

# H-Diplo ROUNDTABLE XXI-5

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 INTRODUCTION BY FRÉDÉRIC BOZO, L'UNIVERSITÉ DE LA SORBONNE NOUVELLE—PARIS 3
 

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Emmanuel Macron's official photograph as President, taken in the wake of his May 2017 election, shows him casually leaning (or half sitting) on a Louis XV-style ornate desk in the Elysée's Salon Doré, which all presidents of the Fifth Republic (except for Valéry Giscard d'Estaing) have used as their official office. As if it was not clear enough that this had been Charles de Gaulle's desk fifty years before, Macron was keen to set in the backdrop of the picture, along with a clock, a copy of the General's *Mémoires de guerre*, lying open; the display of symbolic continuity between him and the founder of the Fifth Republic was for everyone to see. In a much-commented upon Tweet, Macron's adviser for communication shared a 'making-of' video in which Macron is seen preparing for the photo shoot. In the footage, he toys with other accessories, including two smartphones and two other books—André Gide's *Les Nourritures terrestres* and Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir*. The latter books and the communication devices also made their way into the official photograph, though in a slightly less conspicuous position. The not-so-subliminal message was clear: as he assumed office, the new president wanted both to embody and to modernize the fundamentals of Gaullism while displaying a personal—and somewhat transgressive—touch.<sup>1</sup>

The foregoing gives the measure of the extraordinary centrality of de Gaulle's towering figure in contemporary French history to this day. In many ways, just like his wartime nemesis, the Vichy régime, de Gaulle, to use the words of Henry Rousso, represents "an ever-present past."<sup>2</sup> To write a biography of the great man is therefore a daunting task for a historian, all the more so because the General's relationship with history—France's and his own—is a famously complicated affair. This is indeed demonstrated by his *War Memoirs*: the latter, wrote Stanley Hoffmann perceptively, are "an impassioned dialogue between the General and his idea of France."<sup>3</sup> History and 'legend,' in other words, are not easily distinguishable when it comes to de Gaulle and his role, as reflected in what has long been considered the most thorough study of the General and his deeds, Jean Lacouture's three-volume biography published in the 1980's—a book by a former critic turned unconditional admirer.<sup>4</sup>

Julian Jackson's thoroughly researched and well-written book, with its more than 900 pages, including 20 pages of bibliography and more than 50 pages of end notes containing references (bibliographical and archival) as well as many maps and illustrations, will no doubt constitute a new standard work for the years to come. All four reviewers share this view, and they are in unison in thinking, as I do, that Jackson's work is a first-rate piece of scholarship. Herrick Chapman believes it is "the most definitive and insightful biography of [de Gaulle] we are likely to have in a very long time;" N. Piers Ludlow sees the book as "an accomplished biography of a remarkable man;" Philip Nord describes it as "a rich and rounded portrait," adding that "this biography is a page-turner;" and, as to Maurice Vaisse, he praises the book as based on "encyclopedic research."

The reviewers give high marks to Jackson for his knowledge and use of sources, whether primary or secondary. Ludlow underlines that "[Jackson] knows the literature on French domestic politics and society in both eras [the war years and the

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<sup>1</sup> Bastien Bonnefous et (and) Solenn de Royer, « Emmanuel Macron, un portrait officiel où chaque détail compte, » *Le Monde*, 30 juin (June) 2017, [https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2017/06/30/un-portrait-officiel-ou-chaque-detail-compte\\_5153391\\_823448.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2017/06/30/un-portrait-officiel-ou-chaque-detail-compte_5153391_823448.html).

<sup>2</sup> Eric Conan and Henry Rousso, *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas* (Paris: Fayard, 1994); published in English-language translation as *Vichy: An Ever-Present Past* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1998)

<sup>3</sup> Stanley Hoffmann, *Essais sur la France. Déclin ou renouveau ?* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1974), 265. See Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre*, 3 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1970).

<sup>4</sup> Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle*, 3 vols. (Paris, Le Seuil, 1984, 1985, and 1986).

presidential years] inside out,” and that “he has also read extensively on the international politics of the two periods.” Vaisse emphasizes Jackson’s fine use of primary sources, including those he found in archival repositories and in the published documents such as (in terms of foreign policy) the *Documents diplomatiques français* as well as contemporary memoirs or testimonies, including those of Alain Peyrefitte and Jacques Foccart.<sup>5</sup> He praises Jackson for being fully aware that “verbatim records of conversations between leaders can be misleading.”

The reviewers share my appreciation of Jackson’s treatment of de Gaulle’s personality and record as both positive in large measure but also distanced, if not critical in significant ways—in contrast with Lacouture’s almost exclusively laudatory treatment. Unsurprisingly, all four reviewers share Jackson’s (and this author’s) fascination with an individual who very few would dispute was one of the great statesmen of the twentieth century and whose actions made a difference at critical junctures in the history of France and Europe, not least of course in June 1940. De Gaulle, in Jackson’s biography, is amply confirmed as an exceptional personality and a towering historic actor. Still, reading Jackson, Ludlow sees de Gaulle as a “deeply flawed individual, capable at times of coldness and petty spite, beset by frequent moments of agonizing self-doubt (particularly during the wartime years but also in May 1968, for instance), and guilty of serious misjudgments about how his colleagues, allies, or voters would react;” Ludlow emphasizes that Jackson makes no attempt “to airbrush out the numerous failures and setbacks of de Gaulle’s actions.” “De Gaulle was ... a rigid, sometimes impossible personality who was old-school in so many ways,” Nord takes away from Jackson’s book.

As to de Gaulle’s actions, they do not come across in the book as uniformly successful or admirable, whether in terms of domestic or foreign policies. Nord notes that “Jackson doesn’t hesitate to label de Gaulle’s conduct” when returning to power in May-June 1958 “a coup d’état,” and that “his conduct during the Algerian crisis” (and more generally in colonial issues since the war) hardly “prove[s] him to be the farseeing decolonizer that keepers of the Gaullist flame often claim him to be.” Chapman agrees with Jackson that “he did not ‘grant’ [Algeria] independence: it was wrested from him,” and that “he only partially avoided civil war.” As to foreign policy, Chapman shares Jackson’s notion that “De Gaulle’s foreign and military policy achievements were mixed—enduring, in putting the Franco-German partnership at the center of the European project and in giving France an independent nuclear deterrent; more fleeting, in matters of NATO, Québec, and blocking Britain from the Common Market.” Vaisse agrees: Jackson, he observes, “is right to note that France’s rapprochement with Moscow was not really reciprocal, since during the Middle East crisis, which revealed the limits of French influence, the Soviets preferred dealing directly with the Americans.”

Altogether, Jackson’s outstanding book—perhaps unsurprisingly given the magnitude of the existing literature—does not fundamentally change our knowledge of de Gaulle and his actions, but it does shed light on important aspects on both scores. In terms of de Gaulle’s personality, Ludlow is quite justified in commenting that “what this book does make abundantly clear is that de Gaulle did not remain stuck in some time-warp. On the contrary, he remained almost until the end both a perceptive observer of the world around him, especially the international system, and a surprisingly adept learner. Indeed de Gaulle’s ability to learn is for me one of the great revelations of this book.”

As to de Gaulle’s actions, I very much agree with Nord when he writes that “at critical junctures he was prepared to bend and to bend in ways that were both transformative for him personally and momentous for France.” Nord perceptively highlights two such moments: the first was de Gaulle’s summer 1941 address at the Albert Hall, when the General solemnly embraced the republican creed, which, Nord rightly remarks, allowed him in the following months and years “to rally the non-communist Resistance to the Gaullist banner and to line up the support of France’s mainstream parties..., assembling a coalition that stymied the Communist competition and force[ing] the Anglo-Saxon powers to recognize de Gaulle’s pre-eminence;” and the second transformative moment was de Gaulle’s decision, in the wake of Algerian independence, to “pivot” from his past pro-imperial and anti-German stance “toward Europe, embracing the EEC and the Germans” in a

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<sup>5</sup> Alain Peyrefitte, *C’était De Gaulle*, 3 vols. (Paris, éditions Fayard, 1994-2000); Jacques Foccart, *Journal de l’Elysée*, deux tomes, 1965-1968 et 1968-1969 (Paris, éditions Fayard, 1997 et 1998).

“breathtaking volte-face.” This, Nord rightly asserts, meant “building Europe with a Franco-German condominium situated at its beating heart.” This perhaps remains today de Gaulle’s most enduring legacy.

**Participants:**

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## REVIEW BY HERRICK CHAPMAN, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

*De Gaulle as Leader: The Benefits and the Costs to France*

“**A**ll my life I have had a certain idea of France,” Charles de Gaulle famously claimed at the beginning of his *War Memoirs*.<sup>6</sup> He might easily have also said that at least since June 1940 he had a certain idea of *himself* as France—as the providential savior who dared to reject France’s 1940 armistice with Germany and carry on the fight. That moment defined him. As Julian Jackson shows in this, the most definitive and insightful biography of the man we are likely to have in a very long time, de Gaulle came to equate himself with his country so completely that he “turned his own personality into a philosophy of action” (179). He mobilized to full advantage his outsized stature, arrogance, pigheadedness, and strategic brilliance so as to restore France as a sovereign republic at the Liberation, to secure the grudging recognition of the Allies, and to make his country count again as a major force in the postwar international order. “Behaving like a great power,” Jackson remarks, “was de Gaulle’s way of becoming one.” (208) Indeed, he became “de Gaulle,” an imagined personage to whom people attached their own (often disparate) hopes for their nation. For the rest of his life he would remain a figure “through whom the French fought out their history and politics.... [T]hey made him as much as he made them” (xl).

This dynamic between the leader and the led serves as one of the key themes of Jackson’s book. As early as his adolescence de Gaulle became enthralled by the subject of leadership. He chose a military career for its opportunities to lead, and he did so valiantly as a platoon commander in the First World War. The four books he then wrote as a military thinker during the interwar years all had much to say about leadership. In a particularly telling passage in *The Edge of the Sword* (1932), he argued that a leader must adopt an air of mystery and distance, along with a “large dose of egoism, of pride, of hardness and of ruse”—a formula he was to follow to the letter a decade later as head of the Free French and then again as president of the Fifth Republic.<sup>7</sup>

As early as the 1930s de Gaulle also came to the firm conviction that France needed not only better leaders but also constitutional changes to bolster the authority of state. ‘State reform’ became a major focus of national debate in the early years of that decade. The conservative politician André Tardieu argued for constitutional changes to strengthen the executive and weaken parliament. Opponents of this view, such as Senator Joseph Caillaux of the Radical Party and the young center-left politician Pierre Mendès France, regarded the constitutional route to reform as both pitifully insufficient and dangerously undemocratic. They argued instead for a new breed of enlightened and audacious leaders who could work within the existing order. De Gaulle sided with Tardieu, but what makes him so distinctive in this regard is that he ended up living out the imperatives of both sides in this debate: de Gaulle made himself a model of charismatic, audacious leadership, and he created a new constitution for the Fifth Republic that strengthened the executive. He then bolstered the presidency further still by invoking emergency powers and facing down diehards in the French army who were seeking to defy his Algerian policy. He did so by turning foreign and military affairs into a privileged domain of presidential authority at the expense of the prime minister, and by making the presidency subject to direct election via a referendum in October 1962.

De Gaulle’s effectiveness as a leader was not just a product of his imperious personality and the institutional changes he was able to secure. As Jackson shows, it derived too from his capacious curiosity, the breadth of his learning, and his wizardry with words. Jackson describes de Gaulle’s unforgettable speech at the Hôtel de Ville at the Liberation of Paris—“Paris! Paris

<sup>6</sup> “Toute ma vie, je me suis fait une certaine idée de France,” the opening sentence of the *War Memoirs*; Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre. Documents*, 3 vols. (Paris: Plon, 1970).

<sup>7</sup> As quoted from *Le fil de l’épée* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1932) in Jackson, *De Gaulle*, 68. De Gaulle’s other three books from the interwar years include *La discorde chez l’ennemi* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1924), *Vers l’armée de métier* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1934), and *La France et son armée* (Paris: Plon, 1938).

outraged! Paris martyred ... but Paris liberated! Liberated by itself!—as “one of the great passages of French twentieth-century political oratory” (326). Though not a gifted speaker early on in his political career, de Gaulle learned to master the public stage. By the 1960s, Jackson tells us, he had become a “brilliant performer” at television press conferences (623). As for administration, he avoided managerial detail and the intricacies of policy planning, which he delegated to others. But he kept a keen eye on everything and everyone around him. He was a discerning observer of people, and, when he wanted to be, a superb listener. All his life he read voraciously. He often astonished his associates by how much he knew about the most remote of subjects and how quickly he synthesized information. Though he professed to disdain the nitty-gritty of politics, in private he was fascinated by it. He followed local electoral contests with great intensity. These many qualities and habits of mind, Jackson points out, contrasted sharply with “the image of someone ruling in Olympian solitude” (635).

Jackson also emphasizes that for all of his intransigence, de Gaulle was pragmatic. He adapted to circumstances when he had to. Despite his conservative inclinations, he finally began to champion democratic values in 1941 when the Allies and internal Resistance begged him to do so. Relentless in making his own demands on Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin D. Roosevelt, he pushed them “to the brink of rupture and then drew back,” understanding just how far he could go (365). Realistic about the limits of French power, he stopped short of military confrontation with Britain over Syria in 1945. Likewise, in the Algerian war he inched his way gnominically in 1958 and 1959, keeping his options open and his aims ambiguous, until he came to the view that it would be better to end the war on the terms he wanted than to keep trying to win it.

His pragmatism extended to economic matters as well. In 1945, when Mendès France, as Minister of National Economy, recommended a rigorous austerity plan and a new currency to avoid inflation, de Gaulle refused. He opted instead for easier money and the more politically palatable strategy of issuing bonds to absorb the economy’s liquidity. By the same token, when political circumstances allowed for bold economic initiatives, he took them. It is often said that de Gaulle took little interest in economic policy. Jackson argues vigorously to the contrary. Whereas de Gaulle always regarded the reform of France’s political institutions as primary, he still was “intermittently obsessed” by France’s economic improvement as well (637). In 1958, freshly reinstated in power, he threw his weight behind the Rueff Plan, a combination of tax hikes, budget cuts, currency devaluation, and the introduction of the ‘new franc’ to tame inflation and prepare the country to handle the competitive pressures of the new Common Market. Likewise, he became especially keen to bolster economic planning, even to the point of wanting to make the recommendations of the Plan obligatory, something Prime Minister Michel Debré talked him out of. Once the Algerian War was behind him, de Gaulle made France’s economic interests a top priority, embracing the economic stabilization plan of 1963 and fighting fiercely to make Europe’s Common Agricultural Program work to French farmers’ advantage. Jackson argues that “he wanted grain *and* grandeur” (658).

These capacities and commitments worked to de Gaulle’s benefit, and that of his country. But Jackson is also unsparing in exploring the negative side of de Gaulle’s leadership style. And negative there surely was. Signs of it came early. We learn, for example, that although de Gaulle’s physical courage and decisiveness won him the confidence of the men under his command in World War I, he remained aloof, peremptory, and insistent on his own superiority. He lacked the capacity to connect to his men and cultivate a spirit of mutual respect—a failing, Jackson suggests, that would likely have prevented him from becoming a truly inspiring battlefield commander had he stayed in the business and not moved on to the higher reaches of the military bureaucracy and then on to politics.

This deficiency endured. Legions of politicians and diplomats, colleagues and subordinates, were to complain about his arrogance and dismissiveness. They usually did so in private correspondence, diaries, or later memoirs. Jackson quotes much of this material to great effect. The economist Georges Boris, for example, who joined up with the Free French very early on in London, wrote Léon Blum in 1942 to say: “In my view [de Gaulle] would be a great man, even a very great man, . . . if he could more easily make contact with people. Undoubtedly it is because he despises them that he does not understand them.” On rare occasions a colleague confronted the man directly about the problem. In 1943 André Philip, a leading Socialist politician and Free French luminary, wrote de Gaulle to scold him for “consulting no one except yourself.” He warned him to change his ways “now,” lest he return to France at the Liberation as a self-isolating authoritarian that the public would soon reject (286). Perhaps de Gaulle felt the sting. Jackson suggests that he did try harder to woo the political allies he

needed as he prepared the ground for the Liberation. And it has to be said that as difficult as it was to work with the man—with his violent rages, his bouts of melancholy, his lashing out at subordinates—many talented politicians and operatives in his inner circle remained long-term loyalists, despite the abuse. The darker side of his personality, moreover, may have given him some of the mystery and distance he thought useful for the kind of “republican monarch” he sought to be. But it also deprived him of the finer arts of seduction and persuasion that could have made him a greater politician still.

More consequential for France than these shortcomings of personality was de Gaulle’s longstanding hostility to pressure groups, trade unions, and political parties. In his view they merely defended particular interests at the expense of the state, which he revered as the embodiment of the general interest, the source of France’s continuity, progress, order, and unity. Jackson quotes de Gaulle’s remarkable speech of 1959 where he described the “service of the State as the most noble and important action that exists in the temporal order” (375). Hence his trust for close advisors, high civil servants, and policy experts who derived their authority from state service, or service to him, rather than from their leadership roles in civil society. Hence, too, his ambivalence in the 1960s about being a party leader himself or having even his own Gaullist party acquire too much power in parliament.

Throughout his career de Gaulle harbored the fantasy of what Pompidou called his “utopia of unanimity”—a perpetuation of the *Union sacrée* of 1914 when parties and interest groups set aside their partisanship for the good of the country. Jackson sees this utopian thinking on display in the *War Memoirs*, where, in his account of the Liberation era of 1944-1945 de Gaulle repeatedly writes about how “that ‘communion,’ the ‘shared emotion,’ and ‘frisson of unanimity’ characterizing [his] encounters with the French [are] increasingly poisoned by the ‘academies,’ ‘elites,’ ‘assemblies’ and ‘parties’ who interpose themselves between the Saviour-Guide and his People” (436). Of course, as president of the Fifth Republic de Gaulle could hardly wish away intermediary groups between society and the state or the messiness of pressure group politics. On the contrary, he and his prime ministers (first Debré and then Georges Pompidou) had to adapt to the policy precedents and political dynamics of the Fourth Republic, much more so than they cared to admit.<sup>8</sup> But by being so openly distrustful of organized interest groups and so disdainful of their purposes, de Gaulle failed to understand that strong states also need strong societal intermediaries to contend and bargain with. He was an institution builder, to be sure, but only on the state’s side of the ledger.

For all of de Gaulle’s disregard for parties, political movements, and special interests, he intuitively understood that he needed some kind of social vision to be an effective leader of his country. It deeply disturbed him that “mechanization and industrial civilization,” as he often put it, created class conflicts and alienation that his Communist opponents could exploit (397). In 1947, when launching the (ultimately unsuccessful) *Rassemblement du Peuple Français* (RPF) as an electoral vehicle to return him to power, he hit upon the idea of ‘association’ as a response to the Left, a rather vague invocation of the need for greater cooperation and respect between workers and employers, labor and capital. The notion was hardly original; for de Gaulle it no doubt derived from social Catholicism and from corporatist notions that had become popular in the 1930s and that had found their way into Vichy’s economic and social policies. ‘Association’ enabled de Gaulle to claim he had a social vision. But his ideas went nowhere. His inner circle had little interest in making anything out of them.

Then in the mid-1960s, disappointed by the narrowness of his victory in the presidential election in 1965 and aware of the image of his regime as a technocracy, he suddenly began to focus on ‘participation.’ Under this equally vague rubric he floated such ideas as profit-sharing for workers, greater authority for regional bodies, and decades-old proposals to convert the Senate into a corporatist body of interest-group representation. Pompidou dismissed all this as the president’s “hobbyhorse” (699). When de Gaulle amplified his rhetoric about ‘participation’ to try to quell the social upheaval of May 1968, student rebels brutally mocked him for it. Jackson sums up the problem succinctly: “De Gaulle had genuinely convinced himself that it was his mission to introduce participation into French society, despite the fact that his way of

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<sup>8</sup> I develop this argument in Herrick Chapman, *France’s Long Reconstruction: In Search of the Modern Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018).

exercising authority was the antithesis of participatory” (748). With ‘68ers clamoring for radical changes in the structure of power across a host of institutions in France, de Gaulle’s call for ‘participation’ fell utterly flat.

Jackson ends his book with a judicious assessment of de Gaulle’s record, which, on balance, he views as positive.<sup>9</sup> True, he gives him lower marks than have some other historians for his accomplishments in decolonization.<sup>10</sup> As Jackson points out, much of the work of extricating France from its overseas empire occurred under the Fourth Republic, not the Fifth. As for Algeria, “he did not ‘grant’ independence: it was wrested from him. And he only partially avoided civil war” (545). De Gaulle’s foreign and military policy achievements were mixed—enduring, in putting the Franco-German partnership at the center of the European project and in giving France an independent nuclear deterrent; more fleeting, in matters of NATO, Québec, and blocking Britain from the Common Market. But Jackson does give de Gaulle due credit for his two great legacies: establishing a constitution for the Fifth Republic that eventually “created a consensus, for the first time in 150 years, around the nature of France’s political institutions”; and most important, “saving the honour of France” from 1940 to 1944 (774, 777).

The heroic side of this complicated man is clear to see, so it is hardly surprising that in our era of polarized politics and log-jammed governance, de Gaulle’s stock has soared. When polled in 2010, the French public ranked him as their most important historical figure (xxix). France’s current president, Emmanuel Macron, has made much of trying to emulate this ‘Jupiter.’ But de Gaulle left a negative legacy for the Fifth Republic as well, and in this respect Jackson may judge de Gaulle less harshly than would I. By doubling down on the state as the fountainhead of all progress in France, by doing too little to legitimize the role of parties and interest groups, and by invoking “participation” without making it real, de Gaulle did more than his share to make the Fifth Republic a regime where people feel compelled to take to the streets to be heard. Would-be Jupiters, current and future, would be well advised to read this extraordinary biography to take the full measure of both sides of de Gaulle’s leadership ledger. De Gaulle endowed France with a stable Fifth Republic, but also with a volatile polity, where the likes of the *gilets jaunes* (yellow vests), student protesters, transport strikers, and others aiming for participatory disruption are always just around the corner.

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<sup>9</sup> At several points in the book Jackson takes issue with the biographer Eric Roussel, who, Jackson argues, paints de Gaulle as more conservative and authoritarian than he was. See Eric Roussel, *De Gaulle* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> As, for example, the more positive view of de Gaulle as decolonizer in Paul-Marie de La Gorce, *De Gaulle* (Paris: Perrin, 1999).



For a historian of modern France, writing a biography of de Gaulle must be like climbing the north face of the Eiger for a mountaineer. The attractions are obvious. De Gaulle towers above his contemporaries, fascinating, infuriating, and mysterious in equal measure. He is also the sole Frenchman whose place in the pantheon of major international statesmen of the twentieth century is beyond dispute. But like the north face of the Eiger it is also a huge technical challenge. De Gaulle was, and remains, a deeply divisive figure, ensuring that any would-be biographer has almost too many contradictory assessments and opinions of the man to deal with. His own words—often beautifully crafted and assiduously curated since his death—are also almost too plentiful, and were frequently intended to be ambiguous. His two moments of real political importance, furthermore, took place in the vastly different worlds of allied cooperation and rivalry during World War II, and the postwar Europe of the 1960s. Each period has its own particular challenges, with comparatively few historians equally well-equipped to deal with both, and there is also the further difficulty of knowing how much importance to accord to the earlier period when explaining the decisions taken by President de Gaulle between 1959 and 1969. Was the French leader of the 1960s a man stuck in the past, as some of his critics alleged, still fighting battles dating back to real or perceived slights received in the 1940s, or instead a man who showed a remarkable ability to adapt his actions to the circumstances of, and opportunities open to, 1960s France?

Julian Jackson's new biography deals with each of these challenges with great skill. The potential challenge of the very different effects that de Gaulle's words and behaviour could have on different people is confronted head on, with the book often supplying two or more divergent reactions or assessments of the same meeting, speech, or decision. At times the author helpfully reminds the reader of why some testimonies are less reliable than others; for instance, many of the retrospective assessments by Edward Spears, the officer who played an important role in de Gaulle's early wartime interaction with the British but who subsequently fell out badly with the General, carry a health warning. But in many cases the whole point is to demonstrate the gap between individual accounts, sometimes to highlight the narrowness of the political tightrope that the General had to walk, at others to emphasise the extent to which, as Jackson puts it at one point, "De Gaulle had a gift for suggestive obscurity" (490). De Gaulle's own words and carefully massaged recollections, whether culled from his memoirs, his collected speeches and papers, or from the many other comments and aperçus he allowed to be written down at the time, thus rub shoulders with accounts from loyalist companions, whether in the Free French or the Gaullist V Republic presidency, as well as the reactions of exasperated foreign interlocutors, assessments, both critical and adulatory, from the French press, or observations from fellow French politicians. This balanced approach culminates in an excellent concluding chapter which looks, again in both wide-ranging and sympathetic fashion, at the way in which France in general and French politicians in particular have played upon and been affected by the Gaullist legacy.

The book is also scrupulously fair in its assessment of the General's successes and failures. The de Gaulle that emerges from these pages is a deeply flawed individual, capable at times of coldness and petty spite, beset by frequent moments of agonising self-doubt (particularly during the wartime years but also in May 1968, for instance), and guilty of serious misjudgements about how his colleagues, allies, or voters would react. There is no attempt here to airbrush out the numerous failures and setbacks of de Gaulle's actions, ranging from the ineffectiveness of his attempts to play off his American and British allies against each other during World War II, via the fatal hesitations that doomed his postwar *Rassemblement du peuple français*, to the ultimately fruitless efforts to breed dissent amongst the Eastern European members of the Soviet Bloc. The degree to which he failed to adapt to a France that had changed much more than he had during his presidency is also brought out powerfully and almost movingly in the book's final chapters. But Jackson equally recognises how much was achieved, often against overwhelming odds. During World War II, his success in gaining any international role at all amongst the allies, and the degree to which he built up a hold over occupied and then liberated France that was so strong as to beat off all domestic challengers, are remarkable indeed, especially when one recalls the inauspicious circumstances of his arrival in London in June 1940. Similarly, while much of his grandiose 1960s vision of reshaping the Cold War balance of power in Europe remained unfulfilled, his presidency did give France a centrality to European and world affairs in the 1960s that it had not enjoyed since 1919 and has certainly not regained since.

Jackson seems as assured when writing about the 1960s as he is about the 1940s—or indeed the period in between. He knows the literature on French domestic politics and society in both eras inside out. But he has also read extensively on the international politics of the two periods, giving him a very solid grasp of the difficulties that confronted de Gaulle. Inevitably perhaps there isn't space in a single volume, large though it is, to explore each international issue in as much detail as some detailed monographs or articles have done.<sup>11</sup> This is not necessarily the only place to go for the twists and turns of de Gaulle's European policy, his struggle to develop the *force de frappe*, or his importance in Cold War history. But where the biographical approach can really add is in reminding those of us who tend to zero in on one particular facet of French policy during this era of how much else de Gaulle was forced to struggle with at the very same time. Nowhere is this more true than in the opening sections of part IV which bring home powerfully how de Gaulle's early years back in power were dominated by the Algerian impasse. Until this was settled, de Gaulle's options, internationally and domestically, were seriously constrained. The title of the relevant chapter is telling: "This affair which absorbs and paralyzes us."

I also liked the manner in which this biography deals with the effects that de Gaulle's wartime experiences and network of both friends and enemies had on his actions as Fifth Republic President. As a post-1945 specialist I must confess to a degree of annoyance with those authors (and indeed those contemporaries of de Gaulle) who have sought to portray all of his actions as president as being deeply influenced by what had happened between 1940 and 1945. At the same time, my lack of in-depth knowledge of the earlier period limited my ability fully to rebut such assertions. Jackson, though, seems to strike an excellent balance. The past, it is clear, did matter greatly to de Gaulle. His very return to power in 1958, but also the international attention he was quickly able to command, despite the Algerian difficulties referred to above, depended upon his reputation as France's saviour during the Second World War. The shadow of World War II also had an important influence on his interaction with some of his international counterparts, whether U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower or British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, both of whom had had tempestuous dealings with de Gaulle during the wartime years. He was also able to play on his closeness in age and in background when striking up his remarkable partnership with Konrad Adenauer, the first post-war German chancellor. And his rhetorical sallies as president did frequently refer back to wartime instances, whether to denounce the Yalta settlement from which he had been excluded but now needed to be overcome, or to remind the British, as they edged towards European Community membership, of Prime Minister Winston Churchill's wartime observation that at a moment of crisis the UK would always choose 'le grand large,' the wide open sea and its allies beyond, over continental involvement.

But what this book does make abundantly clear is that de Gaulle did not remain stuck in some time-warp. On the contrary, he remained almost until the end both a perceptive observer of the world around him, especially the international system, and a surprisingly adept learner. Indeed de Gaulle's ability to learn is for me one of the great revelations of this book, in that the painfully awkward and stiff officer, who arrived in London in the summer of 1940 seemingly devoid of political skills, developed not merely into a man who seemed positively to enjoy plunging into the crowds who came to see him as president, but also into one of the first political stars of the television era. He may have come to international prominence through his BBC radio message of 18 June 1940, but his skills as a communicator and a politician went on developing and improving immensely over the next twenty five years.

All told, therefore, this is an accomplished biography of a remarkable man. After reading it, I still don't think I like de Gaulle as a person. Indeed, one of the strengths of this book is that I'm not sure that Jackson does either. But of de Gaulle's importance and astounding strength of character there can be absolutely no doubt. Few individuals get to shape two different eras. But de Gaulle undoubtedly did—albeit less fully and less successfully than he would have wanted. His failures and shortcomings, though, are as fascinating and as compelling as his successes. My appetite to learn more about him was thus increased rather than diminished by this excellent book.

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<sup>11</sup> Examples include Frédéric Bozo, *Two Strategies for Europe: De Gaulle, the United States and the Atlantic Alliance* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), Garret J. Martin, *General de Gaulle's Cold War: Challenging American Hegemony, 1963-1968* (New York: Berghahn, 2013), Benedikt Schoenborn, *La mésentente approuvée: De Gaulle et les Allemands, 1963-1969* (Paris: PUF, 2007)

REVIEW BY PHILIP NORD, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

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This is a superb biography. It clocks in at almost eight-hundred pages of text, yet compared to Jean Lacouture's massive three-tomed treatment of Charles de Gaulle's life, Jackson's is a model of concision, an impression reinforced by the volume's readability.<sup>12</sup> The story moves at a brisk pace, and of course, it helps that the story Jackson has to tell is a compelling one. De Gaulle was a man of complexities. He was a rigid, sometimes impossible personality who was old-school in so many ways. Yet, at critical junctures, he was prepared to bend, albeit not always with a good grace. And however traditionalist de Gaulle's deepest impulses, he time and again embraced the technological advances of the modern world and labored to fashion a France that was, not just conservative, but also modern.

De Gaulle's rigidity in matters of principle is legendary. Indeed, the founding moment of the Gaullist epic began with a gesture of principled defiance. On 17 June 1940, France's then prime minister, Maréchal Philippe Pétain, proposed to enter into armistice negotiations with the German invader, an act of capitulation that de Gaulle repudiated. He was a two-star general and a second-rank cabinet member at the time, yet that did not stop him from speaking out, which he did the very next day on the BBC airwaves, exhorting his countrymen with a terse eloquence not to give up the fight. For de Gaulle, this—the armistice, and not the National Revolution that followed—was Pétain's greatest crime, and de Gaulle was never moved to forgiveness. He could also be, as Jackson shows, no less unforgiving to erstwhile friends and allies, to Great Britain and the United States, with whom he clashed with contrarian hauteur whenever he felt the nation's interests to be at risk and that was often. De Gaulle was not a man who cultivated friendships, but a self-styled leader who stood alone and liked to be seen standing alone, braving all comers in the service of France.

Yet what "France" was it that de Gaulle saw himself as serving? Jackson succeeds in conveying just how traditionalist de Gaulle was. He was a child of Paris' Seventh arrondissement, home base to France's old-line elites, and the future general hewed to the values of the milieu in which he was born: army, empire, the State with a capital "S," and the Roman Catholic Church.

De Gaulle's military loyalties were enduring, if complicated. He entered adult life, a graduate of France's premiere military academy, with the intention of making a career in the army. He went on to serve with distinction in both world wars. In the aftermath of the June 18 appeal, not many rallied to de Gaulle's side, but among the handful who did were a number of comrades-in-arms: Charles Hettier de Boislabert, who had served under de Gaulle's command in the 1940 campaign, Philippe de Hautecloque, who is better remembered as General Leclerc; and Admiral Georges Thierry d'Argenlieu. As the colorful names attest, they were all, like de Gaulle himself, men of aristocratic pedigree who had taken to soldiering as a form of public service. De Gaulle, as the leader of Free France, built a combat force that took part in the fight against the Germans in North Africa, Italy, and France itself. France's internal Resistance had armed bands of its own, but once France's liberation was effected, de Gaulle, now head of government, insisted that they integrate into the regular army and subordinate themselves to the authority of commissioned military superiors. Forever after, when de Gaulle told the story of France's liberation, it was the exploits of men in uniform, not of the internal Resistance, that he highlighted. In 1958, as the Algerian crisis spun out of control, de Gaulle, working through intermediaries, coordinated with the army to build up pressure on civilian authorities to step aside and allow the General's return to public office. Jackson's account of this episode is forceful, and he doesn't hesitate to label de Gaulle's conduct a coup d'état. Now, think how often in the years afterward de Gaulle, as President of the Fifth Republic, appeared in person or on television wearing the brigadier general's uniform he had worn back in wartime days.

De Gaulle's militarism, however, had its limits, as Jackson makes crystal clear. The General admired Georges Clemenceau who, as prime minister during the Great War, saw France through to victory, a good deal more than he did Napoleon Bonaparte, whose overweening ambitions had brought the nation to the brink of ruin. The military, however important, had to take a back seat civilian authority. As Free France's leader, de Gaulle tried to keep political and military affairs apart,

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<sup>12</sup> Jean Lacouture, *De Gaulle* (Paris: Seuil, 1984-1986), 3 vols.

creating separate directorates to handle each. And, of course, as President of the Fifth Republic, de Gaulle had occasion more than once to face down unruly generals who were unhappy with what they felt to be his betrayal of *l'Algérie française*. Soldier that de Gaulle was in so many ways, there were plenty in the military who never forgave him his insubordination in 1940 or his eventual willingness to sanction Algerian independence.

Yet, does de Gaulle's conduct during the Algerian crisis prove him to be the farseeing decolonizer that keepers of the Gaullist flame often claim him to be? Jackson's answer to this is an emphatic no. During the Second World War, it was the imperial question as much as any other that poisoned de Gaulle's relations with what he called the Anglo-Saxons. The General feared Britain's designs in Lebanon, Syria, and Madagascar. Nor did he like it that the United States made itself so at home in French New Caledonia. At the Liberation, de Gaulle set about with a will reestablishing France's imperial sovereignty overseas. French troops used lethal violence to quell protests in Sétif and Damascus. Thierry d'Argenlieu was dispatched to Indochina to put the Viet Minh in its place. Sure, there were promises of reform. The Brazzaville conference of January 1944 made gestures in that direction, and de Gaulle attended in person to provide an opening address. But the open hand and mailed fist always went together, with the latter packing the heavier punch. De Gaulle's Algerian policy is a case in point. He did all that lay in his power to maintain France's position there. He tendered a carrot, in this instance the Constantine Plan, which envisioned five billion francs in development investment. It was announced in the fall of 1959, many months after the launching of another plan, the Challe Plan, a punishing counter-insurgency strategy designed to root out the *Front de libération nationale* (FLN) once and for all by force of arms. The combination did not succeed in its purposes, and Algeria won its independence, de Gaulle's best efforts to the contrary notwithstanding. Jackson's conclusion on this score is an apt and pithy one. The General "did not 'grant' independence: it was wrested from him" (545). At bottom, de Gaulle was an imperialist who let go of empire only when other options had failed.

In one domain, however, de Gaulle did get his way, scoring one success after another, and that was in the domain of state-building. At the Liberation, France did not descend into civil war, nor was its sovereignty compromised by an Allied occupation. This felicitous outcome owed much to Free French efforts during the war itself to prepare the transition to peace-time, to line up, that is, a shadow administration ready to take the place of Vichy authorities when the moment came. Once back in power in 1958, of course, the French state came in for a yet more thorough-going overhaul, as the parliamentarist republic of old gave way to a new kind of regime, this one concentrating power in the office of the presidency. Is it necessary to rehearse how hard-hitting this Gaullist state could be? The General was a man of order. Just ask anyone who was on the receiving end of a policeman's baton (or worse) in the 1960s, and there were many: Algerian immigrants in 1961, Communist demonstrators in 1962, and students and workers in 1968.

There's no doubting de Gaulle's investment in State authority, but it was not the regal State alone that mattered to him. He took an interest in social Catholicism. De Gaulle wanted France to navigate a way, a Third Way, between the Scylla of Communist collectivism and the Charybdis of laissez-faire individualism. Jackson notes all this but doesn't develop the point further. Yet, when de Gaulle was head of government in 1944-1946, this was just the course his administration charted, fashioning a mixed market economy endowed with a hefty public sector and a set of welfare institutions organized along familist and corporatist lines. De Gaulle, the social Catholic, was not the architect of this new order—he was not a man for detailed blueprints—, but he did preside at its founding.

The evocation of social Catholicism raises the question of religion's place in de Gaulle's life. On a personal level, it counted for a good deal. At Paris' Liberation, de Gaulle treated himself to a victory walk down the Champs-Élysées, and Jackson's book cover is adorned with a photo of this iconic scene. The march completed, however, where did the General head next but to Notre Dame cathedral for the recitation of a Te Deum mass. As President of the Republic, post-1958, he had a chapel installed in the Élysée Palace. As for de Gaulle's tastes in literature, he liked writers of Catholic sensibility best—René de Chateaubriand, Georges Bernanos, and François Mauriac (de Gaulle's favorite living author). It is worth wondering whether de Gaulle's religious commitments had policy consequences. Jackson, who is solid on the General's Catholic upbringing, does not explore the issue in any detail, but it as an important one. De Gaulle was present at the creation of France's postwar

welfare state which one social scientist has characterized as Christian-democratic.<sup>13</sup> The Debré law of 1959, named after de Gaulle's prime minister at the time, Michel Debré, authorized France's "secular" state to help pay teachers' salaries in religious schools. When de Gaulle, setting aside initial doubts, at last came around to embracing Europe, he found a ready interlocutor in West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. De Gaulle welcomed the German Chancellor to Colombey-les-deux-Églises in 1958, the only foreign leader ever so favored, and the two men got on. De Gaulle laid on the flattery, but it also helped, as Jackson observes, that they were "both Catholic traditionalists who shared many values" (498). In the aftermath of the Second World War, Christian-democratic parties sprang up across Western Europe and asserted their leadership in the continent's reconstruction. France appears a partial exception to the rule. It boasted a Christian-democratic party all right, the *Mouvement républicain populaire*, but the MRP's fortunes faded in the 1950s, and the party was all but dead by the decade following. It may be, however, that even as the party lost steam, the Christian-democratic principles it espoused lived on, finding a place of shelter under the capacious umbrella of a resurgent Gaullism.

Jackson's de Gaulle was a man of tradition who found ways to perpetuate the values of *la vieille France* into the twentieth century, but there was more to the General than that as Jackson's multi-faceted portrait makes clear. De Gaulle could say no when the nation's honor was at stake, but at critical junctures he was prepared to bend and to bend in ways that were both transformative for him personally and momentous for France.

One such moment took place early in the war. Germany had invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, and the French Communist Party, abandoning all equivocation, plunged into resistance work with all the disciplined militancy it could muster. That October, an emissary from the Resistance, Jean Moulin, paid a visit to de Gaulle in London, filling the General in on the political lay of the land back home. De Gaulle grasped that the Communists constituted a rival to himself and that to ward off the danger, he had to do more than opine from Britain in the accents of a soldier. He had to speak for France as a whole. The very next month, de Gaulle delivered an address at the Albert Hall in which he invoked, not just the military motto, "Honor and Fatherland," but also and for the first time the venerable republican trio of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity."

It was a gesture full of consequence. This was the first salvo in what was to become for de Gaulle a lifelong battle with the French Communist Party for the hearts and minds of the French. It was also the moment when de Gaulle, until now a political general, became a politician tout court. In the years following, he maneuvered to rally the non-communist Resistance to the Gaullist banner and to line up the support of France's mainstream parties (or what remained of them), assembling a coalition that stymied the Communist competition and forced the Anglo-Saxon powers to recognize de Gaulle's pre-eminence, even when they manifestly preferred other options. What a tour de force, and Jackson knows it. He titles the chapter which first takes up the General's metamorphosis from soldier to politician "Inventing Gaullism."

A second transformative moment arrived in the wake of Algerian independence. De Gaulle had spent twenty years shoring up the ramparts of France's overseas empire, and now that edifice lay in ruins. He had spent even longer fighting Germany and not just in wartime. In the 1950s, the U.S. favored a Germany rearmed, a policy de Gaulle vehemently opposed. Gaullists helped to scotch the European Defense Community which would have incorporated German units into a European army, and de Gaulle himself was not much better disposed to the European Economic Community (EEC). Yet, as pro-imperial and anti-German as de Gaulle instinctively was, he effected a pivot once back in power. It's not that he gave up on empire, and in fact he continued to meddle in all kinds of ways, sometimes unsavory ones, in France's old imperial backyard. But he did make a turn toward Europe, embracing the EEC and the Germans along with it, a breathtaking volte-face. Yes, de Gaulle's Europe was a Europe of nations, and he leveraged a good bargain with the Germans, who agreed to the Common Agricultural Policy, which in effect funneled German taxpayers' money into the pockets of French farmers. But this was still Europe with a Franco-German condominium situated at its beating heart.

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<sup>13</sup> Gøsta Esping-Andersen, *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 27, 112, 122-124.

It might be thought that de Gaulle's attentiveness to agriculture was one further proof of his traditionalism. That would be mistaken, however. As president of the Fifth Republic, de Gaulle acted in concert with the agricultural sector's most dynamic elements to concentrate holdings and to mechanize farming practices, evidence of the General's predilection, not for *la terre et les morts*, but for the efficiencies of modern technology. Indeed, as Jackson demonstrates time and again, de Gaulle was no technophobe but just the contrary. As a soldier, he had recognized early on the combat value of the tank. He was also a man of plans. De Gaulle gave Jean Monnet, a modernization-minded businessman and diplomat, the green light to set up a planning commission in January 1946. In late 1958, he authorized the Rueff Plan which stabilized France's currency. And don't forget the Constantine and Challe Plans from Algerian war days. Not least of all, de Gaulle had an uncanny feel for how to use the media to best advantage. The first volume of de Gaulle's war memoirs, released in 1954, proved an immediate best-seller, helping to keep de Gaulle's name and what he stood for in the public eye, even at a moment when Gaullism's political fortunes were on the wane. Print, of course, was not the most modern of media forms, but de Gaulle had just as much success with radio and television. The General's 18 June radio appeal, the founding moment of the Gaullist legend, has been discussed already. Jackson is at pains to point out that de Gaulle addressed the nation via television no less than thirty-one times between 1958 and 1962.

These then are the components of Jackson's de Gaulle. He was a man of prickly temperament, a conservative traditionalist with a pragmatic, modernizing streak. It's a rich and rounded portrait. I can no longer read as a lay reader does, but I can say as a reader by profession that this biography is a page-turner.

*Foreign Policy*

In the realm of foreign policy, the main quality of Julian Jackson's work is its encyclopedic research. Compared to earlier books, Jackson's has a notable advantage: the availability not only of archives and the *Documents diplomatiques français*, but also of published books, including both meticulous studies and memoirs, notably rumors reported by British diplomats posted to Paris and American officials (see the description of de Gaulle by Secretary of State Dean Rusk, 595). Jackson uses works by Alain Peyrefitte and Jacques Foccart very appropriately, even if in my view both should be used in moderation.<sup>14</sup> With regard to sources, the author notes that verbatim records of conversations between leaders can be misleading, and that above all they call into question their own authenticity, given how little they reflect the same themes and remarks. On this point, we agree with Jackson completely.

To this impeccable research, Jackson adds to his account of Charles de Gaulle's views sharp thinking and much humor. This is true of his analysis of de Gaulle's anti-Americanism: to explain this important aspect of Gaullist policy, Jackson refers to the non-conformist circles de Gaulle frequented in the thirties. He concludes that this attitude was more existential than cultural.

As for Gaullism's foreign policy, Jackson rightly remarks that de Gaulle managed to convert to his beliefs the Quai d'Orsay, which was not especially disposed to accept them: even a diplomat like Jean Marie Soutou, who was so little inclined to follow the general's whims, could not hide his admiration. Why? Because de Gaulle was a vigilant guardian of French interests, and he succeeded in doing what the leaders of the Fourth Republic wanted but failed to achieve. In the game of international relations, de Gaulle was something of an ingenious player. From this perspective, the analysis proposed years ago by Stanley Hoffman, which presents de Gaulle as a theater actor, is more valid than ever.<sup>15</sup>

In his diplomacy, one must not underestimate the role of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Maurice Couve de Murville: contrary to what has often been said, the general did not make decisions on his own and was very receptive to the ideas of close advisors. What undermines this analysis is the mixture of secrecy and transparency that characterized the general's policies, to the point that, as Jackson notes, even the president's closest advisors did not always know what he thought—a fact that is even more true for moles!

From this standpoint, Jackson emphasizes the role of Foccart in de Gaulle's African policy, and he is no doubt right when he says that the general's *Monsieur Afrique* knew how to find the right moment and the right argument to persuade de Gaulle. Of course; and the general trusted Foccart. But again, one must not exaggerate this influence. After all, it is thanks to Foccart that we know all of this. It is important to keep things in perspective.

Naturally, the author devotes an extensive discussion to de Gaulle's attitude towards Great Britain, analyzing it as a blend of admiration, regret, and envy (for the British monarchical tradition). British conjectures about de Gaulle are very interesting, as some analyses (597) consider him a madman, even explaining his mental derangement by the fact that he suffered from syphilis contracted in London during the war.

The departure from NATO is well analyzed, showing that it was long prepared and coordinated with de Gaulle's trip to the Soviet Union and the general's policy of "détente, entente, and cooperation." And the author is right to note that France's

<sup>14</sup> Alain Peyrefitte, *C'était De Gaulle*, 3 volumes, (Paris, éditions Fayard, 1994-2000); Jacques Foccart, *Journal de l'Élysée*, deux tomes, 1965-1968 et 1968-1969 (Paris, éditions Fayard, 1997 et 1998).

<sup>15</sup> Stanley Hoffmann, *Essais sur la France : déclin ou renouveau?* (Paris, éditions du Seuil, 1974).

rapprochement with Moscow was not really reciprocal, since during the Middle East crisis, which revealed the limits of French influence, the Soviets preferred dealing directly with the Americans.

Finally, Jackson explores two interesting and original ideas: the first concerns de Gaulle's political influence, which the author does not wish to reduce to mere "showmanship"; the second poses the often asked question of whether de Gaulle is best seen as a man of yesterday or tomorrow. Jackson asks the question; but it is clear that, in his eyes, de Gaulle was a true visionary.



« *Politique étrangère* »

Dans le domaine de la politique étrangère, la principale qualité de l'ouvrage de Julian Jackson est sa documentation encyclopédique. Par rapport à des ouvrages antérieurs, celui de Jackson a un atout: celui de pouvoir disposer, outre des archives et des *Documents diplomatiques français*, des livres publiés, à la fois études fouillées et mémoires, en particulier les échos des diplomates britanniques en poste à Paris ou des responsables américains (cf la description de De Gaulle par secrétaire d'État Dean Rusk, 595). Julian utilise beaucoup d'à-propos les ouvrages d'Alain Peyrefitte et de Jacques Foccart, même si à mon sens il convient d'utiliser l'un et l'autre avec parcimonie.<sup>16</sup> S'agissant des sources, l'auteur fait remarquer que les verbatims des conversations entre dirigeants peuvent être trompeurs, et que surtout ils posent la question de leur authenticité, tellement ils ne reflètent pas du tout les mêmes thèmes ou les mêmes réflexions: nous sommes totalement d'accord avec Jackson.

A cette impeccable documentation, Jackson ajoute une réflexion avisée et beaucoup d'humour pour rendre compte des conceptions de Charles de Gaulle. Ainsi de l'analyse de son anti-américanisme : pour expliquer ce trait important de la politique gaullienne, Julian fait référence aux cercles non-conformistes que de Gaulle fréquentait pendant les années trente ; il en déduit que cette attitude est plus existentielle que culturelle.

Quant à la politique étrangère gaullienne, Julian Jackson remarque justement que de Gaulle a réussi à convertir à ses idées le Quai d'Orsay, qui n'était pas spécialement prêt à les accepter : même un diplomate comme Jean Marie Soutou, si peu enclin à suivre le Général dans ses fougades, ne cache pas son admiration. Pourquoi? Parce que de Gaulle est le gardien vigilant des intérêts français et que d'une certaine manière, il réussit ce que les dirigeants de la IV<sup>e</sup> République auraient voulu faire, mais n'ont pas réussi. Il y a un côté joueur de génie dans le jeu joué par de Gaulle dans les relations internationales : de ce point de vue, l'analyse faite il y a déjà longtemps par Stanley Hoffmann de de Gaulle comme un acteur de théâtre est plus que jamais vérifiée.<sup>17</sup>

Dans cette diplomatie, il ne faut pas sous-estimer le rôle de ministre des Affaires étrangères Maurice Couve de Murville : contrairement à ce qui est souvent affirmé, le Général ne décide pas seul et il est sensible aux idées de ses proches. Ce qui fausse l'analyse est le mélange de secret et de transparence qui caractérise la politique du Général au point—remarque Julian Jackson—que même les plus proches conseillers du Président ne savent pas toujours ce qu'il pense, a fortiori une taupe!

De ce point de vue, Jackson insiste sur le rôle de Foccart dans la politique africaine de de Gaulle, et il a sans doute raison de noter que le Monsieur Afrique du Général sait comment trouver le bon moment et le bon argument pour convaincre de Gaulle. Certes, et le Général avait confiance dans Foccart, mais encore une fois il s'agit de ne pas exagérer cette influence: après tout, c'est par Foccart que l'on apprend cela : il faut sans doute faire la part des choses.

Comme de juste, l'auteur consacre un développement important à l'attitude de de Gaulle à l'égard de la Grande Bretagne : il l'analyse comme un mélange d'admiration, de regret et d'envie (s'agissant de la tradition monarchique britannique). Les supputations des Britanniques à l'égard de de Gaulle sont très intéressantes puisque certaines analyses (597) le considèrent comme un fou et même expliquent le dérangement de son esprit par le fait qu'il souffre de la syphilis contractée à Londres pendant la guerre.

<sup>16</sup> Alain Peyrefitte, *C'était De Gaulle*, 3 vol. (Paris : éditions Fayard, 1994-2000); Jacques Foccart, *Journal de l'Elysée*, deux tomes, 1965-1968 et 1968-1969 (Paris : éditions Fayard, 1997 et 1998).

<sup>17</sup> Stanley Hoffmann, *Essais sur la France : déclin ou renouveau?* (Paris : éditions du Seuil, 1974).

La sortie de l'OTAN est bien analysée, préparée de longue date, et coordonnée avec la visite en Union soviétique, et la politique d'entente, détente, coopération lancée par le Général. Et l'auteur a raison de noter que ce rapprochement français avec Moscou n'est pas vraiment réciproque, puisque dans la crise du Proche Orient qui révèle les limites de l'influence française, les Soviétiques préfèrent traiter directement avec les Américains.

Enfin, Julian Jackson développe deux réflexions intéressantes et originales : l'une concerne l'influence politique de de Gaulle que l'auteur entend ne pas réduire à un rôle d'acteur (showmanship), l'autre pose la question souvent abordée, de savoir s'il faut considérer de Gaulle comme l'homme d'avant-hier ou celui d'après-demain. Julian Jackson pose la question, mais il est clair pour lui que de Gaulle a vraiment été un visionnaire.

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 RESPONSE BY JULIAN JACKSON, QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
 

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I am most grateful to the four reviewers for their extraordinarily positive comments on my book, and to Frédéric Bozo for kindly agreeing to chair this Roundtable. Indeed, their comments are so positive that it becomes hard to write a response because there is so little they disagree with. This leads me to worry that I have written too blandly a consensual book. Since there is nothing more soporific than complete consensus, I am reassured by Philip Nord's last sentence! Anyway I will try and engage with some of the points that the different reviewers have made.

To begin with the question of sources, I absolutely agree with Maurice Vaisse that one has to be careful about excessive reliance on the voluminous diaries of Alain Peyrefitte and Jacques Foccart to penetrate de Gaulle's intentions or explain his actions.<sup>18</sup> I do myself say this at the start of the book: Charles de Gaulle was always in some sense 'performing' even when only talking to one person. And I may myself have fallen into the trap that I myself warn against. But since all his life de Gaulle liked to ruminate and to think aloud—one finds this during the war also and in the *Rassemblement du peuple français* (RPF) period (where there is a similar trap with regard to the diaries of Claude Guy or Claude Mauriac)<sup>19</sup>—I would say in my partial defence that if de Gaulle was 'performing' he was nonetheless performing himself. For that reason, these sources allow us to plot the contours of his rich and complicated mind. I am also struck by the congruence between what he might have said to Peyrefitte one day, and what then appeared in a conversation with a foreign diplomat the next day or in a speech on the day after. De Gaulle was a bloc.

In fact the memoirs of Peyrefitte and Foccart are rather different kinds of sources. Peyrefitte was not usually trying to get de Gaulle to do things; he was simply reporting what de Gaulle has said to him after the *Conseil des Ministres* (and he is also reporting what was said at the *Conseil*). Foccart, who saw de Gaulle at the end of each day, to brief him on African affairs, was also trying to get him to pursue a course of action. And what gives his journals some feeling of authenticity is that he does not always give himself the *beau rôle*: he quite clearly admits on several occasions that he went to see de Gaulle to try and persuade him to follow a course of action, and that de Gaulle shouted at him and refused.

That leads to another question raised by Vaisse: "Certes, et le Général avait confiance dans Foccart, mais encore une fois il s'agit de ne pas exagérer cette influence: après tout, c'est par Foccart que l'on apprend cela: il faut sans doute faire la part des choses." I take the point completely. It is difficult to get the balance right. There were people in the Quai d'Orsay like Jean-Marie Sotou who thought that on African affairs de Gaulle had become the puppet of Foccart, whose influence was baleful. I think that the relationship was much more complicated than this. But after my book was published Jean-Pierre Bat, who is *the* expert on Foccart, published a very interesting book which offers more information on the degree of Foccart's real influence.<sup>20</sup>

Take, for example, the coup against President Léon M'ba of Gabon in February 1964, where Foccart with de Gaulle's approval acted fast to intervene and protect France's client. Foccart later wrote up a detailed and confidential account of how the decision to act was decided upon and implemented despite reluctance from the Quai and other ministries. I know that this is from Foccart's own pen, but it does have to me the stamp of plausibility and I have added a new passage about this in the French translation of *De Gaulle* and in the British paperback. It runs as follows:

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<sup>18</sup> Alain Peyrefitte, *C'était De Gaulle*, 3 volumes, (Paris, éditions Fayard, 1994-2000); Jacques Foccart, *Journal de l'Élysée*, deux tomes, 1965-1968 et 1968-1969 (Paris, éditions Fayard, 1997 et 1998).

<sup>19</sup> Claude Mauriac, *Un autre de Gaulle* (Paris: Hachette, 1970); Claude Guy, *En écoutant de Gaulle. Journal 1946-1949* (Paris: Grasset, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> Pierre Bat, *Les Réseaux Foccart. L'Homme des affaires secrètes* (Paris: Nouveau Monde Editions, 2018).

Foccart's account gives a priceless insight into the dynamics of the relationship between him and de Gaulle, and the way that his privileged relationship with de Gaulle gave him such power in the conduct of African affairs:

« Le mardi 18 février j'apprends qu'un coup d'Etat militaire a eu lieu ...vers 2 heures du matin à Libreville...Je téléphone au Quai pour demander s'ils avaient de nouvelles à ce sujet (le télégramme qui m'en avait en effet alerté était d'origine militaire). Le Quai me répond qu'ils n'en savaient rien...J'échange quelques coups de téléphone avec [Pierre] Messmer et je me rends compte que malgré ce que je lui ai dit, il faut que je puisse indiquer que j'aie l'accord du General pour déclencher effectivement l'opération...Je m'informe afin de savoir si l'on peut voir le Général de bonne heure et [Gaston de] Bonneval me répond qu'il a son coiffeur à 9 heures. J'appelle donc à 9 heures et au téléphone je lui expose brièvement la situation. Sans l'ombre d'une hésitation, il m'indique que les dispositions prises étaient bonnes et qu'il fallait donner l'ordre d'intervenir immédiatement ».

But later that day the Quai seemed to be dragging its feet in the implementation of the order to intervene on the grounds that the new authorities in Libreville seem to have no ill will towards France:

« Je monte aussitôt pour prévenir le General...Il est 13.05 et il a un déjeuner...Il entre dans une colère me disant que nos militaires comme nos diplomates sont des incapables...J'insiste en lui disant que...la destitution de Léon M'ba dans ces conditions amènerait immédiatement les mêmes événements dans quatre ou cinq pays d'Afrique...Dans la soirée, aucune indication nouvelle. Le Général que je vois à plusieurs reprises...me confirme les instructions ».

There was much more toing and froing in this vein over the next few hours with Foccart even intercepting a call that one minister wanted to make to de Gaulle at 3 am to call off the operation.<sup>21</sup>

The relationship between Foccart and de Gaulle leads me to another issue raised by Vaïsse: “il ne faut pas sous-estimer le rôle de ministre des Affaires étrangères Maurice Couve de Murville: contrairement à ce qui est souvent affirmé, le Général ne décide pas seul et il est sensible aux idées de ses proches.” As far as the influence of Couve is concerned, no one of course knows that subject better than Maurice Vaïsse.<sup>22</sup> Although I find it hard to pick on any case where one can spot a specific intervention by Couve (except in the ‘*chaise vide*’ affair) that seems to have changed de Gaulle’s mind, I have a sense that there was a kind of symbiosis between the two men—except on one or two issues like Québec—which means that the decisions were in many cases joint (I think that that symbiosis also existed in the early days between de Gaulle and Georges Pompidou).

The point that “le Général ne décide pas seul” seems to me to be an important one. On the face of it this is contradicted by something that was written by de Gaulle’s wartime aide Claude Bouchinet-Serreuelles: “Le Général vit seul dans une solitude olympienne. Il pense seul, il décide seul... Mais il pense et décide.” (218) Well, obviously this refers to a different period when de Gaulle was not yet head of a complex governmental machine but the head of what was really quite a small group in London. But actually I am not sure that the statement is correct even for the London period (apart from the very earliest days). Even in London, it is striking how receptive de Gaulle could be to the people around him like Hervé Alphanth, Henry Hauck, Georges Boris, René Cassin, and so on. If there is one discovery that I made about de Gaulle in writing this book, it is not some sensationalist skeleton in the cupboard, but rather his quite extraordinary receptivity, his capacity to

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<sup>21</sup> Julian Jackson, *A Certain Idea of France. The Life of Charles de Gaulle* (New York: Penguin Books, 2019), 615-6.

<sup>22</sup> Maurice Vaïsse, *La Grandeur. Politique étrangère du Général de Gaulle* (Paris : CNRS Editions, 2013)

listen, and to take advice on board—even if he did not often give credit to those other people who might have changed his mind or influenced his thinking. I quote many examples to this effect in the book (from Jean Mamert, Paul Delouvrier, Pierre Racine and so on). So when Vaisse argues that “le Général ne décide pas seul,” I could not agree more.

That leads on to a very important point raised by Philip Nord: the role that de Gaulle’s Catholicism played in his politics. Nord discusses the post-war settlement created by the Provisional Government between 1944 and 1946: “a mixed market economy endowed with a hefty public sector and a set of welfare institutions organized along familist and corporatist lines. De Gaulle, the social Catholic, was not the architect of this new order—he was not a man for detailed blueprints—, but he did preside at its founding.” Herrick Chapman and Philip Nord have each written superb books on the complex set of influences that created the post-war settlement, and Chapman interestingly and persuasively extends that period right up to 1962.<sup>23</sup>

I read Nord’s book when it came out, but until reading it again last year I had not fully taken on board the degree to which it should have enriched my understanding of the post-war settlement. Of course one of his key themes is to emphasize the importance of social Catholicism in that settlement. Unfortunately, I read Chapman’s book only after I had finished mine. And I feel that if I had fully incorporated both their insights, my chapter on the provisional government could have been richer and more subtle. But this is of course a problem of writing biography: teasing out the input of the individual one is studying. I admit that even after reading these two fine books I just do not have a real sense of the degree to which de Gaulle’s own social Catholic sensibility inflected the decisions that were taken.

As Nord notes, de Gaulle was not someone for “detailed blueprints” and my impression is that actually he rather left the authors of France’s welfare policies to themselves. Social Catholicism does not really enter his politics in any very clear way until the RPF period when, to the surprise of almost everyone, he takes up the Association idea. I think that between 1944 and 1946 he was essentially pre-occupied by foreign affairs, state building and to some extent immediate economic problems—and that he simply did not have the time or energy to involve himself in the rest. But still I feel that my chapter on this period has a certain thinness about it. That said, one of the themes of the book that may not have come out enough is the idea that ‘Gaullism’ was in a constant process of re-invention and development. I wanted to make more of this than in the end I did.

The pragmatism of de Gaulle cannot be over-emphasized, and Piers Ludlow is right to say that I tried to get away from seeing everything that happened in the 1960s as determined by the experiences of the war. His own work is of course indispensable for understating de Gaulle’s attitude to the British in the 1960s.<sup>24</sup> But although I did try to stress the extraordinary versatility of de Gaulle’s foreign policy positions—there is nothing de Gaulle hated more than stasis—I do think that de Gaulle’s vision of a post-Cold War European order looked remarkably like the geopolitical map of Europe in....1914! I can certainly understand that Ludlow does not ‘like’ de Gaulle as a person. One historian colleague and friend who read the book wrote to me that he felt that de Gaulle emerged as an “irredeemably terrible person, nevertheless like some sociopaths kind to children and animals.” I admit that having lived in his proximity for such a long time I have also become sensitive to the shyness and awkwardness of de Gaulle as a person: he wanted to show his emotions but just could not do it. His relationship with his handicapped child I find unbearably moving at times. But all I could do in the biography was to paint the portrait and let the readers decide.

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<sup>23</sup> Herrick Chapman, *France’s Long Reconstruction. In Search of the Modern Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018); Philip Nord, *France’s New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> N. Piers Ludlow, *Dealing with Britain: The Six and the First UK Membership Application* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Ludlow, *The European Community and the Crises of the 1960s: Negotiating the Gaullist Challenge* (London: Routledge, 2006).

I am not sure I would want to sit next to de Gaulle at dinner except that I do have one question that I burn to ask him: “given that one of your core beliefs is that whenever nations dress up their ambitions in altruistic ideological language this is always just as cloak for national interests and ambitions, why do you think that France is somehow immune from this as when you say, for example, in private to Peyrefitte that France’s vocation is to work for the general interest. It is while being fully French that one is the most European, that one is the most universal. While other countries, when they develop their interests, try to subject others to their interests, France, when it succeeds in developing its interests, does it in the interest of all . . . Everyone feels it obscurely in the world; France is the light of the world, its genius is to light up the universe.” Now I can see that Jules Michelet might believe this nonsense... but de Gaulle!

Finally, Chapman thinks I am a bit too indulgent to de Gaulle regarding the Fifth Republic. Of course I take his points absolutely. And the *gilet jaunes* remind us of the dangers of the arrogance of power and the contempt for intermediary organizations. For the paperback edition and French translation I added a new passage to my conclusion on these issues. It does not really change fundamentally what I wrote previously but it would be easiest for me to quote it here:

The constitution has been amended several times and operates in many respects differently from de Gaulle’s intentions—but it is still in essence the regime that he created between 1958 and 1969. The constitution certainly has dysfunctional characteristics of which the concentration of power in the hands of the Presidency is the most obvious. In fact, as has been shown in earlier chapters, the working of the Constitution did not exactly turn out as de Gaulle, even less [Michel] Debré, had expected. They were partly working to counteract the lack of a stable party system in France and the absences of stable parliamentary majorities. De Gaulle had dreamt of being a ‘*unanimiste*’ leader above party, with the power, if necessary to be able to act effectively despite the absence of parliamentary support. What he had not predicted was that he would end up with a parliamentary majority supporting him. This had the effect of magnifying the power that the constitution gave him. Quite apart from this, it is true that in the Fifth Republic the relative downgrading of the role of parliament, and the consequent lack of effective counterweights to executive power, and the closing off of legitimate channels of political opposition, has led to periodic outbreaks of direct popular protest—from the events of May 68 right up to the recent crisis of the *gilets jaunes*. There have been periodic calls for the need for a Sixth Republic to produce a greater balance between legislative and executive branches.

Just as it was once famously remarked (by [Alphonse] Aulard) that ‘*la République était belle sous l’Empire*’ so the defects of the Fourth seem more blurred in memory as we live with the defects of the Fifth. But one should not overlook the complete discredit into which the Fourth Republic had fallen among the entire political class at the moment that de Gaulle took power which is one reasons why figure like [Guy] Mollet, [Pierre] Pflimlin and [Antoine] Pinay were ready to sit in his first government. One of the key provisions of the new constitution –Article 49-3 that allowed the government to force a vote of confidence in order to pass a piece of controversial legislation—had already been part of a constitutional revision proposal drafted, but never voted, by [Félix] Gaillard’s government in January 1958. And the Third and Fourth Republics may have offered more parliamentary channels to express dissent but these did not prevent the violent protests of February 1934 or the kind of *jacquerie* represented by *Poujadism* in 1956. The truth is that no political system is without flaws, and perfect constitutions only exists in the fantasies of constitutionalists. All things considered, one might judge that France has not been badly served by the Fifth Republic over the last 60 years.<sup>25</sup>

And that is still more or less what I think that I think about the Constitution, but it is an inexhaustible subject....

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<sup>25</sup> Jackson, *A Certain Idea*, 780-781.