in nature, and outside attempts to tip the balance through military intervention would end in failure[476]. This message, the first direct salvo on Vietnam during the de Gaulle-Kennedy years, was interpreted by the Kennedy administration as a mildly-expressed reservation about the tough slog ahead for Americans as their involvement in South Vietnam deepened. Blame for this and subsequent misunderstanding must be apportioned equally. Linguistic nuance was missed by the Americans, while French fears that the American endeavour in Vietnam was shaping up

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[475] Ibid., 357.

[476] Ministère des affaires étrangères, *Documents diplomatiques français 1961* Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin (Paris: Impr. nationale, 1997), 674. American records of the conversation at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum are much more condensed than the French account in *Documents Diplomatiques Français* (hereafter referred to as DDF), which makes an attempt to follow the flow of the conversation and paraphrase speakers as close to their original words as possible. All DDF passages quoted in this dissertation have been translated by the author.

for a massive failure were expressed with insufficient conviction. This initial miscommunication ensured that Vietnam would be added to the growing list of difficulties in Franco-American relations. In later years, American charges that the French—motivated by selfishness and anti-Americanism jealousy—were undermining Washington's efforts in Vietnam grew increasingly frequent, as did French frustration with American inability to comprehend the political nature of the conflict.

Kennedy already had long-standing set ideas about France and the French national character as he embarked for Paris, but he had never met de Gaulle and depended on secondary accounts to prepare himself for his first encounter with *le général.* The White House solicited two long reports on de Gaulle in May[477] to brief Kennedy in advance of his first meeting with his French counterpart. The two de Gaulle experts consulted were Cy Sulzberger, a globe-trotting playboy journalist with unfettered access to world leaders[478] who penned an influential thrice-weekly 'Foreign Affairs' column in the *New York Times*, and Nicholas Wahl, a Harvard Professor of Government and leading specialist in French politics in American academia.

In broad terms there were elements of the Gaullist legend that appealed greatly to Kennedy: de Gaulle emerged as one of the great European heroes of World War II by demonstrating his "will to resist" when lesser countrymen collaborated with Nazi rule, he brought an end to the interminable squabbling of the effete, bourgeois politicians of the Fourth Republic, and rewrote the constitution to shore up the power of the president, and

[477] Memos attached to these reports show that Arthur Schlesinger asked for one from Cy Sulzberger, while McGeorge Bundy did likewise from Nicholas Wahl.
[478] Sulzberger, a Harvard graduate, was the nephew of Arthur Hays Sulzberger, the publisher of *The New York Times* from 1935 to 1961. No doubt this shared educational background and access to the corridors of power from a young age appealed to Kennedy.

he had most recently engineered a solution to Algerian crisis that looked likely to prevent North Africa from becoming a new Cold War battlefield. Though Wahl was on relatively good terms with de Gaulle and wrote with less cynicism than Sulzberger, both men offered views that would have counterbalanced the aforementioned positive qualities Kennedy saw in the French president.

Not only did the Sulzberger-Wahl papers set a pessimistic tone for the summit, but they reflected the administration's overly complicated attempt to psychoanalyze de Gaulle and fit his actions into French national character flaws rather than simply review his proposals based on their merits. These background reports went beyond the intellectual curiosity of an administration with a strong social science orientation and were an early example of a long-running search for the faults in de Gaulle that fit with Kennedy's stereotypes of French national character defects of jealousy, selfishness, and irrationality.

Schlesinger cultivated Sulzberger's fantasy of filling the secret role of player in the Great Game disguised as a foreign correspondent at the *New York Times*, referring to him as someone "who probably has seen more of De Gaulle than any living American[479]." Familiarity did not result in nuance-filled analysis; much of what Sulzberger wrote for Kennedy was insightful, but the disdainful tone running through his reports illustrated a complete unwillingness to accept the legitimacy of de Gaulle's goals. His assessment of de Gaulle betrayed an unspoken expectation that France should

[479] Cy Sulzberger, "Memo on General de Gaulle (to Arthur Schlesinger)," 8/5/61, President's Office Files (#3), Series 9 Countries, box 116a – France Security 1961 (A), de Gaulle meeting, Part I, JFKL, 1.

passively accept second-tier status and submit to American management of the western alliance, making it impossible for Sulzberger to accept national assertiveness from Paris.

Sulzberger began his report with a specious tribute to de Gaulle as "a powerful personality and as a major and fascinating historical figure", but then immediately cut him down to size by adding "[m]any of his conceptions are, I believe, either false, outdated, or premature; at least not applicable to May 31, 1961[480]." While Sulzberger chose to appropriate André Malraux's characterization of de Gaulle as "[a] man of the day before yesterday and the day after tomorrow[481]", he clearly viewed the prior as the more apt characterization. Accordingly to Sulzberger, de Gaulle was at heart an anti-American harbouring grudges from World War II. Sulzberger saw "resentment at the fact that the United States is now the great power of the West—in Europe and as elsewhere—while France has fallen to a tertiary role" and "a kind of invisible Anglo-American conspiracy designed to keep France from recovering the prestige it held, above all, on the continent, during and after World War I[482]."

Sulzberger suggested that Kennedy had best remember that, "[t]he General doesn't really like us and he suspects our motives, even when they are above suspicion... De Gaulle is an astute poker player—but with the European 'stripped deck.' We must remember this and not deceive ourselves[483]. This assessment, coupled with blanket statements like "[d]e Gaulle has blazing areas of ignorance[484]" and "[i]t is blatantly

[480] Cy Sulzberger, "Memo on General de Gaulle (to Arthur Schlesinger)," 8/5/61, JFKL, 1.
[481] Ibid., 2.
[482] Ibid., 8-9.
[483] Ibid., 8.
[484] Ibid., 20.

apparent that de Gaulle has little use for our conceptions of either NATO or U.N[485]", perpetuated the stereotype that French foreign policy was motivated by feminine traits such as resentment, jealousy and irrationality rather that the legitimate pursuit of a national interest that differed from that of the United States.

When actual talks began, Sulzberger cautioned Kennedy that he would be facing a dour, humourless old man who deliberately chose "austere surroundings[486]" unbefitting of his title. While de Gaulle was "very much the old-fashioned gentleman with impeccable manners, deliberate courtesy and an almost subconscious desire to speak and hear well-phrased sentences[487]... [b]eneath his superior air and frequently disdainful manner, [he] is a rather shy and timid man[488]." Sulzberger tentatively expressed hope that the president and his wife would find de Gaulle "favorably inclined towards [their] youth" and open to "a bit of quiet gaiety and laughter... in moments of relaxation between the major conversations[489]."

Sulzberger was apparently responsible for coming up with Kennedy's counterproductive summit strategy of trying to win de Gaulle over through superficial flattery. He suggested Kennedy consider "'buttering up' de Gaulle... [by] point[ing] out how pleased we are that the heritage of French culture... in former French colonies in Africa has helped bring many of these to the support of Western causes in the U.N. Assembly[490]." Similarly, he recommended paying lip service to de Gaulle's "conception of consultation" by "ask[ing] the General's advice on Cuba/Latin America to stoke his

[485] Ibid., 15.
[486] Ibid., 6.
[487] Ibid., 4.
[488] Ibid., 5.
[489] Ibid., 6.
[490] Ibid., 17.

ego[491]." He noted that this would be a hollow nod to French vanity, as "[w]e are no more bound to follow his advice than he is bound to follow ours[492]." Sulzberger concluded by expressing uncertainty as to whether de Gaulle was "'the man of the day before yesterday' or the 'man of the day after tomorrow[493]'", but his recommendations for Kennedy's approach to the summit—beginning talks with an assumption of bad faith from the Élysée, feigning interest in de Gaulle's monologues without ever considering the substance of his arguments, and avoiding areas of policy disagreement[494]—suggest he lacked the curiosity to truly find out.

Wahl, the son of Hungarian Jewish immigrants to the United States, had the good fortune of securing a meeting with de Gaulle—then out of power—in the early 1950s as a Harvard graduate student doing thesis research on the politics of the French resistance. The retired general took a shine to the intelligent young American, granting him numerous audiences through the decade as the Fourth Republic began to crumble, paving the way for de Gaulle's return to power in 1958. This unprecedented insider's view to the redrafting of the French constitution enabled Wahl to write his first book, the well-received *The Fifth Republic: France's New Political System*[495]. In spite of his personal admiration for de Gaulle and the tremendous career boost their friendship had accorded him, Wahl's report to Kennedy painted a picture of the French president as a stubborn old windbag rather than a man of thoughtful conviction and strategic foresight. By focusing on the rigours of de Gaulle's formalism, his oratorical habits, mannerisms, tics, and so on,

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[491] Ibid..
[492] Ibid., 18.
[493] Ibid., 23.
[494] Ibid., 25.
[495] Nicholas Wahl, *The Fifth Republic: France's New Political System* (New York: Random House, 1959).

Wahl inadvertently threw a blinding spotlight on the cultural-generational gap between the young Cold Warrior from Brookline and the statesman from Lille whose formative years took place while the Concert of Europe was still active.

Whereas Sulzberger tended to take a mocking approach to everything from de Gaulle's conception of how the Atlantic Alliance should operate to his mannerisms, Wahl placed his emphasis on the unpleasantness of the physical act of conversation with the French president. Though Wahl knew better than anyone the obstacles de Gaulle had overcome on his road to the Élysée, he still chose to focus on the idiosyncrasies of an elderly European rather than portray him as one of the more thoughtful political strategists and statesmen of the era. Wahl's memo helped further shift Kennedy's pre-summit focus from de Gaulle's message—that France was a willing partner, but had reservations about elements of American policy that led it to seek reassurance and more meaningful dialogue—to the medium: an old man who was widely assumed to be reflexively anti-American. In doing so Wahl unwittingly contributed to the de-legitimization of a raft of French concerns about American leadership in the Western community that were poorly understood in Washington and thus went unaddressed during the Kennedy years.

Wahl forewarned Kennedy that conversation with de Gaulle was a "carefully managed" listening exercise that usually lacked a real, free-flowing exchange of ideas[496].

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[496] Nicholas Wahl, "Conversing with on General de Gaulle and the prime minister (to McGeorge Bundy)," undated (spring 1961), John F. Kennedy, President's Office Files (#3); Series 9 Countries; Box 116—France General 1961, JFKL 1-3. Wahl wrote, "An old fashioned, complex and rather reflexive courtesy surrounds conversations with de Gaulle. The atmosphere is always calm, but he does raise his voice, gestures broadly, strikes his hand on a table, and often grimaces strangely—all for emphasis. This is rarely more than oratorical style. Since he refuses to allow conversations to have 'surprises' for him, he remains collected throughout even when he wishes to communicate to his

Without assigning any anti-American motive to the French president, Wahl further advised Kennedy that "[n]othing can oblige de Gaulle to 'give and take' when he has decided not to—and this is usually the case[497]." When de Gaulle did allow an opening to his interlocutor on a subject of disagreement, "[h]e might give the impression that he [was] listening closely to your reformulation and will appear to agree with your view by nodding his head and grunting 'oui' occasionally[498]." After allowing the speaker to continue until he was "finally winded on the subject" de Gaulle would suggest returning to the matter in future discussions, at which time "he might give [one] satisfaction" only if the speaker had insisted and de Gaulle had found some advantage to conceding the point[499].

By pressing one's insistence on matters where de Gaulle did not agree, the most likely outcome was that he would concur "that your point is very interesting and then… launch off into a long lecture on a parallel subject only somewhat relevant[500]." Outside of the staid confines of the Élysée, "[h]is talk at meals or in automobiles is often of a critical and free swinging variety that allows him to escape the formal courtesies of his official discussions and to indulge his talent for epigram, cryptic rhetorical questions, and

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visitor that he is excited, and this is rare. He plays with his glasses during conversations, putting them on and taking them off, but it is my impression that after having closely inspected his interlocutor at the outset, he no longer really sees him during the balance of the talk. Since he is not really conversing, he does not feel it necessary—nor is it easy for him—to note visually the facial clues which conversation provides. When de Gaulle is bored or when he is irritated by the pace or content of the conversation, he shows his nervousness by shaking the foot of the leg he has crossed. A slightly lower level of nervousness is denoted by his opening and closing his mouth while the visitor talks, or by frequent tossings of his head in the manner of an aging racehorse eager to have his turn on the track. Other minor signs of tension are the crossing and uncrossing of his hands and sudden shifting about in his chair."

[497] Ibid., 2.

[498] Ibid.

[499] Ibid.

[500] Ibid.

bitter, if not coarse, comment[501]." Disappointingly, however, "[e]ven in this sort of informal talk, de Gaulle pays little attention to the flow of conversations, but tosses off his opinion as they occur to him without any care for their immediate relevance."

The impression Kennedy would take from these two reports just as he was about to meet with de Gaulle was undoubtedly that he should brace himself for a tedious and ultimately pointless exercise. While the perspectives of Sulzberger and Wahl would certainly have been informative to Kennedy, both men seemed to operate under the assumption that de Gaulle received all men as equals and would treat an American president no differently than a foreign journalist or scholar. Although Kennedy had prepared himself for lengthy monologues, de Gaulle was far more eager to engage in meaningful discussion with the American president than Sulzberger or Wahl would have Kennedy believe.

The pre-summit briefing book prepared for Kennedy by Christian Chapman, then Officer in Charge of Laos Affairs at the State Department, took a half-century's worth of American caricatures of France and applied them to Paris' policy aims in Southeast Asia. Kennedy had been well-acquainted with the politics of the region during its anti-colonial struggle, but this briefing book sought to reacquaint him with post-Geneva elements of the Franco-American dynamic in Vietnam. Foreshadowing much of the State Department and embassy chatter as American involvement in South Vietnam deepened in 1962, Chapman delegitimized French policy aims in the region and assigned sinister motives to them by using the familiar tactic of assigning feminine characteristics to France.

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[501] Ibid., 3.

Borrowing heavily from the feminizing language commonly used by Americans to describe France in the 1950s, Chapman painted Paris as a spurned ex-lover when it came to its views of American involvement in Vietnam. He argued "[t]he French are... attached to Indo-China by ties of emotion and interest. But with their power diminished, they have jealously sought to preserve a special position at whatever cost[502]." The briefing book expressed the view that France's hollow claim to world power centred on its control of a few small Pacific islands and the retention of some influence in its former Indochinese colonies[503]. As the United States replaced France as the chief foreign power in the region following the 1954 peace deal, "[i]nevitably strong emotional frictions developed between French and Americans, the French feeling that we sought to supplant them and we considering that French policies were opening the area to Communist conquest." Paris refused to passively allow Washington to usurp its former role in Southeast Asia, and "[t]he French have interpreted the inclination of the native peoples toward the US as a perfidious American scheme to wean their loyalties away from France[504]." At no point did Chapman consider that Paris had long preferred negotiation to the use of force and that this was the real source of worry when de Gaulle considered the Kennedy administration's policy direction in Vietnam.

The briefing book outlined a broad philosophical disagreement in the region that supposedly had its roots in French "selfishness", which manifested itself in indifference towards communism, the preservation of non-communist regimes in the former Indochina, and the defence of western interests in Asia in general. Chapman wrote,

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[502] Christian Chapman, "Section I: SE Asia of President's Visit to de Gaulle, Paris, May 31-June 2 1961 Briefing Book," President's Office Files (#3); Series 9 Countries, box 116a, JFKL, 1.
[503] Ibid., 1.
[504] Ibid., 2.

"[t]he French, who no longer have the power to affect the situation, have taken a very narrow and selfish view and simply sought to preserve what they could of their own interests at whatever cost, even at the risk of losing the area to the Communists[505]. Chapman argued that France's similarly "soft" stance during the Laos crisis, caused in large part by the inability of the French Military Mission in Laos to train an effective national army, stoked further discord. "The policy of complete laissez-faire" from the French, who backed centrist prime minister Souvanna Phouma, led Paris to mistakenly characterize American support for rightist colonel Phoumi Nosavan as an attempt "to make Laos into a militant anti-Communist bastion" rather than a last ditch effort to prevent "the gradual take-over of the country by the Pathet Lao, supported and directed from the outside." As a result, "the recent crisis in Laos has produced renewed bitterness [as t]he French consider that we have pursued what they call a 'hard' policy which, in their eyes, has caused an inevitable Communist reaction[506]."

The Pre-Summit Talking Points Paper issued Kennedy on 27 May predicted a further bilateral schism to come in Southeast Asia before the two presidents had even had a chance to discuss their views of the region. De Gaulle, by failing to provide any specifics on the summit agenda or any indication of the order in which he planned to discuss major issues, certainly did little to aid American preparations for discussion of the

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[505] Ibid., He continues, "[f]or instance, in 1954-55, the French were predisposed to reach a compromise with Ho Chi-minh rather than support Diem, as they considered South Viet-Nam could not be held against a Communist take-over. Certain French elements at the time actively supported Diem's adversaries and even violently opposed the Americans who were desperately seeking to shore up the Vietnamese Government. To preserve their schools and economic interests in North Viet-Nam, the French have continued to maintain semi-official relations with the Communist regime. (The Communist authorities have nevertheless taken over all French assets.) In general, the French have favored a policy of neutralism as against our policy of encouraging and supporting native anti-communist individuals, groups, and governments."

[506] Ibid.

region. Nevertheless, the unnamed author of the document expected general agreement on "East-West Issues", Berlin, the future of the EEC, German integration, Africa, and the French role there[507]. The paper recognized that there was no prospect of winning de Gaulle's support for the UN, but felt Kennedy should explain to him once again why Washington felt the UN was important to western policy[508]. Kennedy was to express a desire to see a greater French role in Latin America and Cuba, but the paper demonstrated uncertainty about de Gaulle's position on Southeast Asia and advocated a defensive posture on what was anticipated as a source of awkwardness.

The paper suggested discussing the region "under the general problem of Communist aggression and penetration" with the understanding that Thailand, Vietnam and Laos would be addressed together. The paper's contradictory recommendation that "[s]tress could be laid on obtaining French cooperation in creating a genuinely neutral government and not one dominated by the leftist elements" pointed towards radically different conceptions of what constituted neutralism. Whereas de Gaulle's neutrality implied emphasis on non-alignment in the Cold War, the American position seemingly denied socialist regimes could be neutral. The assertion that "[w]e should combat de Gaulle's view that Laos is a peripheral area which can be abandoned with impunity, and continue our efforts to improve the performance of the Royal Army[509]," further demonstrates total incomprehension of Gaullist notions of genuine neutrality.

Kennedy and de Gaulle finally got their first opportunity to measure each other up in face to face talks just after lunch on 31 May 1961 during the first afternoon of the

[507] "President's Visit to de Gaulle, Paris, May 31-June 2, 1961,Talking Points," 27/5/61, President's Office Files (#3); Series 9 Countries, box 116a, JFKL, 1.
[508] Ibid., 2.
[509] Ibid.

summit. Between the niceties of banquet etiquette, de Gaulle sought real, tangible concessions from Kennedy. Most notably, he wanted greater cooperation between Paris, Washington and London on external "Western policy", confirmation that Kennedy would not yield Western rights in Berlin under pressure from Khrushchev, and reassurance that the United States would come to Western Europe's defence in the event of a Soviet invasion, even if doing so meant running the risk of a nuclear attack on the American mainland. When they finally sat down to talk politics, de Gaulle invited Kennedy to speak on issues that interested him the most, and Kennedy ranked Southeast Asia second, after Berlin, but before Latin America and Africa.

Discussion of Vietnam concluded without any definitive agreement, but at least a clear picture emerges where both men at least presented their cases, though neither conceded any ground. De Gaulle expressed his position broadly—or "vaguely" as Americans would later charge—but firmly: no to military intervention, no to big aid programs, no to the logic that American prestige in the region forced it to act against the long-term interests of the West, that it would be wise to enlist the help of regional powers like India and Japan, and that the West should play for time as the communist bloc began to fragment[510]. This stance, expressed solely through diplomatic channels until de Gaulle's press release in August 1963, remained essentially unchanged up to Kennedy's tragic assassination.

Kennedy's position denied the presence of strong ideological and emotional impulses to intervene as the president dispassionately outlined what appeared to be sound

[510] "Talking Points Reviewing Conversations between President Kennedy and President de Gaulle," 31/5/61-2/6/61, President's Office Files (#3); Series 9 Countries, box 116a—France Security 1961 (D) de Gaulle Mtg. Part II, JFKL, 5.

strategic reasons for American involvement in Vietnam. Kennedy rejected de Gaulle's view that American intervention had turned South Vietnam into a Cold War battlefield, while countering that an American withdrawal would ensure the collapse of the Saigon regime, American military intervention must be kept on the table as a bargaining chip with the Soviets, and that a failure to act vigorously in the face of communist pressure would have a catastrophic effect on the perception of American security guarantees in allied states from the Philippines to Greece.

It is likely that Kennedy's subsequent misunderstanding of de Gaulle's position on Vietnam arose from his assurance that he would not publicly oppose American military intervention in Laos even though he thought it was a horrible idea. Kennedy's disagreement with de Gaulle's views probably led him to misunderstand their seriousness. The final American summary notes of the summit mentioned Southeast Asia right after a recap of discussions on Africa[511], specifically the deteriorating situation in Portuguese Angola. De Gaulle did not support a UN role there—he had earlier in 1961 made a similar argument that the Western powers should have imposed their will on the Belgians and Congolese outside of the UN to prevent Soviet meddling—but once again said that he understood the American position and would not oppose it. It appears that de Gaulle had inadvertently set a precedent where the White House made the reasonable assumption that his concerns over the shape of "Western Policy" in the Third World were serious, but of far less importance than European matters, and certainly not worth risking a diplomatic breech with Washington. By issuing another non-interference pledge on

[511] Ibid.

Laos, de Gaulle seemingly resolved the matter to the White House's satisfaction and fed the impression that Vietnam was not part of his *amour propre.*

Laos and South Vietnam were inextricably linked in American thinking on Southeast Asia. Geoffrey Warner argues that the Kennedy administration had talked tough about Laos as a regional lynchpin whose defence was essential to the maintenance of American prestige, but Kennedy had dithered on military intervention during the spring crisis to the point that the rainy season forced a ceasefire that temporarily shelved the problem[512]. South Vietnam became the administration's consolation prize when the McNamara and Gilpatric reports of April and early May reinforced perceptions that a communist victory there was a plausible short-term scenario that could only be prevented by a major overhaul of the American effort in the region.

Kennedy accepted Rostow's argument that the deployment of American troops would have broader political-diplomatic consequences, but set out to prevent another Cuba or Laos-style embarrassment by maxing out the American effort just short of a firm troop commitment. He set out to help shore up the Diem regime and increase the size of US Military Assistance and Advisory Group (MAAG) beyond the limits authorized by International Control Commission in place since Geneva Agreements in 1954[513]. Geoffrey Warner writes that "after what we have learned about the President's behaviour over Laos, we should be wary of concluding that he had made a firm decision [about the nature of the American commitment to Saigon... Nevertheless] having in effect

[512] Geoffrey Warner, "Review: President Kennedy and Indochina: The 1961 Decisions," *International Affairs* 70, no. 4. (1994): 694-5.
[513] Ibid.

abandoned Laos, the administration had taken a decision to stand firm in South Vietnam[514]."

If de Gaulle did leave ambiguity as to how he would respond to an American policy in Southeast Asia he did not approve of, there was none in his assessment of Western prospects in the region. He forcefully shared the opinion that "the situation in Laos is badly compromised.... it's a poor country, without unity, without will, freedom almost lacking in everything[515]." The problem, in his mind, was that "because the United States being engaged, the Russians were engaged in their turn and they have the advantage mostly because of their propaganda, of the determination of their agents and on site supporters[516]." De Gaulle's preferred course of action was to encourage Laotians to keep free from communist control, while at the same time recognizing that the Pathet Lao would have to be given a share of power in order to keep the peace.

De Gaulle felt that Souvanna Phouma, a French-backed neutralist, was the least bad candidate to lead a coalition government in part because he had demonstrated an ability to work with the communists without being used by them. France would continue to use the small military base at Seno permitted under the Geneva Accords as a forward listening post. Kennedy, who had abandoned Eisenhower's attempts to establish a Western-oriented rightist regime in Laos, tepidly concurred that Souvanna was the least bad candidate to lead the country, but wondered how he would hold up if the balance of power tipped to Pathet Lao. De Gaulle responded by admitting that Souvanna may not prove able to hold off the communists, but warned, "one must not lose sight... that in

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[514] Ibid., 696.
[515] Ministère des affaires étrangères, *Documents diplomatiques français 1961* Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin (Paris: Impr. nationale, 1997), 674.
[516] Ibid.

general South East Asia (Laos, South Vietnam, Cambodia and even Siam) is not a good, combat ground for the West. For the rest of the region, the best course is to let it develop its own neutrality that will not force the Soviets to penetrate the area, as they seem to have no desire to do so"[517]. Kennedy, de Gaulle felt, was losing sight of Western limitations.

Kennedy responded that American prestige was tied to a favourable outcome in Laos, which had a SEATO guarantee that he had reaffirmed in the hopes of securing a ceasefire, and if the communists were to triumph there "the effect could be disastrous" for America's Asian allies from Turkey to the Philippines[518]. De Gaulle, no doubt sensing that his line of reasoning was not gaining any traction, let Kennedy know that he was aware of the dangers to the United States and parried from another angle. He stressed that France owed the influence it had left in its former Indochinese colonies precisely because it had abandoned the notion of playing a military role in the region[519]. De Gaulle then attempted to reaffirm that this view in no way implied that he advocated rolling over and letting Asia fall into communist hands; rather, he preferred taking a stand where conditions were favourable to the West. He cited India and Japan as more advanced Asian powers—"real countries"—in terms of national unity, civilization, government and independence that were both defensible and worthy of serious aid[520]. This reflected a Realist worldview that had little use for idealistic crusades to transport western-style

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[517] Ibid.
[518] Ibid., 675.
[519] Ibid. "France had been present in Indochina for a long time. President Kennedy recalls how she (France) decided to retire from there. If she still has a serious influence in Vietnam, Cambodia and in Laos, it is precisely because this influence no longer possesses a military character. Wanting to maintain influence and at the same time arming these countries are two contradictory goals. The populations think, in effect, that if the West arms their countries, it is to dominate them and the situation deteriorates immediately."
[520] Ibid.

values and expectations where they had no foundation. In a more strongly worded reiteration of his earlier rejection of military intervention in Southeast Asia, he stated that limited economic and technical aid along with cultural diplomacy was the only appropriate course of action[521]. Kennedy was not prepared to concede the point, however.

Reformulating his own argument, Kennedy hoped to touch on a matter dearer to de Gaulle by drawing parallels between the American role in Southeast Asia and the defence of Western interests in Berlin. He returned to the SEATO security guarantees to Thailand and South Vietnam, claiming that there was a real possibility the Saigon regime could collapse even with American aid and that it certainly would not survive an American withdrawal from the country. Kennedy questioned, "would the effect produced on Asia not be of the same nature as that of an allied retreat from Berlin on the West[522]?" De Gaulle tried to steer the conversation back to common ground, replying that he did not disagree with the Berlin analogy and that unfortunate policy decisions made during the Eisenhower years, principally the decision to replace France as the region's primary economic/cultural link, had consequences that were not of Kennedy's doing. In future discussions with Kennedy officials, de Gaulle added the salient point that the fundamental difference between Berlin and Vietnam was that the Soviet Red Army already had a physical presence in the former.

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[521] Ibid., 675-6. De Gaulle stated, "But South Vietnam, Laos, even Thailand are not realities, they are nebulous, invertebrate organisms. One should not engage oneself there too deeply. Without a doubt it is not easy to change policy, but it is not very difficult either on the condition of having the agreement of Mr. Nehru and of Japan. The favorable realities for the West, in the Indian Ocean and in the Pacific are still considerable, but not in Southeast Asia where the only favorable possibility is neutrality. The influence to conserve must not be military, but cultural, economic and technical like that of France. And, as well, one must not give these countries too much money that corrupts directly the government as well as the civil servants and creates unpopularity of the system as is the case in Vietnam."
[522] Ibid., 676.

In the meantime, however, de Gaulle stated fatalistically, "the wine has been opened, now we must drink it[523]." De Gaulle made clear that France had no intention of intervening militarily in Southeast Asia again and advised Kennedy that he should do likewise. Kennedy expressed a deep reluctance to risk seeing American forces get bogged down in Laos, but resisted taking military options off the table by citing the need to keep pressure on the Soviets during upcoming negotiations and close the communist infiltration route to South Vietnam and Thailand[524]. This forced de Gaulle to repeat that the poor terrain in Laos meant military intervention should not be considered under any circumstances, adding that non-intervention from the West would lessen Soviet desire to interfere and allow real neutrality to take shape[525]. The discussion began to draw to a close without broad agreement, but de Gaulle launched a final salvo nevertheless. He reminded Kennedy that French efforts to hold back the spread of communism in Indochina by military means had led to rapid deterioration of the situation on the ground and an ultimate communist triumph. The United States would meet with the same fate if it repeated this mistake, but "if the US estimates that their security or their honor—because of their engagements—forces them to intervene, France would not oppose[526]."

Building on the point, de Gaulle wondered whether the West would have greater ease of action in the region once the Chinese began to visibly show their ambition in Southeast Asia. He saw a point in the future where the West would have more allies in place—claiming that even Ho feared the Chinese—and a breach in Sino-Soviet relations would lead to more favourable circumstances. De Gaulle added that Western influence in

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[523] Ibid.
[524] Ibid., 677-8.
[525] Ibid., 677.
[526] Ibid., 678.

Vietnam, even the communist North, was strong and that relations with France were much better than they had been a decade earlier. Still sceptical, Kennedy questioned whether the West had the luxury of waiting for a Sino-Soviet split or if this was a development that would not come until the West had been expelled from the region[527]. De Gaulle wrapped up the topic by expressing understanding that the situation there could turn out unfavourably for Washington, but the worst result would be a military defeat[528].

This exchange of views on Vietnam took place during the sole face to face encounter between Kennedy and de Gaulle. The pre-summit briefing files that had been prepared for Kennedy by Christian Chapman emphasized irrational, feminized stereotypes as an explanation for French behaviour in Vietnam and background reports on de Gaulle from Wahl and Sulzberger painted the French president as an old windbag who should be flattered while the substance of his ideas was politely ignored. Kennedy unfortunately decided to heed Sulzberger's advice and very little came out of summit. The only saving grace was that bilateral relations were not compromised even further because Kennedy offered to reconsider tripartism, an issue dear to de Gaulle. Both men had expressed their opinions frankly, though at this point it was unclear to Kennedy just how far de Gaulle would take his opposition to American policy, while de Gaulle was unsure of the extent to which Kennedy would stake his personal prestige to a non-communist outcome in Vietnam. Kennedy was free to disagree with de Gaulle and even ignore his warnings, just as de Gaulle opposed elements of American policy in Europe. The stakes were high enough, however, to warrant a dispassionate discussion of de

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[527] Ibid.
[528] Ibid., 679.

Gaulle's suggestion that the administration pursue diplomatic options rather than escalate the conflict.

CHAPTER 6: "Let us make the best of it, then, and try not to come out too badly in the end." – de Murville

The period from the end of Franco-American summit in June 1961 to the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962 saw a considerable souring of bilateral relations between Paris and Washington under the weight of many lingering, unresolved disagreements ranging from the *force de frappe*, the MLF nuclear weapons sharing deal, French opposition to British entry into the EEC, and the appropriateness of negotiating with the Soviets. At this juncture the policy dispute over Vietnam was neither the biggest stumbling block in the Franco-American relationship nor one that had come out into the open, but it certainly was a festering source of mutual dissatisfaction. The French response to the growing impasse was to cite the goodwill that had been built up during the Paris summit in the hopes of wrangling an invitation to the United States for de Gaulle, suggesting that a meeting should probably take place in Key West or New England, where the formal trappings of Washington could be avoided.

The White House, increasingly annoyed with French "obstructionism" and unable to see beyond a perception that de Gaulle harboured wartime grudges with the "Anglo-Saxons" and was reflexively anti-American, expected little from another presidential tête-à-tête and constantly rebuffed French efforts to restore some civility to the badly damaged relationship. At this point, voices in the bureaucracy sympathetic to French aims were either removed or marginalized and the American embassy in Saigon emerged as a particularly hostile voice against French policy in Vietnam. The hardening of American policy towards France grew to the point that Kennedy privately admitted in

mid-1962 that he had completely given up on finding any common ground with de Gaulle[529].

Distrustful of French motives and animated by a desire to break with past policy in the region, key members of the Kennedy-era bureaucracy were often guilty of mistakenly assuming that the Vietnamese shared their suspicions of Paris. They also dismissed evidence of growing French influence on both sides of the 17th parallel and signs that de Gaulle actually had the high-level connections necessary to engineer a diplomatic solution to the war. During the period in question relations between Paris and Hanoi had improved considerably, while Ngo Dinh Nhu, the brother of and adviser to President Ngo Dinh Diem, had began a subtle diplomatic campaign to re-establish France as a player in the country to counterbalance American influence and provide a discreet conduit for talks with representatives from the North.

There were, however, several important organs and actors that did have a better understanding of de Gaulle's aims and long-term vision, but they were either ignored or eased out of their positions. The CIA, for example, produced a detailed intelligence summary of de Gaulle's foreign policy aims for Kennedy in May of 1961 that outlined how his belief that ideologies were a transitory phenomenon led to his ability to scold the Soviet leadership for its current policy yet still see the possibility of détente, while his interest in China led him to a conviction that a Sino-Soviet split was inevitable. De Gaulle was later proven to have had a better grasp than Kennedy of how the Cold War would really play out, but acknowledging his assessment would have required the

[529] Robert Kleiman and J. Robert Schaetzel, "French Affairs," 1/6/62, General Records of the Department of State, Bureau of European Affairs Office of Political and Economic Affairs, RG 59, Alpha-Numeric Files 1948-1963, B.5D Canada-US trade area to C.3 de Gaulle Proposal 1962, Box 4, C3 De Gaulle Proposals 1962, NACP, 2.

administration to accept that France had a different, yet legitimate worldview. This proved impossible, however, as key administration officials were convinced that America's relationship by France had been and would continue to be an adversarial one.

Reflexive anti-Americanism or old wartime grievances with "les Anglo-Saxons"—so frequently cited by members of the administration, Kennedy included, as root causes of de Gaulle's opposition to American policy—were not deemed themes worthy of further examination by the analysts who prepared the CIA report[530] because they distracted attention from de Gaulle's legitimate aims. In Paris, James "Jim" Gavin[531], a decorated World War II general and political maverick whose dispatches to Washington revealed a considerable amount of sympathy towards de Gaulle's ambition, was in 1962 replaced as American ambassador to France by Charles Bohlen[532], whose hostility better reflected the administration's orientation towards Paris. In the Washington political bureauracy, the alarmist reports about policy drift in Vietnam from Chester Bowles, the President's Special Representative and Adviser on African, Asian, and Latin American Affairs, were ignored as retribution after he leaked his opposition to the Bay of Pigs invasion to the press. As the few nuanced American voices relatively close to the president capable of rationalizing how de Gaulle's worldview applied to

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[530] CIA Briefing Packet, "Current Intelligence Weekly Summary of 18 May 1961," National Security Files, Series 1 Countries, box 70A, France-General, JFKL.

[531] See: T. Michael Booth and Duncan Spencer Paratrooper: the life of Gen. James M. Gavin (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994); and, Robert Buzzanco, *Masters of War: military dissent and politics in the Vietnam era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[532] Bohlen (1904-1974) was a Harvard man and Eisenhower era ambassador to the Soviet Union. Under Kennedy and Johnson he served as Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Soviet Affairs from 1960 to 1962 and later Ambassador to France from 1962-1967. See: Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929-1969* (New York: Norton, 1973); and, T. Michael Ruddy, *The Cautious Diplomat: Charles E. Bohlen and the Soviet Union, 1929-1969* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1986).

Southeast Asia were silenced through 1962, the Kennedy administration retreated further into historical prejudices against France and de Gaulle.

19. Indian PM Jawaharlal Nehru (R) shaking hands with US Under Secretary of State Chester Bowles upon his arrival.
Photo: Murali/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
8 August 1961

De Gaulle's top diplomats, Foreign Minister Couve de Murville, ambassador to the United States Herve Alphand, and Minister of Cultural Affairs André Malraux, all doggedly stuck to de Gaulle's summit message that even if American military intervention was the least bad option in Vietnam, it was still a very bad one that would likely end in failure. In numerous conversations with Kennedy, Rusk, McNamara, and other members of the bureaucracy, they repeated several many considerations behind the French position. They argued that the United States simply could not maintain a position of strength in Asia from Iran to Japan when it no longer enjoyed a nuclear monopoly, that

Indochina had unsuitable terrain for fighting, that increased American material and economic aid for the Diem regime was drawing the Soviets into an area of peripheral interest where they had no previous presence, and that a Sino-Soviet split was coming in the near future and would create more favourable playing conditions for the West in Southeast Asia. Unable to see beyond de Gaulle's supposedly sinister motives, the administration grew increasingly frustrated with his refusal to back down and allow Washington to pursue its program in Vietnam without having to endure constant expressions of French disapproval.

French officials did, however, make sure that their Vietnamese policy dispute with Washington kept out of the press to avoid the appearance of disunity in the Western camp. Nor did their apparent inability to reach a common position on Vietnam shake the French appetite for further dialogue on the region or de Gaulle's personal amity for Kennedy. The French embassy in Hanoi continually furnished the Americans with pertinent intelligence they were unable to obtain otherwise[533] on a variety of military and economic matters in the North without being solicited by Washington.

French concerns were, for the most part, noted with growing but passive annoyance until a remarkably frank May 1962 exchange between Kennedy, Bundy, Alphand, and Malraux in which an emotional Kennedy castigated France and Germany for their criticism of American leadership of NATO, threatening to bring American troops home unless Western Europeans started to show more appreciation for the

[533] British officials and Canadian members of the International Control Commission (ICC) operating in the North rarely stayed in dour Hanoi beyond the bare minimum of time, preferring the chaotic bustle and cowboy capitalism of Saigon. While both groups shared information with the Americans, neither enjoyed anything remotely close to the degree of access to communist officials as the French.

sacrifices Washington was making for them[534]. Kennedy's wounded, defensive assertion that United States would gladly put an end to the massive expense of its commitment in Europe signalled an emotional escalation to broader Franco-American disputes. Consequently, it was little surprise then that he chose to stop listening to the French rather than re-evaluate his perceptions of them.

South Vietnam: chaos and competing agendas

Key members of the Kennedy administration who had traveled with the president to Paris acknowledged that while French and American positions on Laos appeared to be coming closer, major disagreement remained on South Vietnam. During a 2 June 1961 ministerial meeting on Laos between Charles Bohlen, then Special Assistant to the Secretary of State, Bundy, Gavin, Murville and Alphand[535], Bundy expressed scepticism of de Gaulle's reliance on cultural diplomacy and outlined his preference for injecting military might. Playing "bad cop", Bohlen implied that France was not living up to the military responsibilities assigned to it in the 1954 Geneva Accords and chided de Murville for associating neutralism with demilitarization. Bundy tried to steer the discussion back to matters upon which both sides agreed, arguing that "perhaps there was no difference on Laos, or the existent difference relates to [a] different estimate of what is

[534] "Meeting in the Cabinet Room (of John F. Kennedy, Ambassador Alphand, Malraux, Lebel and Bundy)," 11/5/62, National Security Files, Series 1, Countries; box 71, France- General, 5/10/62-5/11/62, JFKL.
[535] "Memorandum of Conversation (between Bohlen, Bundy, Gavin, Murville, and Alphand at the Quai d'Orsay), 1/6/61, President's Office Files (#3), Series 9 Countries, box 116a—France Security 1961 (D) de Gaulle Mtg. Part II, JFKL.

needed or what can be saved." There was mutual acknowledgment, however, on Bundy's point that "there were real differences, and that these extended to South Vietnam." De Murville responded by arguing that South Vietnam should be viewed as a "separate matter" and that disagreement on Laos should be keep private to prevent compromising ongoing negotiations to neutralize the country with the outcome of diplomatic efforts still uncertain. Neither party left satisfied, but they did make a tacit agreement to publicly stress areas of agreement on Laos and avoid complicating matters by making linkages to issues related to Vietnam[536].

20. *Charles E. Bohlen (fore), going to White House meeting re: Cuban crisis.*
Photo: Ed Clark/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 April 1961

[536] Ibid., 6-7.

Temporarily shelving substantive policy disagreement on Vietnam did not make it disappear, as both French and American actors were painfully aware. By early July relatively localized issues pertaining to Laos and South Vietnam had spiralled into a philosophical debate over the nature of Washington's role in the Cold War that entrenched the Kennedy administration's view that de Gaulle could not be reasoned with. From mid-1961 to late 1962 the patient efforts of top French diplomats to continue dialogue on Vietnam and clearly explain the historical factors that motivated their position contrasted starkly with the hurt, defensive tone of key Kennedy administration members who viewed expressions of policy disagreement as a personal attack on American leadership of the Western alliance.

When the dispute over Vietnam resurfaced in late autumn following the release of the Taylor Report on 2 November 1961[537], American officials tended to downplay the extent of French opposition to deepening American involvement in South Vietnam, or consciously misinterpreted ambiguity in French statements to make it appear that there was more concurrence between their respective positions than actually existed. When it became clear by late spring 1962 that de Gaulle would not mute his opposition to American policy in Vietnam, internal American discussion once again shifted from the substance of de Gaulle's views back to an examination of the historical factors that supposedly made him such a difficult ally.

Following inconclusive discussions in Paris a month earlier, de Murville felt compelled to write Dean Rusk on 6 July 1961 to clarify outstanding matters on Laos,

[537] The full text of the Taylor Report can be found here: U.S. Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, I, Vietnam 1961 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1988): 210, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_i_1961/u.html.

principally assertions from Bundy and Bohlen that France was indifferent towards the fate of the beleaguered country[538]. In previous high-level Franco-American discussions on South East Asia, French officials spoke of their strategic view of the West's role in the region in broad terms, perhaps assuming that their American colleagues would not prove resistant to a realist assessment. This approach failed to yield the results Paris desired, prompting de Murville to outline the French strategic view in greater detail. He wrote to Rusk:

> Laos, the Congo and Cuba... are problems that arise on the periphery of the Communist world or even outside it where Russia's vital interests are not directly involved. They differ from that country's basic national problems. In that periphery the Soviet Union seeks to exploit to the maximum the crises that arise, and thereby to extend its advantages. But it is not disposed to take major risks, that is to say risks of war, for its very existence is in no way at stake[539].

De Murville recognized that Washington had "vital interests" in the Far East and Southeast Asia and was directing regional defence against Russia and China, but attacked the notion of French indifference by noting that France too "attaches very great importance" to Indochina because of its "cultural and economic legacy" as a former colonial power.

Still, de Murville countered that the Kennedy administration was leaning towards an approach with ambitions that vastly outstripped even Washington's considerable resources. He wrote that it was "unrealistic" that the United States could continue with past policy of propping up and supplying a ring of anti-Communist states from Iran to Japan when it no longer enjoyed an atomic monopoly. De Murville made clear that he

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[538] Couve de Murville, "letter to Dean Rusk," 6/7/61, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Records of Ambassador Charles E. Bohlen, 1942-71, box 18, Paris Foreign Ministers Meeting August 4-9, 1961, NACP.
[539] Ibid., 2.

was not arguing for pacifism, conceding that "military intervention by the West would be necessary immediately and would be justified" if China sent its forces into Southeast Asia[540]. De Murville sought to convince Rusk that the same principles that the West applied to the defence of Berlin or key East Asia allies need not be applied to Southeast Asia and that acceptable neutral regimes could be established in Indochina at very little cost or risk to western prestige.

De Murville argued that standing firm on Berlin, the focal point of the Cold War, was a special case because of the divided city's unquestionable importance to the West and proximity to other NATO allies[541]. So far as Asia was concerned, de Murville also hoped to create a distinction between Japan and the Philippines, where the United States was firmly entrenched in a position of military strength, from the contested nations of Southeast and Southern Asia. He essentially outlined a conservative regional strategy where Western powers would not intervene militarily in theatres of relative weakness until China or the Soviet Union had given them a clear pretext by firing the first shot. In the meantime, de Murville argued that "[a]part from such an eventuality, it seems to us normal to limit ourselves to political, economic and cultural means, with the least

[540] Ibid. He wrote, "Asia is an enormous region which—and this is particularly true of southern Asia—is situated at a great distance from the Pacific coast of the United States. Is it possible to maintain throughout this vast area, from Iran to Northern Japan, positions of strength that require a tremendous effort at a time when the American atomic monopoly no longer exists? This is, in reality, the subject of the discussion that we have been having with each other for the past five years with regard to Laos. We believe, for our part, that it is unrealistic to think that the West, in this instance the United States, can continue on the basis of what has been done for the past ten years. And we find the proof of this in what is occurring today in Laos."

[541] Ibid., 3. He wrote, "A position of strength is certainly necessary since it is, for us, just as it is for the Russians, a question of paramount political interest. But it is more than that, for the very survival of the Atlantic Alliance and, consequently, the security of us all depend [sic] on the developments of a crisis in connection with Berlin."

possible intervention in the internal policy of these countries[542]." This approach would dictate an active, but discrete French policy "in Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam [where] we think that we are capable of exerting in the long run a not inconsiderable influence[543]."

According to de Murville, France would accept neutralization of disputed countries—especially a "very special case" like South Vietnam—as an acceptable alternative to the unpredictable consequences of unprovoked military intervention. Moving on to Laos, de Murville acknowledged that the opposition there was looking to communize the country, not neutralize it, and that it would not accept partition. Even if the outlook there was not optimistic, he argued, military intervention was the only alternative and one that was unacceptable for reasons stated earlier. He concluded his remarks on Southeast Asia pessimistically, telling Rusk "[l]et us make the best of it, then, and try not to come out too badly in the end[544]."

De Murville's attempt to repackage the French position on Southeast Asia by explaining it in greater detail than de Gaulle had in summit conversations with Kennedy failed to provoke any deeper discussion on regional strategy in the administration. Within a week National Security Advisor Walt Rostow and Rusk were discussing how "[Washington] must be ready to go" in South Vietnam, weighing a series of military options designed to buttress the Diem regime's counter-insurgency campaign[545]. Rostow

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[542] Ibid., 2.
[543] Ibid.
[544] Ibid., 3.
[545] Walt Rostow, "Memoradum for the Secretary of State," 13/7/61, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Vietnam: Internal and Foreign Affairs, 1960-1963, 59, Microfilm Rm., box 69, US-Relations with France 1960-1963, C92: Reel 3, NACP. Rostow explained his logic thusly, "As I see it, the purpose of raising the Viet-Nam issue as a case of aggression is either to induce effective

suggested increasing the number of American military personnel in the South to aid in Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) training and logistics, a Viet Cong-style "counter-guerrilla operation" in the North with American air and naval support, and a limited military operation against the Hanoi regime, such as the seizure of the North's second city and main seaport, Hai Phong. Rostow felt that the United States had to put more military pressure on North Vietnam because "a posture aimed more directly against North Viet-Nam is more likely to be diplomatically persuasive" and "we are unlikely to be able to negotiate anything like a satisfactory Laos settlement unless the other side believes that we are prepared, as an alternative to a satisfactory settlement, to fight[546]." On a broader strategic level, Rostow envisioned a response diametrically opposed to that expressed by de Murville to Rusk, making an express linkage between American action in Laos and Vietnam to wider policy in the rest of Asia and Berlin.

The administration not only ignored French pleas to consider Southeast Asia in isolation from other Cold War theatres, but refused to acknowledge that differing conceptions of the Cold War in Europe were the by-product of a legitimate, alternative worldview rather than parochial self-interest. Dean Acheson, Truman's Secretary of State and elder statesmen of the Democratic Party, authored the Flexible Response[547]

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international action or to free our hands and our consciences for whatever we have to do. The optimum goal is to create a more persuasive deterrent position with respect to the Laos conference and Viet-Nam. At the minimum we put ourselves in a political position to salvage South Laos and save Viet-Nam with a more rational military plan than we now have."

[546] Ibid.

[547] In early 1961 Kennedy overhauled Eisenhower's policy of Massive Retaliation to create a new Flexible Response doctrine that would allow the president to deploy conventional forces against the Soviet Union and its proxies rather than relying on total nuclear war. Kennedy had not abandoned nuclear deterrence, but he recognized that it was inappropriate in limited wars on the periphery. Europeans fretted that this shift indicated that Kennedy would not automatically come to their defence with their full military weight in the event of Soviet attack. See: Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*; Meena Bose, *Shaping and Signalling Presidential Policy: the national security decision making of*

doctrine in the 1950s that was later adopted by the Kennedy administration and served as an official advisor to the president. His address to State Department employees on 25 July 1961 typified that administration's feminized characterization of continental Europeans as narrow-minded complainers incapable of seeing the global challenges that faced American decision-makers[548]. The theme of Acheson's address was the importance of returning the State Department to its rightful, proper role as the central organ of foreign policy formation and the necessity of putting an end to bureaucratic infighting with other agencies, but he also emphasized greater American unilateralism in the face of a cacophony of critical European voices.

At Kennedy's request, Acheson outlined a new, more active strategy in March 1961 to update the American approach to management of the western alliance[549]. Acheson advised "consulting frankly [with European allies] about policies which are still in a formative stage, and being willing to alter policies, if warranted, in the light of discussion", but he recognized that the former colonial areas would continue to be "a fertile source of disagreement between the U.S. and its NATO allies[550]." However, as Acheson and Kennedy framed it, consultation was to be a one-way affair in which Washington convinced hesitant Europeans to toss away their anachronistic colonial-era world views and submit to the American program.

Eisenhower and Kennedy (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1998); Shaun R. Gregory, *Nuclear Command and Control in NATO: nuclear weapons operations and the strategy of flexible response* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); and, Jane E. Stromseth, *The Origins of Flexible Response: NATO'S debate over strategy in the 1960s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988).

[548] "Address by Dean Acheson," 25/7/61, President's Office Files (#3) Series 2 Special Correspondence, box 27, JFKL, 1.

[549] Dean Acheson, "A Review of North Atlantic Problems for the Future," the Committee on U.S. Political, Economic and Military Policy in Europe's Policy Guidance to the National Security Council, March 1961, DNSA no. NH01131.

[550] Ibid., 5-6.

There were serious reservations about American leadership across Western Europe in 1961 and 1962, but France emerged during this period as the one NATO member willing to voice its concerns about the consequences of non-consultation with Washington. The Multilateral Force (MLF) nuclear sharing scheme was typical of the Kennedy administration's efforts to offer a token concession that would create the veneer of equality within the western alliance. The MLF was designed by the Eisenhower administration to discourage other continental NATO allies—West Germany especially—from following the British and French, who had developed or were in the process of developing their own national programs, by giving international NATO crews shared control of American seaborne nuclear-armed Polaris missiles. The Kennedy administration first balked at equipping the MLF with modern nuclear submarines, then made it clear that Washington was to retain veto power over the actual use of MLF missiles[551]. MLF was meant to give Europeans the comfort of knowing they had their finger on the button and could defend themselves in the event of nuclear attack, but did not give them the right to actually push it. This was unacceptable to de Gaulle for all of the same reasons that prompted the Mendès France government to allow the EDC program to die almost a decade earlier.

Politically, the Kennedy administration's program for Western Europe called for the creation of an integrated political community that shed parochial national interests in favour of a large-tent anti-Communist grouping. Washington lobbied hard to include Britain in the EEC, mostly because London's presence would help ensure a firm Atlanticist orientation for Western Europe and undermine any drift towards neutralism.

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[551] Frank Costigliola, "The Pursuit of the Atlantic Community: Arms, Dollars, and Berlin," in *Kennedy's Quest for Victory*, 51.

De Gaulle saw American intentions for what they were—an attempt to plant an American Trojan horse in a dynamic new political project and to chip away at European national sovereignty politically just as NATO did militarily—and emerged as the unelected spokesman for a contrarian European position. Through 1962 de Gaulle and Adenauer, authors of the January 1963 bilateral Treaty of Friendship, were already closing ranks on key Cold War issues such as making overtures to China that would force the Soviets to back down in Europe, superpower arms control, and building de Gaulle's vision of "a single European community extending from Paris to the Urals[552]." De Gaulle had no intention of surrendering to the Soviet Union, nor did he accept that Washington had the right to decide the continent's fate.

Acheson was not speaking in an official capacity in his 25 July speech, but he was addressing State Department employees with a message that the Secretary of State and various other members of the administration would have privately agreed with: that continental Europeans—he had no critical words for Britain—were generally predisposed towards parochial national thinking, that they refused to acknowledge their own shortcomings, and that America's NATO allies were often obstacles that jeopardized wider American and Western interests.

Referencing an April trip to Europe that took him to five NATO capitals, Acheson noted that:

> in each of these countries people nursed a sense of grievance against the United States, though in no two cases was the grievance the same one. They had troubles which largely

[552] Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 27.

> were the result of their own stupidity, or foolishness, or lack of foresight, but in order to blame somebody other than themselves, they blamed us[553]...

Kennedy had frequently employed these irrational, female descriptors for France in his own addresses from the 1950s. Acheson added that there were great early expectations of the Kennedy administration in Europe, but that the response to the Bay of Pigs invasion was incredulous. Europeans likened Kennedy to "a gifted amateur practicing with a boomerang and suddenly knocking himself cold. They were amazed that so inexperienced a person should play with so lethal a weapon[554]." Still, Acheson did not believe that the young administration's blunder in Cuba added any legitimacy to a handful of unrelated European grievances he was subjected to during his voyage.

After dropping several joking remarks about how unpleasant it was to find himself in the company of European 'intellectuals', the Yale and Harvard Law graduate said, "I began to have a reluctant feeling that we perhaps are the only nation in the world which is capable of having a broad outlook on the world, an outlook which perhaps can at times comprise some of the interests or many of the interests of the whole free world." His prescription for American policy makers was to listen less to Europeans, and "always act ahead of the discussion... doing things which we urge others to follow, rather than making proposals and talking about them forever[555]."

With Franco-American policy discussions on Southeast Asia at an impasse, the dispute over Vietnam remained dormant until the release of the Taylor Mission Report in early November 1961. In this prelude to the intense negotiations in November-December

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[553] "Address by Dean Acheson," 25/7/61, JFKL, 2.
[554] Ibid.
[555] Ibid., 4.

and a deeper reassessment of Franco-American relations in Washington in the spring of 1962, there was an early indication that the administration was more focused on trying to figure out what "motivated" de Gaulle and his top officials—who had always been forthright on why France opposed American policy in Vietnam—rather than weighing the merits of the philosophy he outlined. More nuanced assessments were provided, but were overlooked in favour of reports that played up traditional charges of French anti-Americanism.

Nicholas Wahl reported to Rusk on 5 August 1961 on separate conversations with de Gaulle and French Prime Minister Michel Debré in late July, noting fatalism in de Gaulle's thinking since his return to power and that he was pursuing more limited national goals than those usually ascribed to him[556]. Wahl contrasted de Gaulle's aggressive confidence that he could restore French prestige in 1958 with the reality of 1961 that "three years in power have considerably affected his general view of France's future and his estimation of his own role in influencing the course of her history[557]." Under the weight of the confused ambitions of the people he led, coup plotting in the army[558], and the chaos in Algeria, De Gaulle's grandiose visions had given way towards new priorities of maintaining national unity and reforming the French state while France

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[556] Nicholas Wahl, "Memorandum on conversations with de Gaulle and Prime Minister Debré (to Ambassador Gavin," National Security Files, Series 1 Countries, box 70A, France-General, 8/21/61-8/31/61, JFKL, 1-2.
[557] Ibid.
[558] De Gaulle was deeply shaken when Generals Maurice Challe, Raoul Salan and others responded to Debré's secret peace negotiations with the FLN by attempting a military putsch in April 1961. The coup quickly fizzled, but—echoing 1940—de Gaulle felt the need to give a televised address to the nation in uniform to urge his countrymen to resist the coup "by all means." French public opinion supported a negotiated settlement, conscripts soldiers had no interest in turning against the government, while local commanders in Oran and Constantine refused to go along with the plan.

husbanded its economic, scientific and spiritual strength for a return to great power status at some distant point in the future.

Wahl noted that, despite de Gaulle's short-term pessimism, he was still "guardedly optimistic about France's ultimate future" even if a "fatalistic attitude... had come to dominate all his thinking[559]." Wahl's portrait of de Gaulle was that of a man consumed by internal developments beyond his control, his own political legacy as he neared the end of his public life, and the future of his divided, confused country, rather than the mischief-making anti-American he had been characterized as by many in Washington.

The release of the Taylor Report, which advocated the deployment of American military personnel into South Vietnam and a potential combat role for them, sparked a renewed flurry of activity from French officials frustrated that Washington was preparing itself for entry into the war. General Maxwell Taylor[560] had been the commander of the famed 101st Airborne Division during World War II and author of *The Uncertain Trumpet*[561], a critique of the Eisenhower administration that had brought him to Kennedy's attention. A rising star in the administration, he became the president's most valued military advisor as Kennedy's distrust of the Joint Chiefs of Staff grew from his belief that they had withheld crucial information during the Bay of Pigs invasion.

Fresh off heading a task force charged with writing the post-mortem of the Cuban fiasco, Taylor left for South Vietnam on 15 October 1961 with the hawkish Rostow and

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[559] Ibid., 2.
[560] The most comprehensive biography is John M. Taylor's *General Maxwell Taylor: the sword and the pen* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1989). General Taylor features prominently in Buzzanco's *Masters of War*.
[561] Maxwell Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet* (New York: Harper, 1960).

Brigadier General Edward Lansdale[562], an assistant to the secretary of defense who had coordinated American counterinsurgency support for the Philippines and Diem government, amongst others. Taylor concluded that the United States must show resolve in South Vietnam because its regional prestige was at risk, that ARVN was characterized by "bad tactics and bad administrative arrangements" that rendered it incapable of defeating a guerrilla force one tenth its size, and that ARVN's defensive-mindedness inherited from the French "permit[ted] a relatively small Viet-Cong force... to create conditions of frustration and terror certain to lead to a political crisis, if a positive turning point is not soon achieved[563]."

When he arrived in South Vietnam, Taylor discovered that ARVN's combat effectiveness was handicapped by a series of major weaknesses. ARVN's intelligence arm was especially inadequate and there was little forewarning of surprise attacks, forcing Saigon to tie up roughly 80 percent of its troops with defensive guard duty[564]. ARVN was unable to deploy its reserves quickly enough to protect the villages from communist raids, creating a vicious circle where the peasants withheld badly needed intelligence from the government that was unable to guarantee their security. The situation was still far from hopeless, though, Taylor argued. Like many Americans, he viewed Diem as a deeply flawed leader, but one who was still the least bad candidate to rule the country. He hoped that a new generation of young post-colonial officials and army officers would inject a new sense of professionalism into ARVN's

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[562] Landsdale recounts his experiences in Southeast Asia in *In the Midst of Wars: an American's mission to Southeast Asia* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1991). For biographies, see: Cecil B. Currey, *Edward Lansdale, the unquiet American* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1988); and, Jonathan Nashel, *Edward Lansdale's Cold war* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005).
[563] Taylor Report, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_i_1961/u.html.
[564] Moyar, 136.

counterinsurgency campaign. Rostow added hopefully that the vast majority of the peasants were apolitical and could be won over if the right reform programs were implemented correctly[565].

Taylor's prescription for the ills facing the Diem regime was to make "[a] joint effort… to free the Army for mobile, offensive operations" that involved a far greater role for 6000-8000 new American military personnel he wished to see deployed in South Vietnam. He recommended that "[t]he U.S. Government will support this effort with equipment and with military units and personnel to do those tasks which the Armed Forces of Vietnam cannot perform in time", ranging from "air reconnaissance and photography, airlift (beyond the present capacity of SVN forces), special intelligence, and air-ground support techniques" to coastal defence[566]. Had the following recommendations for "working collaboration" from Taylor been accepted, they would have transformed the United States from patron to an active combatant irreversibly tied to defence of the Diem regime[567]. Kennedy made his opposition to the introduction of American troops clear in advance of follow-up discussions on the report between Taylor, Rostow, McNamara, Bundy, and Undersecretary of State George Ball on 6 November,

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[565] Taylor Report, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_i_1961/u.html.
[566] Ibid.
[567] Ibid. Specifically, the report called for: a. Provide a U.S. military presence capable of raising national morale and of showing to Southeast Asia the seriousness of the U.S. intent to resist a Communist take-over; b. Conduct logistical operations in support of military and flood relief operations; c. Conduct such combat operations as are necessary for self-defense and for the security of the area in which they are stationed; d. Provide an emergency reserve to back up the Armed Forces of the GVN in the case of a heightened military crisis; e. Act as an advance party of such additional forces as may be introduced if CINCPAC or SEATO contingency plans are invoked.

but was interested enough in its recommendations to have key members of the administration debate the plan and outline how it might be implemented[568].

The language of the report was Rostowian, referring to "communist strategy" as though the Soviet Union, China, and North Vietnam were engaged in a unified campaign of subversion. However, there was no mention of the strategic implications of the Sino-Soviet split and how the United States could exploit them[569]. The report also revealed that Washington knew relatively little about the forces ARVN was fighting. Despite conflicting evidence in a 5 October National Intelligence Estimate that 80 to 90 per cent of the roughly 17,000 Viet Cong were South Vietnamese armed with homemade or captured weapons rather than infiltrators from the North, Rostow was fixated on the idea that the North was leading an international communist conspiracy to conquer the South. A Rand Corporation study from 1961 similarly concluded that the communist insurgency was overwhelming home-grown and limitless foreign economic-military aid would do little to halt it unless the Diem government took serious measures to address the grievances of the masses[570]. That many of the report's central tenets escaped challenge, testifies to the uniformity of the administration's thinking on Vietnam and inability to weigh countering points of view.

Rusk informed the president the following day that he, McNamara and the Joint Chiefs were in agreement that "[t]he chances are against, probably sharply against, preventing the fall of South Viet-Nam by any measures short of the introduction of U.S.

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[568] U.S. Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, IV, Vietnam, August-December 1963 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1991): 211, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_i_1961/v.html.
[569] Freedman, 324.
[570] Ibid., 324-5.

forces on a substantial scale" and that "[t]he fall of South Viet-Nam to Communism would lead to the fairly rapid extension of Communist control, or complete accommodation to Communism, in the rest of mainland Southeast Asia and in Indonesia[571]." They acknowledged that direct American military intervention could easily spark unwelcome consequences—such as formal Chinese and North Vietnamese entry into the war along the lines of Korea a decade earlier or a renewed Pathet Lao offensive in Laos, serious considerations that motivated de Gaulle's preference for diplomacy—and would potentially require as many as six divisions of 205,000 men to be effective[572].

Short of the injection of American troops, Rusk, McNamara, and the Joint Chiefs offered a token nod to the view that ARVN might be capable of stabilizing the country if it underwent a massive doctrinal and organizational overhaul, if American troops "sharply increased" their role in logistics, transport, intelligence and command, and if the Communist bloc were induced to lessen its support for the Viet Cong. In the end, Rusk stated that they should "now take the decision to commit ourselves to the objective of preventing the fall of South Viet-Nam to Communism and [show] willingness to commit whatever United States combat forces may be necessary to achieve this objective[573]." McNamara reaffirmed that he and the Joint Chiefs would prefer to "commit the U.S. to

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[571] U.S. Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, IV, Vietnam, August-December 1963 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1991): 222, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_i_1961/v.html.
[572] Ibid.
[573] Ibid.

the clear objective of preventing the fall of South Vietnam to Communism and that we support this commitment by the necessary military actions[574]."

Discussion on the Taylor Report is typical of internal debate over American policy in Vietnam that focussed on what shape the intervention should take rather than the broader question of whether Washington belonged in the country in the first place. Kennedy did not meet with his administration for a discussion of the Report until 11 November and the partial records that remain show that he did not share the hawks' enthusiasm for an immediate deployment of American forces. While de Gaulle had made clear during the Paris summit that the no Western country should intervene military without a clear pretext in the form of a Chinese or North Vietnamese invasion of the South, Kennedy did not rule a future combat role for the United States and did gradually increase troop levels over the next two years. For the moment, however he stressed that he would not make a snap decision, "[t]roops [were] a last resort", that he would not risk war with China, and that his preference was to deploy a multilateral SEATO contingent if military intervention proved necessary[575]. This did not prevent, however, an adverse French reaction to news of the report's contents. Rusk met with Ambassador Alphand on 13 November to outline American intentions in Vietnam in light of discussions on the Taylor Report. He began by restating the administration's mantra that it would "take the necessary measures which will make it possible for Viet-Nam to win its own war", an end that would require a greater military support and training role from the United

[574] Ibid., 227.
[575] Ibid., 236, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_i_1961/w.html.

States[576]. Rusk added, "[w]e do not, however, visualize sending U.S. forces of the battle-group type, although this may become necessary later[577]."

Alphand's response built on the same logic that motivated de Gaulle's advice to Kennedy in late May and de Murville's longer elaboration on French thinking to Rusk in July. He questioned whether sending American military engineers to the Mekong Delta for "flood relief" operations was a pretext for a larger deployment of combat troops. Rusk admitted that no deployment of engineers was imminent, but it had been considered, prompting the ambassador to again offer a general summary of his government's opposition to any form of military intervention by Washington. Alphand argued against a deployment on the additional grounds that it would complicate ongoing negotiations over Laos with the Soviets in Geneva and that it would give Moscow a pretext to broaden its own intervention in Vietnam.

Rusk said he agreed with Alphand's concerns over Laos, but dismissed the second component of his argument on the grounds that Soviet intervention had already expanded to the point that there were enough company-sized Vietminh groupings equipped with modern Soviet weaponry to fill out three regiments. Alphand repeated de Gaulle's view that Indochina, Vietnam specifically, was a poor place to fight, as the French knew from first-hand experience. The loss of Vietnam would be "disastrous... but France does not

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[576] "Memoradum of Conversation (between Rusk, Ambassador Alphand, Barthelemy, Dean Brown, and Chalmbers B. Wood)," 13/11/61, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Vietnam: Internal and Foreign Affairs, 1960-1963, 59, Microfilm Rm., box 69, US-Relations with France 1960-1963, C92: Reel 6, NACP.
[577] Ibid.

want to see the involvement of forces escalated by the introduction of American troops[578]."

Rusk responded that Washington could not let South Vietnam go down the same path as Laos because the "bad precedent" it set would be devastating to public opinion in the United States and in allied countries. He stated that West Europeans no longer had global concerns to worry over and did not see the importance of the region to Washington's international prestige. The secretary of state was bracing for new Geneva talks to lead not to "a genuine coalition and true neutrality but rather to disguised surrender" in Laos. He figured that the Soviets would "see no need to compromise [in Vietnam] if they can pick-up Southeast Asia without it[579]." Alphand pressed Rusk to confirm that Washington would not send troops at the present, but had not rejected that option, to which Rusk replied, "[w]e realize that sending troops would represent a risk. It might be a greater risk not to send them." He concluded that, "[w]e hope that we can work together, but if the issue comes to be one of the possible loss of Southeast Asia and our European friends do not agree with our policies to prevent this, then our paths may have to diverge[580]."

High-level Franco-American discussions on Vietnam did resume the following month, though they failed to lead to any sort of breakthrough. Ambassador Gavin had forewarned Rusk that the French government was concerned that the administration seemed "likely to overstress military aspects of solution at expense of political and social reform… [and that the] Quai [d'Orsay] also appears to fear that we may be presented

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[578] Ibid.
[579] Ibid.
[580] Ibid.

with 'reform measures' satisfactory on paper but lacking necessary motivating spirit[581]." Gavin added that the French had reluctantly ceded the initiative in Southeast Asia to Washington and had little bargaining leverage left because of their total rejection of military options. Still, they were greatly concerned "that hasty US action in Vietnam might preclude chances for [a] neutrality experiment in Laos on which [the] French bank [on] for continuation [of the] French presence in Southeast Asia and [the] precarious non-alignment of Cambodia[582]." The French position was that major action in Vietnam should be postponed until negotiations on Laos had played out in the hopes that a Laotian solution would have a positive spill over effect in Vietnam.

Vietnam's role in the Communist bloc dominated tripartite talks on Vietnam in Washington involving Rusk, Alphand, British Ambassador David Ormsby-Gore and Lord Hood on 6 December 1961[583]. Alphand questioned "whether [the American] decision to increase support for Vietnam would not create the danger of an escalation in the area and lead to increased Chinese-Communist assistance." Rusk responded that the stakes were high enough to warrant running the risk of escalation, especially given that Communist forces had ramped up their guerrilla campaign substantially. Alphand later asked whether the American government had taken "Sino-Soviet differences" into consideration. Rusk replied that the American "decision was not influenced by these considerations but simply by the need that the time had come to stand firm, if Southeast Asia was to be defended." Rusk noted that the Chinese were more inclined towards

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[581] James Gavin, "Embassy telegram (to Rusk)," 17/11/61, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Vietnam: Internal and Foreign Affairs, 1960-1963, 59, Microfilm Rm., box 69, US-Relations with France 1960-1963, C92: Reel 7, NACP.
[582] Ibid.
[583] "Memorandum of Conversation (between Alphand, Ambassador Ormsby-Gore, Rusk, et al.)," 6/12/1961, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Vietnam: Internal and Foreign Affairs, 1960-1963, 59, Microfilm Rm., box 69, US-Relations with France 1960-1963, C92: Reel 7, NACP.

escalation in Vietnam than the Soviets, but countered "that [the US government] could not base [its] policy on the assumption of a Chinese-Soviet rift." The British delegation remained neutral, making minor suggestions and asking questions rather than outlining a firm position.

21. FRANCE - APRIL 1961: Representative to NATO Thomas K. Finletter (R) with Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson (C) and Ambassador James M. Gavin during his visit. Photo: Hank Walker/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images 1 April 1961

When Rusk and Gavin met with de Gaulle and de Murville in Paris on 13 December 1961, they addressed Southeast Asia only briefly after inconclusive talks on negotiations with the Soviets, which de Gaulle opposed on principle, to the exasperation of the Kennedy administration[584]. De Gaulle disarmed his American guests with an unfamiliar degree of cordiality, but recognized that the prospect of dissuading the hard-headed Rusk was remote and chose not to press the issue. After Rusk brought de Gaulle up to speed on American plans for South Vietnam, assuring him that no combat troops would be deployed in the short term, de Gaulle chose to add little beyond some cryptic remarks about the failure of the French campaign in Indochina and his "[hope that the United States] would succeed in what it was endeavoring to do[585]." At this point de Gaulle alluded to the advice he had offered Kennedy during the spring summit, leaving his key aides to conduct more substantive discussions on the topic.

Vietnam was set aside for the time being as the French became consumed by the final stages of peace negotiations with Algerian rebels that would produce the Evian Accords in March of 1962. Although the Algerian War was drawing to a close, there were still major residual issues that demanded de Gaulle's full attention until late spring 1962, such as counterterrorism operations against General Raoul Salan's *Organisation Armée Secrète* (OAS), which rejected the peace and continued the fight against the FLN, and the repatriation of roughly one million European *pieds noirs* settlers to metropolitan

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[584] "Memorandum of Conversation (between Rusk, Gavin, de Gaulle and de Murville)," 13/12/1961, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Vietnam: Internal and Foreign Affairs, 1960-1963, 59, Microfilm Rm., box 69, US-Relations with France 1960-1963, C92: Reel 1, NACP. De Gaulle consistently refused the notion of negotiating with the Soviets while they were applying pressure on Western interests in Berlin because he viewed it as a reward for bad behaviour.
[585] Ibid.

France[586]. The Algerian distraction conveniently provided a break for Rusk, who had little interest in further bilateral discussions on Vietnam with de Gaulle's representatives.

In May 1962 it became evident that the Kennedy White House was not only incapable of understanding the issues that animated France but also took insult from de Gaulle's encouragement for a diplomatic solution. This was a period of great internal American reflection on the administration's relationship with France that concluded by returning to the familiar knee-jerk anti-American caricature of de Gaulle and a feminized view of France as an inherently irrational actor with whom discussion or agreement were unrealistic goals. Charles Bohlen, appointed ambassador to France later in the year, recounted that Kennedy" had a curious fascination for" de Gaulle and "was always trying to find out what made the man tick, why he acted the way he did, and what particular motivation he was working on[587]." Bohlen speculated that Kennedy "finally came to the conclusion that de Gaulle needed some form of friction with the United States for his own personal policies, domestic and otherwise, but Kennedy was equally determined that he was not going to oblige him on this[588]." Kennedy's argument, which overlooked de Gaulle's earlier attempts to shore-up policy coordination with his administration via the *directoire* plan, was a means of shifting responsibility for difficulties in Franco-American relations from Washington to Paris. Ignoring strains in the alliance did not make them disappear and ultimately aggravated bilateral relations even further.

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[586] Martin S. Alexander and John F. V. Keiger, *France and the Algerian War, 1954-62: Strategy, Operations and Diplomacy* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002), 151.
[587] "Charles E. Bohlen, Oral History Interview," 5/21/1964, JFKL, 16, http://www.jfklibrary.org/NR/rdonlyres/7EC13BCC-1280-478B-9EB7-E839C02E95A1/44128/BohlenCharles_oralhistory.pdf.
[588] Ibid.

Bohlen—who was still serving as the ambassador to France when he gave this interview to Arthur Schlesinger as part of the John F. Kennedy Oral History Project that began after the president was assassinated—is probably guilty of understating the extent to which Kennedy personalized Gaullist opposition to his policies. In contrast, de Gaulle had always held Kennedy in high esteem and was able to separate personal from political differences. As Ambassador Alphand, noted after Kennedy's death, "we had differences of opinion on many subjects, but there was no difference of principle between us and this we saw especially in the time of great crises[589]."

A remarkably frank exchange between Kennedy, Alphand and Malraux in Washington on 11 May 1962 illustrated just how badly the administration's view of France had deteriorated within a year of the Paris Summit, long before de Gaulle had taken any firm provocative steps[590]. The conversation began as Malraux tried to clarify elements of the French position on British entry into the Common Market—supported by the United States and opposed by France unless Britain chose to fully orient its trade towards Europe rather than the Commonwealth—that he believed were misunderstood in Washington, but Kennedy quickly steered the discussion to what he believed was the real issue: that France wanted to kick the 'Anglo-Saxons' out of Western Europe while still saddling them with the responsibility for its defence.

Kennedy was so fixated on the idea that de Gaulle harboured an anti-American grudge from his wartime experience that he repeated the charge several times despite

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[589] "Herve Alphand Oral History Interview,"10/14/1964, JFKL, 9, http://www.jfklibrary.org/NR/rdonlyres/1018C379-B8B0-471A-B5DD-A1E291B4AD97/43794/AlphandHerve_oralhistory.pdf,

[590] "Memorandum of Conversation (between Kennedy, Alphand, Malraux, Lebel, and Bundy in the White House)," 11/5/62, National Security Files, Series 1 Countries, box 71, France- General, 5/10/62-5/11/62, JFKL.

Malraux's attempt to convince him that de Gaulle had shown himself to be very pragmatic in his postwar dealings with Germany, France's long time enemy[591]. Malraux could have added that de Gaulle's rejected *directoire* plan refuted the anti-American obstructionist charges by offering further evidence that the French president had in fact been seeking greater meaningful consultation with Washington when Kennedy took office.

Malraux tried to explain the French obsession with national self defence that manifested itself in the independent *force de frappe* and a desire to have real decision-making status in NATO by arguing "[t]he French army of today had faced twenty years of fighting all over the world without defending France, and that is why it has gone mad[592]." Rather than acknowledge the point, Kennedy raised the ante by stating that the United States would gladly withdraw its forces from Europe because of the massive expense of the American commitment there. No one in the French government had publicly suggested an American military withdrawal from Europe.

Kennedy argued that he would be content to let the so-called Franco-German axis handle the Berlin crisis on its own, but knew that it did not have the military resources to deter the Soviet bloc. Had the United States not been "carrying the load…, [he] could understand a policy of every man for himself", but France had refused to do "the military work" to defend Berlin, it had opposed negotiations with the Soviets, and now its obstructionist views had contaminated West German thinking[593].

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[591] Ibid.
[592] Ibid., 8.
[593] Ibid., 13.

The president alluded to his feminized notion of the French national character when he stated:

> The United States was carrying a very large load and in particular he found it very difficult to understand this latent, almost female, hostility which appeared in Germany and France, and an apparent sentiment that we might not be reliable in keeping our engagements[594].

To Kennedy, the United States was a masculine power with a global responsibility to offer protection to its weaker feminine charges who lacked the conviction, "realism", and "will to resist" to defend themselves. For their part, NATO allies still had an obligation to play a supporting role, assisting the United States as best they could through burden-sharing. It was bad enough that irrational France was throwing up roadblocks at American leadership of the western alliance, but spreading anti-American contagion to loyal West Germany was intolerable to the administration. In his mind, Kennedy associated the different goals of French policy with larger faults of America's European allies rather than accepting them as a legitimate expression based on a differing politico-historical outlook.

Kennedy had lost his patience, "[did] not understand the posture of France[595]", and was not planning to alter his thinking. In an attempt to lighten the tone, Kennedy claimed that "[h]e thought that General de Gaulle was right 80% of the time, but he did wish that de Gaulle might say that we were right 20% of the time[596]." Malraux appreciated the effort at humour, but the exchange left him deeply shaken and marked a turning point in Franco-American relations during the Kennedy-de Gaulle era. Kennedy

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[594] Ibid., 11.
[595] Ibid., 12.
[596] Ibid., 14.

was still livid weeks after the meeting despite Malraux's best efforts to explain French thinking. In a 30 May conversation with *Newsweek* political reporter Benjamin Bradlee, Kennedy allegedly complained that "that bastard de Gaulle" would not deploy any French troops to support American efforts in Southeast Asia even though France was a member of SEATO[597].

As the administration's anger with de Gaulle's France grew, Ambassador Gavin found himself increasingly marginalized and was ultimately replaced by the more confrontational Charles Bohlen in late 1962. Gavin was one of the few figures with access to Kennedy who made a genuine effort to understand de Gaulle's thinking and explain it for an American audience, but the president had grown impatient that he was inadequately communicating American policy aims in Paris and had perhaps shown too much sympathy to French positions that opposed those coming out of Washington. Gavin had warned the administration in March 1961 that Franco-American relations would deteriorate badly unless Kennedy offered de Gaulle the serious tripartite consultation he had been seeking for three years[598], but his dire assessment did nothing to alter the administration's approach to France. His numerous uncritical reports on French thinking on Vietnam and Southeast Asia beginning in late May 1961 hinted that he agreed with the French position that Vietnam was facing political problems first and foremost[599], putting him at odds with Rusk and most of Kennedy's advisors.

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[597] Benjamin C. Bradlee, *Conversations with Kennedy* (New York: Norton, 1975), 104.
[598] James Gavin, "Embassy Telegram (to Dean Rusk)," 22/3/61, National Security Files, Series 1 Countries, box 70A, France- General, 1/20/61-3/15/61, JFKL.
[599] James Gavin, "Embassy telegram (to Dean Rusk), 31/5/61, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Vietnam: Internal and Foreign Affairs, 1960-1963, 59, Microfilm Rm., box 69, US-Relations with France 1960-1963, C92: Reel 4, NACP.

On 10 May 1962, the day before Kennedy's fateful exchange with Alphand and Malraux, Gavin telegraphed Rusk twice from Paris to express his sympathy with French frustration over the American policy of expressing dissatisfaction with France to third parties[600] and to argue that the Paris embassy really could not do anything further to spin American policy in a positive light without real change in the White House's approach[601]. Kennedy cabled Gavin on 18 May 1962 to reiterate to de Gaulle the message he had sent back with Alphand and Malraux: the United States could not be excluded from internal West European affairs and still be expected to provide a defence guarantee[602].

Gavin responded to the president's mild rebuke by attempting once again to outline his understanding of French foreign policy aims and motivations. In the first of two cables to Rusk on 28 May 1962, Gavin reported that in his last conversation with de Gaulle he found the French president "unfriendly", "tense" and fearful that NATO would collapse if the United States treated Western European countries as protectorates rather than allies[603]. Gavin argued that the official American stance that France should not have nuclear weapons for its own defence fed that view. More importantly, however, he informed Rusk that the message Malraux had taken back from Kennedy was received very unfavourably in Paris, contributing to a growing bilateral gap that created a "need for an agonizing reappraisal of our relations vis-à-vis Europe[604]."

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[600] James Gavin, "Embassy Telegram (to Dean Rusk)," 10/5/62 (9:22 p.m.), National Security Files; Series 1. Countries; Box 71; France-General, 5/10/62-5/11/62, JFKL.
[601] James Gavin, "Embassy Telegram (to Dean Rusk)," 10/5/62 (8:45 p.m.), National Security Files; Series 1. Countries; Box 71; France-General, 5/10/62-5/11/62, JFKL.
[602] John F. Kennedy, "Memo for James Gavin," 18/5/62, National Security Files, Series 1 Countries, Box 71; France-General, 5/16/62-5/18/62, JFKL.
[603] James Gavin, "Embassy Telegram (to Dean Rusk)," 28/5/62 (10:20 a.m.), National Security Files, Series 1. Countries, box 71, France-General, 5/10/62-5/11/62, JFKL.
[604] Ibid.

In his second memo of the day he attempted to explain the French cabinet's concerns over the American stance on the *force de frappe* and Washington's growing hawkishness in Vietnam. He stated that Paris feared that Washington "as sole proprietor of [an] atomic force... might regard some conflicts in Europe as limited and thus would not participate. On the other hand, US might become involved in war in which France would have no interest." Paris felt that possession of a token nuclear force would give it "some freedom of action... [and] responsibility for its own future[605]." Gavin understood that the American policy of non-consultation on strategic matters fed French fears that Washington and Moscow would make a deal over Europe's head and created uncertainty bordering on mistrust regarding American intentions. He attempted to counter Rusk's perception of de Gaulle's reflexive anti-Americanism on 6 July 1962 by arguing, "some people have made the mistake of interpreting many of general's actions as being in some sense primarily directed against at the US... Fundamentally his concern is French national interest, which, on basic issues, he regards as largely [the] same as the United States[606]." Still, no matter how many times he restated his views, Gavin was unable to swing his political masters to this more accurate appraisal of French thinking.

Marianna P. Sullivan refuted charges of anti-Americanism in the first major study of Vietnam in Franco-American relations, *France's Vietnam Policy: a Study in French-American Relations*, arguing that de Gaulle's peace initiatives "[were] a dynamic response to changing Vietnamese circumstances and evolving French-American

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[605] James Gavin, "Embassy Telegram (to Dean Rusk)," 28/5/62 (2:07 p.m.), National Security Files; Series 1. Countries; Box 71; France-General, 5/10/62-5/11/62, JFKL.
[606] "James Gavin, "Embassy Telegram (to Dean Rusk)," 6/7/62 (4:56 p.m.), National Security Files; Series 1. Countries; Box 71; France-General, 5/10/62-5/11/62, JFKL, 1-2.

relations[607]." More recently, Yuko Torikata, after an exhaustive search of recently released French archival material, has shown that de Gaulle's Vietnam policy slowly evolved from suggesting a negotiated peace to criticizing the war before the press. Initially, de Gaulle hoped that using his good offices to help Washington find a way out of Vietnam would in fact "avoid troubles in the Atlantic Alliance" rather than exacerbate them. However, "with American military escalation, this consideration gradually diminished to be replaced by his aspiration for greater support from the Third World and the Eastern bloc[608]."

In early 1962, however, Kennedy was simply unwilling to accept Gavin's argument that de Gaulle was pursuing French national interests when charges of anti-Americanism were a convenient excuse to avoid discussion of legitimate policy aims. It was assumed that his proposals on Vietnam were little more than another minor irritant in a grander scheme to oppose American leadership in the western alliance. McGeorge Bundy weighed in on Franco-American relations on 28 May with a short note arguing that Kennedy had left Paris in 1961 with de Gaulle's confidence and that some rapprochement was definitely still possible[609]. Still, the White House remained fixated on the idea that de Gaulle was animated by reflexive anti-Americanism and sought documentary evidence from his subordinates to counter Gavin's anecdotal reports to the contrary.

Bundy's folio included a pair of memos Kennedy had requested from William Averell Harriman, Roosevelt's Special Envoy to Europe in the early 1940s and wartime

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[607] Sullivan, intro xi.
[608] Torikata, 912.
[609] McGeorge Bundy, "Memo for the President," 28/5/62, National Security Files, Series 1 Countries, box 71, France- General, 5/27/62-5/31/62, JFKL, 1.

ambassador to the Soviet Union, "to indicate to the President that Presidential difficulties with de Gaulle did not start in 1961[610]." Harriman's first memo addressed de Gaulle's difficulties with Churchill and Roosevelt, bringing up American-backed Gen. Henri Giraud's rivalry with de Gaulle for leadership of French forces in North Africa in late 1942 to underline his view that de Gaulle was stubborn, irrational, and obsessed with honour. Harriman buttressed feminized stereotypes of France by recounting that "[i]t was at Casablanca that Churchill christened DeGaulle [sic] 'Joan of Arc' because of his emotional attitude towards his role in reestablishing the honor of France[611]." Harriman also cited a 1943 conversation where de Gaulle allegedly dismissed Giraud's idea of going to war with the Soviet Union after the Germans had worn them out by arguing that Russia and France had always been partners and should control Europe together, excluding the insular British and distant Americans.

After internal discussions in May on how to proceed with de Gaulle's France, the Kennedy administration opted for confrontation rather than rapprochement. In 12 June 1962 talks between Alphand and a combative McNamara in Washington, the Secretary of Defense was dismissive of French concerns over NATO, which he argued did not exist in other allied capitals[612]. McNamara went on to flippantly reject that the concept of a

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[610] Ibid.

[611] Ibid., 4. Harriman's second memo, originally written in 1960, added to the myth of Gaullist intransigence by noting that in December 1944 an exceedingly stubborn de Gaulle forced Stalin, who had had considerably more bargaining leverage, to abandon his demands that France recognize the Communist 'Lublin Poles' as the official government of Poland. At this point the Red Army was already occupying the eastern suburbs of Warsaw and the future composition of the Polish government was largely beyond the control of any of the Western Allies. Harriman meant to imply that de Gaulle was so obstinate that he was willing to comprise his greater strategic desire for Franco-Russian domination of Europe for a pointless gesture of solidarity towards the Polish government-in-exile in London.

[612] "US-French Exploratory Talks," 28/5/62, National Security Files, Series 1 Countries, box 71, France- General, 5/27/62-5/31/62, JFKL, 2-3.

neutral European "Third Force" independent of the superpowers—a project that, as Alphand noted, de Gaulle had never endorsed—as a bit rich considering that Europe was the main source of friction between United States and the Soviet Union. He went on to skewer the logic behind de Gaulle's notions of tripartism, arguing that it was highly doubtful that other NATO members would accept being reduced to second or third tier status[613]. This indicated that McNamara had failed to consider the gravity of de Gaulle's main grievance against American leadership: NATO in its then composition confined *all* European members to second rate status, even those with useful experience and resources in contested regions of the Third World.

Rusk adopted a more conciliatory tone in a series of high-level *tour d' horizon* meetings with de Gaulle and his cabinet from 19-21 June in Paris[614], but Kennedy had already given up on rebuilding his relationship with de Gaulle. Robert Kleiman at the State Department's French Affairs desk met with Kennedy in late May to try to convince him to keep open the dialogue with de Gaulle, who gave nothing away in negotiations and would often make sudden grand reversals months later, but made little headway. Kleiman noted that "the only response he got from the latter was that the differences were too great between the United States and de Gaulle..., thus [his] unwillingness to get involved in any further discussions with the General[615]."

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[613] Ibid.
[614] Ministère des affaires étrangères, *Documents diplomatiques français 1962* Tome I, 1er janvier - 30 juin (Paris: Impr. nationale, 1998), 605-46.
[615] Robert Kleiman and J. Robert Schaetzel, "French Affairs," 1/6/62, General Records of the Department of State, Bureau of European Affairs Office of Political and Economic Affairs, RG 59, Alpha-Numeric Files 1948-1963, B.5D Canada-US trade area to C.3 de Gaulle Proposal 1962, Box 4, C3 De Gaulle Proposals 1962, NACP, 2.

From the Paris summit in the spring of 1961 to late spring 1962, the initial cautious optimism in the de Gaulle-Kennedy era of Franco-American relations quickly gave way to American suspicion of French motives in Vietnam when it became clear that Paris would not endorse the American program there. De Gaulle and several other high-ranking French officials, engrossed as they were by events in Algeria, repeatedly made clear their fundamental opposition to the introduction of American troops into Vietnam throughout this period. They consistently expressed a preference for a low-risk diplomatic strategy over military confrontation that threatened to draw China and the Soviet Union into yet another civil war, offering to help the United States by employing France's substantial resources in Southeast Asia towards a negotiated peace.

The Kennedy administration, which had uncritically accepted most of the Taylor Mission Report's recommendations that the United States accelerate its counterinsurgency programs, had no interest whatsoever in heeding French advice. That the French position was constantly rebuffed was less significant than the manner in which administration officials shaped their response. At no point did they acknowledge—much less debate—a rival, but legitimate interpretation of the conflict. Rather, they chose to seek an explanation for de Gaulle's position instead in the French president's supposed character flaws or historically-rooted anti-Americanism, a counterproductive exercise that merely shifted the focus of attention away from the substance of his viewpoint. The disunited and feeble voices in the American bureaucracy that opposed the administration's policy in Vietnam were similarly marginalized during this period as well, creating conditions for fantasies of a grand French conspiracy to grow to truly absurd proportions in 1963.

CHAPTER 7: Ignoring "Nosey Charlie"

Subtle transformations in the international system from the summer of 1962 to Kennedy's assassination in November 1963 created new opportunities for de Gaulle, who saw a window to modify the global Cold War status quo in a manner more fitting with French national interests. In turn, a series of developments emboldened de Gaulle and ultimately led him to make his first Kennedy-era public appeal for peace and non-intervention in Vietnam in August 1963. The erection of the Berlin Wall brought an uneasy truce to the divided Cold War flashpoint, the Évian Accords of March 1962 wrapped up France's last remaining colonial war and eliminated a major complication in French relations with the Third World, the negotiated settlement to the Cuban Missile Crisis in October seemed to indicate to de Gaulle that the superpowers would not go to the nuclear brink and the Cold War was effectively over[616]. In Vietnam, the Diem regime's bloody repression of Buddhists and students protesting against the government's autocratic nature from spring to autumn 1963 sparked American revulsion and widespread distaste for the Kennedy administration's wayward client state.

American unwillingness to reform NATO and put his *directoire* proposal in place led de Gaulle to increasingly turn towards strengthening relations with France's European partners, West Germany especially[617]. The end of the Algerian War in early 1962 removed a major foreign distraction, allowing de Gaulle to focus French efforts more firmly on reorganizing and unifying Western Europe in a manner that would better

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[616] See Logevall, "De Gaulle, Neutralization, and American Involvement in Vietnam, 1963-1964," 78, and Sullivan, 20-2.

[617] De Gaulle's European platform is inevitably laid out in detail in all of the major works on his foreign policy and biographies. See especially: Bozo, Mahan, and Vaisse.

position it to bargain with both of the heavily-armed superpowers in Washington and Moscow. In pursuing a program designed to enhance French independence and prestige, de Gaulle adopted more assertive European policies had the unfortunate consequence of being interpreted in Washington as an ungrateful attempt to exclude the United States from West European political considerations while leaving it saddled with the burden of mutual defence.

De Gaulle first rebuffed the American-sponsored MLF as a poor substitute for the *force de frappe* under exclusive French command. His subsequent refusal to join the United States, the Soviet Union and Britain as signatories to the Partial Test Ban Treaty[618] in August 1963 was viewed as another example of French nuclear insolence. His veto of the British entry into the EEC and signing of a Franco-German Treaty of Friendship with West Germany in January 1963 pointed towards a narrower, Anglo-Saxon free, vision of Western Europe's future that infuriated Washington. These actions were designed above all to strengthen France, and by extension Western Europe, but seemingly conformed to the stereotype of de Gaulle as a knee-jerk anti-American

[618] In the summer of 1963 years of tough negotiations finally resulted in the Limited Test Ban Treaty, which banned atmospheric and above-ground test detonations of nuclear weapons. The treaty itself was a relatively modest step towards nuclear disarmament, but seemingly created further opportunities for a relaxation of tensions. Lagging behind the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union, de Gaulle was loathe to sign an agreement that would limit Paris' ability to develop the force de frappe into a credible deterrent. Paris continued to conduct atmospheric tests until 1974. On the Partial Test Ban Treaty, see: Paul Boyer, *Fallout: a historian reflects on America's half-century encounter with nuclear weapons* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1998); Benjamin P. Greene, *Eisenhower, Science Advice, and the Nuclear Test-Ban Debate, 1945–1963* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007); Kendrick Oliver, *Kennedy, Macmillan and the Nuclear Test-Ban Debate, 1961-63* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Glenn T. Seaborg, *Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the test ban* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981); David Tal, *The American nuclear disarmament dilemma, 1945-1963* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008); and, Andreas Wenger and Marcel Gerber, "John F. Kennedy and the Limited Test Ban Treaty: A Case Study of Presidential Leadership," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (1999): 460-87.

obsessed with French prestige and aloof towards the greater good of the Atlantic alliance, shaping perceptions of his motives on all other matters.

The Kennedy administration viewed French actions in Vietnam through the same lens that coloured perceptions of de Gaulle's aims in Europe. After James Gavin had been replaced as ambassador to France in 1962, the two remaining voices in the president's coterie willing to share their reservations about administration policy in Vietnam in a manner that unintentionally reflected elements of the Gaullist critique were quietly eased out of their respective positions the following year. Galbraith, who had been serving as ambassador to India from spring 1961, stepped aside in July 1963 to return to academia. His infrequent attempts to sway the president against military intervention with simple logic and humour rather than economic tables and detailed reports bore no fruit. Chester Bowles was a former undersecretary of state who had been quietly demoted to the elaborately-titled position of the President's Special Representative and Adviser on African, Asian, and Latin American Affairs, and Ambassador at Large. He spent most of 1962 futilely drafting unread memos to Kennedy on the dangers of policy drift and group think in Vietnam before being put out of his misery with an exile posting to India in mid-1963 as Galbraith's replacement.

As the situation in South Vietnam grew increasingly tumultuous during the summer of 1963, American embassy telegraphs out of Saigon revealed a profound distrust of French motives despite French willingness to share intelligence gleaned from sources in Hanoi and continued openness on Paris' long-term hopes for the country. The administration fixated on the notion that Roger Lalouette, the French ambassador in Saigon, was plotting with Ngo Dinh Nhu, President Diem's younger brother and main

political advisor, to arrange a ceasefire with the Viet Cong and potentially secure a reunification deal with the North in exchange for the removal of American forces. As Schlesinger later remembered, the administration thought that "[d]e Gaulle's interest was plain enough—to show up the blundering Americans, to rescue the west from a hopeless predicament, [and] restore French influence in Indochina[619]." Lalouette was indeed in contact with Nhu and high-level members of the Hanoi regime, but he was trying to hammer out a deal that would give the Kennedy administration a "peace with honour" and an opportunity to exit the country before the situation spiralled out of control.

Reports on the farewell conversation between J.L. de la Boissière, the outgoing French Delegate General in Hanoi, and North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong in June 1963, was heavily studied for signs of a potential North Vietnamese overture towards Diem, while the movements of Nhu and Lalouette were subject to considerable diplomatic chatter. The French, who had made their preference for a negotiated settlement abundantly clear to the Kennedy administration from early 1961, had never denied that Nhu[620] was in frequent contact with representatives from the North and did not share American perceptions of him as a toxic element in South Vietnamese politics. Still, the Kennedy administration was unable to accept that surreptitious French efforts to foster North-South dialogue were the logical by-product of a long-standing regional peace policy first articulated in the spring of 1961, interpreting Lalouette's actions instead as part of a sinister Gaullist conspiracy to drive Americans out of Southeast Asia that

[619] Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979), 718.
[620] Miecyslaw Maneli, a Polish member of the ICC in Vietnam who later defected to the United States, discusses Nhu's thinking in the summer of 1963 at length in *War of the Vanquished*, trans by Maria de Görgey (New York: Harper and Row, 1971) and concludes that he genuinely was interested in peace with the NLF (118-25).

mirrored his alleged anti-American program in Europe. Washington's obstruction of his efforts indicated that Kennedy would rather fail in Vietnam on his own terms than accept French assistance.

South Vietnam plunged into chaos in June of 1963 as Diem, a member of the Catholic minority, launched a campaign to brutally suppress the civil liberties of Buddhists and their university student sympathizers that badly damaged already strained relations with the United States[621]. Photographs of the self-immolation of Buddhist monk Thich Quang Duc in heavy Saigon traffic in American newspapers coupled with facetious comments from Madame Nhu, bachelor Diem's unofficial first lady, calling the suicides "barbecues" shocked American audiences. This ultimately prompted the Kennedy administration to begin internal discussions on a potential anti-Diem coup.

De Gaulle responded to the deepening crisis on 29 August 1963—the same day Kennedy authorized a coup against Diem intended to bolster South Vietnam's capacity to carry on the war effort—by taking the unusual step of having a statement he had made to his cabinet expressing French interest in Vietnam, his sympathy for hardships of the Vietnamese people, hopes for progress, independence and cooperation cited verbatim to the press via Minister of Information Alain Peyrefitte[622]. De Gaulle's statement was classically ambiguous and designed for broad global appeal. He made no direct reference

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[621] On Buddhist resistance to the Diem regime, see: Mark Moyar, "Political Monks: The Militant Buddhist Movement during the Vietnam War," *Modern Asian Studies* 38, no. 4 (2004): 749-84; Robert J. Topmiller, *The Lotus Unleashed: The Buddhist Peace Movement in South Vietnam, 1964–1966* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), and, "Struggling for Peace: *South Vietnamese Buddhist Women and Resistance to the Vietnam War*," *Journal of Women's History* 17 no. 3 (2005): 133-57.

[622] Many of the documents concerning the administration's response to de Gaulle's statement at the National Archives in College Park, MD remain classified. In the summer of 2007 the author filed a Freedom of Information Act request that was acknowledged in writing the following year. The author has not, however, received any further indication as to whether permission will be granted.

to the United States, but there was no mistaking that his underlying message was that Paris backed Vietnamese reunification rather than status quo American efforts to prop up the independent anti-communist regime in Saigon[623].

22. Anti-Diem government demonstration by students at the University of Saigon School of Sciences and Pedagogy.
Photo: Larry Burrows/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 August 1963

[623] Logevall, *Choosing War*, 2-3.

23. US Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. (L) meeting with Pres. of South Vietnam Ngo Dinh Diem Ngo.
Photo: Larry Burrows/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 September 1963

24. Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu, acting as official hostess for Pres. Ngo Dinh Diem.
Photo: John Dominis/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 May 1956

25. Advisor and brother to Pres. Diem, Ngo Dinh Nhu.
Photo: Larry Burrows/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 September 1963

26. Presidential Palace, residence of President Dinh Diem Ngo.
Photo: John Dominis/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 July 1961

Indirect and diplomatically cautious as it was, the de Gaulle statement marked the first occasion that the French president made public his opposition to the Kennedy administration's program in Vietnam. The American response—a mix of incomprehension, curiosity, and suspicion—was truly odd; Kennedy's top officials reacted as though de Gaulle had dropped a massive bombshell on them when in fact he had said little publically beyond the oft-repeated stance on Vietnam that he, de Murville, Alphand and Malraux had been advancing in numerous private conversations with their American counterparts over the previous two and a half years. With little to no internal opposition to the thinking behind the administration's policy in Vietnam beyond the private reservations of George Ball, the de Gaulle statement did not provoke greater

reflection in Washington on American policy in a country that was rapidly careening out of control.

McGeorge Bundy summed up the cabinet's view of the statement in a 1 September 1963 memo to Kennedy in which he cautioned that "we find only our own personal irritation as an argument against [the] well-established conclusions that we do best when we ignore Nosey Charlie[624]." When Kennedy appeared on CBS news the following day for an interview with Walter Cronkite at Hyannis Port, he hinted at "impatience" with America's "candid friend" and dismissed the de Gaulle statement as an inconsequential generalization from a leader who was doing nothing to "carry the burden" of defending South Vietnam from communism[625].

Confronting an Unpleasant Dilemma in Vietnam: the domestic opposition to intervention suffers defeat

It is difficult to quantify the extent to which de Gaulle's history and policies on other matters preconditioned the administration against serious consideration of his Vietnam program given that it also ignored internal voices making similar independent arguments. George Ball openly shared his reservations about Vietnam policy with Kennedy just once before quickly deciding to keep them private in the future for the sake

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[624] McGeorge Bundy, "Draft Statement on South Vietnam for Cronkite Interview (to Kennedy)," 1/9/63, National Security Files, Series 1 Countries, box 199, Vietnam-General, 9/1/63-9/10/63 State Cables, Memos and Misc, JFKL.

[625] "Transcript: interview between President Kennedy and Walter Cronkite (CBS)," 2/9/63, National Security Files, Series 1 Countries, box 199, Vietnam-General, 9/1/63-9/10/63 State Cables, Memos and Misc, JFKL.

of his career upon meeting opposition[626]. Sen. Mike Mansfield, the Senate Majority Leader, was a long-time friend of Kennedy and an early supporter of the Diem regime who reversed course on American support in late 1962 after visiting the country again, later becoming a vocal public opponent of the war during the Johnson administration. His pessimistic December report to Kennedy on the consequences of deepening American involvement in Vietnam contained the sort of detailed analysis lacking from the broader philosophical opposition of de Gaulle and his top lieutenants, but still failed to convince the president that the benefits of a withdrawal outweighed the risks[627].

Despite his expertise on Southeast Asia and long-standing relationship with the president, Mansfield lacked the influence necessary to convince Kennedy to re-evaluate his strategy of discretely expanding the support role of American military personnel while playing for time before making a final commitment to Saigon. Whereas Bowles was predictably ignored as punishment for earlier disloyalty to the administration and Ball chose self-censorship over sustained opposition, it is entirely plausible that Mansfield's entreaties for a policy reversal were handicapped because his position was associated with a critique that had been presented ad naseum by a highly unpopular de Gaulle and his aides.

Bowles first raised his concerns regarding American policy in Southeast Asia in an April 1962 memo to Kennedy and repeated his fears of a dangerous policy drift through four more unanswered letters before the year was out. He returned to the subject with renewed vigour in a 13 June 1962 memo to Kennedy, again urging "that [the

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[626] Strober, 413.
[627] U.S. Department of State *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, II, Vietnam, 1962, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1990): 330, http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v02/d330.

government] clearly define and publicly state 'a coherent over-all political objective' for our involvement in Southeast Asia[628]." He cited the recent settlement in Laos and Sen. Mansfield's stated desire to have Congress focus more attention on the administration's grand regional strategy as "an excellent opportunity for a positive clarification of our overall political objectives[629]."

Bowles did not object to any decision taken by the administration on Vietnam; rather, his main concern was that a series of crises had regrettably forced it to shape policy on the fly in the absence of a strategic blueprint. He saw additional cause for alarm in the incongruence between military and political planning as the administration had already formulated an advanced counterinsurgency program without stating its political aims beyond a repetition of Eisenhower's Domino Theory. Until the administration set out a regional "grand design... the initiative will continue to rest with our adversaries and with our allies and camp followers", leaving the administration vulnerable to unpredictable future events[630]. Citing examples from the World Wars and Korea, his fear was that delaying the formulation of a clear regional policy until it was forced to would ultimately leave the administration in a position where it had missed the "honorable avenue of retreat" and had no alternative save war[631].

Bowles continued to warn that fighting a war in Vietnam with "no clear definition" could very well lead to similar losses suffered by France—90,000 men and a bill that exceeded all of the money that it received under the Marshall Plan—a point that

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[628] Chester Bowles, "Memo to the president," 13/6/62, President's Office Files (#3), Series 2 Special Correspondence, box 28, JFKL.
[629] Ibid.
[630] Ibid.
[631] Ibid.

de Gaulle and his lieutenants had been attempting to impress upon the administration without success . Kennedy's policy of delaying the decision on whether to make a firm commitment was confusing to America's Vietnamese allies, the enemy, and millions of Southeast Asians who had witnessed major overt and covert American intervention in a variety of hot spots from Indonesia to Korea with mostly unfavourable results. Bowles recommended that "we present ourselves in a fresh and affirmative role… [by outlining that h]ere, as elsewhere in the world, what we want for the people of the region is almost precisely what the people want for themselves: guaranteed national independence, more rapid economic development, and maximum choice within their own cultures and religions[632]."

Bowles argued that such a public statement of American objectives in Southeast Asia would appeal to nationalist and neutralist opinion in the region, position the United States in the peace and development camp in contrast with militaristic communists, isolate the Chinese by appealing to Soviet elements who preferred de-escalation in the region, shore up bipartisan support at home for the administration's program, and "provide a compelling future rationale for whatever future action—military, political or economic—we may be required to take in the region[633]."

The underlying assumptions behind Bowles' call for a re-evaluation of American policy were driven by many beliefs that de Gaulle and his men had already expressed to Kennedy: that most Southeast Asians were exhausted by almost two decades of uninterrupted warfare and would embrace a policy of peace, that American military

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[632] Ibid.
[633] Ibid.

intervention in the former Indochina would be too costly in terms of manpower and dollars, that military intervention could potentially lead to an even worse result than the status quo, and that the United States simply lacked the resources to maintain a position of military strength on the Asian perimeter from Turkey to Korea. Bowles did not view neutralism as a stalking horse for communism because he felt the United States, not the Soviet Union, had the commercial resources and experience fostering regional integration to spark the rapid economic development desired by Southeast Asians.

As reasoned as Bowles' argument appears in hindsight, his plea for a policy re-examination fell on deaf ears. His letter received no reply from the White House and no record exists to indicate that it was even read by anyone in the Cabinet, which was preoccupied with hashing out details on the strategic hamlet program and various aid streams and in no mood to be distracted by a discussion of its political aims in Vietnam. The following month Bowles, sensing that his proposed forthcoming trip to the region would amount to little more than "a series of vague discussions with Southeast Asian leaders[634]", pressed Rusk for a presidential statement of policy aims in Southeast Asia in a 18 July 1962 letter[635], though the evidence appears to indicate that he was ignored once again.

W. Averell Harriman, the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, wrote a short note to Rusk on 30 July 1962 referring to the Bowles plan as "impractical" on the grounds that it would require another Geneva-style international conference when

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[634] U.S. Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, II, Vietnam, 1962 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1990): 241, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_ii_1961-63/u.html.

[635] Chester Bowles, "Memo to Dean Rusk," 18/7/62, President's Office Files (#3), Series 2 Special Correspondence, box 28, JFKL.

the United States had no reason to believe that the Soviets or Chinese would show good faith, and would probably end up lacking reasonable enforcement mechanisms[636]. It was a moot point in any event, since Harriman and the rest of the Cabinet was of a mind that "suggested economic objectives can be achieved only after there is peace." Rostow concurred with this assessment of the Bowles proposal[637]. When word reached an unhappy Bowles that the Far East Bureau of the State Department rejected his idea for a presidential statement on political aims in Southeast Asia without any serious consideration, he penned an emotional missive to Kennedy on 18 August 1962, accurately predicting—amongst other things—that a situation was brewing in the coming year that would force Washington to commit more troops and money to a deteriorating situation or abandon South Vietnam with its tail between its legs[638].

Bowles argued that his opponents appeared to have learnt little from the French experience or the mistakes of the Eisenhower administration, repeating Mansfield's assertion—which paralleled earlier claims from de Gaulle that American intervention in the region had drawn in the Soviets when no previous interest existed—that the countries with smallest American presence, Cambodia and Burma, were freest of communist influence. Bowles railed against his colleagues' notion that the United States could not accept "paper guarantees" from the Soviet Union when the Austrian precedent had clearly demonstrated that Moscow was capable of co-sponsoring neutralism with Washington when it perceived such a policy to be in its best interests. He went on to

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[636] U.S. Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, II, Vietnam, 1962 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1990): 253, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_ii_1961-63/w.html.
[637] Ibid.
[638] U.S. Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, II, Vietnam, 1962 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1990): 267, http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_ii_1961-63/x.html.

argue further that the administration ought to "[i]mprove our almost non-existent intelligence capability in regard to Ho Chi Minh's attitudes and objectives" as part of a broader reassessment of accepted wisdom that would see greater tolerance for anti-Communist neutralism at the expense of the "military bastion" approach[639].

As with all of Bowles' other unsolicited memos on the Third World written during 1962, there is no documentary evidence that his ideas provoked any follow-up discussions between Kennedy and other members of the administration. On 1 December 1962 Bowles finally admitted defeat, writing Kennedy to express continued support for his presidency mixed with dismay that he had been unable to navigate the bureaucracy and affect real change for the better[640]. Thereafter, Bowles, one of the more thoughtful of several early Cassandras on Vietnam in Kennedy's coterie, quietly stepped down from what he finally understood to be a ceremonial position with no real duties or influence.

Unconstrained by the opposition from Kennedy's advisors, Senator Mansfield used his commencement address at Michigan State University on 10 June 1962 to call for greater public discussion of Vietnam as American involvement in the remote country deepened. Through the 1950s Mansfield had been one of Diem's firmest American backers, but he had begun to grow increasingly disillusioned with the South Vietnamese president's rougher edges. Though he did not mention de Gaulle by name, he did echo the French president's conviction that the United States could not spend its way to a desired result. Mansfield expressed concern that "[f]rom a minimum of contact and cost

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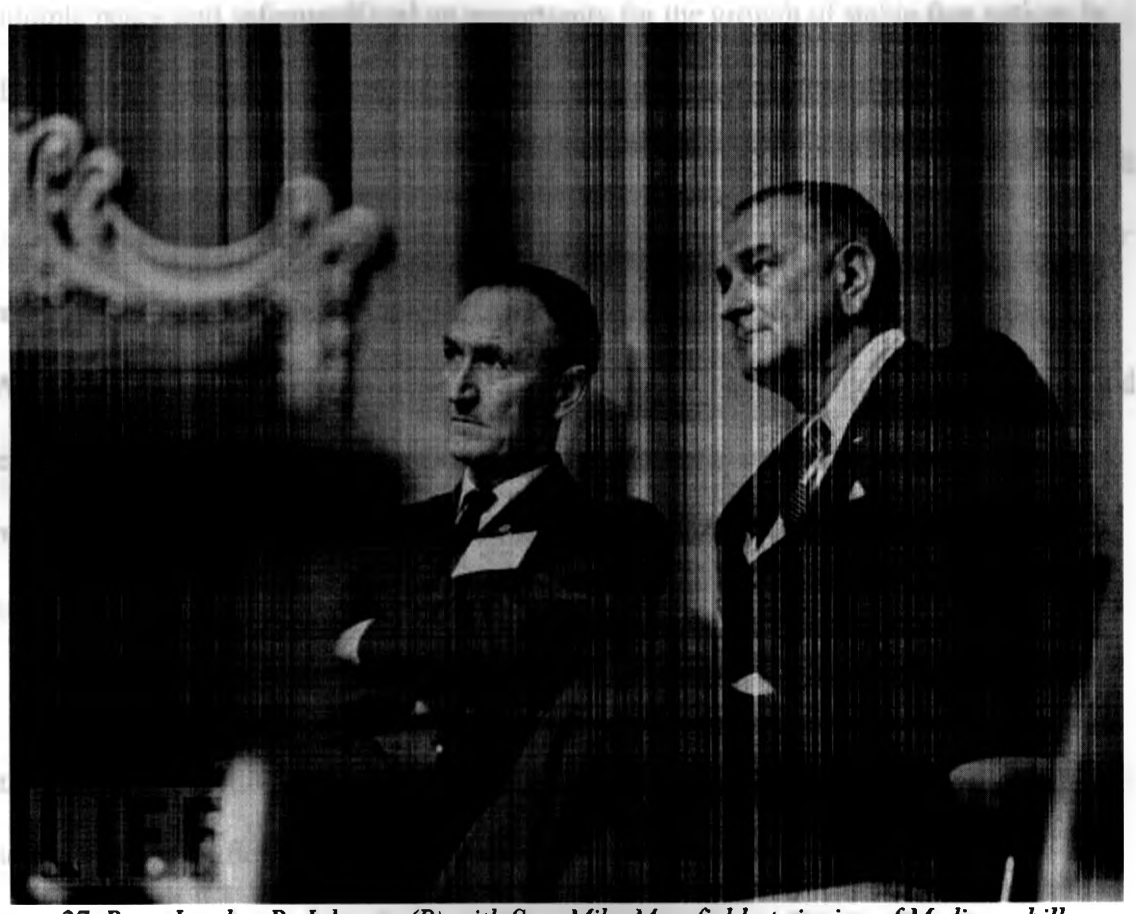
[639] Ibid.
[640] Chester Bowles, "Memorandum to the President," 1/12/62, President's Office Files (#3), Series 2 Special Correspondence, box 28, JFKL.

scarcely a dozen years ago [[America's role in Southeast Asia has] moved, today, to a point of saturated involvement and immense expense[641]."



27. Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson (R) with Sen. Mike Mansfield at signing of Medicare bill.
Photo: Francis Miller/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images
1 July 1965

As the United States entered the region in earnest to contain Communist China, it sent in American personnel to build up local military capabilities at great cost and funded ambitious economic aid programs that made no tangible improvements to the lives of millions of ordinary Vietnamese and Laotians who Washington was supposedly protecting from communism. A vast portion of the $3 billion in American aid allocated to Southeast Asia over the previous decade had in fact ended up lining the pockets of

[641] Mike Mansfield, "Commencement address at Michigan State University," 10/6/62, President's Office Files (#3); Series 2 Special Correspondence, box 31, JFKL.

Saigon's military and political elite[642]. Mansfield did not oppose American efforts on the grounds of cost alone, but rather because they were so costly without "yield[ing] a durable peace and safeguard[ing] an opportunity for the growth of stable free nations in the region[643]." South Vietnam, he claimed was even more unstable than it had been five years earlier, before the massive American aid flow had begun, and nearby countries with limited contact with the United States, principally Burma and Cambodia, had enjoyed far more success in maintaining their independence and resisting communist pressure. Above all, Mansfield urged Americans to consider whether this expensive, ineffective aid effort to a region with which the United States had little commercial or cultural ties and had little impact on American national security was worth continuing in its present form, suggesting that "traditional diplomacy" was quite likely the best avenue[644].

Mansfield's speech had the most impact on Bowles, who embarked on the aforementioned futile, but noble, campaign to promote the Senator's new thinking in the administration. After several months of reflection, the Senator penned a letter to Kennedy warning him of the findings of the upcoming Senate Foreign Relations Committee report due in February[645]. Mansfield wrote candidly, repeating many of the points that de Murville had made to Rusk in 1961 about the limits of American resources in Asia without mentioning France or de Gaulle by name. Mansfield charged that the Diem government had lost any momentum for positive change five years earlier and was now totally dependent on American largesse in the form of billions of aid dollars and

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[642] Ibid. This was exactly the scenario de Gaulle had warned against during the Paris summit.
[643] Ibid.
[644] Ibid.
[645] Mike Mansfield, "Report on South Vietnam (to Kennedy)," 18/12/62, President's Office Files (#3), Series 2 Special Correspondence, box 31, JFKL.

reengineered programs that had accomplished little. He noted local optimism towards the strategic hamlets program[646], Special Forces cooperation with the Montagnards to cut off communist supply lines, and other new initiatives, but added that Gen. Henri Navarre had tried a similar list of ideas when he took command of French forces in Indochina in the spring of 1953. Mansfield believed that the Viet Cong was adaptable enough to counter the strategic hamlet program, dictating that expectations for the initiative should remain limited.

With no short-term prospects for victory, the only hope of saving South Vietnam was "enlightened" government in post-Diem Saigon coupled with massive dollops of American aid. The only remaining alternative means of propping up Saigon without best case scenarios in all areas was the unpalatable option of official American entry into the war and neo-colonial status for South Vietnam. Mansfield vehemently opposed choosing this option, arguing "[o]ur role is and must remain secondary in present circumstances. It is their country, their future which is most at stake, not ours[647]. While there was theoretical merit to Kennedy's attempts to play for time in an attempt to keep as many options open as possible, Mansfield and others had correctly recognized that this delay made it much more difficult to opt for a policy of disengagement.

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[646] For planning and implementation of the program, see: Philip E. Catton, "Counter-Insurgency and Nation Building: The Strategic Hamlet Programme in South Vietnam, 1961-1963," *The International History Review* 21, no. 4 (1999): 918-40.

[647] Mike Mansfield, "Report on South Vietnam (to Kennedy)," 18/12/62, JFKL. He added, "[t]o ignore that reality will not only be immensely costly in terms of American lives and resources but it may also draw us inexorably into some variation of the unenviable position in Vietnam which was formerly occupied by the French. We are not, of course, at that point at this time. But the great increase in American military commitment this year has tended to point us in that general direction and we may well begin to slide rapidly towards it if any of the present remedies begin to falter in practice."

Mansfield went on to warn Kennedy that American planning did not take into account the real possibility that the political situation in Saigon could get worse rather than better. He urged a broad strategic re-evaluation of Vietnam's importance from a realist perspective, suggesting that the United States needed to decide just how far it would ultimately go to defend its regional interests[648]. Mansfield left no ambiguity; he had independently arrived at the same conclusions as de Gaulle regarding Washington's role in the conflict, closing that a combination of gradual disengagement and "vigorous diplomacy" would serve American interests by lightening its burdens while simultaneously bringing stability to the region. "We may well discover," he wrote, "that it is in our interests to do less rather than more than we are now doing[649]."

De Gaulle Accelerates the French Peace Program

Two major events in 1962 emboldened de Gaulle enough to advance his critique of American policy on Vietnam beyond the polite entreaties he and his lieutenants had made to Kennedy and his officials in private discussion to an active, if discreet, support

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[648] Ibid. He wrote, "[t]he problem [in Vietnam] can be grasped, it seems to me, only as we have clearly in mind our interests with respect to all of Southeast Asia. If it is essential in our own interests to maintain a quasi-permanent position of power on the Asian mainland as against the Chinese then we must be prepared to continue to pay the present cost in Vietnam indefinitely and to meet any escalation on the other side with at least a commensurate escalation of commitment of our own. This can go very far, indeed, in terms of lives and resources. Yet if it is essential to our interests then we would have no choice. But if on the other hand it is, at best, only desirable rather than essential that a position of power be maintained on the mainland, then other courses are indicated. We would, then, properly view such improvement as may be obtained by the new approach in Vietnam primarily in terms of what it might contribute to strengthening our diplomatic hand in the Southeast Asian region. And we would use that hand as vigorously as possible and in every way possible not to deepen our costly involvement on the Asian mainland but to lighten it."

[649] Ibid.

for Vietnamese actors willing to talk peace. The Évian Accords brought a formal ceasefire with the *Front de Libération nationale* (FLN) and finally brought peace to Algeria after a bloody eight-year guerrilla war that cost at least 350,000 lives[650] and had brought France to the brink of civil war. The point at which de Gaulle finally reconciled himself to the loss of Algeria is a matter for debate[651], but the resolution of the conflict certainly did remove the biggest obstacle towards a genuine policy of peace and goodwill towards another former colony that had similarly fought hard for its independence.

The denouement of the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962 would later have tremendous consequences for de Gaulle's thinking on France's role within the Atlantic Alliance. He took two principal lessons from the standoff: first, that the superpowers had both backed down when faced with the prospect of nuclear war, which had profound implications on the Cold War; and, second, that the Kennedy administration would dictate to America's allies during major crises rather than consult with them, definitively shattering any residual hopes for tripartism. The Cuban Missile Crisis was a seminal event for de Gaulle, who viewed the superpowers' recoil from the use of nuclear weapons as an indication that nuclear war was far less likely in the future. This back down had

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[650] The official French number of casualties was 350,000, while the FLN figured it to be closer to 1 million. Alistair Horne settles on 700,000 in *A Savage War of Peace*.

[651] In *France, the United States, and the Algerian War*, Irwin Wall challenges the dominant Gaullist account that de Gaulle nobly and skilfully brought the conflict to a close, arguing instead that he initially hoped to retain some form of French control over Algeria. This would establish Paris as a major Mediterranean/African power and present France on a more equal footing with the Anglo-Saxons. The election of Kennedy, long-time foe of French colonialism, forced de Gaulle to give up this ambition and reluctantly accept Algerian independence. In any event, the Algerian War had been a mostly internal conflict for France separate from other elements of the Cold War. Even if the settlement had not been entirely satisfying to the political right, the vast majority of French opinion took great relief that the long, draining period of colonial wars that had begun in 1945 had finally drawn to a close. Free of the Algerian burden, de Gaulle was able to begin rebuilding the national confidence necessary for France to assume its desired role as a major global player. As the man who had finally brought peace where a generation of politicians of all stripes had failed, de Gaulle had accumulated a considerable amount of political capital at home and abroad, establishing himself as a voice of authority on Third World conflicts.

profound implications for de Gaulle, who saw it as a marker of the end of bipolarity as America's western allies saw that they no longer had to support the United States unequivocally[652]. In combination with the new freedom of action gained by wrapping up the Algerian War, this reinforced de Gaulle's conviction that it was in the interests of both France and Western Europe to secure greater independence from the superpowers.

De Gaulle's foreign policy up to 1962 had focused on French relations with the United States and Europe, but its emphasis shifted to Third World countries, which he viewed as the turning point in bipolar confrontation in response to events in Cuba. This reorientation was followed by overtures to countries on both sides of the Cold War divide and the promotion of a policy of détente, which would allow minor allies like France "to deemphasize total solidarity with its major ally and to concentrate less on Europe, the focus of Soviet-American conflict[653]." De Gaulle had long aspired to Franco-Soviet rapprochement, but this was impossible until Moscow relented over Berlin and began granting greater autonomy to its European satellites. France's post-colonial re-posturing did, however, created the prospect of a diplomatic opening to mainland China, which de Gaulle identified as a major player with which he could shape a Vietnamese peace settlement[654]. Like many elements of Gaullist foreign policy, ambitions often greatly surpassed the resources necessary to fulfill them, but the development of a clearer French policy of moral support for the peoples of the Third World, respect for national independence, and opposition to the bipolarity of the Cold War status quo did help

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[652] Sullivan, 5.
[653] Ibid., 20.
[654] Ibid., 21-2. De Gaulle had long been eager to restore diplomatic relations with the People's Republic, but held off until January 1964 out of respect for wartime colleague Jiang Jeshi, then president of Taiwan. France was the first major western country to establish ambassadorial relations with Mao's China and de Gaulle is still revered in present day China.

contrast France's new global role with American "imperialism" as the conflict in Vietnam intensified in 1963.

As important as developments in Algeria were, de Gaulle would not have felt as confident as he did, openly recasting France as a global player with interests and a strategic vision different from those of the United States, if not for the Kennedy administration's non-consultation of America's European allies during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Costigliola argues that the decision of Kennedy's Executive Committee (Excom) to reject any consultation with Western European leaders during a crisis that put them in as much danger of nuclear annihilation as the United States, emerged from thinking that viewed Western Europeans as irrational partners incapable of solving major crises[655]. Whereas the Kennedy administration felt that including Europeans or Canadians in the decision-making process during the crisis would make negotiations and military planning more difficult while increasing the risk of a security breach, Western Europeans saw American unilateralism as bitter evidence of their own helplessness[656].

Widely-read contemporary French political commentator Raymond Aron, usually known for his pro-American sympathies, told Walter Lippmann of the *Washington Post* that American conduct during the crisis had effectively reduced America's European allies to "the status of protectorate nations[657]." When Kennedy sent Dean Acheson to inform de Gaulle of the coming Cuba blockade mere hours before announcing it in a speech, de Gaulle began the conversation with typical bluntness, asking "[i]n order to get

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[655] Frank Costigliola, "Kennedy, the European Allies, and the Failure to Consult," *Political Science Quarterly* 100, no. 1 (1995): 107.
[656] Ibid, 112.
[657] Walter Lippmann, "Today and Tomorrow... The Agitated Alliance," *The Washington Post,* 20 December 1962, A25.

our roles clear... have [you] come… to inform me of some decision taken by your President—or have you come to consult me about a decision which he should take[658][?]" Unsurprised by Acheson's response that the former was indeed the case, de Gaulle, like most other leaders of NATO countries, was intensely troubled by the Kennedy administration's unwillingness to discuss a matter of such grave mutual concern. At this point the French president felt free to begin a more assertive, independence-oriented foreign policy program.

De Gaulle struck first in Europe. The Kennedy administration had strongly backed Britain's candidacy in the hopes that London would steer the six continental members in a more pro-American direction, a transparent motive that de Gaulle naturally opposed as a challenge to French leadership in the EEC. Kennedy and Bundy lacked the enthusiasm of the Grand Design enthusiasts like Ball, Rostow, and others who saw West European integration as a catch-all solution to contain West Germany, build a viable export market, and prevent the rise of neutralism. Still, they had been slowly shifting to the view that the EEC could be used as a vehicle to solve a series of political and economic challenges[659]. Impressive growth rates in Common Market countries outstripped those of the United States, which was suffering chronic balance of payments deficits with Europe, developments that had potentially negative implications for Washington as it pertained to the balance of power within the Atlantic alliance. Europeanist promoters of the Grand Design viewed British entry into the EEC as a means of injecting a pro-American, liberal trading regime that would oppose any possible future

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[658] Costigliola, "Kennedy, the European Allies, and the Failure to Consult," 113.
[659] David DiLeo, "George Ball and the Revisionists in the State Department," in *John F. Kennedy and Europe*, 273-4.

moves towards raising tariffs or closing the Western European trading bloc to American commerce. More importantly, "Great Britain's desire to preserve its 'special relationship' with the United States meant that London would serve as Washington's ear and spokesperson within the Common Market[660]."

On 14 January 1963 de Gaulle dropped a major bombshell that killed American plans for the EEC by issuing a statement that effectively vetoed the British application for membership. The matter had become tied to the seemingly unrelated issue of the French *force de frappe*, which unlike Britain's independent nuclear deterrent, was being developed without the aid of American technology. British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan, having been strongly warned in advance by the Kennedy administration against an "unholy alliance" with de Gaulle's France, had rejected de Gaulle's suggestion in a 14 December 1962 meeting that their two countries develop a joint nuclear missile program replace the obsolete Skybolt system[661]. MacMillan badly wanted de Gaulle's support for British entry into the EEC, but was unwilling to jeopardize London's relationship with Washington and could not offer de Gaulle the nuclear *quid pro quo* he was seeking.

De Gaulle was unimpressed by MacMillan's "[hints] at the long-term nuclear opportunities, albeit with the unspoken if quite obvious condition that Britain must first be admitted to the EEC[662]." Several days later at Nassau, Bahamas, MacMillan secured a deal from Kennedy that would see the American sale of submarine-based Polaris missiles to replace the V-bomber-based Skybolt force, closing the door on any prospect of Franco-

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[660] Costigliola, *France and the United States: the Cold Alliance since World War II*, 129.
[661] Paterson, *Kennedy's Quest for Victory*, 49.
[662] Peter Mangold, *The Almost Impossible Ally: Harold Macmillan and Charles de Gaulle* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2006), 171.

British nuclear cooperation. The following month de Gaulle justified his EEC veto on the grounds that British trade deals with the Commonwealth threatened to undermine the institution of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), an elaborate subsidy program dear to French farmers, by flooding Western Europe with cheap agricultural products[663]. Still, there was little doubt in Washington that de Gaulle's veto "was linked to the Nassau Agreement, and... [was part of] a strong attack on the American vision of an Atlantic Community as a subterfuge for hegemony[664]."

In the first National Security Council (NSC) meeting after de Gaulle's veto speech, Kennedy expressed his belief that that the move was part of a broader French conspiracy to leave the United States responsible for the burden of guaranteeing European security while undermining its influence on NATO allies. Kennedy felt that "[i]f France keeps Britain out, this will be a setback for us but a more severe setback for the U.K.[665]". He was more concerned with de Gaulle's opposition to the MLF, which was designed to "increase our influence in Europe... provide a way to guide NATO... [and] weaken de Gaulle's control of the [Common Market] Six." Kennedy established France as an opponent by explaining that, "[i]t is through the multilateral concept that we

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[663] Andrew Moravcsik took on a provocative revisionist stance in *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose & State Power from Messina to Maastricht* (London: Routledge/UCL Press, 1998), arguing that de Gaulle's veto was the product of commercial—not political—factors, just as de Gaulle publicly stated. He expanded on this position in "De Gaulle between Grain and Grandeur: The Political Economy of French EC Policy, 1958–1970 (Part 1)," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 2, no. 2 (2000): 3–43; and, "De Gaulle between Grain and Grandeur (Part 2)," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 2, no. 3 (2000): 4–68. Robert H. Lieshout, Mathieu L.L. Segers, and Anna M. van der Vleuten dissected his work in "De Gaulle, Moravcsik, and *The Choice for Europe* Soft Sources, Weak Evidence," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 6, no. 4 (2004): 89–139, arguing that Moravcsik misread two key documents on which his entire argument depends and generally failed to produce sufficient direct evidence that agricultural matters were de Gaulle's foremost concern regarding potential British EEC membership.

[664] Harrison, 80.

[665] U.S. Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, VIII, National Security Policy (Washington, DC: GPO, 1996): 125, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/kennedyjf/viii/33842.htm.

increase the dependence of the European nations on the United States and tie these nations closer to us. Thus, we thwart de Gaulle who wants to cause a split between Europe and the United States." He correctly argued that de Gaulle had turned to Germany after being rebuffed by Britain and the United States on his *directoire* proposal, a development that threatened to undermine NATO, but at least prevented Bonn from considering a deal with Soviets. As annoying as these events were, he argued that "[w]e should not be overly distressed because the problems caused by de Gaulle are not crucial in the sense that our problems in Latin America are[666]."

De Gaulle followed his British EEC veto up on 22 January 1963 with the equally provocative signing of the Franco-German Treaty of Friendship with Chancellor Adenauer, with whom the French president had been consulting regularly on East-West issues over the previous year. The pact, controversial in both countries, emerged out of mutual dissatisfaction with Kennedy's stance and lingering doubts over the extent of Washington's commitment to Europe in the event of nuclear war. The two elderly statesmen had spent many hours discussing how they could present a united European front on peace and development across the Iron Curtain—dwelling specifically on issues such as how to diplomatically exploit the Sino-Soviet split and bring stability to Central Europe via an arms limitation pact between the superpowers[667]—and pledged to coordinate foreign policy in the future. Their intention to provide an alternative vision to the American-led Cold War status quo was predictably interpreted as a minor rebellion in the White House, which expected such behaviour from de Gaulle, but was disappointed

[666] Ibid.
[667] Suri, 27.

to see this new orientation from a West Germany heavily dependent on American troops to deter Soviet aggression.

An emotional Adenauer, who sought to draw West Germany closer to France without repudiating its close ties to United States, told Under Secretary of State Gilpatric on 14 February 1963 that he was "flabbergasted" by American opposition to the treaty when growing Franco-German solidarity was largely motivated by perceptions in Germany that Kennedy was reneging on his promise not to discuss German matters with the Soviets without prior consultation with Bonn[668]. Gilpatric had told Adenauer earlier in the conversation that Kennedy blamed "recent signs of greater Soviet intransigence [on] de Gaulle's January 14 press conference, citing as examples both nuclear test negotiations and Soviet attitude on removal of troops from Cuba[669]", indirectly expressing American concern that its hitherto compliant ally was being sold Gaullist snake oil.

There was some justification for Adenauer's anger with Washington in early 1963. When Kennedy chose to temporarily back down on bilateral talks with the Soviets on Berlin, he did so not because he thought it was wrong to break a promise to Bonn, but rather out of concern that disgruntled Europeans could sabotage unilateral American initiatives if they so desired. In a high level meeting with Bundy, Rusk, William Tyler and his ambassadors to London and Berlin on 15 February 1963, Kennedy rejected Rusk's suggestion that the administration continue talks despite Franco-German objections on the grounds that "[u]nless they were fully locked in, the Germans would be

[668] U.S. Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, XV, Berlin Crisis, 1962-1963 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1994): 174, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/kennedyjf/xv/46001.htm.
[669] Ibid

in a position to take advantage of the accomplishments of the talks, but remain ever ready to criticize us if things went wrong[670]."

The following day Kennedy authorized instructions for the ambassador to Bonn, who was to inform Adenauer that the administration had not initiated this latest round of talks with the Soviets and noted the West German position that there was "no advantage in reacting swiftly to Gromyko overture[671]." The ambassador was to make clear that the administration hoped that Bonn would not object to future bilateral Soviet-American talks on the understanding that they would be kept exploratory in nature and that acceptance of the Western position in Berlin was non-negotiable. Reasserting American concern over the nature of the new Franco-German relationship, Adenauer was to be told that "[i]t seems to us that [the] position now taken by German [government] toward talks is more negative than it was a year ago, and that there is now no difference between the German and French positions on this point[672]." This message was delivered on 19 February and apparently resolved the matter to Adenauer's satisfaction, but de Gaulle was not excused for his supposed role in stoking German-American discord.

The events of January and February 1963 illustrated how the Kennedy administration had come to view de Gaulle as a minor irritant, yet one capable of "seducing" less assertive continental European NATO members into opposing American designs. By framing opposition to American aims from de Gaulle and fellow travelers in Western Europe and Canada as the product of emotion over rationality, of narrow

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[670] U.S. Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, XV, Berlin Crisis, 1962-1963 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1994): 175, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/kennedyjf/xv/46001.htm.
[671] Ibid., 176.
[672] Ibid.

national interest over burden-sharing, of bitterness over magnanimousness, the Kennedy administration was able to delegitimize numerous European concerns without engaging in any serious reconsideration of its strategic vision. An incomplete reading of history coupled with deeply-ingrained national stereotypes fostered a mythology of de Gaulle as an intractable foe that precluded any serious reappraisal of American policy towards France.

In a long letter to Kennedy on 29 January 1963, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Special Assistant to the President and a key speech writer, wrote Kennedy to lament how badly the administration had damaged its relationship with France[673]. He argued that "[o]ur delinquency lies less in failing to change [de Gaulle's] course than in failing to recognize what his course was—and doing so in spite of the singularly frank and lucid declaration he made to the world of his policies and purposes[674]." Citing direct quotes from published memoirs—which he doubted had been widely read within the administration—Schlesinger found numerous declarations from de Gaulle that he would resist Anglo-American attempts to relegate France to second-class status, that he sought to re-establish French primacy in Western Europe, that he would not accept dependence on any ally, and that he would cooperate with members of the communist bloc who sought peace and stability. "This misjudgement of de Gaulle's intentions," he wrote, "in face of the evidence he so obligingly provided as to what he planned to do, is so massive that it deserves appraisal so that the error will not be repeated[675]."

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[673] Arthur Schlesinger Jr., "Memorandum for the president re: de Gaulle," 29/1/63, The Personal Papers of Arthur Schlesinger Jr., box WH-34—France General 9/1961-10/1963, JFKL.
[674] Ibid.
[675] Ibid.

The administration's stance towards de Gaulle was reversible at any time, while the more diligent evaluation of his aims and motivations Schlesinger was calling for would have left Washington better prepared to deal with France in the future. By the spring of 1963, Kennedy appeared to have come around to this view and made a tentative effort to mend fences. In a 25 May 1963 discussion with de Murville and Alphand, Kennedy tried to calm worries over a deteriorating bilateral relationship by making a series of conciliatory claims, though it is doubtful that he actually believed anything he was saying. This sent off the wrong signals to French officials, whose subsequent actions indicate that they concluded that they had been given Kennedy's blessing to begin a more active peace policy in Vietnam.

Kennedy first claimed that he found the French conception of European unity entirely reasonable[676]. He added that he had come around to de Gaulle's view that the risk of war in Europe lessened considerably as the Soviets faced bigger problems in their difficult relationship with Beijing. When de Murville expressed his view that China's goal in Southeast Asia was a defensive one designed at producing a buffer zone to separate it from the United States rather than overt takeover, Kennedy seemed receptive to his suggestion that, this assumption proving true, a political solution for Vietnam would be optimal[677]. It appeared that Kennedy had finally come around to the French position on Vietnam, an extremely encouraging development. Shortly after de Murville's return to Paris, de Gaulle's ambassadors to North and South Vietnam began a discreet

[676] "Review of French Policy (between Kennedy, de Murville, et al.)," 25/5/63, National Security Files, Series 1 Countries, box 72A, France-General, 6/5/63-6/20/63, JFKL.
[677] Ibid.

campaign to foster a French-supported dialogue with the ultimate aim of laying the groundwork for future ceasefire and reunification negotiations.

The Last Chance for Peace Slips Away

In South Vietnam late in the summer of 1963, Diem and Nhu were showing growing resentment towards American infringements on South Vietnamese sovereignty, while the economically-strained North made subtle indications that Ho was willing to make major concessions in exchange for a comprehensive reunification deal. De Gaulle saw a perfect opportunity to bring about a deal that would satisfy all parties, draw a draining war to a close for the Vietnamese, allow the United States to withdraw with honour, and permit the North's Communist patrons to similarly disengage from a peripheral conflict. This was the logical extension of the 25 May conversation between Kennedy, Alphand, and de Murville.

The paranoia in Washington surrounding French initiatives in Vietnam through the summer of 1963, however, illustrated that the administration still rejected the French assessment of the conflict even if Kennedy might have been willing to pretend that he was in agreement in order to improve Franco-American relations. Here as elsewhere, Kennedy viewed European allies as unfocussed, nationally-minded charges that lacked Washington's global vision and were to be gently cajoled into accepting the American position rather than given shared responsibility—or credit—for policy formation. The

sheer distrust that met with de Gaulle's peace initiatives in Vietnam was the natural outgrowth of American perceptions that sabotage was his principal aim in Europe.

French efforts to facilitate North-South talks in Vietnam began in earnest after Ambassador J.L. de la Boissière's farewell conversation with Premier Pham Van Dong in Hanoi on 29 June 1963. De la Boissière had spoken freely with American officials in Saigon on North Vietnamese economic plans and reunification strategy, passing along much useful information that was not otherwise available to Washington. In June 1963 he had informed American officials that Hanoi was taking a patient, political approach with the South while it waited for the inevitable collapse of the Diem regime and its replacement by a new government reconciled to reopening Geneva talks on reunification[678]. He also warned that the United States was in danger of being backed into a position where it was seen as an opponent of reunification, the dearest desire of the majority of the Vietnamese people[679]. While the consular and State Department officials who noted his views expressed appreciation for his unique access in the North, they typically dismissed him as a "colonialist French official" with "defeatist" views on the future of South Vietnam who "greatly exaggerated" Hanoi's willingness to negotiate peace with the South in good faith[680].

De la Boissière spoke with two American embassy officers in Saigon on 3 July 1963 to inform them of the substance of his farewell conversation with Premier Pham a

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[678] Green, "Embassy telegram (to Rusk)," 20/6/63, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Vietnam: Internal and Foreign Affairs, 1960-1963, 59, box 69, US-Relations with France 1960-1963, C92: Reel 9, Microfilm Rm., NACP.
[679] Ibid.
[680] Robert E. Barbour, "Embassy telegram (to Rusk)," 5/7/63, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Vietnam: Internal and Foreign Affairs, 1960-1963, 59, box 69, US-Relations with France 1960-1963, C92: Reel 9, Microfilm Rm., NACP.

week earlier[681]. He said that Dong admitted that the South was making economic progress, but "professed to believe that the Diem regime would be dragged down by the weight of the American presence and was therefore doomed." As the number of American 'advisors' in the South grew, Pham argued:

> The Americans will be unable to reduce their commitment as the struggle drags on, for the more they pour in the more the 'people' (Viet Cong) will struggle against them. In this situation the population will begin to chafe under the miseries caused by the American presence and will turn to a neutral solution as the only way of ridding South Viet Nam of the Americans[682].

Hanoi was taking deliberate steps to leave room open for negotiations with Saigon. It had adopted a policy of strict neutrality in the Sino-Soviet dispute to maintain room for diplomatic manoeuvre, was "anxious to keep operations in the South well below the threshold of open warfare", and was preparing a direct overture for a comprehensive settlement to a post-Diem government[683].

De la Boissière not only acknowledged that France was aware that discrete negotiations between North and South were talking place, but also–provocatively to American ears—described official communications between the foes as "excellent[684]." In a subsequent report on the conversation, de la Boissière stated that he had told Pham that South Vietnamese Foreign Minister Vu Van Mau hoped for "peaceful competition with Hanoi instead of Viet Cong destruction[685]." Pham felt this overture might be genuine, but added that South Vietnam was still controlled by the United States, which

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[681] "Robert E. Barbour, "Embassy telegram (to Rusk)," 8/7/63 Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Vietnam: Internal and Foreign Affairs, 1960-1963, 59, box 69, US-Relations with France 1960-1963, C96: Reel 13, Microfilm Rm., NACP.
[682] Ibid.
[683] Ibid.
[684] Ibid.
[685] Charles Bohlen, "Embassy telegram (to Rusk)," 11/7/63, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Vietnam: Internal and Foreign Affairs, 1960-1963, 59, box 69, US-Relations with France 1960-1963, C96: Reel 13, Microfilm Rm., NACP.

was building up its military presence in the country, and that "inevitably [a] diplomatic settlement would establish [a] neutralist [South Vietnam][686]." The last thing Pham reportedly said to de la Boissière was "[s]ee you in Geneva", indicating his belief that France would play a part in securing a negotiated settlement to the war along Laotian lines[687].

By sharing such sensitive information with American officials, de la Boissière revealed that France was attempting to position itself as a mediator between North and South Vietnam and felt no need to hide its actions from Washington. As explosive as news of the Pham-de la Boissière conversation should have been, it was simply catalogued with hundreds of other tidbits of information on the region and there is no documentary evidence to indicate that it provoked any sustained discussion in the State Department or White House.

While South Vietnam plunged further into crisis as Buddhists and their sympathizers launched protests against the government in July and August, American newspapers openly discussed the advantages of an anti-Diem coup to Washington. De Gaulle responded personally on 29 August 1963 by having his Minister of Information, Alain Peyrefitte, cite verbatim to the press a short cabinet statement de Gaulle had made on Vietnam. Without naming the United States or the communist patrons of North Vietnam, de Gaulle reasserted French interest in its former colony, offering to help all

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[686] Ibid.
[687] Robert H. Miller, "Embassy telegram (to Rusk)," 8/7/63, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Vietnam: Internal and Foreign Affairs, 1960-1963, 59, box 69, US-Relations with France 1960-1963, C96: Reel 13, Microfilm Rm., NACP.

Vietnamese people unify the country and secure "independence from foreign influences[688]." De Gaulle stated:

> The serious events taking place in Vietnam are being followed in Paris with attention and emotion.
>
> The work which France accomplished in the past in Cochin-China, Annam and Tonkin, the ties which she has in its development lead her to understand particularly well, and share sincerely, the hardships of the Vietnamese people.
>
> On the other hand, the knowledge which France has of this people's valor makes her appreciate the role this people would be capable of playing in the present situation of Asia, for its own progress and for the benefit of international understanding, once it is able to carry on its activity in independence from exterior influences, in internal peace and unity, and in concord with its neighbors.
>
> Today more than ever it is this that France wishes for all of Vietnam.
>
> Naturally it is up to this people and to them alone to choose the means to bring this about. But every national effort which might be undertaken in Vietnam toward this end would find France ready, to the extent of her own possibilities, to set up a cordial cooperation with this country[689].

As well-intentioned and sensitive to avoid blaming Washington for the sorry state of affairs in South Vietnam as it was, the statement first caught American officials badly off-guard, then provoked derision after it had been digested[690].

French damage control efforts began the following day, when Ambassador Alphand was summoned to a meeting with Rusk at the State Department. In the American summary of the conversation, Alphand said the statement "in essence… reiterated the points which General de Gaulle had made in this meeting with the President

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[688] Peter Grose, "De Gaulle Offers To Help End Foreign Role," *The New York Times*, 30 August 1963, 1.
[689] Ibid.
[690] Tad Szulc, "Paris Premature on Vietnam Unity, Washington Says; It finds de Gaulle's Call for Merger and Neutrality Completely Unrealistic," *The New York Times*, 31 August 1963, 1.

in the spring of 1961. The French did not feel that a military solution could work[691]." Rusk returned to the arguments he too had made many times in the past, replying that it was North Vietnam, not the United States, that was seeking a military solution to the conflict, that Washington never sought out Saigon as an ally, and that the Kennedy administration "would be perfectly happy if it were truly nonaligned as many other countries are." In response, Alphand clarified that France had "no immediate solution to the problem" and described the statement "as a long term proposition, not as something that could be put into effect in the near future[692]."

Rusk did seem interested in tapping French knowledge of North Vietnamese thinking, posing a series of questions that led Alphand to tell him that Ho Chi Minh sincerely wanted peace but Chairman Mao was pushing him to ramp up the war, and that the Soviets truly had little influence in Southeast Asia beyond what Ho gave them to counterbalance the Chinese. Whereas Alphand saw many signs indicating support for neutralism, Rusk would not waver from the hard line position that American actions were forced on them by communist aggression and that "a truly neutral Vietnam was [probably not] possible[693]." Nevertheless, Alphand promised that he would "emphasize to the press that it was absurd to think that France was looking for an arrangement with Diem or was trying to extend her influence at the expense of the U.S.", agreeing to Rusk's request that de Gaulle statement be painted as a long-term plan[694].

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[691] "Memoradum of Conversation (between Alphand, Rusk, et al.)," 30/8/1963, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Vietnam: Internal and Foreign Affairs, 1960-1963, 59, box 69, US-Relations with France 1960-1963, C96: Reel 13, Microfilm Rm., NACP.
[692] Ibid.
[693] Ibid.
[694] Ibid.

To de Gaulle's probable satisfaction, his statement took on a life of its own, provoking a debate within the United States on alternatives to war in Vietnam. American public opinion was firmly focused on the drama in Saigon in September 1963 and the most frequent media position was against unilateral withdrawal, but supported efforts to find a diplomatic solution. *Newsweek*, *The New Republic*, and the respected Pulitzer Prize-winning political commentator Walter Lippman all saw de Gaulle's willingness to facilitate a deal as productive[695]. Noted war correspondent and Vietnam expert Bernard Fall reported later in the month that Hanoi welcomed French efforts because it knew that a protracted war with the United States would leave North Vietnam overly dependent on Beijing. The Viet Cong insurgency began to slacken by late summer-early autumn, which may have been a deliberate North Vietnamese attempt to bolster Diem's position in the hopes of accommodation[696].

Still, *New York Times* journalist Tad Szulc wrote on 30 August 1963 that the administration's official view of the de Gaulle statement was that it "must be viewed as a hypothetical issue", he revealed that the "[a]dministration deeply resented his intervention[697]." He added that the administration saw the statement as "another effort to undercut the United States' position in the Western alliance" and found its timing during a crisis in relations between Washington and Saigon "particularly irksome[698]." Other newspaper reports in the immediate aftermath of the statement echoed administration fears that France was looking to work around the United States, its NATO ally, by

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[695] Logevall, *Choosing War*, 55.
[696] Ibid, 58.
[697] Szulc, "Paris Premature on Vietnam Unity, Washington Says; It finds de Gaulle's Call for Merger and Neutrality Completely Unrealistic," 1.
[698] Ibid.

expecting Soviet support for its neutralization plan[699], or that it had given Nhu an opportunity to evade American pressure on the regime for major reforms by cutting a deal with the North[700].

Kennedy was in the midst of agonizing internal discussions over whether to encourage an ARVN coup against Diem[701] and French efforts to promote a negotiated solution created massive problems for his administration[702]. American embassy officials in Paris urged that it would be unwise to respond harshly to the de Gaulle statement, "[t]oplofty and irritating though it may be" because "we do not find [it] inconsistent with this attitude of relative aloofness." It was suggested that "we would do well for [the] time being to pass it over in complete silence and treat it as [a] French definition of long term objectives for Viet-Nam unless we see signs that some kind of initiative is developing from it[703]."

Still, Henry Cabot Lodge Jr.[704], the newly minted ambassador to South Vietnam, succeeded in convincing the administration that the "idiotic[705]" statement was an affront to the American effort in Vietnam. He surmised that Nhu, with the help of French

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[699] Waverly Root, "France May Get Soviet Support On Plan to Neutralize Viet-Nam," *The Washington Post*, 1 September 1963, A9.
[700] Robert Trumbull, "Diplomats Say Brother of Diem Sees Accord as Way to Oust U.S.," *The New York Times*, 2 September 1963, 1.
[701] Schulzinger, 121-2.
[702] Logevall, *Choosing War,* 61.
[703] "Lyon, "Embassy telegram (to Rusk)," 30/8/63 (6:23 p.m.), National Security Files, Series 1 Countries, box 198A, Vietnam-General, 8/24/63-8/31/63 State Cables, JFKL.
[704] Lodge, a Republican who had lost his Senate seat to Kennedy in 1962, replaced Frederick Nolting in early August, 1963. Kennedy hoped the appointment of a bitter rival to such a key position would help win bipartisan support for his Vietnam policy. Lodge's political memoirs, *The Storm has Many Eyes; a personal narrative* (New York: Norton, 1973) disappointingly skip past his time in Vietnam, merely refuted that he had played an active role in planning the coup that led to Diem's murder (210-1). Also, see: William J. Miller, *Henry Cabot Lodge; a biography* (New York: Heineman, 1967).
[705] Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., "Embassy telegram (to Rusk)," 1/9/63, "National Security Files; Series 1. Countries; box 199; Vietnam-General, 9/1/63-9/10/63 State Cables, Part I, JFKL.

Ambassador to Saigon Roger Lalouette, was trying to play Paris off against Washington to secure a deal with the North to eject the United States from the South in exchange for peace[706]. Ambassador Bohlen in Paris cabled Rusk on 2 September 1963 to inform him that the French had been taken aback by the hostile American reaction to the statement, which de Gaulle hoped would be "helpful to [Washington] if it in any way shook up Diem and made him tractable.[707]"

Undeterred by American hostility to de Gaulle's statement and suspicion of his role as a conduit between North and South, Lalouette called on Lodge on 4 September to remind him "Nhu believed he could work out an arrangement with the [Viet Cong] whereby the guerrilla war would be ended... [in exchange for] the withdrawal of some US troops[708]." Lodge believed that it was Lalouette's view that if the United States would eventually tire of the conflict, France would like to help it lay the groundwork for a future withdrawal[709]. Lalouette's attempts to assuage Lodge's fears had quite the opposite effect; the French ambassador's every movement thereafter was subjected to incredible scrutiny as Lodge attempted to pin down Lalouette's role in Nhu's anti-American plot.

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[706] "Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., "Embassy telegram (to Rusk)," 30/8/63, National Security Files; Series 1. Countries; box 198A; Vietnam-General, 8/24/63-8/31/63 State Cables, JFKL; "Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., "Embassy telegram (to Rusk)," 31/8/63, National Security Files; Series 1. Countries; box 198A; Vietnam-General, 8/24/63-8/31/63 State Cables, JFKL; and Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., "Embassy telegram (to Rusk)," 4/9/63, National Security Files; Series 1. Countries; box 198A; Vietnam-General, 8/24/63-8/31/63 State Cables, JFKL.

[707] Lyon, "Embassy telegram (to Rusk)," 2/9/63, National Security Files, Series 1 Countries, box 199, Vietnam-General, 9/1/63-9/10/63 State Cables, Part I, JFKL.

[708] Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr, "Embassy telegram (to Rusk)," 4/9/63 (10:40 a.m.), National Security Files, Series 1 Countries, box 199, Vietnam-General, 9/1/63-9/10/63 State Cables, Part I, JFKL.

[709] Ibid.

The de Gaulle statement had provoked far too much chatter in the press for Kennedy to remain silent, forcing the president to clarify his reaction to it on national television during a 2 September interview with Walter Cronkite of CBS from Hyannis, Massachusetts. In a draft statement for the president in preparation for the interview, Bundy wrote a stinging riposte asserting that de Gaulle had never offered to inject the military resources necessary to defend South Vietnam and that he appeared willing to hand the country over to the communists , but suggested that Kennedy not use it on air[710]. Bundy argued that it would be detrimental to American interests in Southeast Asia for Kennedy to reference the French role in Laos, which he and Harriman considered "most unhelpful" and "raises [the] spectre of neutralist solution[711]." More importantly, however, Bundy advised that "we find only our own personal irritation as an argument against [the] well-established conclusion that we do best when we ignore Nosey Charlie[712]."

On air with Cronkite, Kennedy was guarded when the discussion turned to Vietnam, stressing that it was up to the South Vietnamese themselves to win the war with the United States reluctantly playing a secondary support role with equipment and advisors[713]. He repeated the importance of the Domino Theory rather than publicly reconsider American policy based on new information that North Vietnam feared Chinese encroachment and was putting out peace feelers, arguing:

> these people who say that we ought to withdraw from Viet-Nam are wholly wrong because if we withdraw from Viet-Nam, the Communists would control Viet-Nam.

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[710] McGeorge Bundy, "Draft Statement on South Vietnam for Cronkite Interview (to Kennedy)," 1/9/63, JFKL.
[711] Ibid.
[712] Ibid.
[713] "Transcript: interview between President Kennedy and Walter Cronkite (CBS)," 2/9/63, JFKL.

> Pretty soon Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Malaya would go, and all of Southeast Asia would be under the control of the Communists and under the domination of the Chinese, and then India and Burma would be the next target. So I think we should stay[714].

When asked if he had an opinion of de Gaulle's statement specifically, Kennedy largely heeded Bundy's advice, cautiously dismissing it as much ado about nothing:

> I guess it was an expression of his general view, but he doesn't have any forces there or any program of economic assistance, so that while these expressions are welcome, the burden is carried, as it usually is, by the United States and the people there. But I think anything General de Gaulle says should be listened to, and we listened.

When Cronkite asked Kennedy if the statement warranted a personal meeting "to call off President de Gaulle from this kind of sniping at us", Kennedy replied:

> I mean President de Gaulle follows a policy of advancing the interest of France and he is a man of great stature. We are trying to advance the interests of the U.S. and we think the interests of the U.S. are tied up with maintaining the balance of freedom in the world. What, of course, makes Americans somewhat impatient is that after carrying this load for 18 years, we are glad to get counsel, but we would like a little more assistance, but we are going to meet our responsibility anyway. It doesn't do us any good to say, 'Well, why don't we all just go home and leave the world to those who are our enemies.' General de Gaulle is not our enemy. He is our friend and candid friend—and, there, sometimes difficult—but he is not the object of our hostility[715].

When Kennedy followed up his Cronkite interview with an elaboration on NBC's Huntley-Brinkley Report a week later, he again called for patience and reiterated his belief in the Domino Theory[716]. In effect, Kennedy was signalling to Paris that de Gaulle's peace initiatives were unwelcome, while his administration had privately decided to stay the course, play for time, and hope that the coup leaders could produce a more responsive, popular government than Diem had been providing.

With French interest in brokering a comprehensive Vietnamese peace settlement and the existence of clandestine North-South contacts already established by early

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[714] Ibid.
[715] Ibid.
[716] Logevall, 52.

September, American attention shifted to Nhu's prospects for success as he used the potential withdrawal of American advisors in the South as a diplomatic bargaining chip with his communist adversaries. On 11 September Lodge cabled Rusk that de Gaulle's statement had been welcomed by the press in South Vietnam, but the government and most Vietnamese had little appetite for a more active French role in the country. Lodge felt that the "only possibly interested party seems to be Nhu[,] who from recent reports [is] conceivably cooking up some sort of deal with [the] French in anticipation [of a] possible showdown with [the] U.S.[717]" He concurred with the view that de Gaulle, who had long been on bad terms with Diem, had been persuaded by Lalouette that protecting the president and his brother were essential to any potential peace deal with the North. Lodge assumed that France's real motivation was to "open up all of what was formerly Indo-China to French business activity and political influence[718]."

Though specifics on any particular deal were lacking, Lodge identified Lalouette and Nhu as the greatest threats to American influence in South Vietnam. If the French would not curtail their initiatives of their own accord, then ridding the country of Nhu was the next best means of scuppering them. The State Department[719] and CIA[720] both issued less sensationalistic reports around the same time, arguing that Nhu viewed the de Gaulle statement as a means of evading American pressure for governmental reform, that

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[717] Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., "Embassy telegram (to Rusk)," 11/9/63 (11:08 p.m.), National Security Files, Series 1. Countries, box 199, Vietnam-General, 9/11/63-9/17/63 State Cables, JFKL.
[718] Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., "Embassy telegram (to Rusk)," 11/9/63 (12:45 p.m.), National Security Files, Series 1. Countries, box 199, Vietnam-General, 9/11/63-9/17/63 State Cables, JFKL.
[719] Thomas L. Hughes, "Hanoi, Paris, Saigon and South Vietnam's Future," 11/9/63, National Security Files, Series 1 Countries, box 199A, Vietnam-General, 9/11/63-9/17/63 Memos and Misc. Part I, JFKL.
[720] "CIA Memorandum on the possibility of a GVN deal with North Vietnam," 14/9/63, National Security Files, Series 1 Countries, box 199A, Vietnam-General, 9/11/63-9/17/63 Memos and Misc. Part I, JFKL.

Moscow and Beijing respectively might welcome a deal that got the United States out of country, and that France was more than likely involved in secret negotiations, but concluded that no major moves were imminent.

Still, Lodge would not relent in his crusade to uncover evidence of a French-supported plot engineered by Nhu, who was described in the same sort of feminizing language that was typically found in early Cold War American descriptions of the French. He reported to Rusk that Nhu, who was allegedly in the midst of an opium bender, was "manic", held "delusions of grandeur", was "somewhat irrational, highly emotional, wound up and very self centred" and "had seduced" Lalouette, who was being manipulated rather than pulling strings[721]. Diem was "cut off from reality and very slow in his reactions", no longer capable of sustaining the vigour he had brought to his office only few years earlier[722].

By the end of the month, however, it had become clear that American preparations for a coup had outpaced Nhu's efforts to reach an accord with the North. On 30 September Melvin Manful, Counsellor for Political Affairs at the Saigon embassy, cabled on this "cagey game" between Nhu, Hanoi, and Paris the French, "who have all along chafed over their loss of influence, would be more than happy to have the opportunity to play the role of the chief Western influence upon the departure of the U.S." Nhu saw a showdown with Washington approaching within three months and hoped to parlay the success of the strategic hamlet program into a better deal with the

[721] Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., "Embassy telegram (to Rusk)," 16/9/63, National Security Files, Series 1. Countries, box 199, Vietnam-General, 9/11/63-9/17/63 State Cables, JFKL.
[722] Ibid.

North while the United States was still in the country in force[723]. While Nhu welcomed the long-term vision expressed in the de Gaulle statement, he still viewed the strategic hamlet program as the best means of creating favourable grounds for eventual negotiations, perhaps in December or early 1964, with Ho's representatives, who would probably have to delay any response as they waited on instructions from Moscow and Beijing[724].

In the end, however, Nhu overestimated the length of this brief window of opportunity to save his own position and, more importantly, to finally bring peace to his country. Administration discussion continued almost to the end of October, and Kennedy's indirect position was that the United States did not necessarily want a coup, but it would not oppose one. Washington was forewarned of the coup at least a week before it was launched, with Kennedy and McNamara willing to take a "que sera, sera" approach. Ambassador Lodge, who was micromanaging an amateurish operation that was barely concealed from the regime, was, however far more enthusiastic for getting rid of Diem. On 1 November a group of ARVN generals led by General Duong Van Minh stormed the presidential palace in Saigon after Diem and Nhu refused an offer of safe passage out of the country and attempted to flee the palace, but were captured and summarily executed the following day. Everyone, Lodge included, was shocked by Diem's murder, and Kennedy in particular was dismayed by the moral implications of American actions[725]. The coup would eventually quash tentative, cautiously-executed

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[723] Melvin Manful, "Vietnamese Reactions to de Gaulle's Statement of August 29 and Some Related Developments," 30/9/63, Confidential U.S. State Department Central Files, Vietnam: Internal and Foreign Affairs, 1960-1963, 59, box 69, US-Relations with France 1960-1963, C96: Reel 13, Microfilm Rm., NACP.
[724] Ibid.
[725] Freedman, 390-5.

French initiatives to create the conditions for talks on a neutral, reunited Vietnam, as Nhu had been the only major player in South Vietnamese politics with the will and contacts to bring about an accommodation with the North.

As flawed as Diem had been, none of his post-coup successors were anywhere near as capable, increasing South Vietnam's dependency on the United States and feeding North Vietnamese propaganda that portrayed the leadership in Saigon as little more than a cabal of American stooges. None were cunning enough to play Nhu's double game of simultaneously negotiating with enemy and ally alike, while America's formal entry into the war with the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in August 1964 shattered any remaining hopes of de-escalation. Kennedy too was killed, taking an assassin's bullet as his presidential motorcade rode through Dallas on 22 November 1963.

At this point the French campaign for an early, peaceful solution to the conflict effectively drew to a close. De Gaulle would soon discover that Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson, would not even bother to listen to French proposals and the two men never spoke at any point from Kennedy's funeral to the Gulf of Tonkin incident. In five years as president Lyndon Johnson spoke to de Gaulle only twice—the second occasion being Adenauer's funeral in 1967—and justified his near total avoidance of the French president with colourful baseball metaphors that portrayed Johnson as a slugger facing a fearsome curveball artist[726]. De Gaulle had failed to sway either president to his correct assessment of America's prospects for success if it entered the conflict, and Johnson's

[726] Lyndon Johnson, *The Vantage Point: perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 212.

tragic decision to formally bring America into the war was the logical outcome of his predecessor's policy of delegitimizing an alternative French world view.

The events of Kennedy's final year mark a tragic final chapter in his administration's rejection of the Gaullist program for Vietnam. Diem's resistance to American 'guidance' served as an obstacle to the ambitious counter-insurgency and nation-building programs the administration had laid out, the government's brutal repression of Buddhists was causing a massive propaganda embarrassment for the United States, there was growing distaste for the conflict in American public opinion, and most importantly, a will in both halves of the country to explore a ceasefire deal. Nevertheless, while the argument for a peace policy seemingly grew stronger by the day, the administration never considered exploring the French plan.

CONCLUSION

The Vietnam War fell roughly in the middle of the "American Century[727]" that was bookended by costly, divisive military interventions in the Philippines in 1898 and Iraq in 2003. That the Kennedy administration, so confident in its understanding of American exceptionalism, committed a tremendous amount of lives, money, and effort in remaking a far corner of the world in America's image is hardly remarkable; many of his predecessors and successors had also done so elsewhere in one form or another. It is also true that Kennedy had inherited momentum towards robust intervention in Southeast Asia from Eisenhower, who had steadily positioned the United States as the major foreign power in Vietnam after the French withdrawal in 1954. Kennedy was tragically assassinated while in office, leaving the ultimate decision on whether to formally join the fighting to Johnson, an accidental president who would have much preferred to focus on an ambitious, noble-minded domestic reform agenda. Was Vietnam really Kennedy's war?

At essence, Kennedy's real fault in Vietnam was more that he did not apply the brakes in time and re-evaluate the consequences of this slow-motion march to war. Playing for time, as he had in Laos in 1962, was never a viable option in the summer of 1963 once monks started self-immolating in central Saigon to protest repressive government policy and the countryside had largely become the fief of domestic communist guerrillas. The administration's tacit authorization of the coup that led to Diem and Nhu's murder effectively marked a major, unpleasant evolution of the client-

[727] This term was originally coined by *Time-Life* publisher Henry Luce in 1941.

patron relationship that all but tied South Vietnam's fate to Washington. For that, Kennedy bears responsibility.

Despite Camelot myth-making, Kennedy was flawed and human, which is entirely forgivable. What is less so is the New Frontiersmen's boastfulness of their "objective vision" when others were selfish and narrow-minded, its cherished ability to manage crises under extreme pressure, and the sound social science grounding of the modernization theory that shaped its approach to the Third World. The men of the Kennedy administration were, for the most part, rank conformists who never saw the contradiction in fighting for the Free World while remaining completely intolerant of dissent, either internal—from men like Ball, Galbraith, Bowles, Gavin, and Mansfield—or external—from de Gaulle, and occasionally to a more muted extent, Adenauer. They were so wrapped up in managing day-to-day crises across the globe that they were never able to imagine a way out of the Cold War. Their conviction that experienced statesmen from NATO allies—be it de Gaulle, Adenauer, Harold MacMillan, or John Diefenbaker—had nothing to teach them was proven dreadfully wrong.

Kennedy's natural over-confidence was combined with long-standing suspicions of French national character and France's colonial legacy. He had bought into popular negative views of France and French foreign policy circulating in interwar America by the time he was an undergraduate at Harvard. These prejudices were revealed in the diary from his 1937 trip to Europe. From Congress and the Senate, Kennedy's writing and speeches on France employed subtle cultural stereotypes and gendered language that reflected his mistrust of the country. When de Gaulle shattered the feminized stereotypes of Fourth Republic France by bringing strength to the French presidency and securing an

honourable withdrawal from Algeria, Kennedy shifted to the mistaken notion that Franco-American policy disagreements were explained by de Gaulle's supposed character flaws and the French president's historically-rooted anti-Americanism. When de Gaulle disagreed with Kennedy on Vietnam at the Paris summit and after, familiar stereotypes of France flooded back, providing the administration with a convenient justification to dismiss his position without really debating it on its merits. Malevolent intent was always assumed to be the driving force behind French foreign policy and little effort was made to understand the French national interest as de Gaulle understood it. America would suffer greatly over the following decade from Kennedy's close-mindedness on America's first foreign ally.

Charles de Gaulle was portrayed as many things over the course of his long and storied career—messianic advocate of tank warfare in the interwar years, rallying figure for a painfully divided nation in the 1940s, and the president who finally brought an end to *le bourbier algérien* in 1962—but he is best remembered both at home and abroad as one who seemed to take his greatest pleasure in sabotaging the American superpower's designs. It is often argued that any French government would undoubtedly have pursued the same ends as de Gaulle, but *le général* brought the means—high drama, public moralizing, and conflict escalation—that entrenched his hero status for so many of his countrymen. De Gaulle's diplomacy naturally rankled across the Atlantic, yet *le général* had the ability to see Cold War issues with a degree of clarity absent in American corridors of power. De Gaulle, having just extricated France from its own bloody war in Algeria, knew well that American intervention in Vietnam would only complicate a very delicate local dispute and was sure to end in failure. He expressed his views privately at

first and then went to the press only after he found himself completely ignored by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations.

Several key historiographical questions arise when examining de Gaulle's Vietnam policy: had de Gaulle set himself on an irreversible path towards confrontation with *les Anglo-Saxons* all along or did Washington "lose" him somewhere along the way? Was he simply using Vietnam as a means of humiliating the United States in front of the entire world?

In effect, the Americans did lose de Gaulle, a "rebel by inclination" to Jean Lacouture, but one who most likely could have functioned within the constraints of an American-dominated alliance that acknowledged French national interests and accepted the need for real consultation on matters of joint concern. The Kennedy administration, like its predecessor, proved unwilling to offer the symbolic concession of an informal *directoire* in exchange for more tractability from Paris; doing so would have required an admission that there were serious flaws to the manner in which Washington led NATO, something Kennedy had no intention of admitting. De Gaulle's critique of growing American involvement in Vietnam, which began politely and privately in discussions with Kennedy administration officials, was shaped by a belief that the ideological differences between East and West that so absorbed Washington were really of little import. Vietnam was a peripheral theatre; Europe was where the Cold War would ultimately be won or lost. His critique was not the product of a genuine expression of solidarity with Third World peoples and their national liberation movements, but neither was it the product of reflexive, knee-jerk anti-Americanism as many have argued. There

is huge significance to the fact that de Gaulle made public his Vietnam position only after the Kennedy administration had closed the door on greater consultation.

De Gaulle spent two and a half years patiently trying to sway the Kennedy administration to his—the correct—view of conflict. Only after Johnson had formally made the decision to go to war did de Gaulle become an increasingly vocal critic of the Johnson administration's Vietnam policy, culminating in a dramatic speech from Phnom Penh on 1 September 1966 in which he reiterated his long-standing call for the neutralization of Indochina. De Gaulle knew no one in the White House was listening by this point, but it mattered little to him. He was privately infuriated by Johnson's decision to tune him out completely, though he accepted that his critique alone would not alter American policy. Only when the United States reordered the way it viewed its national interests would it be able to wind down its commitment in Vietnam. His audience was world public opinion and this time his critique of the Vietnam War *was* part of a calculated bid to embarrass the reckless hegemon that ignored its allies one time too many.

From the Cambodian capital, de Gaulle publically summarized his assessment of the Vietnam conflict one final time. Unlike his August 1963 statement, this time he did mention the United States by name and his critique was clearly directed at Washington as he stated:

> [France] is [calling for withdrawal and negotiation] because of the exceptional and two-century-old friendship that… she has for America, because of the idea she has up to now had of her—like the one America has of herself—that is, the idea of a country championing the concept that we must allow people to determine their own destiny in their own way. She is saying this in consideration of the warnings which Paris long repeated to Washington when nothing irreparable had yet been done.

> She is saying this, lastly, with the conviction that, in view of the power, wealth and influence at present attained by the United States, the act of renouncing, in its turn, a distant expedition once it appears unprofitable and unjustifiable and of substituting for it an international arrangement organizing the peace and development of an important region of the world, will not, in the final analysis, involve anything that could injure its pride, interfere with its ideals and jeopardize its interests.
>
> On the contrary, in taking a path so true to the Western genius, what an audience would the United States recapture from one end of the world to the other, and what an opportunity would peace find on the scene and everywhere else. In any event, lacking this outcome, no mediation will offer a prospect of success, and that is why France, for her part, has never thought and does not think of proposing one.[728]

These words very succinctly recapitulated not only the French critique of America's involvement in the Vietnam War, but a position that a growing number of Americans were beginning to share.

In the early 1960s de Gaulle was not battling Kennedy on Vietnam alone; there were significant, but disunited and ineffective, anti-war voices within the American bureaucracy, such as George Ball, John Galbraith, Chester Bowles, and others. That the Kennedy administration also boxed out the few critical voices on Vietnam at home in their march to war would have provided little solace to de Gaulle. But one is left to wonder how events would have played out had men such as these been as bold with Kennedy regarding their opposition as de Gaulle had been. There was great irony that even though Kennedy and Johnson both chose to ignore de Gaulle's words of caution on Vietnam, a peace treaty would ultimately be negotiated under French auspices in 1973 on much worse terms for the West than the deal de Gaulle could have engineered a decade earlier.

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[728] Charles de Gaulle, "Discours de Phnom-Penh," 1 September 1966, Fondation Charles de Gaulle, http://www.charles-de-gaulle.org/pages/l-homme/accueil/discours/le-president-de-la-cinquieme-republique-1958-1969/discours-de-phnom-penh-1er-septembre-1966.php?searchresult=1&sstring=Phnom+Penh.

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