

2

1958–68: The Consolidation and Evolution of the Fifth Republic

Between 1958 and 1962, de Gaulle moved from one matrix of support to another. In the case of the army and public opinion, he went from having particular elements support him for one set of reasons to others supporting him for a different set of reasons, arguably the opposite ones. He moved to and fro across support from the parties, the army, his own supporters, 'opinion', the electorates: legislative, presidential and referendary, *Algérie Française*, both in Algeria and in France, the trade unions, intellectuals, small town and village France with its local allegiances, the female vote, republican/legalistic opinion, eventually to a new configuration of sources of support. By 1962, he had almost got to the other side, as it were. As regards the parties, certain sections of the army, the media, the *pieds-noirs*, and some parts of fluctuating opinion, most of these had been 'for' him (for a range of reasons, and this is crucial). By 1962, all of them were now against him (for a range of reasons, and this is still crucial). It was certain, moreover, that the parties that had brought him to power to solve Algeria would, once it had been solved, try to, if not abandon him, then 'domesticate' his republic, bringing it much closer to a UK model (Debré's preference), or a Fourth Republic with all the safeguards that figures like Coty, Mendès France, Faure, Mitterrand, Pflimlin and Defferre (and Vedel and Duverger and others) had striven for, largely in vain, in the months and years running up to May–June 1958.¹

The political support de Gaulle enjoyed from the UNR was unequivocal. By 1962, its *Algérie Française* element had more or less been sifted out. It is worth pausing here to note that the bitterness felt by some bordered on the heartbreak of those who had been the most devoted. The emotional intensity of allegiance to de Gaulle by many cannot be overstated. With the loss of its right wing, the UNR nominally gained a

left wing. The *Union démocratique du travail* was made up of left wing Gaullists such as Louis Vallon, Léo Hamon and René Capitant. It formed in April 1959, bringing together many of those who had supported him since the Resistance years, some of whom, like Jacques Debû-Bridel, were even close to the Communist party. Many of them were the most intelligent, theoretically informed and intellectually interesting exponents of Gaullism. The UDT fused with the UNR in 1962. The left of the party, however, never really developed into a significant force, perhaps because of a fundamental contradiction between a left wing philosophy and the focus on an individual, but mainly because by 1962 the nature of the UNR had already been defined. The two most interesting theoretical aspects of Gaullism – Soustelle's Gaullism, and Capitant's – were almost certainly incompatible with one another but more importantly were incompatible with the exigencies of political support within de Gaulle's new Republic.² The most politically devoted support was already becoming ideologically neutral by the time the UDT joined it. The most loyal became the least ideological and the most politically practical, acting unconditionally for de Gaulle, and efficiently on his behalf.

Against the UNR were the communists who, although reduced to ten seats in 1958, remained a mass party and in clear opposition to de Gaulle. Having said this we need to recognize that at various moments they lost swathes of their voters to de Gaulle – up to 30 per cent in the 1958 referendum as well as in later referenda. And even they – against the putschists in 1961 – came out in support of him.³ In spite of their likening him to Franco or Salazar and a version of fascism, their task was hard because he had been the leader of the resistance to Nazi Germany, and had even gone into resistance before the PCF had. He had also worked reasonably well with the PCF in the closing stages of the war; and immediately after the war had communist ministers in his government, and was on reasonable to good terms with the leaders of the Soviet Union and was respected by them, and was – increasingly after 1958 – identified by many Third World states and independence movements as non-aligned. He was, like the PCF, sceptical about Europe, had a penchant, like them, for anti-Americanism, and was not without concern for 'the social', unlike some of his contemporaries on the right. Even within their own ranks, therefore, the communists were never able to rid themselves of a reluctant respect for their arch-enemy. Nevertheless, the PCF was able to survive and prosper as the clearest anti-de Gaulle movement. It did this by portraying him as the new figurehead of a brutal capitalism, which in France, given the uneven-

ness of the spread of much of the prosperity in the 1950s and 1960s was true in part.

As regards other oppositional political forces, the PSU (first called the PSA) was formed in April 1960 from dissidents from SFIO Algerian policy in 1956, then from progressive opposition to de Gaulle's coming to power in 1958. It was vociferously anti-Gaullist and vocal in intellectual circles (essentially Paris) and in the 'serious' press, and had some of the best minds (including Mendès France and the young Michel Rocard). Politically and electorally it was insignificant in terms of the political drama unfolding in 1962. However, many of its members, via rejoining the big political parties, or founding think tanks and influencing/forming political opinion, would go on to play major roles in the post-1962 period.

The CNIP in the early stages of the 1958–62 legislature was the UNR's coalition partner. The CNIP or 'moderates', however, were not really a party fit for modern purpose, rather a large conservative coalition of local '*notables*'. They represented a France that at the national level was about to be overtaken by a rapidly changing society and polity. Even more internally destructive was its strong support for *Algérie Française*. This created great internal 'stress' and meant that once Algeria was lost, it risked being washed away by the next tide.

The socialists, unhappy with the social and economic policy of de Gaulle's government, and his own brand of presidentialism – which Mollet regarded as a deviation from the constitution he had helped draw up, left government in January 1959. The problem for the socialists, and this more or less throughout the following four years, was that by and large they strongly supported de Gaulle's Algerian policy. It was only from early 1962, therefore, that the SFIO could really move against his government; and one had the sense that when they did move against him they did so precipitously, and without proper reflection upon strategy, and even less upon the nature of the republic they found themselves in.

The MRP was forever in a fragile situation because many of its leaders were either significantly more right wing or significantly more left wing than the MRP's electorate (essentially centre right and centre left Catholics). On top of this, on many issues, the UNR and MRP (who had wanted de Gaulle to lead them in 1946, and some of whom were with de Gaulle in the Resistance) were in broad agreement, and in terms of electorate were in fairly direct competition with one another. Moreover, as in the CNIP, Algeria had created serious stress within the MRP, and several of its ministers were in government in 1962 and in

disagreement with parts of their own party. The MRP, moreover, was very 'pro-European'. Any gestures of anti-Europeanism from de Gaulle would throw the party into further disarray. And de Gaulle's anti-European gestures were about to start raining down into the political arena.

By 1962, it was clear that the Algerian drama was almost over. De Gaulle had been returned to power to solve Algeria, but had done the opposite of what had been anticipated. As his strategy moved towards accepting Algerian independence he took the French population with him, strengthening his support over the divided political parties through two referendums, the first in January 1961 on the question of Algerian self-determination (over 75 per cent yes), the second in April 1962 on independence (over 90 per cent yes). As French opinion followed him, the parties also followed with varying degrees of enthusiasm. At certain points, his most unequivocal support was from the PCF and SFIO. His shifts in policy involved endless speeches, ambivalence, silences, ambiguities, and then action. As the *pièdes-noirs* and elements of the army saw their own stars waning, they reacted, first with a week of rioting (January 1960), then a military putsch (April 1961), then with an OAS terrorist campaign of increasing brutality and nihilism. With the April 1962 referendum, the drama was over. Algeria gained its independence. Nearly all of the European Algerians returned heartbroken and bitter to France. De Gaulle then turned immediately to the political challenges facing his authority, legitimacy and political capital. The real test for de Gaulle's new republic, however, was not Algeria but de Gaulle's conception of leadership politics. And the test was about to take place.

The 1962 referendum and elections

On 14 April, de Gaulle replaced Michel Debré as Prime Minister with the non-parliamentarian and relatively unknown Georges Pompidou. Debré had remained loyal but had agonized over Algeria. Pompidou was considered as merely the President's delegate in Parliament. One month later, on 15 May at a press conference de Gaulle made clear 'anti-European' remarks, this to the horror of France's most pro-European political party:

Dante, Goëthe, Châteaubriand appartiennent à toute l'Europe dans la mesure où ils étaient respectivement et éminemment Italien, Allemand et Français. Ils n'auraient pas beaucoup servi l'Europe s'ils

avaient été des apatrides et s'ils avaient pensé, écrit en quelque espéranto ou *volapük* intégrés.⁴

What is striking about de Gaulle's remark is how personalized it is with its references to Goëthe, etc; how deliberately provocative it is – several of his own ministers were pro-European; how insulting it is – referring to European integration as a kind of *volapük* is denigrating and more scornful than the use of the more musical expression 'Esperanto'; and finally how extremely amusing it is. Here is one of scores of examples of how de Gaulle used his press conferences as political performances to consequential political effect. To move away from some forms of support, to move towards new policy positions, de Gaulle used himself. Henceforth, the direction of politics would follow de Gaulle's press conferences. The six MRP ministers in his government immediately resigned.

As regards the CNIP, Pinay had resigned in 1960, but the party had remained silent – rather than support or oppose – over de Gaulle's Algeria referendums. Many independents wanted Giscard d'Estaing, the new Finance minister (and also pro-European) to resign. He had his own plan for future collaboration with the UNR, and he refused. Nevertheless, the new Pompidou government was now essentially a UNR government. On 8 June 1962, this time in a television broadcast, de Gaulle alluded to the idea of a constitutional reform regarding the mode of election of the President at the next presidential election. On 22 August, there was another assassination attempt (there had been a previous one on 8 September 1961). The President was in a car with his wife and son-in-law at Petit-Clamart just outside Paris when OAS activists opened fire. Such a dramatic event (and his own calm response) came at the perfect moment.⁵ On 12 September following a cabinet meeting, de Gaulle announced that on 28 October 1962 there would be a referendum on the election of the President by direct universal adult suffrage. He repeated this in a message to Parliament on 2 October 1962. This time, all the political parties except the UNR opposed it.⁶

They decided in fact to organize a joint '*cartel des non*' (excluding the PCF, itself, of course, also opposed). Many leading, now opposing, figures spoke out against de Gaulle's plan. Paul Reynaud, for example, spoke stirringly in favour of the spirit of republicanism. From his April *volapük* speech de Gaulle was forcing, daring the parties to oppose him in a bold move to consolidate what was now his version of the Fifth Republic. On 5 October, Pompidou's government was overturned by

280 votes. Instead of replacing Pompidou with a new Prime Minister who could create a new majority more reflective of the prevailing majority, the President maintained Pompidou in post and dissolved the National Assembly. The new elections to the National Assembly would fall immediately after the referendum that had provoked the motion of no confidence in the government in the first place (18 and 25 November, the referendum being set for 28 October).

Many in the political parties and the print media believed that de Gaulle's act was desperate and misplaced. As well as the parties, he also now had ranged against him most legal opinion concerning the constitutionality of his proposed reform, the trade unions, all those who were spokespersons of the 'republican tradition', as well as those who saw themselves as modernizers, but who wanted a kind of updated *Mendésisme*, and a Fifth Republic free of the drama of de Gaulle's politics. There was no basis in his own constitution for what he was doing; what he was doing was asserting the centrality of his own action. The two factors that had helped bring him to power, fear of the army and despair over Algeria, were, by 1962, no longer issues. In several of his broadcasts at this time, de Gaulle stated that if he lost (or even if his majority was an unimpressive one) he would resign and return to his self-imposed internal exile. Most observers remarked at the time and later upon the kind of blackmail such declarations exercise; that they amounted to frightening an electorate and almost threatening it. In fact, what they also did was to focus upon the true object (target and prize) of the election, himself. In terms of the regime's subsequent evolution, 1962 was a dramatic showdown between de Gaulle wanting to reinforce personality politics and almost everyone else trying to dedramatize the republic.

With all sectors of political society against him and the threat of a coup or war now passed, and the fact that this really was a leap into the unknown for the republic, if de Gaulle were to win, it would be a stunning victory against the odds. And he won. There was the usual quarter of abstentions (22.76 per cent) and a majority in favour of 61.75 per cent of votes expressed. This was his lowest referendum achievement. Nevertheless, nearly 62 per cent, given the opposition and the audacity of his undertaking, was a breathtaking victory for his new style republic. It also put the drama of the assassination attempt into clearer relief: this truly was a personal (although 'imagined') relationship of some intimacy at the heart of a modern republic. With every element (except the UNR) of the political elite against him, he had won with the help of the mass of the French, dramatically demon-

strating that the republic was based upon an unmediated relationship between the leader and the people. In 1958 he had set up the republic in a kind of alliance with the political elites. In 1962, the people confirmed through their vote that the republic truly belonged to him.

For the 'no's, the defeat was truly significant, for it meant that with the whole political class against him they had still lost. We should remember that in the 1958 referendum they were all for him (except the PCF), and now, without the threat of major civil disorder, the 'no's had only increased their vote by 18 per cent. One could argue that the totality of political parties that stood between the PCF and the UNR totalled 18 per cent.⁷ This is a strong indication of the power of the personal in the political process. Events had polarized the political parties; on one side de Gaulle's supporters (with a few big names – like Maurice Schumann, MRP but a long-standing Gaullist – who rallied to the Gaullists), and on the other, virtually all of the political parties united in a kind of impotent exasperation with de Gaulle's style of leadership and its consequences for Parliament and the republic. And just as in 1958, the dramatic referendum was immediately followed by legislative elections.

On the Gaullists' side, Malraux and Frey organized the UNR and now the left wing Gaullists, the UDT, into an electoral *Association pour la Cinquième République*, and, as the new party had done in 1958, selected the candidates to represent the party on the basis of their unequivocal allegiance to de Gaulle. Alongside the UNR-UDT were the 'Giscardians' who would form themselves in the course of the campaign into a parliamentary party, the Independent Republicans. For the opposition, the '*cartel des non*' developed a programme of *désistements* (standing down for the best placed among them in round two); and the SFIO, to the annoyance of the other parties, also developed a similar plan with the PCF, so that all the political parties were ranged against the Gaullists.

The abstention rate for the first round of the election on 18 November 1962, rose to 31 per cent. Between 1958 and 1962, largely because of the highly personalized referendums, all elections and participation in them was seen as an indication of support for de Gaulle. The 31 per cent abstention rate here reflected perhaps confusion and voting fatigue, but also perhaps more than a hesitation about de Gaulle's republic. The UNR-UDT, however, gained 32 per cent of the vote. No party in the history of French electoral politics had ever crossed the 30 per cent barrier. All the other parties, except the PCF who increased their vote slightly (on 1958) because of the understanding with the SFIO, either

just about held on to their poor 1958 score or did worse, in some cases far worse. In the second round, the UNR was only nine seats short of an absolute majority, and Giscard d'Estaing's new *Républicains Indépendants* with 36 seats provided it. We should remember that over a third of the 1958–62 National Assembly majority had been made up of the now hostile CNIP. This non-Gaullist right almost disappeared, with in total a disparate 55 seats, hundreds of seats down from its former glory. It was as if in 1958 de Gaulle had thumped down through the National Assembly and devastated the left, and now in 1962 had thumped again and devastated the right. In the run-off, the communists' gains quadrupled because of SFIO *désistements*. The SFIO through *désistements* with the PCF and others raised its seats by 20 or so. Former Radicals and Mitterrand's fraction of the UDSR gained 39 seats.⁸ This was the beginnings of the emergence of a left-of-centre opposition (between them they held almost 150 seats, with what remained of the MRP and Independents another 50 or so).

In quick succession, French politics had seen: a series of referendums favourable to de Gaulle, an unsuccessful coup attempt, (at least) two assassination attempts, Algerian independence, a change of Prime Minister and government, a showdown between the political parties and de Gaulle, a major constitutional revision, the near annihilation of several large political parties, and the electoral triumph of de Gaulle's own party.

Let us look at the post-1962 period under three consequentially interrelated headings: Gaullism and the Gaullists; de Gaulle on the world stage; the Left opposition. But first let us examine a paradox borne of de Gaulle's 1962 triumph, for it informs the nature of de Gaulle's leadership between 1962 and 1965, the nature of the relationship between society and politics, the style of Gaullist party rule, and the political and discursive context of the left's response to the Gaullist republic. The paradox is that a condition of drama is that it cannot, by definition, be continuous. Dramatic moments, particularly if they end in triumph, are followed by calm, if not bathos. De Gaulle could now take on the '*grandes querelles*' of international politics because he had 'solved' the domestic, could go on up to the higher ground where his historic destiny awaited him. Those left minding the shop seemed consequently rather dull. Such a phenomenon has political consequences, for negotiating drama (as we have seen in both 1958 and 1962) and the pauses between it; creating it, responding to it, being ready for it, knowing how to profit from it or its absence, all these become part of understanding a now very complex political process. This inter-

relationship between drama and calm would have formative political influence throughout the next 50 years. And for the present, bathos descended upon political life. In one sense it was deliberate. De Gaulle's appointment of Pompidou was made for all the obvious reasons of Pompidou's competence and allegiance to de Gaulle. He was also affable, down to earth, and unpretentious; a real contrast to the fiery, tortured, larger than life Michel Debré. Pompidou represented, particularly after the November elections, the acquiescence of parliamentary politics in presidential politics, in a form of personality politics that saw the effacing of all personalities bar one. Reynaud's withering treatment of Pompidou in the Assembly, treating him as nothing more than 'la voix de son maître', had no effect not only because of the severe downgrading of Assembly discourse but because that was precisely why Pompidou was in position.

Gaullism and the Gaullists

One of the striking things about the government and the UNR, given their single purpose, was how distinct from one another they were. They were distinct phenomena that were often not that compatible. The new Prime Minister, Georges Pompidou, was not even a member of the party at this time. Debré was, although he was never its leader.

One of the developmental features of Pompidou's appointment is that it shows how the relationship between President and Prime Minister was an evolving one, with ambivalences on both sides that made the relationship more subtle than it appeared. It is true that Pompidou was de Gaulle's creation in a way Debré was not. But the relationship was not a capricious one. Pompidou remained Prime Minister from 1962 until after the 1968 elections. This was unprecedented in French history, and although unfaltering service to the President was a prerequisite to the relationship, Pompidou's ordinary style was related to de Gaulle's as if in a kind of system, as if they were contrasting aspects of the same thing. It is true that although de Gaulle could never be publicly opposed, the government often countered effectively de Gaulle's arbitrary or misguided initiatives. During the Algerian War it was counsel that prevailed over de Gaulle's wanting to militarily crush the *pieds-noirs* opposition during the '*semaine des barricades*' in January 1960. Similarly, as early as the spring of 1963 de Gaulle's impetuous and old fashioned (and ineffective) requisitioning of the striking miners was countered by a wiser government response to the problem; and to an extent, the quiet competence of the new government contrasted not only with its predecessors, and the sorry

state of the opposition, but also with de Gaulle's own style, and would begin to be perceived, in spite of itself, as eventually a welcome alternative to de Gaulle's own imperious style, and would become another aspect of Gaullism.

The nature of power and authority in the new regime, however, was defined by de Gaulle. His press conference of 1 January 1964 was unequivocal in its stress upon the undisputed supremacy of the President. He also chaired the all-important *Conseil des ministres* (Cabinet) throughout his presidency. Pompidou's government settled into a full five-year term, addressing the implications of a booming economy and the formidable challenges of the sectors of finance, agriculture, education, and defence. It is worth noting that Pompidou's own position did not change until 1968, but in Education (the ministry dealing with the issues that would trigger the 1968 events) there were eight changes of minister. Nevertheless, no government after 1962 was overturned, and the government had a rock solid parliamentary (presidential) majority.

The UNR itself, however, faced difficult times, and behind the smooth public face, had very difficult beginnings. It too saw no less than seven general secretaries in the 11 year period from 1958–69. In a sense, maintaining the party as a 'parti des godillots' (devoted followers) and as de Gaulle's 'transmission belt' was imperative, but no less difficult for that.

First of all was the question of its own identity. It had been born of a surge of support for de Gaulle in late 1958, immediately after the referendum on the constitution, and brought together all the small Gaullist groups and old RPF activists and the *Républicains sociaux*. It had 86,000 members in its early days, an impressive figure that grew from none. Nevertheless, this was akin to the quite small SFIO (80,000), and nothing like the alleged million-strong RPF (and PCF). It was a mass party, but one that would group sufficient cadres for the tens of thousands of elected posts nationally available to the new party.

The UNR had to 'de-ideologize' itself while maintaining an identity. We have seen how its first extremely difficult task was to oust the very members who constituted its ideological strength and its fervour: namely, the often lifelong supporters of de Gaulle and of *Algérie Française*, which, they had thought, were synonymous. The early years saw much heated debate, even violence, as the 'true Gaullists' like Delbeque and Soustelle were rejected by Gaullism along with *Algérie Française*. Nor did the UNR replace the ideologies it lost – its left wing version never took hold. This is an extremely problematic issue for a political party,

and it replaced ideology with the pursuit of power itself. In many ways the UNR became the political ideology of those who wanted to modernize the French economy, open France up to international trade, and modernize business and industry. National implantation of the party became one of the party's main concerns, particularly after the municipal and senatorial elections of March and April 1959 and again during the senatorial elections of September 1962 which demonstrated the challenges of creating a political presence at local level.⁹

De Gaulle's thought, as could be gleaned from his writings and speeches, could not be 'developed' by the party, as the allegiance had to be to him rather than his ideas. This alters somewhat the view¹⁰ of the UNR as a 'catch-all' party. It was ideologically 'thin' not for strategic electoral reasons but for reasons of its identity (or non-identity) and *raison d'être*. The young cadres of the party, moreover, soon owed their allegiance and careers not to de Gaulle but to people like the Prime Minister, and other 'barons' of Gaullism; so that by the mid-1960s a new generation of the Gaullist political elite was emerging that had few links with the Gaullism of the RPF, let alone of the war. For the moment, and of necessity therefore, Gaullism, the philosophy of the most passionate and dramatic of political actors, lost its passion and its drama. The colonizing of the state machinery, of industry, of all walks of life by the UNR, turned UDR in 1968, would lead to the accusation, indeed the generalized perception, that there was, by the 1970s, a UDR-state.¹¹ The weakness of parliamentary control over this highly successful party and its government involved a whole series of scandals that would also become part of the fabric of the regime.¹²

De Gaulle on the world stage

We are not arguing here that after the victories of 1962, de Gaulle could proceed to perform unfettered upon the world stage and leave domestic politics behind.¹³ He maintained his grip upon domestic politics right up until the time his grip was broken almost completely in 1968. In spite of his triumphs, the inevitable negotiation with the prevailing political forces both domestically and internationally meant that even de Gaulle was in a perpetual state of political advance, concession, advantage, and retreat. In certain ways, the domestic situation became more conflictual after 1962, and 'opinion' in a whole range of manifestations appeared where it had not appeared before. The Fourth Republic had structured social conflict along classical lines of political sociology, expressing if not resolving, the myriad conflicts of interests and class that haunted France as it entered a very rapid period of

modernization and social change after World War Two. Without these conflicts being properly expressed through Parliament or political parties, it was to the 'social' that politics-society relations would shift, and this would become a permanent feature of the Fifth Republic, channelling political activity into a range of contestatory channels, as we shall see. This was compounded by the Fifth Republic's reassertion of the state and its administration's centrality in political and social life, making it more than ever the 'target' rather than the channel of political protest and competition.

The relatively stable domestic situation allowed de Gaulle to address wider foreign policy questions. Conversely, the foreign policy style of de Gaulle, the 'politics of grandeur',¹⁴ had major domestic social and political effects. An appraisal of de Gaulle's foreign policy lies outside the scope of our analysis. What we wish to demonstrate is how his style and some of the effects of his style upon policy were the result of the nature of his leadership. Domestic political stability was necessary for France to 'be itself' on the world stage in the 1960s, but the way in which France would comport itself was, in a sense, could only be, the comportment of its leader, legitimated in drama and legitimating of drama in the domestic context.

For de Gaulle, economic prosperity was a condition of France's greatness, not an end in itself. This would lead France down paths that could be argued as being detrimental to its economic well-being. De Gaulle, himself an austere man uninterested in the pettiness of material well-being, wanted a rich France devoted to its own greatness, not devoted to its citizens' acquisition of hi-fis, Renault Dauphines and fridges. Ironically, de Gaulle's success as a grandiose leader representing France's higher calling was utterly dependent upon the successes of this consumer society, a success he himself presided over; and which was a necessary yet contradictory condition of 'greatness'. Improvements in ordinary life – not least the acquisition of televisions through which de Gaulle's political authority was maintained – were preconditions of his ability to comport himself dramatically as if such triviality were of no consequence. Mundane self-improvement became a condition of the politics of grandeur, but it is a contradictory condition which would have consequences.

The international developments and events of the 1960s were, even by de Gaulle's standards, dramatic. However, they were not dramatic in the way de Gaulle would have wanted them to be, for it was a drama – from the Cuban Missile Crisis to the end of the Vietnam War – that was 'played' by the USA and the USSR, leaving little room for manoeuvre for smaller actors. It could be argued that de Gaulle's interpretation of

political action; to use personal (now national) *volonté* and *volontarisme* against *fatalité* could only take place within the ultimate inflexibility of the super-power stand-off. It is further arguable that de Gaulle's exploitation or creation of the spaces within this overall inflexibility was not in France's interests; and that a great deal of posturing and diplomatic noise ultimately led to a series of Gaullist failures. Let us examine our own contentious suggestions. Measuring success and failure are open to enormous qualification. It has been argued that de Gaulle's role and true function was to make failure look like success.¹⁵ We could perhaps say the opposite, that one of de Gaulle's greatest successes was, apart from the Algerian tragedy, the near-pacific loss of Empire. Even though the 1958 Constitution itself devoted so much space to the 'Community', and all of its members bar one signed up to it, within a year or so, Cameroon, Chad, Dahomey, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mali, Senegal, Togo, and Upper Volta were independent, leaving France with just a few overseas departments and territories. And the most successful failure was de Gaulle's bringing an end to the appalling human and economic costs of the Algerian conflict. Let us not try to measure but look at some of the consequences of his leadership style in this arena.

From 1962, de Gaulle had a devoted, docile, stable and competent government, with no internal opposition. And Algeria was over. He could replace his many Algeria tours at least for new ones. He enjoyed enormous popularity at home at this point, and he was already seen as a figure of international status who had put France back on its feet, as it were. This meant of course two things: that France would be represented almost exclusively by him alone, and that the representation would be his own '*certainne idée*', a definition of French independence, greatness, and so on, that was only given interpretation through himself. This romantic view is at once simple and elusive. It was not only that Gaullism was whatever de Gaulle happened to be doing or thinking, but rather that France itself and French Foreign policy had taken on this 'character'.

Two related themes or factors dominated de Gaulle's reign. The first was that his highly personalized and uncompromising almost caricatural assertion of France's national independence followed logically and inevitably from the assertions he had been making about domestic politics since the 1920s, but in particular since 1958. The second and related factor was that the context of this assertion was the overwhelming world controlling power and might of two other powers, the USSR and the USA, but as regards de Gaulle's 1960s foreign policy, in particular the USA.¹⁶ In many ways the whole of de Gaulle's decade in power

was dominated by his hostile attitude to the United States. In March 1959, he took the French Mediterranean fleet out of NATO control. This semi-withdrawal from NATO would later include the fleets in the Channel and the Atlantic, the refusal to allow US nuclear weapons in France, the taking control of all French airspace and the eventual withdrawal of France from the integrated command structure of NATO and the withdrawal of all US and Canadian troops from French soil.

In February 1960, France exploded its first Atom Bomb in the Sahara (and its first Hydrogen Bomb in August 1968). In March 1960, the Soviet leader Nikita Krushchev visited Paris. Because of the subsequent U2 spy scandal,¹⁷ this came to little, but the notion of France seeing itself as a kind of intermediary between West and East had been created. In June 1961, President John Kennedy made a highly popular and highly publicized state visit to France. The public and the media were very taken by Jackie Kennedy and by the warm and instant mutual admiration between her and de Gaulle. The irony here was that the 'real' enemy was never the Americans. De Gaulle's support for the US during the U2 scandal in 1960 and his total support for Kennedy during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 were, if one can use such a term in international relations, almost instinctive. But the logic of de Gaulle's world view when faced with US hegemony made his responses almost inevitable. It proceeded from a symbolic refusal of US domination of the 'free world'. The US gave de Gaulle ample diplomatic reason to be such a difficult ally for the US. It was in part the United States' utter command (with, in fact, Soviet backing) and humiliation of both the UK and France over the Suez crisis, before de Gaulle came to power, in 1956, that produced such different national responses. The UK's lesson learned was never to cross the US again; France's, and de Gaulle's, was to be sufficiently independent to be able not to have to toe the American line.

De Gaulle had spent a lot of time trying to obtain a particular mode of treatment as an ally rather than a servant of the United States, but whether it was over procuring nuclear capability, nuclear related technology, greater status within NATO strategic decision-making and so on, from Eisenhower through to Lyndon Johnson, France was rebuffed. There was also a credible strategic logic to de Gaulle's analyses, if not his subsequent politics. The fact that the USA and the USSR could not embark on total nuclear war, meant that it was likely that the first and perhaps only (before negotiation) battleground between the super-powers would be Europe itself which in the event of a Third World War would be either destroyed, or else overrun, in about three days, by

conventional Warsaw Pact forces. So even though under the US nuclear umbrella, it was very clear from a military point of view what this meant. Such strategic concerns allowed de Gaulle to try to develop, in line with his philosophy, a Metternich-style balance of powers between several poles of power (even though it seemed that truly there were only two). For de Gaulle, there was something unreal about trans-national power blocks acting in unison. This desire to bring other actors in to rearrange the chess board was the logic behind de Gaulle's helping to bring Communist China, 'Red China', into the UN in January 1964.

One of France's most fundamental relationships, indeed the most fundamental, was its relationship with Germany. Here also, the United States would influence Franco-German relations. In September 1958, the German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and de Gaulle met at Colombey-les-deux-églises. Their mutual admiration and subsequent friendship was the quintessence of de Gaulle's world view: two leaders as if incarnating their countries, and expressing national reconciliation through their personal relationship. This friendship between the two men would develop into a treaty between the two countries. In July 1962, Adenauer visited France, and in September, de Gaulle visited West Germany. Adenauer impressed and reassured the French, while de Gaulle impressed and entertained the Germans with his high rhetoric and the historic sweep of his speeches. A solemn treaty, the Franco-German treaty, was signed in January 1963. This was only 20 years after the cataclysm of World War Two. For de Gaulle this was not only an act of reconciliation, but an opportunity to begin to draw West Germany into a less pro-American, more pro-European system of alliances, guided in particular by France, politically the most powerful of European countries. In the Cold War context, however, West Germany was the front line of any potentially devastating conflict. In the same year, 1963, President Kennedy made his politically stunning (although grammatically incorrect) 'Ich bin ein Berliner' speech, thereby publicly offering to West Germany, even West Berlin in the heart of East Germany (and Berliners had already had experience of the Berlin Airlift), protection from the USSR by the United States. The notion that West Germany in such circumstances would do anything to jeopardize US goodwill was out of the question and, therefore, de Gaulle's diplomatic intentions were, particularly in retrospect, almost amusing. The Franco-German treaty itself contained little apart from solemn intention to dialogue, hold meetings and develop cultural and youth exchanges.

De Gaulle 'inherited' the EEC (EU) as he did so many of the Fourth Republic's policies (e.g. its nuclear programme). He was not hostile to the organization, recognizing its enormous economic advantages. Even politically he was initially involved in its construction. The failed 'Fouchet Plan' of October 1961 was a French initiative and proposed integrated cooperation in a range of areas: diplomacy, defence and culture, and powers for the Commission, European Council and Parliament along the lines that in fact the EU was to achieve in the 1970s and 1980s. In May 1962, he made his overtly anti-European speech, which triggered the resignation of his pro-European MRP ministers. It is arguable that once again de Gaulle's attitude to the US was decisive in his hostility. His failure to advance France's own leadership of Europe led to a reversal in his attitudes; thereafter he sometimes saw the EU as yet one more potential avenue through which the US could dominate Europe. Hence his hostility, from the beginning, to the UK's joining the EU. For him, the UK was a Trojan horse for US policy.¹⁸ In 1965, France's failure to get its own way on the Common Agricultural Policy led to the 'empty chair' crisis of the EU whereby France just simply refused to cooperate with its partners. This lasted six months, at the end of which France's demands were met.

By this time, de Gaulle had come to be seen by his allies – the US, the UK and the countries of Western Europe, as a most difficult Head of State. It is arguable that perpetually contestatory leadership saw the beginnings of a revision of how he was seen in France. Although de Gaulle enjoyed majority support in France for his foreign policy stances, this was never of the kind he enjoyed in his 1958–62 phase, nor was French opinion always in agreement with de Gaulle, for example on nuclear policy. French nuclear weapons developed throughout the 1960s (and well beyond). By 1967, France had a nuclear submarine, and (French-made) fighters capable of carrying nuclear weapons. It was also developing missile capability. The consequences for this modernization were that the Airforce and Navy were favoured, de Gaulle's own force, the troublesome Army, disfavoured, falling in his presidency from 800,000 to 300,000.

He extended his refusal of the two 'blocs' by developing good working relations with the USSR, visiting 'Russia' in June 1966, once again, however, signing agreements that had little content, even if they momentarily drew the world's attention. In September 1967, in Poland, he upset his hosts (and the USSR) by urging Poland to be more imaginative, be more like France and see the world as more than just two blocs.¹⁹ He made similar speeches in Romania in the following year, in May 1968

in fact, at the moment that his own regime was on the verge of collapse. Efforts of this kind in the past had been crushed by the authorities in Poland – and in Hungary with Soviet troops, so he offered no practical support to dissidence while irritating his orthodox party hosts. The one tangible advantage was to stress the national identity issue, which in fact was advantageous to both dissidence and orthodoxy.

He was to commit possibly his greatest diplomatic affront in July 1967 in a speech in Montreal, as the guest of the Canadian Federal government.²⁰ By uttering his expression 'Vive le Québec libre!' he seemed to be calling for, not dissociation from the superpowers (though the Americans were not happy with this speech either) but secession for Quebec from Canada, and an implied special kind of relationship with France. Just before and after this (27 November 1967) de Gaulle also made two pronouncements about Israel, the first opposing the 6-Day War, the second coming close to accusations of anti-semitism when he referred to Israel (the Jews) as a 'peuple d'élite, sûr de lui-même et dominateur'.²¹

De Gaulle's politics of grandeur, which grew out of his world view, meant a series of '*grand projets*' such as the Anglo-French supersonic *Concorde* project, large investment in television and computer technology, again in response to US innovations in these, and even an attempt to 'take on' the international financial system by bringing large gold reserves back to France to counter America's exporting (through dollars) of its own deficit.²²

De Gaulle's rhetorical style at the international level was fashioned by his domestic persona and the conditions of his presidency, which encouraged a particular style and discourse that was lifted to the international level. De Gaulle could not, however, have lifted to the international level his unequivocal successes on the domestic level, given that in the former he was not in a position of great, and familiar, advantage. Yet it is doubtful whether France could have struck such an independent stance under any other political leader at this time. And no other politician's international persona would have had such domestic resonance and approval. And it was recognized, and often applauded, that a European leader, drawing upon all the discourse, style, verve, historical memory, and intellect that the French possess, could represent perhaps Europe's most compelling country on the international stage. No Italian, British, German, or other leader could have taken such stances as de Gaulle did. There was also a great deal of European opinion that agreed with him, particularly as the Vietnam War became morally questionable, seemingly endless, and utterly destructive. We shall come back

to this point, but this brings us to what is arguably de Gaulle's most striking and paradoxical achievement, namely, the impetus he gave to Third World discourse on the international stage. Paradoxical, in that de Gaulle's whole temperament was of Empire, and of tradition. Yet, the logical outcome of his own views about national self-determination meant that he did speak out against the superpowers' grip in the name of self-determination of free peoples whether in Europe, Latin America, or South East Asia, and he reflected Western opposition to the war in Vietnam, particularly in his Phnom Penh speech in September 1966, and arguably contributed to the ending of the war by reflecting European public opinion and by creating a climate of opinion among Western leaders. Given France's own knowledge of South East Asia (the Vietnam War had begun as a French colonial war), France was well placed to offer criticism and advice. The lyricism of some of his Third World, non-alignment rhetoric bordered on liberation philosophy.

The context of this was de Gaulle's hostility towards the United States' domination of international relations among the Western allies and its dependents and to the superpowers' 'cartelizing' international relations generally – hence his mixed reception in the USSR, Poland and Romania, for example. We have to raise the question, however, whether near-uncritical support for US policy by most of America's allies was tempered by de Gaulle's boldness. US policy in Latin America, South East Asia, and elsewhere was indeed highly questionable²³ at this time; and a kind of cultural resistance to an aggressive American economic policy in Europe with its far-reaching cultural ramifications in terms of European identity/identities was perhaps welcome. It is also arguable that de Gaulle understood well the nature of European Communism, better than the Americans did, and knew that calls for national self-assertion could take place, and for the better, even in the context of the Cold War.

This brings us to a difficult question, for we risk being drawn into de Gaulle's own mythical reference points. But let us ask it with that proviso: was de Gaulle, with his acute political and historical intelligence, indeed a visionary in world affairs? And although seen at the time as an often unbearably arrogant, self-regarding, and at times bombastic world leader, perhaps in the longer term he was right. It is arguable that his opposition to America's treating Latin America as its 'back yard' foresaw the murderous consequences that would appear in countries like Chile, and contributed in the longer term to the transitions to democracy in Latin America. His advice to Eisenhower and Kennedy not to become embroiled in Vietnam, and his opposition to Lyndon

Johnson's escalation of the Vietnam War was arguably a correct view. The policy of a country with a very limited range of nuclear weapons, threatening anyone – in fact the USSR only – with significant and immediate retaliation to attack, arguably acted as a deterrent against aggression towards Western Europe. One assumes de Gaulle's all out strike, '*tous azimuts*' policy was believed in the Kremlin. In the post superpower era, should we not see de Gaulle's encouragement of Poland, of Romania, of Russia even, indeed visionary? Is it not true that his suspicions about the UK's being too uncritical of American policy were correct, and that his dramatic halting of the trend towards European supra-nationalism in the early 1960s was a recognition of the considerable power and depth of national allegiances? Is it not arguable that he foresaw rather than created the problems faced by a Europe caught between the tensions of national and supra-national allegiances?

Having said these things, the essential thing to bear in mind is that the kind of political performances de Gaulle gave were integral to the kind of leadership he exercised, the way he came to power, the political ascendancy he enjoyed at the domestic level and the highly personalized way he exercised his political power not only as the main political actor but also as France's Head of State.

Left opposition

One of the fortuitous things for the left in the political rout of 1962 was that, of the non-Gaullist opposition, the main parts left functioning were indeed on the left; and a certain degree of cooperation was imperative. Quite simply, the legislative election two-round system meant that without allies parties could never hope to increase their vote in the second round and win the seat. Alliance with the PCF was a gamble, and success would partly depend upon how the Cold War developed, how *détente* between the superpowers developed, and how 'acceptable' communists in government became for the French as a whole (and arguably for France's international partners, especially the United States). This realignment of the left, 1962–81, has been written about in hundreds of books. What we wish to emphasize here is how the left began to cooperate after 1962, and what the consequences of this were for the nature of politics in the new Fifth Republic.

It is worth noting two things here. First, in neither the SFIO nor the PCF was the Fifth Republic's advent followed by any real doctrinal reflection. Second, the alliance strategy remained focused on the National Assembly. A very small number of individuals, some of them in political parties (of the left, centre left and centre), or else in think tanks or

political media, saw the possibility of using presidential competition to help get the republic to 'revert' to a properly republican one.²⁴ Virtually no one saw beyond this – or into the heart of the Fifth Republic, namely that the key to power was actually the presidency and presidentialism itself.

On 19 September 1963, the then centre left *Express* magazine run by the young modernist Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, started to write about a mysterious 'Monsieur X', an imagined, ideal left wing candidate who might stand against de Gaulle in the forthcoming presidential election of 1965. This campaign – a brilliant innovation in the mediation of politics – caused enormous national interest. It transpired that the Monsieur X was Gaston Defferre, a leading senior politician in the SFIO and party boss of the Bouches-du-Rhône (Marseilles) federation of the SFIO. This was the first initiative from inside a large political party of responding to the presidency in this way.²⁵ The 'parliamentary' thrust in Defferre's subsequent proposals to domesticate the presidency (reform of the referendum initiatives, and of article 16); these 'symbolic' attacks betrayed the party nature of the initiative.²⁶ Defferre (dissociating himself from the PCF) actually did draw support from parts of the centre left (Radicals and MRP) and some think tanks, and went as far as to begin setting up a trans-party *Fédération démocrate et socialiste* destined to involve several parties and groups. The leader of the SFIO, Guy Mollet, in order to sabotage the initiative, insisted in June 1965 that the FDS be truly socialist and secularist, thus collapsing the project through his frontal attack upon the Christian democrat MRP and other non-socialist support. It was true that Defferre was trying to gather the former regime's centre left to a new purpose. The problem was that the SFIO was partly travelling in the opposite direction, towards the PCF that Defferre was marking himself off from. The mighty PCF in 1962 had still polled, and would continue to do so throughout the 1960s, around 20 per cent of the electorate, to the SFIO's 12.5 per cent. The PCF, therefore, had to be part of the solution, even though neither it nor Mollet were interested in the presidential election. Into this void stepped François Mitterrand, not a member of the SFIO, who, by playing to the Mollet/PCF strategy while enhancing – much more than Defferre – the 'presidentialism' of his (left wing) candidacy, conflated, or rather, transcended both the Defferre and Mollet strategy to begin a process that would transform the left and French politics itself.

A first point to note is that Mitterrand's was an individual undertaking which neither countered nor threatened the established political

parties. In 1964, Mitterrand was the leader of one or two think tanks and remnants of parties that had fused to form the tiny *Convention des institutions républicaines*. This would act as his support base, and continue to do so over the years in one form or another. He made contact with the established parties and kept his initiative within the converging trajectory of the PCF and SFIO. His hurriedly organized *Fédération de la gauche démocrate et socialiste* (FGDS) was a left-centred reprise of Defferre's idea but without the MRP (it included the SFIO and the Radicals, and his own CIR), and it was accepted by the PCF (and the PSU). In September 1965, he declared his candidacy. There would also be a Centrist candidate, Jean Lecanuet, the leader of the MRP, who declared the following month.

The 1965 campaign itself saw television and advertising play a significant role (Lecanuet used an advertising agency and an almost US-style campaign). There were six and a half million television sets, and a great deal of radio debate, particularly on the independent stations, all of which was reported in the press. The country 'saw' for the first time opposition candidates countering de Gaulle's views and his government, the television having been the real *domaine réservé* of de Gaulle until then. He, on the other hand, announced his candidacy on the eight o'clock evening news as late as 4 November, only four weeks before the election, and was clearly disdainful of the whole process that he had himself invented. It is startling to bear in mind that this was de Gaulle's first – and last – national election. He did not even use his allocated broadcast time. But the campaign itself changed everything. As Mitterrand, and Lecanuet at the beginning of the campaign, clambered up the opinion polls, de Gaulle's supporters, almost silent until the last days of the campaign, began campaigning vigorously, and personally, against the opposition candidates. On 30 November, de Gaulle – finally giving in to advice – also made a broadcast stressing his social reforms and his effective government team.²⁷

There was a general assumption that these elections, scheduled for 5 and 19 December, would see de Gaulle elected on the 5th with a vote approaching 70 per cent. 1965 was the first major electoral moment in the Fifth Republic where the unexpected happened, and the public was riveted by developments. By mid-November it was clear from the polls that he had fallen below 50 per cent, i.e. that he would have to go to the run-off. Until this moment, paradoxically, because he was seen as unbeatable, a lot of the interest was in the two other main candidates, Lecanuet and Mitterrand. There was a kind of national curiosity about what other politicians apart from de Gaulle there were. And, unlike de Gaulle, all the other candidates campaigned hard, gaining much

publicity in a France that had been almost exclusively dominated by only one person. The right wing lawyer J.-L. Tixier-Vignancour also stood (as a kind of 'witness' to *Algérie Française*). He went on to gain 5 per cent, but it is interesting to note that even here, and even this early, the fundamentally anti-de Gaulle extreme right was using what had become the Gaullist republic's central political moment to purpose.²⁸

Mitterrand and Lecanuet's candidacies were in part a struggle for the future shape of the non-Gaullist opposition. And Mitterrand's success over Lecanuet in round one (we should bear in mind that Lecanuet was credited in the polls with 20 per cent at some points in the campaign) would have major effects upon the political process. In mid-November, Mitterrand and Lecanuet's national profile became even more '*sérieux*' as it was clear that one of them would go on to challenge the General. The fact that there was to be a second ballot electrified the public and the media and the polity. On 5 December, the results were: de Gaulle 44 per cent, Mitterrand 32 per cent, Lecanuet 16 per cent, Tixier-Vignancour 5 per cent, Marcilhacy 1.7 per cent, Barbu 1.1 per cent. One of the results was to trigger de Gaulle's belated entry into the campaign. He gave three interviews, becoming again as it were, the affable and approachable de Gaulle of the press conference of 19 May 1958. Mitterrand campaigned for the centre ground in round two, appearing more 'republican', more of a rally style figure. On 19 December, de Gaulle won with 54.05 per cent of the vote. De Gaulle had won – of course – but Mitterrand had as it were recreated the left in one election. His 45.05 per cent against de Gaulle meant that there was a possible alternative politics to Gaullism. It is true that Mitterrand's vote was not really the left – all those opposed to de Gaulle had voted for him, much of the extreme right too. But the 1965 elections were fundamental to the embedding of the left into the regime, and therefore of the regime into the wider political culture. Three preliminary points we can make are: first, how dramatic, exciting, and fun these first direct suffrage presidential elections were; second, how even at this early stage, it was the presidential aspect of the republic that was having major effects upon the comportment of the parties, even though some of them ignored this effect; and, third, Mitterrand's tactic of moving from the left to the centre 'republican' ground for round two, became a feature of leadership politics.

The new conditions of the republic

Let us look in more detail at what the 1965 presidential election tells us about the role of 'persona' in politics. We need to make one thing

clear, however. The near universal view that 1965, forcing de Gaulle to a second ballot, severely damaged his exalted personal image, and caused him to fall from Olympian heights, is to fundamentally misunderstand the Fifth Republic, Gaullism, and de Gaulle's relation to the French. We shall return to these issues below. Let us stress here, once again, that the essence of the Fifth Republic is not simply the power and prestige of the President but the personal nature of his imagined relationship to his national constituency. And understanding what happened to this will help us understand what happened to the republic. We can agree with the general view, however, that television and a sense of the modern and the new media age, did redefine French politics fundamentally and forever. Many of the features of the campaign remain with the republic and presidential politics 45 years and more later. We can divide our comments on the significance of the 1965 elections into the three categories we used when looking at the 1963–65 period: Gaullism, de Gaulle, and the left.

Gaullism and government

Let us make four observations. First, the practical, managerial, daily business of government style shown by Pompidou and his government provided Gaullism with another face and leadership style that helped de Gaulle rule unhindered, but also provided future Gaullism with an extra political resource and, eventually, a new leader. Second, we have seen that a precondition of the above meant the relatively total 'emptying' of Gaullism of its ideology and ideological enquiry. It nevertheless became the site where Gaullist 'barons' resided, and future leaders at a range of levels would begin to emerge, with their own coterie of support, advice, and even devotion. Third, and related to this and to the ideological question, is the fact that such an organization, although apparently ideologically empty, retained the potential to pitch over into an emotional rally form, during de Gaulle's presidency, particularly around election times, but also after de Gaulle. The rally, a devotional rally of feeling and opinion around an insightful leader, remained embedded deep within the organization. Fourth, as we have seen, the UNR and the government acted as a protective shield, so that in the 1960s de Gaulle could go off to solve the world's problems because he had a team at home operating in such a way as to allow him to behave as if he did not need them. Let us turn to him then and the consequences of his 'above-the-fray' status in the context of the 1965 elections.

De Gaulle

We can make four points. First, simply to stress again the point made above, that the condition of his '*gaullien*' status was a committed team prepared to allow him such scope, although as we saw in 1965, the image of a leader, so Olympian that he is 'out-of-touch', can be harmed by the division of labour. Second, being given such scope, 'character' and presidential initiative replaced or at least dominated policy elaboration; and de Gaulle's arguably high handed and self-certain comportment vis-à-vis virtually everyone, but in particular the United States, increased after 1965 rather than diminished. Did he assert himself more subsequently because of or in spite of the 1965 election? Third, it is clear that de Gaulle's style and style of delivery, often so powerfully advantageous to him, were, in 1965, disadvantages. This is in part the result of their precluding alternatives most of the time. It is difficult for a leader like de Gaulle to have changed a whole regime, offered to the French, against all the odds, the sacred right to elect their leader, and then go on to be a contender for that leadership in an appropriate way. Moving from leader to citizen-candidate²⁹ is a very charged symbolic transition. For de Gaulle it was impossible. The result was that he stood in awkward contrast to his own republic. As regards the accompanying discourse, moreover, it was also clear that the attraction of Jean Lecanuet, for example, was the contrast with de Gaulle's never-changing intonations of grandeur and of regime crisis. The electorate quite rightly felt that his regime was in fact relatively stable, and this, of course, thanks to him. The discourse of crisis was beginning to sound like empty rhetoric, and de Gaulle's failure to grasp the evolving 'mood of the nation' certainly undermined his claim to X-ray vision. Fourth, we said above that de Gaulle's style precluded character shifts. Mostly, but not completely. De Gaulle's 'persona' was capable of another public aspect as we have seen: jovial, friendly, knowing, warm hearted – and, given the unsettling rise of Lecanuet and Mitterrand in the opinion polls, de Gaulle shifted into this mode, particularly in the three interviews he gave to Michel Droit between the rounds. In many ways, by 'humanizing' himself like this, de Gaulle's (albeit belated) 1965 election persona strengthened his long term standing rather than weakened it. He arguably became more endeared to the French in that he showed, once again, an aspect to his character long submerged and much liked. We should remember that the discursive intervention that most endeared him to a fearful opinion was the occasion of the press conference of 19 May 1958.³⁰ Did the 1965 election bring de Gaulle down to earth? Arguably, yes (although not

for long); but the main point or points, rather, are that it did him good not harm, and that this interaction of persona and character traits is crucial to an understanding of the Fifth Republic. His popularity in no way meant that the French saw de Gaulle, consistently and intensely, as he saw himself. In this sense, even for de Gaulle – and especially for his republic – 1965 was a great success, even though neither he nor most commentators saw it as such. 1965 is not the twilight of Gaullism but, when understood properly, its triumph.

The left

François Mitterrand, because he went through to the second round, became henceforth the perceived leader of the left. He, like all the other candidates, moreover, was (as if) a lone individual who had stepped into the presidential arena. Mitterrand indeed was let through by the left precisely because he had no political party (his CIR was really only a small support group); but this notion of a candidate as 'alone' would become part of the mythology of the presidential contest, even though strictly speaking it was not true (indeed could not be true given the exigencies of a party system). Mitterrand's candidacy (and Lecanuet's by default) demonstrated that the future of French politics would very much involve the political parties but in a novel way that few, especially the big battalions, as yet understood.

The 1965 election also saw attempts at an overall modernizing of politics. The candidacy of Defferre from 1963 to 1965 with 'his' book (*Un nouvel horizon*, really it was an election manifesto), his support from think tanks, the campaigns in the media, the personalization, the federating of support somewhat reminiscent of the Gaullist rally, the 'gadgets' (e.g. badges, hats) and the photo-opportunities of Lecanuet's campaign, the developing television rhetorical style (repetitions, *mises au point*) of Mitterrand; all these pointed to the idea that the 'renewal' of opposition to de Gaulle would be in tune with modern politics.³¹ Yet it would also bring closer to the mainstream and in personalized form older myths and ideas. Mitterrand – although he would go on to be as 'regal' as de Gaulle – detonated, by his 1965 challenge, the myth of David v. Goliath, a myth that would inform French politics in a significant way at a range of levels throughout the Fifth Republic. Outsiders, underdogs, loners would begin to join the presidential constellation with significant political consequences.

The events of 1965 meant that the legitimacy of political leadership was now crucially related to the presidential system, if not to the presidential election itself. 1965 also began a new kind of politics in that it put

leaders, potential leaders, and the political parties, in a dramatic and exciting relation to the conquest of power, and linked over time presidential to legislative elections. The perceived 'crises' these elections took place in further dramatized these linked processes, often dividing France into two warring camps, with the legislative elections themselves becoming highly personalized. 1965, for example, was the beginning of a series of perceived crises that would influence each other for 15 years: the 1965, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1973, 1974, 1978, and 1981 elections were all shaped and dynamized by the elections that preceded them, and in turn shaped and dynamized the ones following.

Finally, 1965 saw the personalization of politics become a generalized phenomenon beyond de Gaulle himself. In this, he really did influence the Fifth Republic without realizing how. He thought election by direct suffrage was necessary to confer (a pale reflection of) his status upon those who came after him. What he did was to generalize his own mythology, and dynamize the whole system, bringing into it a complex and consequential relationship between the persona of political actors and their relationship to discourse, political culture, 'opinion', and the electorate, and to the political parties.

From our analysis and narrative of 1962 and of 1965 we can make three points relating to leadership. First, various actors at various conjunctures were drawing the Fifth Republic forward in a particular direction. We could say that de Gaulle was becoming the main figure *not* responding. Second, this was possible because of the arrangement of the institutions and what the presidency let seep into the polity generally as the result of the requirements of presidentialism, the most salient and formative aspect of which was the creation of images of national leadership (i.e. across the nation and of the nation, itself perceived as an entity, as a 'people' and as a modern, nationally self-conscious electorate, and a nation-state that now had international status). Third, in 'real' politics, the 'leader' had to be in a relationship to a political party or group of political parties. 'In a relationship to' begs many questions; it does not necessarily mean, for example, being the party leader. As we have seen, Mitterrand's position in 1965 was conditional upon his not being the leader of any significant political party. His subsequent leadership became possible, partly because of his 'symbolic' 1965 leadership. Presidentialism was imposing a range of forms of leadership, and a range of characteristics and conditions of leadership itself.

There had been both symbolic and more managerial leaderships throughout French history, but the new emphasis upon leadership itself as more exalted was bringing in a much wider range of possibilities in

terms of style, discourse and rhetoric, image, even age (and to a certain extent, even up to the presidential level, at election time at least, of gender).³² One of the major differences between the Fifth and earlier Republics, however, was the division of labour between the leader as a time serving manager, however intelligent, even wise, and the symbolic nature of new leadership with its emphasis upon visionary leadership.

1965 was one of the most interesting moments in the Fifth Republic's history for what it tells us about the range of issues we have been looking at: the status of leadership, and how fragile as well as compelling it could be; the role of the parties; and the role of the media. It was the first time that the new Fifth Republic 'performed' in all its aspects, in all its presidentialism. The year 1965 was soon to be overtaken in the national memory by 1968. It is arguable, however, that although 1968 was indeed a cultural revolution, 1965 was the more important political moment for how the Fifth Republic developed. We need to add the rider, however, that politically 1968 does have two major effects upon the fortunes of the two main protagonists of 1965: 1968 made de Gaulle's subsequent fall and Mitterrand's subsequent rise all the more spectacular, but the seeds of each were sown in 1965. It is true that without 1968, de Gaulle's fall would have been of less biblical proportions, and Mitterrand's rise less phoenix-like. But all of these subsequent events were foreshadowed, encoded, foretold almost, in the events of 1965.

The 1965 election was also formative in that it began as we have said a related series of elections, elections that often were formative of subsequent elections so that we have a path-dependent series from 1965–81. Even 1968, which can in many ways be seen as outside this series is not. For example, the astounding 1968 Gaullist majority – as we shall see – was based partly on events, *the 'events'*, but also upon the perceived consequences of the poor Gaullist voter discipline of the 1967 elections. The momentous departure of de Gaulle from office in 1969, which precipitated new presidential elections was in turn related to his wilful insistence upon a referendum that he had promised in the heat of the '68 events, had withdrawn and gone instead – on advice – for legislative elections; elections which for a range of reasons we shall see irritated him, in spite of his and his party's crushing victory.

1965–67

Let us look briefly at the responses of the Gaullists, the centrists, and the left to the 1965 elections. Fourteen months separated the 1965 presidential and 1967 legislative elections. Giscard was dropped from government,

and turned his attention to establishing the relative autonomy of the Independent Republicans from the Gaullists. Of equal importance were his television appearances and a general media treatment of Giscard as the young man to watch. This 'individuation' of politics was beginning to spread now, from de Gaulle and the other candidates of 1965, now out beyond these. On 10 January 1967, Giscard made his 'Oui, mais' remark at a press conference – ostensibly about the government, but by implication a criticism of de Gaulle too (and a valorization of himself).³³

In the centre, Lecanuet, capitalizing upon his 1965 success, forged a new party (February 1966) made up of MRP, what remained of the CNIP, old UDSR, some Radicals and centre left figures. It too was torn between situating itself in relation to the government and creating a wider alliance with the non-communist left. Throughout this period we can see the ideological moving around of a great number of people as the political formations established themselves; and issues such as social reform, the relationship to the communists, secularism, and Europe, would shift members and leaders around as they gravitated towards the new political structures.

On the left, Mitterrand managed to keep the FGDS intact and forward looking, and even developed the idea of a 'shadow cabinet'. This was not a great success, partly because the political parties, particularly the SFIO, still dominated within the Federation, and Mitterrand's 'cabinet' reflected this, giving it a Fourth Republican feel, the problem being also that many of these people were unknown to the public. Further cooperation – always conflictual and liable to break down – between the FGDS and the communists continued. By 1967, Mitterrand, reflecting Pompidou's *Comité d'action pour la V^e* (set up in May 1966) had agreed single candidacies between the constituent elements of the FGDS, a reasonably tacit understanding with the small PSU, and *désistement* agreements drawn up with the PCF.

De Gaulle intervened once in the 1967 campaign to support the UNR, but it is arguable that his intervention did neither him nor the party any good – underneath, changes were taking place in people's attitudes to de Gaulle and to Gaullism. Pompidou ran the Gaullist campaign, and the diminution of overt personalization and references to de Gaulle and more attention to policy was quite striking. In the campaign itself, television, partly because it still showed rather stifled performances by candidates, was less exciting than radio where the debates between Pompidou and Mitterrand (2 February) and Pompidou and Mendès France (27 February) were listened to by millions and widely commented. On the airwaves, expert spokespersons both for government and opposition were replacing

the old Fourth Republican 'good character' local candidate to send to Parliament and represent the local community. The local still mattered, but a national/governmental level was being disseminated, now with Pompidou seen as the main actor, and Mitterrand as the leader of the opposition. As we have seen, other actors were prominent. Mendès France, Giscard, Lecanuet, 'clashed' – often in the context of 'duels' as we have seen; often even reported duels in the often forgotten National Assembly, between, for example Mendès France and Debré (who replaced Giscard in January 1966 at Finance), or parliamentary duels between Pompidou and Mitterrand.

Over and above this, there was a kind of personalized renewal of the political class, with 'youth' being brought to bear at the breaking dawn of the new television/media age. Both Lecanuet and Mitterrand promoted young candidates, often those whose allegiance was to them rather than to the party. The Gaullists did this too in many constituencies, the young Jacques Chirac, whose loyalty was to Pompidou rather than to de Gaulle or the UNR, was the best known example. All the parties used the techniques of modern campaigning, in particular the new trend, especially by the Gaullists, of spending large amounts of money on the campaign, and replicating Lecanuet's US style rallies, so that 'spectacle' became the norm, so that, as in 1965, the 1967 election was an attractive occasion, and was lived as a national one. The results saw the Gaullists, semi-detached from de Gaulle, increase their vote even on 1962 (though not, it should be noted, on 1965) to 38.5 per cent. Pompidou's prestige climbed even further. At the previous legislative election it was noted that no party before the UNR had ever broken through the 30 per cent mark. Now it was approaching 40 per cent. The Communists did well with 22.5 per cent, and the FGDS quite well with 19 per cent. The 'centre' fell away, this time forever from countenancing party dominance in the Fifth Republic with a score of 14 per cent, albeit similar to Lecanuet's 1965 score, but insufficient to 'weigh' in the second round, or subsequently to entertain the idea, held until then, of radically influencing the political topography. In round two, one week later, the *Centre démocrate* took 1,000,000 fewer votes than Lecanuet in 1965, and fewer than the very poor combined showing of the MRP and CNIP in 1962. The centre would go on existing and see a range of leaders other than Lecanuet, Jacques Duhamel, Joseph Fontanet and Michel Durafour, for example, constantly trying to revive the centre. The bi-polarization of 1965, however, was being reaffirmed, and this in the semi-absence of the towering figure of de Gaulle.

On the left, the 'discipline' that would take the left towards power and office did assert itself. The discipline between the PCF and the FGDS

candidates (who had also brought some PSU under its wing) had the resounding effect of threatening Pompidou's first round success. If the PCF had allowed a few more exceptions to the *désistement* rule, i.e. allowing an FGDS through to take on the Gaullist candidate in round two, where the communist led in round one, the left may well have won the election. Many Gaullist voters, so confident after their first round success did not mobilize enough for round two or in round two. Many centrists – though by no means all – were willing or more willing than before to vote for the FGDS in round two, and even, with the FGDS 'shield', for the PCF. In the end, Pompidou (and the Giscardians) had 245 seats. The others combined, not a united but an ominous opposition, had 242 (of which 192 were PCF/FGDS). Pompidou had a majority of three. Pompidou had won nevertheless, and almost 'without' de Gaulle, itself a new development.

The society that this polity governed was in a period of bewildering change. In many ways, in music, lifestyles, attitudes, authority within the family, the 'place' of women, France was catching up with its Western counterparts; in other ways – in cinema, political and social thought, the cultural life – it was out ahead. For many, the mid-1960s meant better jobs, better prospects, but the still booming French economy (throughout the 1960s France's GDP growth rate was second only to Japan's) was still handing out its rewards unevenly, in terms of gender, social class, profession, age, and region. The troubles of 1963 had shown that not only was this one of the few ways of gaining attention, it could be a successful one. The government did in a more private manner deal with industry and other interest groups, but the relationships were either private deals or public protest.³⁴

The uneven rewards of the economic boom, the massive exodus from the countryside to the towns, the dislocations involved, and the rapidity of change meant that discontent – this was shown by hundreds of opinion polls throughout the decade – was a constant feature of ordinary people's social life. Dissatisfaction, a sense that things were not right, permeated people's thinking. Also there had developed, by the mid-1960s, a largely accurate popular view that the Gaullist government and party had become more or less a conservative force representing – through, for example, help to industry but restraint on wages – capital and not labour. The political forces such as: unions, leftist parties, the PCF, became channels of this discontent. The discontent itself structured politics and political relations at this time. And 1968 was around the corner.

3

1968 and its Aftermath

One of the most important things we can say about interpretation of the events of May–June 1968 is that they should not be treated separately from the rest of the period. The 'events' of '68 were a phenomenon of the Fifth Republic, a phenomenon of de Gaulle's presidency. Let us look at the events and their aftermath from this perspective to see if we can shed light upon their significance, both for Fifth Republic politics in 1968, and for the fortunes and development of leadership politics after.

In some ways, May 1968 was the expressive culmination of social and political developments in youth culture over the previous years. Internationally, youth, the baby boomers, booming throughout the Western world, had shared the social influence of both US and European popular and youth culture since the end of World War Two. More recently, anti-Vietnam War protests had been developing across the West's universities. All over Europe, left wing groups had been springing up, and radical leftism was 'in the culture'. The summer of 1967 had seen major student unrest in West Berlin; one of the heroes of the left, Rudi Dutschke, was shot in the head (April 1968) and very seriously injured by a member of an extreme right wing group, becoming a 'martyr' of protest. A lot of left wing agitation was occurring throughout US and European campuses, particularly the 'new' universities, like Nanterre near Paris, which opened in 1964. These universities, none more so than Nanterre, were overcrowded, dull, miles from cafés and shops, with poor student accommodation and were, generally speaking, 1960s concrete monstrosities surrounded by construction sites, and seething with political radicalism. Nanterre had been in a political ferment since November 1967, with demonstrations, sit-ins, and so on, disrupting classes.