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Chair History of International Relations

De Gaulle between the hegemonies: a politics of grandeur

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## Table of contents

Introduction .....	5
Chapter 1 The Fifth Republic: an instrument to achieve foreign policy .....	11
1.1 De Gaulle coming back to power .....	11
1.2 De Gaulle's foreign policy principles.....	21
1.3 The French posture towards the West at the beginning of his mandate: the withdrawal of Mediterranean fleet from N.A.T.O. and the Berlin crisis	31
Chapter 2 Grandeur and détente in De Gaulle .....	41
2.1 The idea and strategy of <i>grandeur</i> .....	41
2.2 The French idea of <i>détente</i> .....	56
Chapter 3 L'ouverture à l'Est .....	66
3.1 De Gaulle's foreign policy to the East at the beginning of the sixties: the concretization of <i>détente</i> .....	66
3.2 Limits to <i>détente</i> : ideological aspect and the German issue.....	82
3.3 The evolution of French policy towards the East during 1964-1965 .....	93
Chapter 4: The realization of <i>détente</i> .....	103
4.1 Consolidation of the Franco-Soviet relations .....	103
4.2 The aftermath of the Franco-Soviet cooperation and the evolution of French policy to the East .....	114
Conclusion .....	127
Bibliography.....	133
Monographies.....	133
Magazines and journals articles.....	134
Speeches .....	136
Press Conferences.....	137
Communications, Declarations and Comptes-rendus .....	138

Letters .....	139
De Gaulle's interventions .....	140
Telegrams and Memorandum of conversations .....	140

## Introduction

Eric Hobsbawm has titled one of his most important work :«The Age of Extremes: the Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991». The two dates mentioned into the title are very meaningful, because they refer to the beginning of the First World War and to the fall of Soviet Union. It would be possible to affirm that, it is highly likely that the world, between these two major events, has experienced more than it has done in the past centuries, for the contemporary involvement of almost all the States of the world.

While the first half of the century has seen the development of two armed conflicts, the second half has seen the development of a silent conflict, due to the division of the world into two different blocs. Notably, the result of the second conflict led the planet to experience the so called Cold War. As it is known, Europe was the place where such a conflict developed, causing then an ideological and even material, as it is in case of Germany, division at the interior of the continent.

It is not overstated to affirm that during that period, the nation-state concept, has been covered by the impossible independence from the two blocs, led by the superpowers, notably the United States on the Western side of Europe, and Soviet Union on the Eastern one.

When Cold War, a silent contraposition based on ideological conflict, and due mainly to the desire of the two superpowers to impose their views on others nations, arrived to an end, with the fall of Soviet Union, in 1991, the relations between both European States, and the two hegemonies, normalized. In Europe, the reunification of Germany and the involvement of Eastern European countries into the European institutional framework of the European Union, in the first decade of the Twenty-first century, made it possible to overcome the division of the continent, that had lasted for almost fifty years.

Today, the union established between European countries is experiencing a period of crisis, due to the emergence of some national political movements and ideas that foster for a return to a strong closure in national borders,

renouncing to the results achieved with the creation of the European Union, since the Paris Treaty of 1951, when the European Coal and Steel Community was established among France, West Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the nations of Benelux.

Is it really achievable the return to a strong nationalism that some European political parties suggest? Is it possible to make a comparison between the French foreign policy of De Gaulle during the Sixties and the today situation? In other words, are there any similarities between the Gaullist desire to come back to *intérêt national*, in order to make France great again, and the will of some European countries to make their interests prevail on the European ones, today? It is known where, the Gaullist desire for independence from the two hegemonic powers, had to lead, namely to the building up, together with all others European countries, both in the West and in the East, of a stronger Europe. Nevertheless, in such a framework, the defence of national interests would have always been the cornerstone of the Gaullist foreign policy. How was it possible to conjugate, in the De Gaulle's perspective, the necessity for independence from the blocs, and integration into an European scheme, in order to be at the same time, nationally independent on international arena, national independent on European side, and at the same time having cooperation between all?

The analysis that will be carried on of the Gaullist foreign policy, is necessary to finally answer that question, namely whether the framework adopted by De Gaulle during Cold war, could be necessary to look at the current context, and to find a solution to the today situation.

First of all, it is necessary to underline which was the situation of France during the Cold War. For its geographical position, and from the results of the Second World War context, France belonged to the Western bloc, under the hegemony of the United States. Internally, the end of the war had marked the passage from the Third to the Fourth Republic, with the new Constitution of 1946. The political systems established in France, was the Parliamentary one, based on the formation of consensus through political parties. These latter proved to be unable to face the situation that the nation was facing both

nationally, because of the Algerian crisis, exploded in 1954, and internationally, because of the lack of ability to state the French independence from the United States.

The arrival of De Gaulle to power in 1958, put an end to the instability of the French Republic, where all the governments did not last more than some months, because of the disagreements at the interior of the political parties themselves. Then, De Gaulle acknowledged as soon as he was recalled to fulfil the role of Prime Minister, that a revolution in the management of public powers was needed. That is the reason which opened the way to the passage from the unstable Fourth Republic's political system to the more stable Fifth Republic, with the promulgation of a new Constitution in October 1958.

The major symbol of the new text, was the awarding to the executive power of a stronger role at the interior of the national framework, to the detriment of Parliament. The reform that consecrated that strengthening arrived in 1962, after the victory of the referendum proposed by De Gaulle, to allow the direct election of the President of the Republic, conferring him a stronger position in the management of some sectors of policy. Notably, the most important of the *domains réservés* was foreign policy.

As it will be seen in the development of this work, the modifications to the interior political system, were a fundamental condition to arrive to bring France to *grandeur*.

The researches on the Gaullist foreign policy is abundant, as demonstrated by the extended bibliography that has been produced since the arrival of De Gaulle to power. For example, among the most important studies of De Gaulle's foreign policy, there is the analysis done by Maurice Vaisse, one of the most important expert of De Gaulle, that has done a critical contribution with his work *La grandeur, politique étrangère du général De Gaulle 1958-1969*. To be meaningful are also the analysis made by people close to De Gaulle during his mandate, as the monography *Une politique étrangère*, written by the long-time Minister of Foreign Affairs Couve de Murville, or the great work of collecting remembrances of conversations, made by Alayn Peyrefitte, between the himself and the General. All the three mentioned works will be of

great contribution in the understanding of the logic that withstand to De Gaulle's decisions.

The question that arose from the analysis of the today international context, is whether the Gaullist desire for *grandeur* on one hand, only achievable once a state is independent from an hegemonic power, and the desire for détente towards the opposite bloc to which France belonged, namely U.S.S.R., were an imprint depending on the person of De Gaulle, or if it was feasible even in a post-De Gaulle period. And in case the answer was positive, if the French idea of *grandeur* could be reproduced today.

When taking into consideration the Gaullist foreign policy, it is necessary to keep in mind that :«la conception du monde de De Gaulle est marquée par un déterminisme de l'espace et du temps, une vision pessimiste de la nature humaine et de la vie de société, mais en même temps par une grande faculté d'adaptation et un réel pragmatisme»<sup>1</sup>.

That is why in order to give an answer, it is necessary to lead an analysis from a both historical and political perspective.

At that proposal, in the dissertation there is a division between chapters that have a more historical perspective, and chapter titled *Grandeur and détente in De Gaulle*, tries to look more the Gaullist policy from a conceptual point of view. The work will be divided in four chapters, each analysing a specific momentum of the Gaullist mandate. Moreover, it is possible to divide, for its structure, the dissertation in two parties. Indeed, the first two chapters focus on the relations between France and the hegemonic power of the United States; whereas the second two chapters focus more on the French relations to the East, in particular with Soviet Union.

It is worthy to briefly taken into consideration the major themes analysed in the different chapters of the dissertation.

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<sup>1</sup> Vaisse M., *La grandeur-politique étrangère du Général De Gaulle 1958-1969*, Paris, Fayard, 1998, p. 22



The first chapter, titled *The Fifth Republic: an instrument to achieve foreign policy*, aims at focus on the relationships between the coming back to power of De Gaulle, and the decisions of foreign policy taken since the beginning, namely since the last months of 1958.

As a matter of fact, the first paragraph focuses on the return to power of General De Gaulle and his actions concerning the stabilization of the Republic. In this way, it is made an analysis of the French interior political situation in the last two years of the fifties .

The second paragraph, instead, tries to investigate the translation of the internal political principles implemented by the new Constitution, in foreign policy. It means that the focus will be on the two juridical and political principle of, respectively, sovereignty and independence.

In the last paragraph of the two chapters, it will be presented, instead, a case of application of the political principle of independence, in foreign policy. In particular, the De Gaulle's decision to withdraw the Mediterranean fleet from the integrated command of N.A.T.O., *de facto* putting into effect the independence from the American hegemony. Through the analysis of correspondence between the French President and De Gaulle, it will be demonstrated what De Gaulle wished and wanted for his nation.

The second chapter, already mentioned, titled *Grandeur and détente in De Gaulle*, as it is easily understandable from the title, will focus on the analysis of this two concepts.

In the first part of the chapter, there is an analysis of the concept of grandeur, and together with the conceptual framework, a focus on the events that have concretized the concept, is showed. As a matter of fact, the idea of grandeur is strictly related to the necessity to reach independence from the West. The events that mark the achievement by De Gaulle of this objective are, essentially, two: the building up of a French independent *force de frappe* and the decision to leave the Atlantic Alliance military integrated command, in 1966. On the contrary, the second paragraph deals with the concept of détente. As already anticipated above, this will be a bridge paragraph to well understand the concretization of the actions undertaken towards the East. The

main aim is to establish a guide line through which the French idea of détente could be analysed.

The third chapter will focus on the transformation of the French idea of détente principles into actions and effective decisions, from the beginning of De Gaulle's mandate. Even if there is, from a chronological point of view, a returning to 1958, it is necessary to split the President's actions on one hand, towards the U.S., and on the other, towards the Soviet bloc. In this case, the first part focus on the relations between France and Soviet Union at the beginning of the Gaullist mandate.

The second part, instead, deals with two problems that arose when De Gaulle was intentioned to establish détente, entente and cooperation with the East, namely the ideological aspect difference and its consequences on political systems of the two countries, and the unresolved German issue. Therefore, an analysis of these two limits will be given. In addition, the last part of the chapter, deals with the relations between France and Soviet Union in 1964 and 1965, two years of fundamental importance concerning the consolidation of the French idea of détente, with a reference to the French decision to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China and France.

In the last chapter, it will be given an analysis of the consolidation, through different events that have marked 1966 from a Franco-Soviet perspective. Indeed, in the first part, it will be taken into consideration the visit that President De Gaulle did to Soviet Union.

In the last part, instead, the results achieved from the Franco-Soviet cooperation will be presented. Furthermore, as said above, the rapprochement to the East concerned all the Soviet bloc; then a study of two main countries tied to France from the Gaullist perspective, will be conducted, namely Poland and Romania.

The analysis of the events presented into the dissertation, is made through the utilization of specific sources, that is to say De Gaulle's speeches, messages but also private conversations, as reported by Peyrefitte, and correspondence with others States' leaders.

## Chapter 1 The Fifth Republic: an instrument to achieve foreign policy

### 1.1 De Gaulle coming back to power

In 1958 the situation of France was at a point of stagnation, because of the difficulties that the Nation was experiencing from a political perspective internally. The *Assemblée Nationale* and the political parties proved to be unable to solve the conflict between Algeria and the *Metropole*, that was perpetrating from 1954. The issue concerned the status of the colony, namely if it had to remain tied to France as a colony or to become independent.

The Fourth Republic of France was based on the Parliamentary system, that was dominated by the multiplicity of different political parties, unable to find agreements between themselves in order to take important decisions for the future of the nation. Moreover, both the parties and the institutional framework, that gave more power to the legislative power than to the executive, did not allow the government to be efficient.

First of all, in order to solve the Algerian problem, it was necessary to change the internal political situation of France. At that time, the only person to be considered able to succeed in it, was General Charles De Gaulle. He had already proved to be able to lead the Nation to the victory during the Second World War, so it was considered the man of salvation from almost all the French people. Despite the consideration the General had about the political issue of his country, in 1958, De Gaulle was a man who observed the situation in his country as a normal citizen, not involved in the political life of his nation. As a matter of fact, in an article published by François Mitterrand during March 1958, entitled *Le silence du General De Gaulle*, it is possible to read :«le général de Gaulle se tait(...)Mais, si l'on suppose que, soit de son propre mouvement, soit par soumission à la sollicitation populaire, le général de Gaulle quitte une retraite de douze années pour obéir à " cette loi suprême

qu'est le salut de la patrie et de l'État ", comment abordera-t-il les affaires ou s'épuisent l'expérience ou la jeunesse des autres ? »<sup>2</sup>.

When the political parties understood that the Fourth Republic's Institutions could not solve the Algerian problem, De Gaulle broke his silence of twelve years and came back to power, in order to save France for the second time.

The coming back of the General was marked by the events of May 13<sup>th</sup> 1958, when the French army in Algieri took the power under the command of General Massu, and the General Salan constituted a Comité de Salut Public. Before May 13<sup>th</sup>, in order to find a definitive solution to the Algerian conflict, the invitations to take on the power to the General were several. One of the first *appelle* to the General was that pronounced by the Conseil National on March 25<sup>th</sup> 1958. In this communiqué the Conseil National, expressed its worry about the French national situation, and hoped for a sudden transformation of the institutions and the formation of a provisional government, led by General De Gaulle.<sup>3</sup>

The facts of Algieri accelerated the return to power of General De Gaulle and finally the 15<sup>th</sup> of May, he broke his silence and accepted the invitation of the President Coty to form a new government. As it is possible to read from the official communiqué given to the press by the General, he says :«La dégradation de l'État entraîne infailliblement l'éloignement des peuples associés, le trouble de l'armée au combat, la dislocation nationale, la perte de l'indépendance. Depuis douze ans, la France, aux prises avec des problèmes trop rudes pour le régime des partis, est engagée dans ce processus désastreux. (...)Aujourd'hui, devant les épreuves qui montent de nouveau vers lui, qu'il sache que je me tiens prêt à assumer les pouvoirs de la République»<sup>4</sup>.

From this first message, the critics to the political system are clear. The idea of De Gaulle was to reform as soon as possible the political system of France, in order to make it again a stable nation from an interior political perspective, that

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<sup>2</sup> Mitterrand F., *Le silence du General De Gaulle*, in *Le Monde*, 03 Mars 1958

<sup>3</sup> *Le Monde*, *L'appelle au Général De Gaulle*, in *Le Monde*, 25 March 1958

<sup>4</sup> *Déclaration 15 Mai 1958*, in *Discours et Messages, avec le renouveau 1958-1962*, Paris, Plon, 1970

surely would have given advantages at international level. During first press conference of De Gaulle at the Palais d'Orsay, his intention was to clarify the expression pronounced by himself in the message of the 15<sup>th</sup>, relative to the assumption of the *pouvoirs de la République*. Before answering to the questions posed by the journalists, the General remembers that :«C'est un fait que le régime exclusif des partis n'a pas résolu, ne résout pas, ne résoudra pas, les énormes problèmes avec lesquels nous sommes confrontés »<sup>5</sup>. Then, he goes on, stating that this kind of regime could never be able to reach a solution in order to solve the conflicts that France was experiencing since 1954.

De Gaulle, answering to the first question by a journalist, concerning the assumption of power, pointed out that :« Les pouvoirs de la République, quand on les assume, ce ne peut-être que ceux qu'elle-même vous aura délégués. Voilà pour les termes qui me paraissent parfaitement clairs. Et puis alors maintenant, il y a l'homme qui les a prononcés. La République, il fut un temps où elle était reniée, trahie, par les partis eux-mêmes, et moi, j'ai redressé ses armes, ses lois, son nom ! »<sup>6</sup>.

From the last expression of this declaration, the General makes reference to his role of saviour of France during the Second World War. Moreover, those powers should come from the Republic itself.

For De Gaulle this was the time where he could help France to be saved again, this time from an interior catastrophe. The right moment not only to establish a new relationship system between the Metropole and the territories tied to it, but mainly to give to the Nation a more stable and strong asset.

The idea of the General about the political system that should have had already be adopted by France at the end of the world conflict in 1946, was clear at that time. The major elements it should have contained, necessary to avoid a party dictatorship, was expressed by De Gaulle during the famous *Discours de Bayeux*. This speech in that place had an important meaning because was pronounced for the anniversary of the liberation of this city by the Allied in 1944. On the 16<sup>th</sup> June 1946, the General in Bayeux expressed his opinion about the new institutions that should have been created to overcome the Third

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<sup>5</sup> Conférence de presse tenue au Palais d'Orsay du 19 Mai 1958, in *ibidem*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*

Republic inability to react to the invasion by the German forces at the beginning of the war.

De Gaulle envisaged a new political system where there would have been a parliament composed by two chambers. One elected directly by the people, and that would have represented the different political parties in the country; the other one, should have had the participation of the regional delegates and of the associations representative of the economy, family and intellectuals that should have sustained the first one to take decisions in the most important domains of the state.

One of the most important moment of the speech occurs when he affirms:« Du Parlement ainsi composé de deux chambres, il est clair que ne peut pas et ne doit pas procéder le pouvoir exécutif sous peine d'aboutir à cette confusion des pouvoirs, qui aurait pour résultat que le gouvernement de la France ne serait bientôt plus qu'un assemblage de délégations ! ». <sup>7</sup> Forward, he adds that it is from the President of the Republic, that will be the President of the *Union Française*, that the executive power should have derived and this latter would have acted as an arbiter in the political life of the Nation. Moreover, in the same speech, the General attributes several tasks to this figure. Clearly in Bayeux it is possible to imagine the future intentions of De Gaulle when he was called to formulate a new Constitution for France in 1958.

In a critical political climate, as that of May 1958, the General reassured the French people by addressing the third official message since the 15<sup>th</sup> of the same month, through a communiqué on the May 27<sup>th</sup>. There, De Gaulle declares that the day before he had begun the process to form a new government. <sup>8</sup>

The 1<sup>st</sup> of June, General Charles De Gaulle presented his government and his intentions at the *Assemblée Nationale*, which had to approve the new formation or to refuse it. In the speech given this time, the General asked for a strong support for his project. He asked the Parliament to allow his government to

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<sup>7</sup> *Discours de Bayeux du 16 Juin 1946*, in DM 1946-1958

<sup>8</sup> :«J'ai entamé hier le processus régulier nécessaire à l'établissement d'un gouvernement républicain capable d'assurer l'unité et l'indépendance du Pays ». Ch. De Gaulle, *Communiqué du 27 Mai 1958* , in DM 1958-1962

ensure:« l'unité, (...) l'intégrité, (...) l'indépendance de la France. »<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, the new appointed Prime Minister, asked the Parliament to give to his government all the necessary powers, in order to reform the Constitution. First, it was necessary to modify as soon as possible Article 90<sup>10</sup> of the Constitution in force, in order to proceed in the writing of the new text. The new text would have contained at its interior three main principles. De Gaulle exposed them saying that :« Le suffrage universel est la source de tout pouvoir. Le pouvoir exécutif et le pouvoir législatif doivent être effectivement séparés de façon que le Gouvernement et le Parlement assument, chacun pour sa part et sous sa responsabilité, la plénitude de ses attributions. Le Gouvernement doit être responsable vis-à-vis du Parlement. »<sup>11</sup>. In comparing this affirmation with the words pronounced in Bayeux, dating back to 1946, it is possible to understand how the intentions and the opinions of the General had not changed from then onward.

At the end of the various interventions, the *Assemblée Nationale* appointed by 329 votes in favour and 224 against, the new *Président du Conseil* to form a new government. The vote to give the government the *plein pouvoirs* and to elaborate the text of the constitution was that given on June 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The necessary period, during which the government would have found a solution to the Algerian crisis and prepared the new constitutional text, according to the General was of six months. At the end of the semester, the French would have been called to express their vote, by referendum, in favour or against the new Constitution.

After having obtained the necessary powers from the Parliament, the General went on visit in Algeria from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> of June. At his arrival, he delivered a speech, where he affirmed the famous expression :« Je vous ai compris »<sup>12</sup>, referring to the Algerian people, to the Generals of the Comité de Salut public, and presenting himself as the new saviour of Algeria.

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<sup>9</sup> De Gaulle Ch., *Mémoires d'espérance, Le Renouveau 1958-1962*, Paris, Plon, 1970

<sup>10</sup> Article 90 of the Constitution 1946 provides the procedure to follow in order to revise the Constitutional provisions

<sup>11</sup> *Déclaration à l'Assemblée Nationale, 1<sup>er</sup> juin 1958*, in *DM 1958-1962*

<sup>12</sup> *Allocution prononcée à Alger, 04 Juin 1958*, in *DM 1958-1962*, p.15

The occasions during which the Prime Minister remembered the importance to have for the country a new political system were several. One of them, is the message delivered to the television and to the radio, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June from the Matignon Hotel. De Gaulle still another time observed the necessity for the State to be reformed, in order to give to the country new institutions to have a vigorous, modern, full of resources and capacities nation, needed to the world to stop catastrophic events.<sup>13</sup>

From an international perspective, and mainly from a Western one, De Gaulle was seen as the man who collaborated with the Allies in order to defeat the Nazism and the Fascism regimes. Therefore, in a situation of crisis as it was in 1958, that could have had consequences even in the rest of the world, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Adenauer appreciated the coming back to power of the General, and their major concerns were to have a stable France in Europe, as showed by the same words of the German Chancellor, reported by Alain Clement<sup>14</sup> in an article.

The new constitution was presented to the French people during the commemorations for the day of the establishment of the Third Republic in 1870, at *Place de la République*.

In his speech, first of all, De Gaulle made an historical comment to the characteristics, both positives and negatives, of the different Republics that have followed one another from the end of the XIX century onwards.

Then the Prime Minister stressed the importance of change that France needed because of the change that were occurring in the world. The progresses from an economic, social, technique point of view were fundamental to the development of the new Republic.

Finally, the General presented to the French the fundamental elements that the new text approved by the government and that would have been approved by the people on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September.

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<sup>13</sup> *Allocution Radiodiffusée et Télévisée, 27 Juin 1958*, in DM 1958-1962

<sup>14</sup> Clement A., *Le chancelier Adenauer : la République fédérale a tout intérêt à une France forte et stable*, in *Le Monde*, 05 Juin 1958



Among those principles, there are that of a strong government able to carry out its functions, not being hampered by any other power; a representative Parliament, that will carry out its legislative function, but that would have even been separated from the executive. Moreover, an independent judicial system and a Constitutional committee would have been created, in order to ensure the constitutionality of the laws.<sup>15</sup>

What mattered to De Gaulle, and that he had repeated several times from his investiture, was the fact that his government was legitimate and that all the procedure to arrive to the referendum had been respected. In this way, the only one who could approve or refuse his government's proposal was the people itself, as remembered by De Gaulle's words :«La Nation qui seule est juge approuvera ou repoussera notre oeuvre, mais c'est en toute conscience que nous la lui proposons.»<sup>16</sup>.

The oppositions to the referendum as to the same investiture of the government were several. They came mainly from the left of the political parties. One of the most important opponent of the birth of a new Republic and consequently of a new Constitution was the former Prime Minister of France, Pierre Mendes-France, who sustained during his intervention at the National Assembly, of the 1<sup>st</sup> June, that he could not give a forced vote, under the constraints of the army<sup>17</sup>, obviously referring to the Algerian crisis. Moreover, even a group of intellectuals, or of the former Resistance groups allied to the General, led a campaign for the negative results of the referendum. Those opponents, as remembered by an article of *Le Monde*, sustained that the operation of writing down a new constitution, demanding to the parliament special powers, did not lay down with the Resistance principles, disapproving the new constitution.<sup>18</sup>

In his last message before the referendum, on the 26<sup>th</sup> September, General De Gaulle invited the French to give a positive vote to the new text, because it concerned the destiny of France and that this is :« une République nouvelle qui

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<sup>15</sup> *Discours prononcée à Place de la République Paris, 04 Septembre 1958, in DM 1958-1962*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>17</sup> :«je ne puis admettre de donner un vote contraint par l'insurrection et la menace d'un coup de force militaire», Pierre Mendes-France, de la 1ere Seance de l'Assemblée Nationale, 2 juin 1958

<sup>18</sup> *Le Monde, Pour le Non, in Le Monde, 29 Septembre 1958*

va être instituer pour conduire la France à la rénovation dont elle a maintenant les moyens»<sup>19</sup>.

Finally, the 28<sup>th</sup> of September, the new Constitution was approved by the French people. This new text marked the beginning of the Fifth French Republic, whose text still survives in the contemporary France. The new Constitution was approved with a majority of the 82.60%, corresponding to 31 123 483 million votes in favour, and the a percentage of 17.40 of votes against, corresponding to 6 556 073 million votes. The new text was promulgated on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 1958. From then onward, the General had all the necessary means, from a political and procedural perspective, to adopt his program of government relative to, first, the Algerian situation and second to the general rank of France in the world.

Nevertheless, the revolution of the French political system was not accomplished yet. As a matter of fact, another important step to be done, that had the approval of the French people, was the election of the President of the Republic directly by the citizen and by universal suffrage.

It occurred in 1962, with another referendum proposed by General De Gaulle and that received the approval of the French citizens.

The reasons why it was needed a President elected directly by the people were several. They have been exposed directly from De Gaulle in a message to the Nation of the 4<sup>th</sup> October 1962, in occasion of the fourth anniversary of the promulgation of the Constitution. As it is possible to hear from De Gaulle, the need for a direct presidential election was given by the necessity to have a stable republic, in that moment threatened by the attempts to the life of the General himself. Moreover, the approval by the French would have been the sign of the confirmation of the will to maintain those institutions and the political system inaugurated by the 1958 Constitution.<sup>20</sup>

It is strange how personal motivations could constitute the basis for an important change in the political life of a country; at the same time not making that of the General, in this case, a personal power. But, as De Gaulle remembers in the same message, it is needed a president representing :« le

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<sup>19</sup> *Allocution radiodiffusée et télévisée prononcée à l'Hotel Matignon, 26 Septembre 1958*, in DM 1958-1962

<sup>20</sup> *Allocution du 04 octobre 1962*, DM 1962-1965

guide de la France»<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, the President of the Republic, is already the :« garant de l'indépendance et de l'intégrité du pays, ainsi que des traités qui l'engagent. Bref, il répond de la France. D'autre part il lui appartient d'assurer la continuité de l'Etat et le fonctionnement des pouvoirs publics»<sup>22</sup>. In order to carry out these functions, the President needed the direct support of the Nation.

As it was in the case of the new Constitution there were different opinion on this issue. Even this time one of the most important opponent to De Gaulle proposal was Pierre Mendes-France. The augmentation of the powers concentrated in one single person for seven years (this the period of a presidency in the proposal of the referendum), with no apparent limits, worried the partisans of the no. From a declaration of Mendes-France published on *Le Monde*, this fear is perceivable from his words, when he affirms :« Il sera élu pour sept ans. Sept ans durant lesquels il disposera de tous ces pouvoirs pratiquement illimités dont de Gaulle jouit aujourd'hui. Sept ans durant lesquels il gouvernera sans aucun contrôle et sans aucune responsabilité. " Pendant sept ans il fera la politique étrangère qui lui paraîtra la meilleure. (...) Est-il admissible qu'un homme, un seul homme, faillible comme tous les hommes, tienne entre ses mains, et pendant sept ans, la diplomatie de ce pays, sa sécurité, les décisions les plus graves, peut-être les plus dramatiques ? »<sup>23</sup>.

In fact, the universal suffrage for the election of the President of the Republic concerned, in the eyes of De Gaulle, a wider issue. It was related to the future of the Nation, that is to say to decide if to remain a country with no importance at world level, not coming back to occupy that place that France had in the world in the past centuries, or to be part of the most important decisions concerning the world. A simplification of the meaning of the referendum was given by Pisani in an editorial of *Le Monde*, where he stated the referendum was a :« Choix crucial, problème peut être posé en des termes difficiles à saisir, mais il nous faut choisir entre une république parlementaire vouée à la

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<sup>21</sup> *ibidem*

<sup>22</sup> *Allocution radiodiffusé et télévisée prononcée au palais de l'Elysée, 20 Septembre 1962, in DM 1962-1965*

<sup>23</sup> *Le Monde, Le " non " ne serait ni le chaos ni le retour à la Quatrième ESTIME M. PIERRE MENDÈS-France, 27 Octobre 1962*

recherche sans fin d'un subtil équilibre de forces et une démocratie présidentielle fait pour l'action.»<sup>24</sup>.

The referendum of the 28th October 1962, approved the proposal of the President De Gaulle and from then onward the election of the President of the Republic is at universal suffrage. This decision taken by 13 150 516 million people in favour and 7 974 538 against, would have changed definitely the role of the President in France, and consequently the people chose for the :« action» to which referred E. Pisani.

Moreover, during his message at the television and at radio on the 7<sup>th</sup> November 1962, President De Gaulle expressed satisfaction for the results, remembering that those who wanted to hamper the victory of the “oui”, were the same who in 1958 wanted to hamper the adoption of the new Constitution. By stating that, De Gaulle addressed to them as those belonging to the old party system who did not act for the prosperity of France but just to see their power re-established, and concluding by saying :« Or, voici que tout leur ensemble vien d’etre désavoué par le peuple français»<sup>25</sup>.

Finally, the coming back to power of General De Gaulle in 1958 paved the way for a different future of France, both internally and internationally, compared to that developed during the Fourth Republic. The return was marked by three fundamental steps.

First, the promulgation of the new Constitution in October 1958. That provided France of the necessary stability of the institutions, in order to react the Algerian conflict that was lasting from the 1954 and which was finally solved in 1962 with the independence of the colony.

Second, the election of the May-December Prime Minister De Gaulle to the presidency of the Republic in 1958. That has strengthened the role of De Gaulle in the construction of the new Republic, more than acting as an arbiter, he acted as an active politician.

Third, the 1962 referendum concluded the last step that had to be done in order to have a stronger, more stable republic and to avoid the political parties to put

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<sup>24</sup> Pisani E., *Le “oui” est un commencement*, in *Le Monde*, 27 October 1962

<sup>25</sup> *Allocution radiodiffusée et télévisée prononcée au Palais de l’Elysée, 07 Novembre 1962*, in DM 1962-1966

in danger that stability. The direct election of the president of the Republic facilitated De Gaulle's role in launching a new season of foreign policy for France, in order to act in the name of *grandeur*.

## 1.2 De Gaulle's foreign policy principles

The arrival of De Gaulle to power in 1958 marked a fundamental change in the interior political system of France with the promulgation of the Constitution. As said above, another major evolution of that new system was the election by universal suffrage of the President of the Republic. The 1958 and 1962 reforms, both of them approved by a large majority through referendum, were two events that helped De Gaulle to put in place the French foreign policy, that had a different perspective of that developed during the fourth Republic.

In this paragraph, there will be an analysis of two major principles that have characterized the De Gaulle's attitude towards the world during his mandates. Moreover, those principles are at the base of the idea and strategy of *grandeur*, that has portrayed the General's mandate.

To be more precise, it is possible to individuate just one political principle, that is independence. The second one, that is juridical, from which independence directly derives is sovereignty. The former, as it is understandable in the next pages, will be the cornerstone of many areas of interest in the policy of France, both towards the two blocs and towards Europe.

As Maurice Vaisse has pointed out : «l'indépendance est la traduction politique de la notion juridique de souveraineté, c'est la condition sine qua non pour exister sur la scène diplomatique»<sup>26</sup>. Even if the main area of interest of this work is the political aspect of De Gaulle foreign policy, it cannot be divided from the juridical one because the two features are strictly related one another. As a matter of fact, De Gaulle in order to achieve the political independence on the world scene, had to establish a new juridical framework where to act, referring to the powers attributed by the Constitution to the Head of the state.

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<sup>26</sup> Vaisse M., *La grandeur, Politique étrangère du Général De Gaulle 1958-1969*, p. 35, Paris, Fayard, 1998

Firstly, the concept of sovereignty in the General's idea should be considered. According to the Oxford dictionary, sovereignty is the :«the authority of a state to govern itself or another state». The concept of *souveraineté* is at the base of the creation of the Nation-State concept: France has been one of the first country to apply the principle pronounced by Jean de Blanot in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, according to which, the king of France is sovereign in his kingdom<sup>27</sup>. It means that there is no other authority beyond the King, in this case, the State that could exercise his authority in the state itself. Moreover, once the republican form of state has been adopted by a country, that sovereignty belongs to the people. As a matter of fact, the 1958 Constitution states :« La souveraineté nationale appartient au peuple qui l'exerce par ses représentants et par la voie du référendum »<sup>28</sup>.

In order to take fundamental decisions for the country, both internally and externally, it was necessary to have a person who embodied the *souveraineté nationale*. It had to be a delegate of the people, and it needed to be legitimize, in order to act in name of the nation with a large possibility of manoeuvre.

In France, from a juridical point of view, the only person who enjoyed these characteristics and who could direct the foreign policy of the country, is the President of the Republic, because of his universal suffrage election, and consequently of his legitimacy. President De Gaulle because of his election enjoyed the necessary legitimacy to carry out his foreign policy and to take fundamental decisions.

Nevertheless, there were also those who considered that De Gaulle :«has violated its spirit (of the Constitution) in creating a "reserved domain" where he is sole master; it includes foreign policy, national defence and relations with underdeveloped countries»<sup>29</sup>. In this way, according to the detractors of the General's policy, he had been accused to centralize too much power in his hands. To them, the President of the Republic answered:« j'ai reçu mandat de bâtir un état qui en soit un (...) la mission qui m'a donné le peuple c'est de sculpter la statue de l'Etat »<sup>30</sup>. And even before the referendum that approved

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<sup>27</sup> The original statement in the book *Libellus super titulo Institutionum de actionibus*, is *Rex Franciæ in regno suo princeps est, nam in temporalibus superiorem non recognoscit*.

<sup>28</sup> Article 2 of the French Constitution

<sup>29</sup> Defferre G., *De Gaulle and After*, 44, in *Foreign Affairs*, 434, (1966), p. 437

<sup>30</sup> Peyrefitte A., *C'était De Gaulle*, Paris, Gallimard, p. 445

the 1962 Constitutional reform, during the September press conference, the General encouraged the people to go voting in favour of the reform saying :«en cette périlleuse époque et en ce monde difficile, il s'agit de faire en sorte, dans la mesure où nous le pouvons, que la France vive, qu'elle progresse et qu'elle assure son avenir»<sup>31</sup>. These words, certainly, prove the relationship that there was, according to De Gaulle, between the interior stabilization of the political system, and the necessity to act abroad. Moreover, it can be understood that the first change, in order to change the world status quo, had to begin internally.

The question is how to conjugate the juridical aspect to the political one, that is to say how to put in place the French foreign policy. In order to understand this passage, it is necessary to consider that De Gaulle has not a pre-established model to follow when acting. As remembered by Jacques Vernant, for the General, foreign policy is:« l'expression même de la nation sur la scène internationale. Participer à la vie du milieu extérieur est pour toute nation, et pour la France en particulier (...) c'est l'expression normale de l'existence nationale»<sup>32</sup>. That is why the cited reform of the State, with a strong executive, was needed, in order to be able to exist on the international scene. Without that legitimacy derived directly from the French people, it would not have been possible to have actions addressed to affirm French independence in the world. The major aspect of this consideration is that De Gaulle, or any other future President of the Republic, would have not represented the political parties and different factions from whom they came from, but they represented the Nation, the whole French people. By embodying the concept of Nation, Charles De Gaulle had the possibility to overcome the limits imposed by the internal political conflicts, just to serve the national interest of France. The De Gaulle attachment to the nation, has been well clarified by Alfred Grosser, when writing that :« if a nationalist is defined as one who places the national idea at the top of the scale of political values, then General de Gaulle is a nationalist. A nation may be regarded as a human entity which acts in a world made up of other such entities. In this perspective, foreign policy is the only true policy.

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<sup>31</sup> *Allocution radiodiffusé et télévisée 20 septembre 1962*, in DM 1962-1965

<sup>32</sup> Vernant J., *Le général De Gaulle et la politique extérieure*, in *Politique étrangère*, n°6 - 1970 - 35<sup>e</sup>année, p. 620

The sole aim of internal policy is to assure order and unity, and to develop an influence to be used abroad»<sup>33</sup>.

Whenever that order and unity are threatened, article 16<sup>34</sup> of the Constitution states that when there is a situation of danger for the institutions of the Republic, the independence of the Nation, the integrity of its territory and the execution of his international engagements, the President of the Republic takes all the measures imposed by the circumstances. This is an important power that the Head of State has in order to defend the sovereignty of the Nation. From an historical point of view, the decision to foresee a regulation of this kind, comes from the necessity to avoid the repetition of the 1940 crisis, when the General was forced to be in the illegality, because of his disrespecting of the law, but who was at the same time justified from the legitimacy he enjoyed from the *peuple souverain* to call upon the French people to fight for *la France libre*. Indeed, as the General himself remembers to Peyrefitte talking about the difference between the concepts of legality and legitimacy, and in which way it is possible to follow both, De Gaulle states that :« le critère des critères c'est l'intérêt du pays, qui doit toujours primer. (...) Si la légalité est défailante, la légitimité doit s'y substituer»<sup>35</sup>.

In order to transform this legitimacy into politics, and consequently to exist on the international scene, as it has been said above, it is necessary to apply the juridical principle to the political one. It is essential to transform sovereignty in action, and the best outcome possible is independence. In the Sixties, and mainly at the beginning of this decade, to be independent meant to not be strictly and directly related to one sphere's of influence, whether the American or the Soviet one. It meant to make its national interest prevail on those of the two superpowers. Nevertheless, according to Maurice Vaisse :«

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<sup>33</sup> Grosser A., *General De Gaulle and the Foreign Policy of the Fifth Republic*, in *International Affairs*, Vol. 39, N. 2, April 1963

<sup>34</sup> Article 16 of the Constitution states : « Lorsque les institutions de la République, l'indépendance de la nation, l'intégrité de son territoire ou l'exécution de ses engagements internationaux sont menacées d'une manière grave et immédiate et que le fonctionnement régulier des pouvoirs publics constitutionnels est interrompu, le Président de la République prend les mesures exigées par ces circonstances, après consultation officielle du Premier ministre, des présidents des assemblées ainsi que du Conseil constitutionnel »

<sup>35</sup> Peyrefitte A., *op. cit.*, p. 442



l'indépendance n'est pas exclusive des alliances, car dans le monde dangereux de la confrontation des blocs, la France ne peut pas rester seule»<sup>36</sup>. The meaning of this concept expressed by Vaisse, namely a midway between independence and cooperation, will be useful to understand which were the ideas of France when acting on the international scene at the beginning of De Gaulle's mandate.

In this part, in taking into consideration independence, it is even necessary to look at the aims achievable through it, and mainly if there is some sort of theoretical base to sustain De Gaulle's actions.

The declinations of independence for a nation are several. They concern the economic, defense, military and technological independence from another country. These different aspects were analysed by the General during many of his interventions<sup>37</sup> and always he emphasized the importance of having a foreign policy that would have put at the first place the national interests of France.

In order to better understand the principle of independence, and how it has influenced the De Gaulle's actions in leading France to *grandeur*, it is necessary to briefly consider the General's thought on the international systems and who are the agents which compose it.

According to the analysis by Vernant in the above cited article *Fondements et objectifs de la politique étrangère de la France*, there is nothing more that dangerous to plan foreign policy according to ideology. The author states :« Parce que d'une manière générale, la politique n'est pas affaire d'idéologie. Dans le monde des Etats nationaux, c'est en fonction des réalités et des possibilités, compte tenu des grands intérêts de l'Etat, que doit être définie et qu'est effectivement définie la politique étrangère, non pas en fonction d'une idéologie. D'ailleurs l'idéologie n'est nulle part assez puissante pour étouffer les intérêts nationaux.»<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> Vaisse M., *op. cit.* p. 36

<sup>37</sup> An example is the the message of the December 31<sup>st</sup> 1962, in *Discours et Messages*, 1958-1962, p. 54

<sup>38</sup> Vernant J., *art. cit.* p. 461

When affirming that ideology is nothing more powerful to suffocate national interests, he is presenting all the meaning of the Gaullist foreign policy. As a matter of fact, De Gaulle was convinced that the ideologies, as it was communism, was destined to be overcome a day, in order to have a sort of convergence between societies, without separating people on the base of their political beliefs.

In this perspective, :«il y a(vait) du côté français le respect mystique du mot indépendance»<sup>39</sup>, as remembered by Grosser, thus it was necessary to conduct a policy that will be free from the conditionings of the moment, relative to the ideology, and to put at the first place the national interest. That was exactly the contrary of what the Fourth Republic had done, because it made France a sort of vassal state of the Americans. De Gaulle wanted a France not submitted to other powers, as he remembered to Peyrefitte:« La France est souveraine. Ou plutôt elle le redevient, ce qui ne lui était pas arrivé depuis la Première Guerre. Elle s'était blottie à l'ombre des Anglais dans l'entre-deux-guerres, puis des Américains après la Seconde. Tout ça est fini. La France a fini de se blottir»<sup>40</sup>. General De Gaulle wanted a Nation able to stay on his own feet, as the expression that several times is remembered when talking about De Gaulle, he wanted a :«France aux mains libres».

Until now, it has been said that France foreign policy had to be conducted in a way that would have given it the possibility to be independent. According to the General's thought, to be independent was the only chance that a country had to act on the international arena. But how is it possible to conjugate the desire of independence, that at that time had not the meaning of Gaullist independence, but it meant non-alignment<sup>41</sup> chosen by the countries participating to the Bandung Conference of 1955<sup>42</sup>, nor a policy of isolationism, with the will of General De Gaulle to bring France to the rank, this Nation deserves giving it the possibility to stand out in the world?

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<sup>39</sup> A. Grosser, *Une Chance*, in *Le Monde*, 09 Décembre 1969

<sup>40</sup> Peyrefitte A., *op. cit.* p. 345

<sup>41</sup> On the non-alignment of France, see Etienne Burin de Bouziers, *Le non-alignment*, in *La politique étrangère du Général De Gaulle*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1985

<sup>42</sup> Bandung Conference in 1955 to which participated 29 countries, the so called non-aligned countries during the Cold war, in order to discuss on themes like poverty and underdevelopment .

In order to answer to the first part of the question, and in order to better clarify the fact that there is not incoherence in De Gaulle's desire for independence, it is possible to look at his words.

Certainly, this can be translated into his desire to be independent from the two blocs, not being under the umbrella of the two hegemonies. But, at the same time, De Gaulle is aware of the impossibility to act alone in a difficult situation, with the risk of a nuclear war, as it was at the beginning of the Sixties that could have certainly destroyed his nation.

Taking into consideration his words, the General seems to be incoherent when referring to the *politique étrangère* of France. He wanted both to have the possibility of acting without the consent of the U.S., as it was not if he had accepted to stay under their leadership, and the necessity for France to return to fulfil its role in the world, becoming a new leader among the countries belonging to the free and democratic world. Therefore, he :«defined a strategic and diplomatic policy that combined independence with cooperation in such a way as to maximize benefits for France and French influence in the world»<sup>43</sup>.

The necessity to be independent in a world of fundamental interdependence, which was caused by the persistent threat of the Cold war, was expressed by De Gaulle in a letter sent to the President of the United States, General Eisenhower, on May 25<sup>th</sup> 1959. The French President stated that he had never been so convinced that the alliance between *les Etats libres* was absolutely necessary in that time, because the nations that really are founded on democratic principles and that are the symbol of the modern civilisation could get together to act and to protect themselves<sup>44</sup>.

According to De Gaulle, the only way in order to be stronger and to be able to put in place this view, was cooperation among them, and not the via of submission to the strongest power, or as it will be seen forward the via of

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<sup>43</sup> Hoffman S., *De Gaulle as innovative leader*, in *French Politics and Society*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Fall 1990), pp. 78-92

<sup>44</sup> *Lettre au Général Eisenhower, Président des États-Unis d'Amérique*, 25 Mai 1959, in Charles De Gaulle, *Lettres, Notes et Carnets*, Juin 1958-Décembre 1960, (LNC 1958-1960), Paris, Plon, 1980

integration. The refusal of the hegemonic blocs is perceived in several words of the General. For example, it is possible to understand this will to change the *statu quo* represented by the division of the world in two blocs, by the words expressed by the General during his meeting with the King of Nepal, in 1966. There De Gaulle stated :« Nous ne sommes pas en faveur des blocs et des hégémonies, nous sommes pour les états indépendant et individuels»<sup>45</sup>.

The dates to which the two abovementioned interventions date back are fundamental to understand that since the first year of his coming back to power, to the half of his presidential mandate, 1966, the principle that has led the foreign policy actions of the General was always the same: independence and protection of national interests.

Of course, because the belonging of France to the West bloc from an ideological perspective, it is highly probable that when De Gaulle talked about national independence, the concept could be misunderstood and perceived as a De Gaulle's anti-Americanism. But, the refusal of both Communism, from an ideological perspective, and of an American total submission, from a strategical point of view,(mainly concerning the defence and economic spheres), made France to surge as a sort of third pole between the two, whose duty was to lead the entire world to peace and détente.

In such a context, where a nation state as France wanted to be independent from the blocs, but at the same time, the only possibility to exist on the world stage was the participation to the most important international decisions, being aware of not having the necessary means to become a superpower, therefore it was necessary to cooperate. The only solution to those that could seem contradictions, was the renaissance of France as an example to follow on the world stage.

De Gaulle's main ideal has been well expressed by Vaisse, when writing that it was:« promouvoir une société d'Etats Nations, qui doivent pouvoir jouer un rôle conforme à leur passé, à leur personnalité et à leur volonté»<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Reference 141 in Vaisse M., *op. cit.* p. 51, *Meeting between De Gaulle and the King of Nepal*, October 25<sup>th</sup> 1966

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 51

De Gaulle was persuaded that besides the two superpowers, the only nation that could be able at that time to respond to the necessity of a world that was in danger, was France. From the memories of Peyrefitte, it is possible to understand what was the idea of the General concerning this aspect. In 1963, Peyrefitte remembers that the General said: « nous sommes en ce moment les seuls, en dehors des Américains et des Russes, à avoir une ambition nationale, à nous y tenir, et à avoir le courage de le dire »<sup>47</sup>.

Moreover, the General talking about the same subjects some days later, on February 13<sup>th</sup>, stated that : « La France est la lumière du monde »<sup>48</sup>. By those words, De Gaulle wanted to affirm the importance that France had always had in the world from the late XVIII century, when with French Revolution, the ideals of Enlightenment spread all around the world, influencing the historical events of other states. That was the case, as the General remembers to Peyrefitte in the same moments, of the American independence, to which the French thought had paved the way, or the role of France to be the champion of the independence of the nations, against any form of hegemony<sup>49</sup>.

The role of France as the light of the world and pioneer of independence was at the base of the De Gaulle's policy towards the former colonies of the French Empire, that accessed independence during his mandate, especially those countries of Africa, that joined together around France to create the *Communauté*.

The principles at the base of foreign policy actions that have been described so far, can be easily traced in the choices towards the former colonies, transformed in *Territoires d'Outre Mer*, with the approval of the new Constitution. It was offered by France the possibility to be independent from a political point of view, and at the same time to remain tied to the *Metropole* through economic, military and cultural relations.

The *Communauté Française* is the symbol of the achievability of the two principles of independence and cooperation, so important in the Gaullist perspective.

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<sup>47</sup> Peyrefitte A., *op. cit.* p. 293

<sup>48</sup> *ibidem*

<sup>49</sup> *ibidem*, p. 294

As it is remembered by the General during his press conference of November 10<sup>th</sup> 1959, when he was asked which was his opinion about the decisions of the countries of Africa, formerly related to France, and then autonomous in their choices, De Gaulle answered that it was to France to put in place that universal and human mission towards the entire world and it is to France to make possible that the policy will be conform to their mission.<sup>50</sup>

At the beginning of this paragraph it has been said that there was not an ideology at the base of the General De Gaulle's principles of foreign policy. As a matter of fact, there is not a philosophical base that could be said to sustain his actions. May-be someone could define him as a nationalist, as mentioned above, but this vision will not be completely right to describe the General's thought. Instead, what can be understood about De Gaulle is that the most important principle of his actions, both concerning the domestic and international fields, is what he calls *l'intérêt national*.

The historical context in which the General had to operate was certainly one of the most difficult moments of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

In order to be able to be part of the world, it was necessary to be out of the blocs, namely affirming its own independence. But at the same time, it was necessary that the national sovereignty, from an interior point of view, had to be embodied by a strong power, that is why it had been necessary the constitutional reform of 1962. The President of the republic and France, according to De Gaulle, were one single thing, and both had to put in place that national interest.

The declinations of the independence and at same time of cooperation from and with the two hegemonic powers, will be actualized through different actions during De Gaulle's mandate, that will be analysed in the next pages.

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<sup>50</sup> *Conférence de presse au palais de l'Élysée, 10 Novembre 1959, in DM, 1958-1962*

### 1.3 The French posture towards the West at the beginning of his mandate: the withdrawal of Mediterranean fleet from N.A.T.O. and the Berlin crisis

In the previous paragraph, it has been analysed the concept of independence in De Gaulle's foreign policy. It was needed to be sovereign in his nation, to be independent on the world stage. But, how did the General combine the necessity of being independent with the defence of his Nation, due to the interdependence within the Atlantic Alliance?

In this last paragraph, it will be analysed the case of the withdrawal of the French fleet from the Mediterranean under the N.A.T.O. control, that is the first attempt that marks De Gaulle's desire of independence from the United States hegemonic power. The final objective of this action, as that of all De Gaulle's decision, both towards France's allies in the West, and the opponents at the Est, is to ensure equilibrium in order to reach peace<sup>51</sup>, as he remembers in his message of Mai 31<sup>st</sup> 1960, and to protect the national interests. It will be demonstrated how the General's decisions, did not take into consideration the consequences that according to General Eisenhower could have caused such an act. From the De Gaulle's moves towards the United States, it is not clear whether France had to remain tied to the Hegemonic power, or to which extent it has to cooperate and adopt the same position of the Allies.

To show the difference of attitude towards the United States, it is possible to consider two cases. The first one is the Memorandum of 1958, that can be considered the seed of the French policy of independence from the U.S. , that is directly related to another major event that was threatening the world on the same days, namely the Berlin crisis.

The period of De Gaulle coming back to power corresponded to the American presidency of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, with whom he had a long date

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<sup>51</sup> :«C'est ne que dans l'équilibre que l'univers trouvera la paix», in *Allocution radiodiffusée et télévisée, 31 Mai 1960*, in *DM 1958-1962*

friendship from the years of the war. As a matter of fact, as it possible to read from their letters, General De Gaulle remembers the deep respect he had towards Eisenhower<sup>52</sup> as a person and to his institutional role. The fact of knowing each other, could be considered a facilitation in the relations between the two countries. The same happened with the Great Britain Prime Minister, Arold Macmillan, so that when writing him a letter, the General used the formula :«Mon cher ami»<sup>53</sup>.

As said above, the element that marked the beginning of the French-American relations during De Gaulle's mandate can be considered the letter that General sent to the American President Eisenhower on September 17<sup>th</sup> 1958. It is worthy to highlight that it was only three months that De Gaulle took power at the head of the government, not being yet elected president of the Republic, and his idea of how to proceed on the international arena, was precise.

The Memorandum can be seen as the first act of De Gaulle's foreign policy towards the United States. In this document, and to the letter attached, the General's intentions were very clear. It was necessary as soon as possible to put into effect the foreign policy principles of France, that is what the French Nation wanted for his future towards the Allies.

In the analysis of the text of the Memorandum, two fundamental points can be distinguished: first, the necessity to modify the defence of the free world, that is to say the role that France had to cover in the decisions concerning the defence of the free world, shifting from a bi-partitism to a tri-partitism, where France had to be involved both from a political perspective and a strategic one. That would be possible by creating an organisation, where France had to participate and have the same importance of the two other powers, namely the United States and Great Britain, where the political aspects of defence had to be discussed. Second, to review the borders of the defence, not only limited to Europe, but, as proposed by the General into the text, extended to the Pacific, the Indian ocean, North Africa, and the Middle East. This reforms are justified by De Gaulle saying that:« la France ne saurait donc considérer que

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<sup>52</sup> See for example the letter to General Eisenhower of July 7th 1958, or that of September 17<sup>th</sup> 1958, that are some examples of the correspondence that the two had, collected in *LNC 1958-1960*

<sup>53</sup> See the letters collected in *LNC 1958-1960*



l'O.T.A.N., sous sa forme actuelle, satisfasse aux conditions de la sécurité du monde libre et, notamment, de la sienne propre»<sup>54</sup>. In 1959, the threat of communism was not only limited to Europe, but it extended towards new zones.

The same text, with a letter attached to the document, was sent to the Great Britain Prime Minister Macmillan in the same days. Even to the Britain Head of government, the French Prime Minister, asks for a response and a meeting to convene between the three Nations, in order to discuss the points underlined into the Memorandum.

As it has been pointed out by Professor Quagliariello, in analysing the foreign policy of Gaullism, leaving from this first attempt to make France one of the three nations at the head of the defence of the free world, Quagliariello affirms that a question should surge, namely if the intention of the Gaullist foreign policy in 1958, was really opened to accept the different solutions to which it arrived at during De Gaulle's staying in power. The author meant by that, if the events that happened later, namely the construction of an atomic arm, the exit from N.A.T.O. or the central role of the Franco-German axis in the construction of the E.E.C., would have been the consequences of the international partners' responses to the new French foreign policy, or all those events were determined by the following of an ideological imposition of foreign policy<sup>55</sup>, concentrated on the necessity for France to be politically and strategically independent from any other power.

The answer to this question, can be found firstly in the response from General Eisenhower to the letter of De Gaulle, and secondly in the actions of the French government some months later.

General Eisenhower delayed on his answer to the Memorandum of September, compared to other exchange of letters between the two. If this could be considered as a symptom of the disagreement between the two leaders, it is confirmed by the vagueness of the answer of the U.S. President in the letter.

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<sup>54</sup> *Memorandum, in LNC 1958-1960*

<sup>55</sup> Quagliariello G., *De Gaulle et il gollismo*, Bologna, Il mulino, 2003, p. 383

From the text of October 20<sup>th</sup> sent by the Department of State to the American Embassy in Paris, it is possible to understand that some views were shared between Eisenhower and De Gaulle. As a matter of fact, the American President wrote:« We are (himself and De Gaulle), I believe, in full agreement that the threat we face is global and that our policies should be adapted to deal with the world-wide nature of the threat»<sup>56</sup>. Forward, he remembered the role of the U.S. in defending the free world, and the cooperation with France in doing that. But, in another passage, he considers that it is not possible to adopt the means proposed by France, referring to the tripartite talks, justifying this impossibility by saying that:« We cannot afford to adopt any system which would give to our other allies, or other free world countries, the impression that basic decisions affecting their own vital interests are being made without their participation»<sup>57</sup>. Moreover, Eisenhower envisaged difficulties in proposing a reform of N.A.T.O. system.

Of course, looking at the query rise by Quagliariello, it is possible to confirm, that as said in the previous pages, there is not an ideological base that De Gaulle follows when putting in place his foreign policy, except for the consideration of what is better for his country. The decisions that derives from the answer received by the U.S. President, certainly have conditioned the following month's actions of France.

At the beginning, the Memorandum of 1958 failed in its purposes to establish a cooperative system, where the French government should have been consulted on important issues concerning N.A.T.O. both politically and strategically.

An agreement was not reached and the only possible solution for De Gaulle was the unilateral decision to deal with the defence of those French zones of interests, remembered into the text of the document.

The most important steps that led to the withdrawal of a part of the French naval fleet from the Atlantic Alliance apparatus, have been developed at the beginning of March 1959. In this period the preoccupation of the United States concerning the defence of Europe, and the decisions taken by France, rise, as

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<sup>56</sup> *Letter from the U.S. President Eisenhower to the French President De Gaulle of October 20th 1958*, in <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v07p2/d63>

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*

demonstrated by the increase in correspondence between the French and American Presidents, and their representatives.

Certainly, according to the Americans, the French decision would have worsened also the already difficult situation in Europe, given to the Berlin crisis. That latter event was provoked by the Soviet Union, which wanted to change the status of Berlin and tried to impose a restriction on the access of the Western troops to the Eastern side of the city.

As said above, the situation of the Berlin crisis and the withdrawal of the Mediterranean French Fleet from N.A.T.O. are one of the best examples of the application of the foreign principles of De Gaulle towards the West, even accentuated by the contemporaneity of the events.

At the same time, De Gaulle was able to put into effect both independence, in this case from the U.S. from a defensive aspect, because of the necessity to protect the national interests on the zones cited in the text of the Memorandum, and the principle of cooperation among the nations belonging to the free and democratic world (to which De Gaulle makes reference several times in his speeches), concerning the defence of Europe, namely looking at the Berlin crisis.

Putting aside the consequences the Memorandum could have caused, and focusing on the Berlin crisis, De Gaulle and President Eisenhower agreed on the consequences that the situation could have caused and on the decisions to take against the U.S.S.R. As it read the letter sent by General De Gaulle to General Eisenhower on March 12<sup>th</sup> 1959, « le fait que qui que ce soit s'opposerait à notre passage serait donc un acte de force délibéré contre nous. Nous aurions à y répondre par de moyens de même nature. La responsabilité de ce qui pourrait suivre incomberait à ceux qui, les premiers, auraient employé la force pour nous empêcher d'aller là où c'est notre droit d'aller »<sup>58</sup>. This passage of the letter shows the nature of cooperation between France and the United States in solving the issue over Berlin. But, at same time, De Gaulle, taking into consideration the principle of cooperation among the Nations, in

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<sup>58</sup> *Lettre au Président des États-Unis d'Amérique D.D. Eisenhower, 12 Mars 1959*, in LNC 1958-1960

order to ensure stability and equilibrium in the world, remembers to Eisenhower the necessity to hold a “summit” conference between the United States, France, Great Britain and the Soviet Union, in order to discuss a sort of agreement on some:«points importants»<sup>59</sup>, that is the situation of Berlin and the future of Germany. Of course, it is fundamental to have before the conference, that would have been held on May 1960, even if it failed in its intentions, a stable relationships between the Foreign Affairs Ministers, in order to prepare the meeting. This passage of the letter, and the fact that it was the first time that De Gaulle mentioned this conference, could be seen as the first step towards the role of France in trying to open the way to détente.

The Eisenhower response did not delay to arrive. A letter was sent on March 14<sup>th</sup> 1959, from the Department of State to the Embassy in France. The main points of this document are two. First, the American President share his views with the French President about the possible spread of a conflict. As a matter of fact, he underlines that :« if force is used to oppose our exercise of these rights (the rights to ensure to the Berlin people their protection), the world will know precisely who in this controversy first resorted to force to settle a dispute»<sup>60</sup>; secondly, Eisenhower remembers to De Gaulle the necessity of the strong alliance between the members of N.A.T.O. to face the risk of Soviets. From the last passage of the text, it is possible to understand the U.S. were concerned about the decision taken on March 7<sup>th</sup> by the French government to withdraw the fleet from the Atlantic Alliance control. Eisenhower writes:« I am sure you will of course agree that our common defenses must be maintained at maximum effectiveness (...) I believe we should proceed on this score calmly and purposefully. We should not take hasty measures designed superficially to build up our defenses which would only be interpreted as a sign of fear on our part, nor should we do anything to weaken our defenses, or make moves which could be interpreted as weakness or lack of determination»<sup>61</sup>. The expression used by the U.S. President referring to the weakening of defences, surely is an

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>60</sup> *Letter from President Eisenhower to President De Gaulle, March 14<sup>th</sup> 1959*, in <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v08/d223>

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*

attempt to persuade De Gaulle to not confirm his decision about National defence.

The wording of the letters of March 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, are the prove of the cooperation between the two countries when dealing with an international problem on which they share the same opinions. Of course, to avoid a conflict on Europe can be seen as a national interest for De Gaulle, that will not put in danger his country. Finally, the principle of national interest, even in difficult moments, will always prevail in De Gaulle's actions.

Dealing with the France decision to withdraw the Mediterranean French Fleet from the N.A.T.O. control, where is the affirmation of the principle of independence to protect national interest?

During 1959, the main concern that France was tackling was the Algerian problem, not resolved until 1962 with Algeria independence. As it possible to see in the telegram sent by the Cecil B. Lyon, the American Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy in France, to the Department of State on March 6<sup>th</sup> 1959, French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville wanted to call her in order to specify the reasons that have led France to take that decision. At point 3 of the text, it is possible to read:« France was motivated in this move entirely by French reasons, the Algerian situation» and at point 4:«He (Couve de Murville) emphasized that only French Mediterranean fleet was concerned and not rest of French fleet, which would continue to be under NATO control»<sup>62</sup>. In the same document, the American diplomat expressed her concern about a possible leak, being N.A.T.O. composed of other fifteen members, and the psychological effects that this notice could have had on the other members, even more so during the Berlin crisis. At this point the French Minister hoped that there was not any leak and remembered once again the fundamental importance that the Algerian problem had for his country.<sup>63</sup>

The same concerns about the possible consequences of the French decision were expressed by General Eisenhower in his letter to General De Gaulle on March 19<sup>th</sup> 1959. In this document, the American President remembered the

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<sup>62</sup> Telegram n. 3238 From the Embassy in France to the Department of State on March 6<sup>th</sup> 1959, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v07p2/d98>

<sup>63</sup> *ibidem*

fundamental importance that the Atlantic Alliance had in defending Europe from the Soviet threat, by saying:« I believe that in NATO we have the best guarantee of mutual defense»<sup>64</sup>. Forward, in the same document, there is a mention to the response to Memorandum of September 1958, given by Secretary of State Dulles in February 1959.

Therefore, Eisenhower remembers :« It was in this spirit that I asked Secretary Dulles to talk to you on this subject (...) to tell you that the United States would view sympathetically a French request to NATO for greater status within NATO for the French naval forces in the Mediterranean»<sup>65</sup>.

General Eisenhower reaffirmed his concerns, already expressed into the letter of the 14<sup>th</sup>, namely that the French actions on the Mediterranean Fleet could be a sign of weakness among the Western nations, and that in the international situation, under the Berlin crisis, it would have worsened the resolution of the problem because of the believe of divisions among them.

The sentiment of fear and the psychological and political repercussions that this decision could have caused, are also perceivable into a telegram sent by the Department of State to the French Embassy in France on March 22<sup>nd</sup> 1959<sup>66</sup>, three days before the General De Gaulle's press conference. In the telegram, Christian A. Herter, the undersecretary of State, suggested to the Ambassador, the actions to undertake to persuade France to not deliver the notice, and to discuss everything in order to avoid consequences in a N.A.T.O. forum, where all the requests by the French government, that were the same of the Memorandum, would have been taken into account. Herter concludes saying :« We are willing therefore, authorize Ambassador say to De Gaulle that French will find door open in Washington to propositions they may wish make»<sup>67</sup>.

The fact that De Gaulle did not seem to be worried about the consequences that his decision could have comported, does not mean that he was not aware of what it could have represented to the eyes of the Soviets. It is only the

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<sup>64</sup> *Letter from President Eisenhower to General De Gaulle on March 19 1959*, in <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v07p1/d204>

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>66</sup> *Telegram sent by the Department of State to the Embassy in France, on March 22 1959*, in <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v07p1/d206>

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*

reaffirmation of the priority of the national interest principle, before of those of the international community.

During the press conference held at the Élysée by De Gaulle on March 25<sup>th</sup> 1959, in occasion of the Municipal elections of the beginning of the month, the General firstly made reference to the international situation threatened by the Berlin crisis. By analysing the words pronounced by De Gaulle during his speech, it is possible to understand how the German question is of fundamental importance to France. The General repeated what he had already said to General Eisenhower in his letter of March 12<sup>th</sup>, where he expressed concern and proposed solutions about the crisis. First, he announced that whenever it would have been hampered to the Western powers' troops to access the Berlin territory, it would have been seen as an hostile act, and whatever would have happened, the responsibility was on those who had provoked the response, that is the Soviets.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, he announced that in order to solve the problem, he wished the establishment of a conference of Foreign Affairs Ministers, where to discuss about the fundamental points and only later a summit conference where the President of the United States, the Premier of Great Britain, the President of France and the Secretary of the Soviet Union would have participated. Forward, De Gaulle remembers the long friendship that there is between France and the Russian people, affirming :« (...) aucun sentiment de concurrence ou d'animosité ne l'inspire (la France) à l'égard du peuple russe. Bien au contraire, elle a pour lui une amitié réelle et traditionnelle»<sup>69</sup>, that is the reason why France can express his opinion freely.

Finally, concerning the Berlin crisis, the General remembers the necessity of the maintaining of the Atlantic Alliance, that could not exist without the participation of France, and that it is fundamental to the defence of the Nation.

After this analysis of the international situation, De Gaulle answered the question of a journalist concerning the withdrawal of the Mediterranean French

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<sup>68</sup> (...) les occidentaux ont le droit de passage. Si certains s'opposaient, ceux-là et tous autres qui viendraient à les soutenir commettraient un acte hostile à l'égard des Occidentaux et serait donc responsables des chocs qui pourraient s'ensuivre» in *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 25 Mars 1959*, in *DM 1958-1962*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*

Fleet from the N.A.T.O. control. He answered by affirming two important concepts. The first one concerned the zone of interest of the Alliance, that did not involve the Middle-East, the North Africa, the Sub-Saharan Africa, Madagascar, the Red Sea, all zones where France had national interests to defend. It would have not been possible to intervene if the French government would not have had the fleet at its disposal. Forward, he noticed that the two others powerful members of the Alliance, namely the United States and Great Britain had taken measures to maintain the major part of their fleets under their command.

The second point stated is the necessity to shift from an integration of the forces to a cooperation at the interior of the Alliance, avoiding that: « les peuples et les gouvernements se trouvent (...) dépouillés de leur rôle et leur responsabilité dans le domain de leur propre défense »<sup>70</sup>.

Two months after the press conference, De Gaulle sent a letter to President Eisenhower, in order to explain the reasons that have pushed France to adopt the January 31<sup>st</sup> 1959 decision, put into effect on March 7<sup>th</sup> 1959, namely the unilateral decision to withdraw the fleet from N.A.T.O. control.

In the text of the letter, De Gaulle reaffirmed the importance of the Alliance for the defence of the free and democratic nations, against the threat of communism. Nevertheless, he remembered that the defence system was not useful in a situation where not only Europe had to be defended. There were others parts of the world to be threatened by communism then, namely African continent was one of that, and the most important in French opinion.

The analysis of the two cases had demonstrated the concretization of the principle of independence to which De Gaulle referred several times during his mandate and as it has been seen in this last paragraph, from the beginning of his mandate.

The same principles will be also at the base of other actions of foreign policy during De Gaulle's period. In fact, the succession of events from 1959 onwards have paved the way to the idea of *grandeur* that is present in the General's policy. This latter concept, together to a specific strategy, will characterized the

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<sup>70</sup> Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 25 Mars 1959, in DM 1958-1962



following years and decisions of France in foreign policy, both towards the West bloc, and towards the East. In this sense, De Gaulle has launched the idea of a possibility of cooperative policy between the two blocs, and contemporarily overtaking the idea of being under the hegemonic powers.

## Chapter 2 Grandeur and détente in De Gaulle

### 2.1 The idea and strategy of *grandeur*

The previous chapter has enlightened the historical steps which have characterized the coming back of General De Gaulle to power, taking into account also the first case of reaffirmation of France's power in the world. With the analysis of the principles of the Gaullist foreign policy, it was given an example of the application of those features that characterize all the foreign policy of De Gaulle, which are the affirmation of independence and protection of national interest.

When thinking about De Gaulle's foreign policy, it is not only necessary to look at the sequence of the events that have characterized his mandate. As it has been said before, to withstand the decisions taken since the beginning of the President's mandate, there is the respect for those principles of foreign policy.

Therefore, it is necessary to make an effort and imagine the Gaullist idea of France, from a mythological perspective. It means that the idea of *grandeur* might not be considered as a direct consequence of the application of independence into policy, rather as the supreme idea that is at the base of the General's thought.

In the previous pages, it has been said, answering to the question raised by Quagliariello, that the decisions taken by De Gaulle, mainly to reaffirm French independence from the United States, was not the consequence of a precise project. As a matter of fact, those decisions were highly conditioned by the events of those years. However, if *grandeur* is imagined to be as foundations in the construction of a new house, and independence and the protection of

national interest, as the walls in the same building, then the consequence is that without the foundations, those walls would not have been created. And if they were built, they would have fallen with the minimum earthquake. This simile is necessary to understand that without De Gaulle's desire for grandeur, the decisions he took in foreign policy, mainly concerning the independence from the U.S., would have been overcome whenever there would have been an international crisis, leading France to undergo the American will, as it was during the Fourth Republic.

In this paragraph the objective is to investigate the concept of grandeur, that is to say to look at the meaning that General De Gaulle gave to this concept; whereas the second step will be to consider the concretization of this concept into the actions of the French government during the De Gaulle's mandate. To be clear, the events that will be taken as cases to demonstrate French grandeur are tied between them, but they will be analysed separately, so that they could be better understandable. Furthermore, the investigation of the idea and strategy of grandeur, from the concept to the action, will help to better understand the evolution of the French foreign policy towards the East bloc, both during and after that the process of independence from the West was achieved.

The idea of grandeur in De Gaulle was not something that appeared when he came back to power, nor during the years of his mandate as President of the Republic. The General had always thought that his nation should have been *grande*. In the first lines of one of his most important work *Memoirs de guerre*, he had underlined which was, according to him, the role of France in the world. He wrote: «Toute ma vie, je me suis fait une certaine idée de la France»<sup>71</sup>, a phrase that will remain in the collective imagination of all those who know something about the General. The idea that he had about France, was certainly related to that of grandeur. As a matter of fact, continuing the same lines, he added: «le côté positif de mon esprit me convainc que la France n'est réellement elle-même qu'au premier rang; (...) que notre pays, tel qu'il est, parmi les autres, tels qu'ils sont, doit, sous peine de danger mortel, viser haut et

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<sup>71</sup> Ch. De Gaulle, *Memoirs de guerre*,

se tenir droit. Bref, à mon sens, la France ne peut être la France sans la grandeur»<sup>72</sup>. Furthermore, when France did not succeeded to be great, the only ones to be guilty of this failure are the French themselves, that do not understand the role that they have in making their nation great among all the others.

The fact of thinking about a nation as an idea (une certain idée de la France) has certainly contributed to the mythologizing of the concept of nation. As well defined by Jean Lacouture in his De Gaulle's biography, the President of the republic, and in particularly the General, becomes a *mythiculteur*, in his work of remembering the greatness of the past to apply it to the present.

According to this view, there have been those who have shared the General's opinion according to which their nation would have returned to greatness, but even those who discredited him, as Raymond Aron stated in an article entitled *De la politique de grandeur*, published in 1959, and where he wrote:« La politique de grandeur est une expression de certains gaullistes et d'antigaullistes plus nombreux. Pour ceux-là (the gaullists) elle est le but et le symbole du redressement national, pour ceux-ci (the antigaullist) l'expression d'une nostalgie anachronique, la prétention vaine de tenir une place à la mesure de la France d'hier, non celle d'aujourd'hui»<sup>73</sup>.

The role that De Gaulle had in being a *mythiculteur*, was that of building up a certain idea of France, directly related to him and based on the belief in the nation, with the aim of restoring the honour of the country and reaffirm its independence and grandeur, after the defeat of Vichy<sup>74</sup>. That was valid during the war, but it is still important to De Gaulle when he assumed the political powers. The aim was to lead France to greatness, through all the means he had at his disposal as President of the Republic.

A major emphasis to this idea of France, or ideal as it was until it came true, was given by a specific use of words and the importance given to the emotional side of a person, namely the fact that not only reason but also sentiments

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<sup>72</sup> *ibidem*

<sup>73</sup> Aron R., *De La politique de grandeur*, in *Preuves*, 1959

<sup>74</sup> Kritzman L.D., *A certain idea of De Gaulle*, in *Yale French Studies*, No. 111, Myth and Modernity (2007), pp. 157-168

matters in leading the nation to resurge. At this proposal, it can be remembered as De Gaulle imagined France, that is to say as :« la princesse des contes ou la madone aux fresques des murs, comme vouée à une destinée éminente et exceptionnelle »<sup>75</sup>.

Furthermore, the idea of grandeur is related to that of destiny of France. According to De Gaulle, the destiny of France was that of being great. But during the last half century this link between the destiny and grandeur had been broken by the events of history. The moment was come, as General De Gaulle remembers during a declaration in occasion of the ceremony to celebrate the beginning of his mandate as President of the Republic in January 1959, to bring France to the role it was entitled to<sup>76</sup>. Moreover, in a message to the French Parliament, one week after, he stated that the restoration of France as a nation was just a dream eighteen years before, then, in 1959, that dream could come true, but it was necessary to overcome divisions and to fight for unity<sup>77</sup>.

From an historical point of view, there have been moments where the Nation has demonstrated to the world to be great. After the First World War, France lost his role as a leading nation. Addressing to the members of the Alliance Française reunited to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this organization, De Gaulle stated that :« there was a time France. It lived, it thought, it acted through the centuries. (...) And then, France lives, France thinks, France acts »<sup>78</sup>. The governments of French Third and Fourth Republic, not having the necessary means at their disposal, have compliant with the will of the powerful Nations in the world, in this case the United States, making France not living, not thinking and not acting. The change from the using of past tense to the present indicates that the time has come to bring France to grandeur.

The reason why France had to be great was not just because it had to follow his destiny, but also because it had to be able to lead the world towards the good. As said in the previous chapter, the role that France had, as remembered by De Gaulle to Peyrefitte, was that of the *lumière du monde*, and it was achievable

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<sup>75</sup> Ch. De Gaulle, *Introduction, Mémoires de guerre*, Paris, Plon, 1954

<sup>76</sup> *Déclaration, 8 Janvier 1959*, in *DM 1958-1962*

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>78</sup> *Discours prononcée à Paris, 03 Décembre 1958*, in *DM 1958-1962*

only if :«la puissance et la grandeur, qui, suivant le génie de la France, sont tournées vers le bien et la fraternité des hommes»<sup>79</sup>.

At the beginning, the idea of *grandeur* was necessary to De Gaulle in order to reanimate the French people that was still disappointed by the :«déchirement de la France»<sup>80</sup> left by the world conflict.

The General, in this sense, mythologized France, and the consequences to which this mental exercise led, can be clarified if one looks at a dialogue between De Gaulle and Peyrefitte. As this latter reports, in 1962, he asked the President why France needed to be great to be itself. De Gaulle's answer was :«Parce que les Français ont besoin d'avoir l'orgueil de la France. Sinon, ils se trainent dans la médiocrité (...)»<sup>81</sup>. Forward, he added :«Si on lui propose pas des buts élevés, si elle n'a pas le sentiment de sa dignité et de sa noblesse, elle se traine dans une sorte de léthargie. En s'arrachant à la médiocrité, elle a de grandes capacités»<sup>82</sup>. That is, in order to be really France, it needed to wish for great moments.

However, as said above, *grandeur* has to be imagined as the foundations of a building, upon which to construct different walls, and different levels. In this perspective, the reform of the institution, or the foreign policy principles, mentioned in the first chapter of this work, are just two of the elements necessary to construct *grandeur* of France. Despite their importance, they are not sufficient to make the Nation great. That is why, it is needed a transformation from an ideal and mythological perspective of *grandeur*, to a strategic one. And according to De Gaulle, besides of an economic aspect that has an important value in the General's ambitions, what really opens the way to greatness is an independent policy of defence. As seen in the last part of the previous chapter, one of the most significant moment in De Gaulle's assertion of independence from the United States, concerned the withdrawal of the

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<sup>79</sup> *Allocution prononcée à l'hôtel de ville de Paris, 18 Juin 1958*, in *DM 1958-1962*

<sup>80</sup> Phrase used by the General many times during his speeches in order to indicate the pains and delusions of France inflicted by the war

<sup>81</sup> Peyrefitte A., *C'était De Gaulle*, p. 289

<sup>82</sup> *ibidem*

French Mediterranean fleet from the control of N.A.T.O., that was nothing else then the control of the American hegemonic power.

That move was not sufficient to De Gaulle. It was needed to move forward and to affirm, even from a strategic point of view, the independence and the greatness of France. That was only possible if the Nation had shown to the world its ability to reach the level of *puissance*, achieved by the other powers.

According to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Couve de Murville, :«la pensée de De Gaulle était tout entière dominée par la volonté de rendre à la France dans le monde le rôle et la place qu'il estimait devoir lui revenir »<sup>83</sup>.

How could France acquire that role and that place that it did deserve in the world? Certainly, one of the first step was the achievement of a political independent foreign policy, the other one was through an independent policy of defence. In De Gaulle, the policy of defence did not refer to the international defence, as it was the case of the Atlantic Alliance scheme, but it did refer to national defence. The main element of this aspect concerned the French decision to acquire a nuclear armament.

The will to hold national nuclear forces was not a decision taken by the General, but already during the last months of the Fourth Republic the government of Felix Gaillard had decided to develop a *force de dissuasion*, in partnership with the Italian and German governments. But De Gaulle refused to cooperate with the two other States, and decided to lead a national independent program.

As Maurice Vaisse has pointed out, :«pour assurer une défense conforme à l'indépendance nationale, il existe deux moyens complémentaires: le refus du système d'intégration militaire et le développement d'un armement nucléaire nationale»<sup>84</sup>. The first point has been partially put in place in March 1959, and as it will be considered forward, reach its end in 1966. The second point, instead, will be taken into account here.

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<sup>83</sup> Couve de Murville M., *Une politique étrangère, 1958-1969*, Paris, Plon, 1971

<sup>84</sup> Vaisse M., *op. cit.*, p. 45

The manifesto of the Gaullist will for the creation of a national nuclear armament, can be considered his speech during a visit to the Military Academy in November 1959. Despite it was just one year that De Gaulle had assumed the office of President of the Republic, at that proposal his idea had always been clear.

De Gaulle in his speech on November 3<sup>rd</sup> wished for a :«défense qui soit française». This phrase is the core of the words addressed to the members of the Academy. The General added that it was necessary for the French Nation to defend by itself, for itself and in the way it retains appropriate.

Moreover, he criticized the system said of “integration”, namely the Atlantic Alliance system, that has been created to face the immediate threat to the free world, and that it is no longer necessary because in 1959 the *personnalité nationale* had been rediscovered. Then, De Gaulle said that the consequence of the creation of a national defence was to endow itself of a :«force de frappe susceptible de se déployer à tout moment et n’importe où. Il va de soi qu’à la base de cette force sera un armement atomique (...) qui doit nous appartenir»<sup>85</sup>. The General was conscious that it was something difficult to realize, but at the same time, he explained that it was the only way to assert France grandeur and ability to face the two hegemonies. In other words, :«le Général était pressé d’avoir la bombe parce qu’elle constituait un instrument diplomatique pour s’asseoir à la table des Grands»<sup>86</sup>.

The necessity for a *force de frappe* appears even in the letter that General De Gaulle sent to President Eisenhower in May 1959. It was the same document where he explained the reasons why France had decided to withdraw the fleet from the Mediterranean.

In this letter, mainly in its second part, the tone used by the French President toward the President of the United States is very tough. De Gaulle affirmed :«laissez-moi appeler votre attention sur le fait que l’armement atomique et les conditions dans lesquelles l’action de celui-ci pourrait être déclenchée imposent à la France de prendre certaines précautions (...) L’Amérique entend garder ses secrets vis-à-vis de la France, ce qui nous oblige à les découvrir

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<sup>85</sup> *Allocution prononcée à l’Ecole militaire, 03 Novembre 1959, in DM 1958-1962*

<sup>86</sup> Cited by Vaisse M., in *op.cit.*, p. 47

nous-mêmes et à grand frais»<sup>87</sup>. The General continued by saying that U.S. refused to establish a tripartite organization between the three Western powers, in order to share the decision to use the atomic arsenal or not, that was fundamental to De Gaulle, because of a possible direct involvement of the French territory in a nuclear war. He could have justified such a decision, (of not making France participate to the decisions on questions of world security), if the U.S. and France did not had good relations. But, because of the values and principles that tied one country to another, it was unconceivable a defence system, as it was. At the end of the letter, General De Gaulle hoped that Eisenhower could have considered again his proposal, already done in the Memorandum of September 1958.

The fact that De Gaulle seemed to want at any price the atomic armament, could lead to think that he was against the disarmament policy or suspension of the nuclear experiences to which the two superpowers were thinking about. But, it was not like that. Instead, what De Gaulle affirmed during a press conference of November 10<sup>th</sup>, when a journalist asked the General which was the French position towards the atomic, it was clear that he did not opposed that initiatives, but at the same time the fact of thinking about it or to suspend the nuclear experiences, did not impede to the two superpowers to have them. At that moment, the U.S., together with Great Britain, and Soviet Union, could have destroyed France. If it was proposed to France to not continue in its endowment of a nuclear armament, when the others states owned them, then De Gaulle would have not accepted<sup>88</sup>. Actually, he affirmed : «La France en se dotant d'un armement nucléaire, rend service à l'équilibre du monde»<sup>89</sup>.

From a strategic point of view, the fact of possessing an atomic bomb by France, could have contributed not only to allow the Nation to access the club of those countries which owned the nuclear armament, but also to dissuade them, and in particular the Soviets, to destroy France. Despite French were conscious of not having the same capacities of the two superpowers in the short

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<sup>87</sup> Lettre au Président des États-Unis d'Amérique D.D. Eisenhower, 25 Mai 1959, LNC, 1958-1960, p. 226-227

<sup>88</sup> *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 10 Novembre 1959*, in *DM 1958-1962*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibidem*



term, the decision to endow the Nation with a bomb A, was more a strategic and political move, than a purely defensive one. This strategic point has been analysed by André Eshet in his contribution to the book *La politique étrangère du General De Gaulle*, where he focused on the strategic perspective of the defence policy, affirming that :«La dissuasion conçue par la stratégie française consistait à décourager tout candidat agresseur de passer à l'action, par la menace de représailles nucléaires appliquées non plus à son appareil militaire, mais à sa substance vive, à ses concentrations urbaines et à ses centres économiques vitaux. La considération d'un risque disproportionné (...) doit produire un effet d'inhibition»<sup>90</sup>.

The first nuclear test, known as Gerboise bleu, held on February 13<sup>th</sup> 1960 in the Sahara desert in Algeria. Other tests held the following years, so that France could develop nuclear armament in three components: air, terrestrial and marine. As it is easily imaginable, France received tough critics about its decision to have an atomic armament, and to test it, both internally<sup>91</sup>, and internationally. Therefore, De Gaulle during the press conference on April 11<sup>th</sup> 1961, answering to a question of a journalist concerning the French nuclear armament, stated that all the oppositions coming from abroad to the French decision to have an atomic bomb, could not be justified by the problems provoked by the danger of radioactivity to the people living in those territories where the tests were held, because no one had criticized the Americans, the Soviets or the British to conduct nuclear test. It was just a move to persuade France to abandon its projects. De Gaulle concluded by saying:« tant que d'autres auront les moyens de l'annéantir (referring to France), il faudra qu'elle ait les moyens de se défendre»<sup>92</sup>.

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<sup>90</sup> Eshet A., *Aspects stratégiques de la politique étrangère gaullienne*, in Barnavi E., Friedländer S., in *La politique étrangère du general De Gaulle*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de Paris, 1985

<sup>91</sup> From a note of DM 1958-1962, p. 297, it is possible to read that the French government had to propose three times the law for the strategic nuclear force, because of the opposition of the Senate. For a parliamentary debate on the budget to produce the atomic bomb, see also the article written by Megret M., *Questions et réflexions sur le programme français de force nucléaire*, in *Politique étrangère*, n°1 - 1960 - 25<sup>e</sup>année. pp. 15-32;

<sup>92</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 298

The endowment by France of a national force de frappe was certainly one element that could show to the world, and mainly to the United States and to Soviet Union, the independence from a military perspective from the Atlantic Alliance, so mainly from the Americans, and that the path to grandeur was opened.

On the international scene occurred in 1961 a change in the American administration. Eisenhower ended his mandate, and the new President of the United States became John F. Kennedy. It is imaginable that with a new President, maybe De Gaulle could have had new relationships and obtain what he wanted from the U.S., namely their agreement on considering France an independent and important power as Great Britain was.

The French hope was soon disappointed in the defensive field, by an agreement signed by the United States and Great Britain at Nassau in 1962. It provided that Great Britain had to stop the production of the missile system called Skybolt, and the Americans would have furnished them the missiles called Polaris, more powerful than the former. In change, the forces of the two countries should have been integrated under the N.A.T.O. command, practically under the American control. This first attempt of multilateral force was strongly opposed by General De Gaulle.

At this proposal, it is very interesting to take into consideration the first cabinet of French Ministers after the signature of the Nassau Agreement. It took place on January 3<sup>rd</sup>. During the meeting, the President of the Republic exposed his vision of the multilateral force proposed by the Americans to the British government, and that would have been proposed by the Kennedy's administration to the General some months later.

It is worthy to look at this intervention, so that it could give a major understanding of the application of the idea of *grandeur* to the strategic and political fields.

Analysing the intervention of De Gaulle<sup>93</sup>, as reported by Alain Peyrefitte, it is possible to extract two major points.

As mentioned by De Gaulle, the first point concerns the technical aspect of the agreement. Great Britain could only choose between having an agreement with the U.S., continuing in this way to have a nuclear force, or to not have

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<sup>93</sup> Peyrefitte A., *op. cit.*, p. 346-350

anything. It is necessary to remind that Great Britain had only forces produced with the sustain of the Americans, not autonomously, as the Skybolt system was. Once the Pentagon had decided to stop their production, and the British not accepting the Polaris missiles, would have ended in exit from the club of nuclear countries. The fact of being in front of such a crossroads had “forced” the British government to accept the agreement. De Gaulle’s opinion was that for France accepting such an agreement would have not provoked any change, because they missed the other element, as the nuclear submarines, that the U.S. would have not furnished. Moreover, France was arriving where Great Britain would not have without the partnership with the Americans.

The second point concerned the political aspect. As General De Gaulle had many times affirmed, the national defence is a point of fundamental importance in the governing of a State. According to the President, what the Americans wanted, and that the Gaullist France never will grant, was the political dependence. :«Notre défense est la condition même de notre politique. Elle doit rester la nôtre»<sup>94</sup>. What the General thought was that accepting the American offer, it would have meant the end of any atomic independence<sup>95</sup>. Moreover, the multilateral agreement, would not have led to a tripartite share of decisions, as De Gaulle had wished for since his coming back to power, but to a subjection of nuclear forces to the Americans.

In De Gaulle, being grandeur both an ideal and a strategy, putting the strategic elements under the U.S. command, would have meant to put the future of a great France under the American’s decision. But :«when it is a Nation as France is, it is not possible to accept to disappear»<sup>96</sup>. At Nassau, the British government had guaranties that it could use the national forces under the Alliance command, whenever there had been supreme national interest to defend. This clause to the agreement is defined by the French President as :«poudre dans les yeux». Once more the General remembers to the members of the government that the aim of France was not to have the same capabilities of the Americans or of the Russians, because of the material impossibility the French had to own the same means, but it was needed to the Nation *a force de dissuasion* able to impede the aggressor to attack them.

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<sup>94</sup> Peyrefitte A., *op. cit.*, p. 350

<sup>95</sup> *Ibidem*, p.349

<sup>96</sup> *Ibidem*

What, at the same time, is strange and spectacular in De Gaulle foreign policy is his attitude towards the United States, even in the same moment. The reference is to the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. As already analysed in the first chapter in comparison to the Berlin crisis of 1959, when the West was threatened by the East, namely by the U.S.S.R., then De Gaulle gave all his support to the United States. At this proposal, General De Gaulle remembers to President Kennedy in a letter of December 1<sup>st</sup> 1962, soon after the crisis, that whenever there was a world war or just an attack to the American soil, France would have been on the side of the U.S.<sup>97</sup>. This element in De Gaulle could even lead to suspect of his contemporary desire for grandeur, and so of independence, and then his sustain to the Americans whenever there was a crisis. To the Prime Minister of Great Britain, relative to the Cuban crisis, De Gaulle remembers in a letter of November 6<sup>th</sup><sup>98</sup>, that the decision by the United States to not consult neither the British nor the French, before acting to solve the crisis, would not have been possible if the 1958's memorandum were into effect, namely if the tripartite talks could ever took place. That is because the American reaction could have put Europe in danger if the Soviet Union and the Kennedy administration would not have found a solution.

Relative to a possible intervention of France whenever there was a war, it is interesting to reverse the situation and to wonder if the Americans would have done the same if an European country was in danger.

According to De Gaulle, and this was one of the main reason why France had to reach independence and to state its grandeur, the United States would have not risked to save an European country from the Soviet aggression. This Gaullist opinion is confirmed by the General himself as remembered by Peyrefitte in his *memoirs*. De Gaulle affirmed :«Vous pensez bien que les Américains ne vont risquer leur survie pour défendre l'Europe. Ils ne l'ont jamais fait, ils ne le feront jamais. Ils n'en ont pas le moindre envie. C'est

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<sup>97</sup> :« (Si) L'Amérique soit effectivement attaquée et qu'il en résulte un conflit mondial (...) la France serait dans la guerre aux côtés des Etats-Unis », *Lettre à F. Kennedy, Président des États-Unis d'Amérique, 01 Décembre 1962*, in *LNC, 1961-1963*

<sup>98</sup> *Lettre du Général De Gaulle à Harold Macmillan, Premier Ministre de la Grande Bretagne, 07 Novembre 1962* in *LNC 1961-1963*

claire comme la lumière du jour»<sup>99</sup>. The mistrust towards those that once were the Allies, and that still are, but in a different perspective, fosters the Gaullist vision of a France that had to be free from any too much strict relation with the United States, but also if it was the case with the Soviet. A vision that is confirmed even by the refusal of joining the multilateral force proposed by Kennedy, and that the French Minister for the Army has defined :«un projet ridicule. Quand on parlait de MLF, il s'agissait toujours d'armes américaines sous contrôle américain»<sup>100</sup>.

On the American side, :«principal antidote to de Gaulle at this time was organizing Europe along the lines of the multilateral force»<sup>101</sup>. This words pronounced by the American Secretary Dean Rusk during a meeting with President Kennedy and other members of the Administration, meant one main thing: the Americans wanted to impeach that others European countries, and mainly the Federal Republic of Germany, with which the French government had important ties since De Gaulle coming back to power, would have followed the French via to *grandeur*. The endowment by the Federal Republic of Germany of a nuclear force was seen by De Gaulle as something negative, and it could have been perceived even by the Soviets as a threat to them. But, at the same time, the participation of West Germany into the MLF was appreciated by the French government. As a matter of fact, :«France itself could not be part of the “integrated” NATO command system, but it was a good thing that the FRG was—that is, that Bundeswehr divisions were integrated into a military system under U.S. command»<sup>102</sup>, at least until the decisions to end the threat of a nuclear war was taken.

The decisions made by De Gaulle in his attempt to bring France to *grandeur*, which began with the dispatch of the Memorandum to Eisenhower and Macmillan in 1958, the following withdrawal of the Mediterranean fleet, and

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<sup>99</sup> Peyrefitte A., *op. cit.*, p. 298

<sup>100</sup> Cited from André Eshet, *op. cit.*

<sup>101</sup> *Memorandum of conversation, The Merchant Mission and the Multilateral Force, February 18 1963* in <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v13/d174>

<sup>102</sup> Trachtenberg M., *The De Gaulle problem*, in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 14, N. 1, Winter 2012, pp. 81-92

continued with the pursuit of a strategic independent nuclear policy and the refusal of the MLF in the period between 1960-1963, paved the way to the 1966 definitive decision to exit from the military organization of N.A.T.O..

As Maurice Vaisse has pointed out in his work, when writing about the withdrawal from the Atlantic Alliance, it is convenient when dealing with this subject, to remember that the act was possible only because of the international favourable conjuncture, that is the rapprochement of France to Soviet Union<sup>103</sup>, that will be developed in the next pages.

The escalation toward a tough act, as it was the decision taken in 1966 by the French government, was, first of all, the result of the refusal by the American government to ground the defence of the U.S., that of Great Britain and the French one, under a tripartite system. Then, as it has been said above, the uncertainty by the French government to be really under the protection of the U.S. forces whenever a war had spread. Furthermore, the massive employment of American troops in Vietnam confirmed this suspicion by De Gaulle, and distanced always more the interests between France, and Western Europe in general, with that of the United States. This two elements have contributed to increase the desire for France greatness to be showed in the defensive field. Of course, it was a gradual withdrawal, because at the end of the Algerian war, the troops engaged there, did not join the N.A.T.O. integrated forces; or in June 1963, it was the North Atlantic fleet to leave the naval forces of the Organization<sup>104</sup>.

During the press conference of February 21<sup>st</sup> 1966, the President of the Republic, that had been confirmed some weeks before, answering to those who asked him questions about N.A.T.O., he acknowledged that the situation of Europe did no longer requested the remaining of France into the military agreements of the Organization. He underlined once again that the subordination to any organization was not for a Nation as France. Specifically, he said:« la volonté qu'a la France de disposer d'elle-même, volonté sans laquelle elle cesserait de croire dans son propre rôle et de pouvoir être utile aux

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<sup>103</sup>, Vaisse M., *op.cit.*, p. 381

<sup>104</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 383

autres, est incompatible avec une organisation de défense où elle se trouve subordonnée»<sup>105</sup>. De Gaulle concluded his intervention by saying the natural expire of the Atlantic Alliance was in 1969, and from then onward, French government would have done whatever to change the defence system, in order to actualize it to the new context.

Nevertheless, some days later, the decision by De Gaulle to withdraw France from the military agreements of the Alliance, was communicated to the President of the United States, that meanwhile had become Lyndon Johnson, through a letter sent on March 7<sup>th</sup> 1966. In this document, it is possible read the reasons why France had taken such a decision. The first and most important of them was that the context that was under the creation of the Atlantic Alliance was changed. From De Gaulle's words, it is possible to understand that all the progresses that France had made in his defence, did no longer deem necessary the presence of its troops in the integrated military system of the Organization. Furthermore, he added :« France is determined to regain on her whole territory the full exercise of her sovereignty, at present diminished by the permanent presence of allied military elements or by the use which is made of her airspace; to cease her participation in the integrated commands; and no longer to place her forces at the disposal of NATO»<sup>106</sup>.

The last act of detachment from the hegemonic power of the U.S. marked the first sign of *grandeur* for France. De Gaulle had demonstrated to the United States, that France was a great Nation. Moreover, he proved that the defence of national interests and national independence always, as the Americans did for themselves at the end, lead a country to be *grande*. The General by linking the ideal to strategy, through the means of defensive policy, succeeded to rebuild a strong Nation and to realize a *certain idée de la France*.

Clearly, it was just one side of the politics of grandeur, and specifically towards the West. The other side of the coin concerned the politics of grandeur towards the East. Hence, to complete the building of greatness, it is necessary

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<sup>105</sup> *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 21 Février 1966*, in *DM 1966-1969*

<sup>106</sup> *Lettre à Johnson, Président des États-Unis d'Amérique, 07 Mars 1966*, in *LNC 1964-1966*

to look on the other side and focus on the means used to construct to the East, namely *détente*, with all the limits and difficulties it comported.

## 2.2 The French idea of *détente*

When analysing the Cold war period, the main feature that appears in our mind is certainly the division of the world in two spheres of influence, that is to say the West bloc, under the hegemony of the United States, and the East bloc, under the hegemony of Soviet Union. The zone of the world where this division could be perceived more than in others, was Europe. In 1961, with the construction of the Berlin wall, the division was amplified and that not only consisted on an ideological split, between the model of liberalism and democracy, against the communist ideals, but also in a material split of an important city as Berlin was.

In this context, as the title of this work suggests, which was the role of France? In other words, which was the role of President De Gaulle in dealing with such a division? The answers to these questions are given by the title itself. The main aim of De Gaulle was to overcome the hegemonies, and to bring France to grandeur. As it has been underlined several times in the previous pages, De Gaulle's foreign policy opted for a strong affirmation of an independent country, independent mainly from the United States, that were French allies since the end of the world conflict. The will of the General, to give to France an independent foreign policy, materialized mainly in the defensive field, equipping the country with an atomic armament, and detaching step-by-step the French forces from the integrated forces of the Atlantic Alliance, leading to the final decision of 1965 with the total withdrawal of troops under the N.A.T.O. command.

This brief recall was needed to revoke the decisive act of detachment from the United States, that in the Cold War context was the first hegemony that France had to face. The second one was, instead, the East bloc hegemony, namely the Soviet Union, to which France, for obvious reasons, was not tied. It is clear



that, in spite of what the American feared, France did not want to go from an hegemony to another, as it is well expressed by the French Ambassador to the United States, Hervé Alphand, in two of his articles<sup>107</sup>.

In this paragraph, the focus will be on the concept, that could be imagined as a bridge, that has been necessary to complete grandeur (in the sense of independence) to pass from the detachment from one side, to the relationships with the other. Evidently, the concept to which it is made reference is *détente*. Despite this term refers to the relations between the two superpowers, and developed in the post-De Gaulle era, in the General policy there are some elements that have been anticipated, from his coming back to power until the *détente à la française* which would have been finally realized with the voyage of the French President to the U.S.S.R. in 1966.

First of all, in order to avoid to commit a mistake from the historical point of view, it is necessary to specify what is meant with the term *détente*, and to which period it is commonly referred to.

According to the International Encyclopaedia of Political Science, :«*Détente is a word of French origin meaning “a relaxation of tension.” In its traditional diplomatic usage, détente has most commonly been used to indicate a reduction of tension between two adversarial states*»<sup>108</sup>. This definition can be defined as the classical one. Moreover, the definition that has been given by Richard Stevenson, seem to be more appropriate to describe our area of interest. He defines *détente* as :«*the process of easing tension between states whose interests are so radically divergent that reconciliation is inherently limited*»<sup>109</sup>. The states to which the definition is referred are the two superpowers of the Cold War, namely the United States on one side, and Soviet Union on the other. Historically, it is agreed that *détente* began with election of American Presiden Nixon, flanked by Henry Kissinger (former National Security advisor, eventually Secretary of State), whereas Brežnev was the Communist Party

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<sup>107</sup> See articles by Alphand H., *Détente and French policy, the attitude of France*, published in 1963, and *The decision of France, there is no dilemma*, published in 1964

<sup>108</sup> Gratias M. & James P., *Détente*, published in *International Encyclopedia of Political Science*, Sage Publications, 2011

<sup>109</sup> Stevenson R.W., *The rise and fall of détente: Relaxations of tension in US-Soviet relations, 1953–84.*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, p.11

Secretary General of the Soviet Union (1964-1982), and it finished with the Afghanistan invasion by the Soviet troops in 1979.

The main feature that characterizes the policy of détente during this period, and that will not be part of the Gaullist project of détente as it will be seen later, is the so called “linkage” politics. This mechanism :«provided a method of addressing a broad range of issues while trying to prevent any single issue from derailing the overall process and milieu created by détente»<sup>110</sup>. Notably, the issues that would not have been part of a split, would have been the subjects concerning Europe, in particular the German question, the ideological aspects, and disarmament, and the prohibition of using force, that at that time was mainly nuclear force.

According to Jacques Vernant, instead, in principle, it is possible to individuate two different concepts of détente. The first one, Vernant sustains is the expression of the political will of two actors, in this case the U.S. and U.S.S.R., that have some common interests, even if their aims could be different and contradictories, but that agree on the methods to use to achieve those interests<sup>111</sup>. It is possible to see that this definition is similar to that given by Stevenson.

The second approach given to détente by Vernant, looks at this concept as a sort of :«dénominateur commun d'un ensemble de relations qui résultent en quelque sorte de la force des choses plutôt que d'un choix délibéré»<sup>112</sup>. It means that détente is the set of the modifications happened in the global context, and it is the climate that withstand to those events. In this second case, the protagonists of modifications are not the States' decisions aimed at reaching détente, but the decisions of States in any situation of international relations that will give as result a period of détente.

According to these definitions (those given by Stevenson and Vernant), the foreign policy of General De Gaulle towards the East bloc and Russia, as he normally referred to call Soviet Union, that here will be called French idea of

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<sup>110</sup> M. Grätias & P. James, op. cit

<sup>111</sup> Vernant J., *Réflexions sur la détente*, in *Politique étrangère*, Vol. 39, No. 4/5 (1974), pp. 457-471

<sup>112</sup> *Ibidem*

détente, where can it be placed? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to consider from a conceptual more than from a historical point of view the French idea of détente.

The point of departure of this analysis is once again the main element of the Gaullist policy, throughout his mandate, that is independence. This last notion is directly related to the vision of a *grande* France, as it has been said in the previous paragraph.

François Puaux, in his article published on *Espoir* in 1996, entitled *La conception gaullienne de la détente: 1964-1988*, has furnished a good analysis of the concept of détente in De Gaulle policy. In this work, Puaux distinguishes six different points that characterizes the Gaullist idea of détente; some of them will be taken into consideration here.

The first one is the refusal of the bipolar system. It means the refusal of the presence of two different blocs, to which France would have been subjugated. After all, the condition *sine qua non* to allow the Nation to be great, was France independence both from the United States and from Soviet Union. Nevertheless, it did not mean to eliminate the blocs *tout court*, since the exposition to the risk of being under threat was higher than the fact of being under the umbrella of one of the superpowers. Anyway, this first point was the necessary condition to arrive to have a relaxation of tension between the two hegemonies. It would have favoured France in leading his foreign policy, to allow it to strengthen relations with all the countries in the world. As Puaux remarks, it was necessary to make Russia understand that France did not want to detach from the U.S., in order to become a new superpower, that would have challenged Soviet Union, directly in Europe. Actually, Soviets should have understood that, in De Gaulle's idea, it was Russia itself to be part of Europe, for historically ties. Hence, the famous expression pronounced by De Gaulle of :«Europe de l'Atlantique à l'Oural», with which he meant the involvement of the old Russia into the European cultural and historical framework; furthermore, this place did not belong, instead, to the United States.

The main objective was to replace bipolarism with multilateralism. In this way, France, that would have had :«les mains libres» from the West bloc, and independent from any other hegemony, would have led a policy of cooperation towards the East. As De Gaulle remembers during an interview released to Michel Droit in December 1965, :«France cherche la paix, cultive la paix, aide la paix partout. Comment ? En étant en rapport avec tout le monde. Il n'y a aucune espèce de raison pour que nous excluions d'avoir de bons rapports avec ceux-ci ou avec ceux-là»<sup>113</sup>. The General wanted to break the system that had been accepted by the two hegemonies, namely the so called pacific coexistence, proclaimed by Khrushchev during the meeting of the Communist Parties in 1960, where he affirmed :«La coexistence pacifique d'États ayant des systèmes sociaux différents n'est pas synonyme de réconciliation entre les idéologies bourgeoises et socialistes. Elle suppose, au contraire, une intensification de l'effort des partis communistes pour le triomphe des idées socialistes»<sup>114</sup>. But, pacific coexistence does not mean to have peace among nations, in order that the cooperation between independent entities could prosper. While Khrushchev wished for a socialization of the word, through the work of national communist parties, the idea of De Gaulle was the opposite. It is necessary to consider that even during the détente period between the two blocs, the intention was that of having relaxation of tensions between the two, but maintaining the *status quo* concerning the division of the world. So, what will miss in the Gaullist détente approach, is the will to maintain the two hegemonic powers division's based on ideology.

As a matter of fact, one of the element that impeached the West and East to reach equilibrium and peace, was the conflict between the ideological aspects of the two superpowers. The communist and liberal systems fought one against another to try to prevail between them, not only at home, as in the U.S. or in Soviet Union, but also in the countries under the two spheres of influence. According to De Gaulle, it was necessary to overcome ideologies in order to reach détente between countries. As the General confided to Peyrefitte :«Les

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<sup>113</sup> Interview of Ch. De Gaulle given to Michel Droit on December 14th 1965

<sup>114</sup> Quoted from Colard D., *Les conceptions politiques de la détente*, in *Etudes internationales*, Volume 5, Number 4, 1974, Khrushchev, final declaration of the 1960 meeting of Communist Parties

seules réalités internationales, ce sont les nations. La Russie boira le communisme comme le buvard boit l'encre»<sup>115</sup>. He was convinced that the only actors that participated to the political international life were nations, while ideologies like communism would have one day overcome. As a matter of fact, De Gaulle was persuaded that the only way to ensure peace and equilibrium in the world was the passing of ideologies. During his press conference in January 1965, he remembers :«il est clair qu'une paix réelle (...) ne sera pas tranché à partir de la confrontation des idéologies et des forces des deux camps qui s'opposent aujourd'hui»<sup>116</sup>.

The fact of not accepting the perpetration of ideologies through the years, is the reason why De Gaulle has always referred to Soviet Union with the name :«Russie»; because he was convinced that to withstand the sovietisation of the nation, there were those qualities and principles that have made Russia great in the past.

The second point concerned an element directly related to confrontation of the two blocs. It was the stabilization of the German issue. As it will be seen in the next chapter, Germany, together with the ideological aspect, will represent, at the beginning a limit to policies of détente between the two hegemonies. Here, it is worthy to briefly mention the three main problems concerning the German issue. The first one, was the admission by France, but also from all the nations belonging to the Occidental bloc, of the German Democratic Republic as a sovereign state. The second one, was the stabilization and confirmation of the German borders as established at the end of the war; whereas the last one concerned the access of the Federal German Republic to the nuclear armament. The objective of De Gaulle was to discuss the German question not in the context of the American-Soviet confrontation, but as a problem that concerned Europe and only Europeans. The only nation that could propose such an agreement, being the only one to be detached from the United States was France.

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<sup>115</sup> Peyrefitte A., *op.cit.*, p. 306

<sup>116</sup> *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, Janvier 1965*, In *DM 1962-1965*

The last point to take into consideration when thinking about the French idea of détente, represents, perhaps, the major success of the Gaullist *politique à l'est*, because it was one of the causes of the failure of the détente process in the seventies, between the two hegemonies. It concerned the possibility to split détente in different elements. On the contrary, as said above, Nixon and Kissinger wished for the so called politics of linkage. Adopting the Gaullist method, the failure in one aspect of détente, as it could have been the German question, would have not led to the failure of the entire détente process.

Therefore, following the schema proposed by De Gaulle in putting into effect his foreign policy, the result would have been the :«overcoming the Cold War and (the) establishing (of) a new European balance, between a deideologized Russia on one hand and a Western Europe led by Paris on the other»<sup>117</sup>.

It is necessary to wonder which is the main aim of the Gaullist's desire for détente. Having been said that France wanted to overcome the confrontation between the two blocs, and that at the same time De Gaulle did not want to be the new superpower in the world, even because of the lack of means to aspire to an hegemonic position, the only option was the establishment of peace and equilibrium, that would have allowed France to be great.

The De Gaulle's policy towards Soviet Union and the East in general should be imagined as a determined road to travel. The first step was détente, the second one was entente, and the last one was cooperation. As it will be considered in the next chapters, the French President succeeded in achieving all three steps during his mandate.

The ambition to open the way to those steps was not something that arrived only with the complete detachment from the United States, but it was already present in the first years of the General's coming back to power.

Indeed, during the press conference on September 5<sup>th</sup> 1960, De Gaulle answering to a question of a journalist, declared that it was necessary to accomplish those three steps, in order to open the way to the end of confrontation. In his intervention, De Gaulle stated :«Personne ne peut mettre

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<sup>117</sup> Soutou G.H., *France and the Cold War, 1944-1963*, in *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 12:4, 35-52

en doute que nous considérons, en France, la question des relations Est-Ouest comme celle qui domine toutes les autres»<sup>118</sup>. From this first expression, it is easily understandable that all the foreign policy of De Gaulle has been conditioned, as it is obvious, by the international context, in which it developed.

Forward, the General affirmed, conjugating verbs in future, that the issue of East-West relations will imply three conditions.

The first condition to which he made reference was *détente*, that defined as a moment where :«on s'abstienne de se jeter des invectives à la figure et qu'on veuille bien se voir en toute tranquillité, c'est-à-dire pas trop nombreux»<sup>119</sup>. Despite the failure of the Summit Conference in May 1960, he still wanted to reaffirm the necessity for dialogue among the most important powers in the world.

Looking at second condition, that was *entente*, De Gaulle materialized it in the necessity for disarmament. Even if in that period France could have opposed such an agreement because it was the moment of the construction of the French *force de frappe*, De Gaulle seemed available, as he had several times repeated, to think about an agreement, that would have concerned all the nations possessing a nuclear armament. The question was that France should have been consulted about its defence, and not that the decision would have taken by others in its name.

The third condition to realize when the first two were accomplished, was cooperation. He stated :«la détente Est-Ouest devrait être accompagnée par un petit commencement de coopération sincère»<sup>120</sup>.

The tryptique *détente-entente-coopération* could be found at distance of six years in a speech of General De Gaulle to receive M. Kosygin, one of the most important personality of Soviet Union, in visit in Paris.

It is interesting to report directly De Gaulle's words, in order to show that there are not substantial differences between what the General announced at the press conference of 1960, and what he said to Kosygin in 1966. De Gaulle affirmed: :«Cela (les rapports est-ouest) implique d'abord la détente, c'est-à-

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<sup>118</sup> Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 05 Septembre 1960, in DM 1958-1962

<sup>119</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>120</sup> *Ibidem*

dire, entre tous les États de notre continent, la pratique délibérée de relations normales à tous égards. Cela implique ensuite l'entente, autrement dit la possibilité de considérer objectivement, les uns avec les autres, tous les sujets d'intérêt commun, (...) Enfin, pour qu'apparaisse une Europe rassemblée, il lui faut des ambitions. (...) Celles que lui commande notre époque : à l'intérieur d'elle-même, le développement, scientifique, technique, économique, dont désormais tout dépend et qui est le meilleur terrain de convergence internationale»<sup>121</sup>.

The *détente-entente-coopération* has been also criticized by someone who did not deem it the right path to overcome Cold War and to try to establish relations with the East bloc. As reported by Colard in his article *Les conceptions politiques de la détente*, a journalist of *Le Monde*, Tatu, wrote that it would have been better to replace the triad with the formula :«dialogue et coopération». That because the terms *détente* and *entente* imply that a new climate should withstand the new relations between the two states. Furthermore, Tatu thought that :«les litiges doivent être réglés à l'amiable, mais ils ne doivent pas surgir trop fréquemment ; le ton des échanges doit être « amical et même chaleureux »<sup>122</sup>. But without a share of ideals, and without the sharing of ideologies, to the author, it seemed impossible to proceed with *détente*, because the Soviet system maintaining is based on :«high levels of tensions against real or imaginable enemies»<sup>123</sup>. What Tatu proposed, instead, was a politics based on :«à coup par coup», that is, in other words, the French expression to indicate the linkage that will be at the basis of the two superpowers' *détente*.

A last aspect that should be considered is the methodology used by the General to carry on his idea of *détente*. At this proposal, the Gaullist policy implied, as it will be seen to analyse the historical process in the next chapters, the use of two main instruments to deal with *détente*: the private correspondence between the French President and the authorities of Soviet Union, that constitutes an

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<sup>121</sup> *Allocution de bienvenue à A. Kosigiyn Président du Conseil des Ministres de l'U.R.S.S.*, in *DM 1966-1969*

<sup>122</sup> Colard D., *art.cit.*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibidem*



important element to understand the dynamics of détente, and then the official positions taken during the President's declarations or press conferences.

In this paragraph the main aim was that of furnish a conceptual framework of détente. It was necessary to understand why De Gaulle acted those specific ways during his mandate. As a matter of fact, in the next chapters, the relationships between the Gaullist France and Soviet Union will be taken into consideration. The preamble to the historical analysis of the facts, was needed to look at the principles that have led the *politique à l'est* of De Gaulle. As it was in the case of the relationships with the West, and mainly with Americans, here too the French President follows a road, notably that of *détente-entente-coopération*, without forgetting that the main aim of France was to be great.

## Chapter 3 *L'ouverture à l'Est*

### 3.1 De Gaulle's foreign policy to the East at the beginning of the sixties: the concretization of *détente*

After having analysed from a conceptual point of view the elements that characterize the French idea of *détente* in De Gaulle's policy, it is necessary to look at the concrete events that have actualized those principles, following the triad *détente-entente-cooperation*.

In this analysis, it will be used a chronological method, that is to say that as the conceptual path follows its pattern, in the same way the events will be taken into consideration from the beginning of De Gaulle's mandate, until the concretization of cooperation between the two states.

:«Soviet ties with France, more than those with any other country in the post-war era, have been influenced by the vision of one individual-General Charles de Gaulle. He established the structure of post-war Franco-Soviet relations, and his approach and successes became the standard against which subsequent relations would be judged»<sup>124</sup>.

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<sup>124</sup> Stent A., *Franco-Soviet Relations from de Gaulle to Mitterrand*, in *French Politics and Society*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Winter 1989), pp. 14-27

From 1958 onwards, there is a packed correspondence between the two heads of States, namely De Gaulle and Khrushchev that will produce an important source for the cases that will be taken here into consideration.

In the first three letters sent by General De Gaulle to Khrushchev in 1958<sup>125</sup>, on June 30<sup>th</sup>, July 22<sup>nd</sup> and July 26<sup>th</sup>, to answer to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Soviet Union previously sent letters where, in short, the Soviet leader proposed a summit conference between the President of the United States, the Premier of Great Britain, the President of France and himself, in order to discuss, mainly, about the Middle East situation and the issue of disarmament. There, it can be noted that the tone are not so relaxed as they will be in the following years. Despite the awareness of De Gaulle of the importance of such a meeting, as he sustains in the three documents, he was reticent to hold a conference where some disagreements could have arisen. Moreover, those disagreements could have been provoked by the U.S.S.R. itself, because of some accusations against France made in those letters: among them, the necessity for French government to show greatness of his military forces on the Lebanon's shores. To those insinuations the General answered that France was not taking part to the operation shared by the United States and Great Britain in that zone, and that the military troops were there only to ensure protection to French citizens whenever it was necessary<sup>126</sup>. Or, another example is given by the response given by De Gaulle concerning the Algerian problem, in which it remembered one of the most important principle that encompasses all the foreign policy of the French President, that is to say the not intervention of a country in the internal matters of another nations. As a matter of fact, he remembered to Khrushchev that: « L'Algérie ne concerne que la France »<sup>127</sup>, intending that Soviet Union should have not been interested about it. Instead, concerning the matter of reducing nuclear experiences, the General let knew to Khrushchev which were his opinions about this issue. In fact, they were the same communicated in other occasions to the Americans, that is to say that such a decision could not impede the nuclear powers to

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<sup>125</sup> *Lettres au Président du Conseil des Ministres de l'Union Soviétique N. Khrouchtchev, 30 Juin 1958, 22 Juillet 1958, 26 Juillet 1958, in LNC 1958-1960*

<sup>126</sup> *Lettre au Président du Conseil des Ministres de l'Union Soviétique N. Khrouchtchev, 22 Juillet 1958, in LNC 1958-1960*

<sup>127</sup> *Ibidem*

continue to produce armament, so the risk of a danger for the entire world, would not have been decreased. Actually, De Gaulle, as said even in the previous chapters, was in favour of disarmament that would have concerned all the nuclear powers<sup>128</sup>.

These three letters show that at the beginning of De Gaulle's mandate, the French-Soviet relations were not so idyllic, because of frictions that arose from the abovementioned elements. Furthermore, at international level the Berlin crisis did not contribute to the development of good relations between the two countries. As said in the first chapter, De Gaulle writing to Eisenhower, declared to be ready to do whatever was necessary, in order to stop the Soviet threat on Berlin.

As George-Henri Soutou has underlined in a chapter of *Europe, Cold War and coexistence 1953-1965*, the relationships between Paris and Moscow were not so good until 1964. The main reasons that provoked this clash between the two, in the first years of the sixties, concerned the Soviet support to the National Liberation Front in Algeria, as confirmed by the abovementioned response by De Gaulle to letter of Khrushchev, the Franco-German rapprochement that was perceived by the Soviets as a threat, and later, in 1963, the opposition of De Gaulle to the American-Soviet treaty of 1963 concerning the non-proliferation of nuclear arms<sup>129</sup>.

It might be remembered that in those years, De Gaulle had not achieved the complete detachment from the United States, and from the Atlantic Alliance. That represents an important element, necessary to well contextualize the Franco-Soviet rapprochement of the following years, because with the continuous crisis between the two superpowers, as the Berlin or the Cuban crises were, it was not easy for France to, simultaneously, detach itself from the Atlantic Alliance that would have protected France in case of a real threat, and push for détente on the other side: essentially, De Gaulle had not :«les mains libres» yet.

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<sup>128</sup> Lettre au Président du Conseil des Ministres de l'Union Soviétique N. Khrouchtchev, 30 Juillet 1958, in LNC 1958-1960

<sup>129</sup> Soutou G.H., *De Gaulle's France and Soviet Union from conflict to détente*, in W.Loith, *Europe, Cold War and coexistence 1953-1965*, London, Frank Cass, 2004

Nevertheless, De Gaulle did not renounce to carry on his desire of détente, at least between France and Soviet Union, if it was not possible between the United States and Soviet Union. This is confirmed by the message sent by De Gaulle to Khrushchev in September 1959. The document was sent in response of the memorandum sent by the Soviet Prime Minister to the French President in August 1959<sup>130</sup>. Despite the continuation of the Berlin crisis, and of misunderstandings between East and West, from the message, it is possible to note that De Gaulle wished for a collaboration at international level.

It is worthy to take into consideration the content of the message, in order to understand how, despite the conflicts at the basis of the relations, De Gaulle always tried to reach détente before between West and East, and then mainly between France and Soviet Union.

The General underlined three major points. The first one dealt with the disarmament question. He affirmed that in that current situation of the world, and considering the enormous quantities of nuclear arms that had been accumulated by the United States, Great Britain and Soviet Union, nothing was more important than a real détente between the East and the West, leading to a general and controlled disarmament<sup>131</sup>. Forward, the General discouraged any notice that could have provoked a worsening of the situation and he stated that it should have been avoided, as actually the Berlin crisis was doing; to him, certainly, the Berlin crisis was not a way to favour nor rapprochement neither coexistence. Furthermore, the General remembered that whenever constant relations were established a situation like that of Berlin would not provoked emergencies in the world.

The second point<sup>132</sup> highlighted by De Gaulle focused on the opinion that France had about the Federal Republic of Germany. First, the French President wrote that France would have not pushed for an immediate reunification of Germany, and would have supported the thesis concerning the actual borders of

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<sup>130</sup> In the memorandum, Krushenev affirmed that both the Federal German Republic and the French-German rapprochement, were a danger for peace, as De Gaulle said to the Prime Minister of Great Britain Macmillan in a letter of September 11<sup>th</sup> 1959, in *LNC 1958-1960*, p. 257

<sup>131</sup> *Lettre au Premier Ministre de Grande Bretagne, 11 Septembre 1959*, in *LNC 1958-1960*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibidem*

Germany, mainly at East and at South. Second, the General remembered to Khrushchev that, against what had been expressed by him in the Memorandum, the GFR did not represent a threat for France, neither for the world; otherwise De Gaulle would have taken measures to avoid dangerous situation on his nation's borders. Third, a Franco-German rapprochement should not have been perceived by Soviet Union as a threat towards it.

The third point<sup>133</sup>, instead, concerned the future aims to achieve. De Gaulle expressed his desire to have an unify Europe, synonym of civilisation, referring even to the East-European countries, because as, the General underlined, the regimes would have lost their importance; certainly, making reference to the regimes imposed by Soviet Union to the Eastern European countries. Finally, he wished for a Soviet-German rapprochement, because it was excludable that the GFR represented a threat for the world.

Meanwhile, the President of the United States Eisenhower had invited the Prime Minister of Soviet Union, Khrushchev to visit the United States. De Gaulle was informed directly from the American President on August 1<sup>st</sup> 1959 about this possibility, and he welcome the proposal made by his American homologue, because it represented a sign of relaxation of tensions between the two superpowers, and somehow this rapprochement could have been useful to De Gaulle to align France with the two hegemonies. Furthermore, he envisaged the possibility of receiving the American President in Paris, that would have allowed them to reflect on the necessity to hold a summit conference with the Soviet Premier<sup>134</sup>.

The visit to the United States by Khrushchev had positive results. As a matter of fact, the same President Eisenhower in sending a letter to De Gaulle expressed his satisfaction of the Franco-Soviet meetings, mainly because the Soviet leader understood the will of Americans to cooperate for peace and equilibrium. It is after the meeting in Washington that Khrushchev talked about the necessity for pacific coexistence between the two hegemonic powers.

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<sup>133</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>134</sup> *Lettre au Président des États-Unis d'Amérique D.D. Eisenhower, 08 Octobre 1959*, in LNC 1958-1960

Nevertheless, some conflicts remained on some questions, as those concerning Germany and the status of Berlin, as remembered by Eisenhower in a letter sent to the German Chancellor Adenauer<sup>135</sup>.

In the letter of October 8<sup>th</sup> 1959, the French President, after having received a some days before memorandum from Eisenhower, where the U.S. President reported the topics of conversation between him and his Soviet homologue<sup>136</sup>, ascertained that from the Russian side there was a desire for international détente, despite the Soviet Premier had not change his position concerning several issues. Hence, De Gaulle suggested to wait for the subsequent moves put in place by Soviet Union at that proposal, and if it was the case, to push for détente through the organization of a summit conference, where the leaders of the four powers, notably United States, Great Britain, Soviet Union and France, could have convened. Moreover, whenever a conference was organized, the Occidental powers, should have met, early, in order to assume a common position on the issue that would have been discussed in that meeting<sup>137</sup>. In the following letter sent by Eisenhower to De Gaulle, on October 16<sup>th</sup>, the proposal of General De Gaulle to hold a conference with the four powers, was welcome by President Eisenhower. The American president stressed the importance for the conversations held with Khrushchev in the U.S., stating that:« (they) have caused a slight thawing of the international freeze. I (Eisenhower) think that we have achieved a certain momentum»<sup>138</sup>.

Moreover, he agreed with the French President that as soon as possible, it was necessary to convene a meeting between De Gaulle, Macmillan and himself, inviting also Chancellor Adenauer when discussing about Germany, in order to reach agreement on some fundamental matters<sup>139</sup>.

It is necessary to remember that it was from 1955 in Geneva that there was not a summit conference between the four leaders. According to both De Gaulle and Eisenhower, the moment was favourable to prepare such a conference, whose main aim was that of achieving international détente.

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<sup>135</sup> Letter from Eisenhower to Adenauer, in *FRUS on September 28<sup>th</sup> 1959*

<sup>136</sup> Letter and memorandum, from Eisenhower to De Gaulle on September 30<sup>th</sup> 1959, that was similar to that sent to Chancellor Adenauer and Prime Minister Macmillan

<sup>137</sup> *Lettre au Président des Etats-Unis d'Amérique D.D. Eisenhower, 08 Octobre 1959*, in *LNC 1958-1960*

<sup>138</sup> Letter from Eisenhower to De Gaulle on October 16th 1959

<sup>139</sup> *Ibidem*

:«A mon avis, c'est qu'après que le monde aura traversé une période de calme relatif, pendant laquelle l'Est et l'Ouest auront pratiqué de meilleurs rapports et cultivé les contacts sans prétendre trancher à chaud ce qui ne peut être traité qu'à froid, qu'une conférence au sommet ne se présentera dans d'assez bonnes conditions au point de vue psychologique et, par conséquent, politique»<sup>140</sup>.

This reported fragment of a long letter sent by De Gaulle to Eisenhower on October 20<sup>th</sup> 1959, demonstrates that before a summit conference, it was necessary a period to organize it, and so that it was not given the impression to the Soviets to want to have an unexpected and sudden meeting. Actually, as it is wrote in the letter by De Gaulle, it could have seemed that the Western countries were ready to make concessions on Berlin or on any other issue of conflict.

Therefore, in order to prepare the meeting the American President, the British Prime Minister and the French President met in Paris in December 1959, where they agreed on the issues to deal with to the summit conference, which would have took place the following spring. Finally, in December 21<sup>st</sup> 1959, De Gaulle communicated to Khrushchev the proposal of a summit conference to hold in Paris, at the end of April of the following year, between the four leaders As wrote in the letter, the meeting was convened :« pour discuter les principaux problèmes qui commandent la consolidation de la paix et la stabilité du monde»<sup>141</sup>.

Thus far, it has been given a vision of the French and American concertation, in order to reach détente. But, as De Gaulle remembered to Eisenhower in the abovementioned October 20<sup>th</sup> letter, it was necessary to achieve better relations, before embarking in a difficult meeting.

In such a framework, De Gaulle decided to profit from the meetings held in the United States between the two superpowers to initiate the concrete French via to détente, autonomously and faraway from the umbrella of the United States.

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<sup>140</sup> *Lettre au Président des États-Unis d'Amérique D.D. Eisenhower, 20 Octobre 1959, in LNC 1958-1960*

<sup>141</sup> *Lettre au Président du Conseil de l'Union Soviétique N. Khrouchtchev, 21 Décembre 1959, in LNC 1958-1960*



The first act which can be considered the beginning of the Franco-Soviet relations in a national perspective, was the invitation made by De Gaulle to the Soviet President of the Council of Ministers of Soviet Union, M. Khrushchev, as soon as the latter returned to Moscow from his American trip.

A communiqué from the Presidency of the Republic stated its appreciation for what Khrushchev had declared, concerning :«la nécessité de mettre un terme à l'état de tension où se trouve le monde»<sup>142</sup>. And it continued affirming that even the President of the French Republic agreed on the importance to convene to a real international détente. Therefore, it seemed that both Soviets and French intentions corresponded. Nonetheless, there was not an agreement on the means to use in order to put into effect those intentions. The communiqué concluded with an invitation by the French President to Khrushchev, in order to discuss those means and aims on which France and Soviet Union agreed. The French Ambassador to Moscow was charged to deliver the message to the Prime Minister of Soviet Union. This invitation constitutes the first step towards a French idea of détente.

The invitation made by De Gaulle was accepted by Khrushchev, as demonstrated by the message sent to the latter by the Foreign Affairs Minister, on behalf of the French President of the Republic at the end of October 1959. In this document, De Gaulle expressed his regards for the acceptation to go in France, which would benefit not only to the two countries, but to the entire world, and suggested that in order to constitute:«une réelle prise de contact avec la France»<sup>143</sup>, the visit, according to the French government and President, should have last at least eight days, to allow Khrushchev to really visit the country.

The official visit of the Soviet Prime Minister occurred between March 23<sup>rd</sup> and April 2<sup>nd</sup>. He was received by President De Gaulle who pronounced his short speech at the airport of Orly, saying that France was ready to understand him and make the French understand by him. It was an historical moment since

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<sup>142</sup> Communiqué au sujet des récentes déclarations du Président du Conseil de l'Union Soviétique, in *LNC 1958-1960*

<sup>143</sup> *Méssage au Président du Conseil de l'Union Soviétique N. Khrouchtchev*, in *LNC 1958-1960*

Khrushchev was the first Soviet leader to be received in France since the beginning of the Cold War.

French public opinion was divided between those who were in favour of that visit and those who were against it. As reported by *Le Monde*, in an article of Vianson-Ponté, :« la S.F.I.O., la C.F.T.C. et F.O., l'Union des écrivains pour la vérité, le Comité lyonnais d'action pour le respect des droits de la personne, la section française de la Commission internationale des juristes, le Mouvement fédéraliste européen, la Commission épiscopale de l'émigration, ont exprimé sous diverses formes leurs regrets et leur désapprobation »<sup>144</sup>, about the Soviet leader's visit, mainly due to the violation of human rights and of basic political freedoms. But, at the same time, there were also positive reactions to that visit, as those from the Gaullists, or the communist themselves, that as stated by the author in the same article, wanted to let the Prime Minister of Soviet Union know which was their political weight in the French society. Moreover, as demonstrated by a declaration of the Union pour la Nouvelle République (U.N.R.), and published in *Le Monde*, :« La venue du premier ministre soviétique est la preuve la plus éclatante du rétablissement de la position diplomatique de la France et du prestige de grande puissance dont elle jouit à nouveau grâce à l'action du général de Gaulle »<sup>145</sup>.

This last words confirmed that General De Gaulle's main aim, that of re-establishing a politics of grandeur, was producing positive effects.

Khrushchev was welcome with all the honours reserved to a head of State of Western countries; thus demonstrating the importance given by France to establish new relations with Russia.

President De Gaulle, in his intervention at the Élysée on March 23<sup>th</sup><sup>146</sup>, reaffirmed the satisfaction of having the President of the Council of Ministers of Soviet Union in France. Moreover, he underlined that in the current situation of the world, that visit meant that :« la Russie et la France ont eu besoin de se voir ». The General remembered to Khrushchev the importance of historical ties that their two nations had had throughout history, stressing the fact that

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<sup>144</sup> Vianson-Ponté, *Le Monde*

<sup>145</sup> *Le Monde*, *Déclaration de l'Union pour la Nouvelle République*, in *Le Monde*, 30 Mars 1960

<sup>146</sup> *Toast adressé à M. Khrouchtchev Président du Conseil des Ministres de l'Union Soviétique*, 23 Mars 1960, in *LNC 1958-1960*

both nations and peoples were fruits of one single mother: Europe. This last point is very significant because, as said in the previous chapter, the consideration of Russia as belonging to European continent is one of the point that characterizes the French idea of détente.

The intervention concluded with the herald by General De Gaulle to have cooperation between the two countries. He stated that, despite France and Soviet Union found themselves placed under two different camps, according to which the world is divided, it seemed to him that it was arrived the moment when, both sides, « Veuille(nt) chercher les moyens d'empêcher que les rivalité ne mènent à la destruction, d'établir des rapports pratiques qui ne soient pas méfiants, ni malveillants, et, même, peut-être de mettre en œuvre un début de coopération pour porter une aide commune à tant des peuples qui, eux aussi, aspirant à un développement moderne »<sup>147</sup>.

In order to fully understand the concretization of the principles described in the previous chapter concerning the French idea of détente, it is worthy to analyse some statements contained in the diplomatic documents<sup>148</sup> of the French Republic, reporting the compte-rendu of the meeting between the two leaders, from which three major objects of conversation emerge. Taking into consideration what has been said so far, it is easily to imagine which they are.

The first conflictual issue on which France and Russia dealt with, concerned issues related to disarmament. The opinion expressed by De Gaulle was the same that he had several times proclaimed, even with the American interlocutor. He restated the French availability to proceed to disarmament, if and only if the two superpowers, jointly with Great Britain, had found a real solution about it. Furthermore, the General reaffirmed that in his opinion, the stopping of nuclear tests did not mean that both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. would have stopped the production of nuclear arsenal. Consequently, France would have continued to equip itself with nuclear arms, in order to possess an independent defence system. Khrushchev seemed to appreciate the French

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>148</sup> Entretien De Gaulle-Khrouchtchev, Fondation Charles De Gaulle, <http://www.charles-de-gaulle.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Lentretien-entre-de-Gaulle-et-Khrouchtchev.pdf>

President's position concerning his proposal to stop nuclear production whenever atomic powers would have stopped it.

Moreover, Khrushchev stated: «Il vaudrait mieux s'entendre pour l'utilisation pacifique de l'énergie nucléaire. Nous avons une grande expérience en la matière, dont pourraient profiter tous les pays»<sup>149</sup>. General De Gaulle appreciated this proposal advanced by the Russian leader, and he affirmed to be ready to cooperate to boost the pacific utilization of nuclear energy. He declared himself ready to public this notice<sup>150</sup>.

As a matter of fact, on April 2<sup>nd</sup> a treaty on the beginning of cooperation on that issue was signed by the French President and the Russian Prime Minister.

The second object of conversation between the two leaders concerned the French problems in Algeria. Even if, the French President confirmed that it was not an issue threatening world peace, as already wrote to Khrushchev in his letter of August 1958, according to him, he was worthy to clarify the situation. At that proposal, the Soviet President affirmed that his country had been indirectly involved in the question, because some members of the so called Algerian revolutionary government, had relations with Russian institutions. Khrushchev, anyway, hoped for a fast resolution of the Algerian problem that could have provoked political consequences in France<sup>151</sup>.

The last problem, and perhaps, the most controversial one, that De Gaulle and Khrushchev took on, was the status of Germany, and in particular that of Berlin.

The analysis of this problem will be the object of the next pages. Now, it is worthy to note that the proposal made by De Gaulle to the U.S.S.R. is the application of one of the principles at the bases of the French idea of détente, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Notably, it was the extrapolation of the German issue from the two superpowers' area of conflict. This issue should have been faced at European level, as General De Gaulle remarked. Instead, the proposal advanced by Khrushchev concerned mainly two points: the first

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<sup>149</sup> Entretien De Gaulle-Khrouchtchev, in <http://www.charles-de-gaulle.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Lentretien-entre-de-Gaulle-et-Khrouchtchev.pdf>

<sup>150</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>151</sup> *Ibidem*

one, being the conclusion of peace treaties with the two sides of Germany and involving all the occupying powers from the end of the war; or in the case this proposal would not have been accepted by France's allies, Soviet Union would have signed a separately peace treaty with the German Democratic Republic<sup>152</sup>.

The first attempt of détente between France and Soviet Union did give positive fruits. It surely put the basis for the spreading of relaxation of tensions between the two nations. Moreover, it was of fundamental importance because, principally during the conversation of March 24<sup>th</sup> and April 1<sup>st</sup>, between De Gaulle and Khrushchev, they arrived to share some points, which were necessary to the establishment of détente.

The visit of the President of Council of Minister of the U.S.S.R. in Paris could have been perceived also as a sort of preparation for the following Summit conference to which the United States and Great Britain would have participated. The date for the beginning of the conference between the four, was convened to be the 16<sup>th</sup> of May.

The main three objects on which the Paris summit conference had to investigate, concerned: the disarmament issue, the German problem and the Berlin crisis, the sustain to give to under-developed countries in order to boost for their development.

Contrary to what the three Western powers participating in, wished, the Conference revealed to be a failure, because of the Soviet retreat after the first day of meeting. The reason why Khrushchev took such a decision was justified by the event occurred on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1960. In sum, an American military spy-plane U.2 was flying upon Soviet territory, in order to take pictures of atomic bases (as referred by the pilot who was captured by the Soviets), and the plane was shot down in the Soviet airspace. In a first moment, the United States tried to cover up the real mission of the plane, but then they were forced to admit its function because the Soviets discovered spy technologies, pictures and the pilot, Francis Gary Powers, admitted the real scope of the mission.

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<sup>152</sup> *Ibidem*

This event clashed with the purpose of the conference that was mainly to confirm the pacific way of life established by the superpowers during the last year. It was not possible, according to the Soviets, to reach détente with a nation that did the contrary of what had expressed some months before.

As reported in the Memorandum of conversation, when President De Gaulle invited the other participants to make any intervention, Khrushchev addressed a statement that was very tough both in content and in tone.

He, firstly, described what had happened on May 1<sup>st</sup> on Soviet airspace, defining it :« a provocative act»<sup>153</sup>; secondly, he affirmed that to authorize an espionage mission in U.S.S.R. had been the directly the American government, and it was qualified as an act of :«treacherous nature which is incompatible with the elementary requirements of the maintenance of normal relations between states in time of peace, not to speak of it being in gross contradiction with the task of lessening international tension and creating the necessary conditions for the fruitful work of the Summit Conference»<sup>154</sup>. Forwards, the Prime Minister of Soviet Union, let knew to the other participants that, after an American attempt to justify the incident by saying that it was a case that the plane had violated the borders, then both the Department of States and President Eisenhower himself, confirmed and admitted which was the purposes of that plane. Then, Khrushchev wondered as it was still possible to have conversation with members of a great power that tried to attack another great power, and how it was possible to reach agreements and relaxation of tensions on others issues. Moreover, according to what Khrushchev stated, the American government would not have stopped such missions, that practically consisted in a violation of a state sovereignty, according to the Soviet leader. Therefore, as condition to continue the conference, it was asked to all the members the respect for the principle of sovereignty of a state, and to the American government and to the President to condemn such an act, and to refrain this kind of policy against any other state, participating at the conference. :« Until this is done by the United States Government, the Soviet Government sees no possibility for productive negotiations with the United

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<sup>153</sup> Memorandum of Conversation of the Summit conference on May 16<sup>th</sup> 1960, in <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v09/d168>

<sup>154</sup> *Ibidem*

States Government at the Summit Conference. It cannot be among the participants in negotiations where one of them has made treachery the basis of his policy with regard to the Soviet Union»<sup>155</sup>. Khrushchev repeated several times, in his statement, that his government's intentions, were that of continuing the conference in order to assure peace and co-existence between two different blocs.

The President of the United States, instead, answering to the statement of Khrushchev affirmed that it was not his government's intention to perpetuate such a policy, and that in the notes sent to the U.S.S.R. government, that decision had been already delivered. Moreover, Eisenhower stated that the aim of that episode was to ensure peace and avoid attacks to the free world from a country that each time exhibits his force.

In the framework of the Summit conference that began in a turbulent atmosphere, the two other leaders, notably President De Gaulle and Prime Minister Macmillan, tried to mediate between the two superpowers' leaders, in order to reach an agreement for the continuation of the conference. According to De Gaulle, the incident of May 1<sup>st</sup>, had to be conceived as an integral part of the conference, because it concerned disarmament, and the summit meeting was the most indicated place where to discuss about it, and to avoid the repetition of a similar episode. But Khrushchev replied that, both France and Great Britain, did not perceived that event and the American declarations as a threat because they were both allies of the United States and members of N.A.T.O., whose leader were the U.S..

Instead, what the Soviet leader pretended, in order to let the conference proceed, was a public statement by the American President and government where they admitted their responsibility and declared that such a policy would have no longer be pursued. It was needed to demonstrate to the Soviet public opinion that they had not submitted to the American requests. On the contrary, the conference would not have continued.

At this moment of the meeting, the American President would not have declared what the Prime Minister of the U.S.S.R. asked him, not the Russian leader wanted to renounce to such a request.

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<sup>155</sup> *Ibidem*

By reading the entire memorandum of conversation, it is possible to see how the only one who really wanted to pursue détente, was General De Gaulle. He encouraged until the last moment to reach an agreement between the two leaders, but without any results, because the Russian delegation would have left Paris the day after.

According to a report made in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the United States, on July 25<sup>th</sup>, and entitled “Analysis of the Soviet behaviour at the Conference”<sup>156</sup>, the Russian decision to leave the conference was not just a result of the incident U-2, but it was the fruit of more complex problems that were antecedents to May 1<sup>st</sup>. Among the reasons underlined, two are the most meaningful: the Soviet perception of the impossibility to reach a convenient agreement on Berlin at the summit conference, and the interior problems that were going on in Soviet Union.

The idea of boycotting the conference by the Russian, and not merely because of the incident, has been investigated even by some French analysts during those months, as reported by Benjamin Varat, in his article<sup>157</sup> published in 2008.

The summit conference was a failure because of the incomprehension between the two blocs, what the French President, in his idea of détente, tried to overcome. As a matter of fact, President De Gaulle, in a telegram to Khrushchev on May 19<sup>th</sup>, just later the end of the first meeting, stated : «le peuple français désire entretenir et développer des relations cordiales avec le peuple soviétique, pour le bien de nos deux pays, dans l'intérêt de l'Europe toute entière et en vue de la paix du monde»<sup>158</sup>. That is the demonstration of the will to pursue détente, even if at that moment was still impossible for France to boost for a Franco-Soviet rapprochement, being the French defence still on the hands of the Atlantic Alliance.

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<sup>156</sup> Report *Analysis of the Soviet behaviour at the Conference, July 25 1960, Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the U.S.* in <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v09/d195>

<sup>157</sup> Varat B., *Point of Departure: A Reassessment of Charles de Gaulle and the Paris Summit of May 1960*, in *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 19:1, 96-124 (2008)

<sup>158</sup> *Télégramme à N.S. Khrouchtchev, Président du Conseil des Ministres de l'U.R.S.S., 19 Mai 1960*, in *LNC 1958-1960*



De Gaulle expressed his disappointment for the failure of the summit even in a letter<sup>159</sup> sent to his son Philippe De Gaulle, on May 18<sup>th</sup> 1960. The General wrote to the Captain de Corvette De Gaulle, that according to him, both the United States and Soviet Union were wrong in making the conference fail. The former did not had to send a spy plane at the conference's eve; the latter had not to personally accuse Eisenhower. Concerning France, instead, the President stated that :«la conclusion en tirer, c'est qu'il nous faut exister par nous-memes»<sup>160</sup>.

:«In sum, the failed summit turned out to be a defining moment for the French: it led them to conclude that Europe would no longer be the focal point of the Cold War»<sup>161</sup>. The most important statement made by De Gaulle after the failure of the summit conference was given in the broadcast of May 31<sup>st</sup><sup>162</sup>. In this message to the nation, it is possible to individuate which was the position of France towards both the East and the West, and which role would have France in dealing with the problems of the world.

Firstly, the French President underlined the challenges that the world had to face at that time. Among them, there were, certainly, the necessity for détente in order to cooperate at international level, and the disarmament question, that had to concern all the powers possessing nuclear arms, in order to reach peace and equilibrium.

Secondly, De Gaulle highly criticized the Soviet decision to abandon the works of the summit conference, and let knew that the problem of the incident could have been discussed in the framework of the conference, because if the intention by the Soviet government was that revealed on May 16<sup>th</sup>, it would have been better to not participate at all to the conference.

Thirdly, despite France has acknowledged what had passed, the nation is ready to open the way to new dialogues between the four powers, because :«la détente, le désarmement contrôlé des engins de portée stratégique, la

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<sup>159</sup> *Lettre au capitaine de corvette De Gaulle, a bord de l'escorteur d'escade Duperré basé à Toulon, 18 Mai 1960, in LNC 1958-1960*

<sup>160</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>161</sup> Varat B., *op. cit.*

<sup>162</sup> *Allocution télévisée et radiodiffusée tenue au Palais de l'Elysée, 31 Mai 1960, in DM 1958-1962*

coopération des Etats (...) restent, autant que jamais, les buts que les quatre puissances se doivent et doivent à l'univers de réaliser en commun»<sup>163</sup>.

As far as the world would not have been safe for French people, the government would have pursued its own program of defence, in equipping the country with a nuclear armament.

Furthermore, in the same occasion, De Gaulle remembered the role that France had in contributing to building up Europe, from a political, cultural, economic and human perspective. Therefore, once the divisions would have overcome, that cooperation, should have been enlarged to the:« Allié naturel» of France on Europe, notably Russia.

As said above, it could be considered that the beginning of the French idea of détente corresponds to the visit by Khrushchev in Paris in March 1960. Even if some conflicts remained at the basis of the relations between the two nations, they demonstrated the will to cooperate for a common aim: détente on French side, and co-existence on the Russian one. These good intentions were transferred, at least by the French side, to the summit conference. Unfortunately, as it has been said, the proposals for the success of the meeting were disappointed by the events that occurred. Anyway, France did not give up to the necessity for itself and the entire world to continue to follow his aims of relaxation of tensions, at least between it and Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, there still were some conflicts that could have threatened the Franco-Soviet rapprochement at that time, namely the persistence of France into N.A.T.O., the ideological differences, and the most important, the German issue. The last two will be at the centre of the analysis of the next paragraph.

### 3.2 Limits to détente: ideological aspect and the German issue

Thus far it has been stressed the importance attributed by the French President to the pursue of that has been defined the French idea of détente. As long as, limits arose from the concretization of that idea would not have been

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<sup>163</sup> *Ibidem*

eliminated, in whole or in part, the Franco-Soviet relations could not have started again.

The two major problems that will be considered here, which represent the most important examples of limitations to establish détente, and consequently entente between the two nations, are: the division on ideological aspects, that as it will be seen have reflexions on the political systems adopted by the two sides; and the unresolved problem concerning Germany, that can be traced back to three different elements.

The first limitation to the French idea of détente, that will be taken into consideration is the division provoked by the different ideologies, withstanding to the political systems adopted in the two parts of the world.

This object has been considered in the previous chapters also, when dealing with the principles of the French idea of détente. After all, the adoption of communism or liberalism as political system, was the first sign that marked the beginning of Cold war. Moreover, the division of the world, in two spheres of influence, between the two hegemonic powers, consisted in conditioning also other nations to adopt a specific ideology and consequently a specific political system.

As it is known, France belonged to Western side of the Europe, to the so called :<<free world>><sup>164</sup>, that adopted the patterns of liberalism and establishing a political system based on the respect for democratic principles.

Instead, the ideology that had been imposed to the East bloc by Soviet Union, both in its territory and in the satellite States, belonging to the Warsaw pact, was the communist ideology, that implied the adoption of non-democratic system; in substance, the political system could be identified as a regime.

As already said in the previous pages, when looking at the points that distinguishes the French idea of détente, compared to the conventional principles that characterize the détente period of the seventies, the issue

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<sup>164</sup> This phrase has been several times used by the Western leaders, as De Gaulle, Eisenhower or Adenauer, to oppose their national political systems, to those systems that were adopted by the Eastern European countries and U.S.S.R., that consequently were considered not to be free.

concerning ideological aspects is strictly related, from a Gaullist point of view, to the overcoming of the division of the world between two hegemonies. From that, it is possible to deduce that, in De Gaulle, even the division caused by ideological conflict, could have been overcome.

In fact, what De Gaulle thought about communism was that it was just an ideological imposition that would not have survived to the old Russia, as he had always imagined and as history had demonstrated in the past<sup>165</sup>.

The idea of De Gaulle that the :«idéologies deviendraient périmées», and to remain at the basis will be just nation-states and their interests, is confirmed by the French President himself, in several public and private interventions. As a matter of fact, by analysing the De Gaulle's speeches and messages from his coming back to power until the end of his mandate, it is possible to notify a specific element: De Gaulle when had to condemn and criticized Soviet Union, because of the imposition of the communist ideology, referred to it with the terms *régime totalitaire*; when, instead, he intended to appreciate the Russian people, or Russian culture, to express the historical links between France and Russia, he referred to the nation by calling it :«la Russie», and avoiding the adjective:« soviétique».

In order to clarify this concept, it is worthy to look at some words, at this proposal, pronounced by De Gaulle.

During the press conference on November 10<sup>th</sup> 1959, the French President affirmed:« sans doute, le régime communiste, appliqué à la Russie depuis 42 ans et qui s'oppose au monde libre de toute son idéologie, perd-il de sa virulence sous la poussée profonde du peuple vers ce que l'homme souhaite par sa nature: une vie meilleure et la liberté»<sup>166</sup>. As long as the communist regime would have survived to Russia, the people had not the possibility to be free and to wish for a better life.

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<sup>165</sup> This idea of De Gaulle can be found both in official texts of the French President, or in private conversation, like those reported by A. Peyrefitte, or in the correspondance with both President of the United States Eisenhower, as that with Macmillan. See for example, the definition given to communism during his press conference of May 31<sup>st</sup> 1960, where the General referred to the future of the world, stating that :«idéologie deviendraient périmées»

<sup>166</sup> *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Elysée, 10 Novembre 1959, DM 1958-1960*

As it is understandable from some letters between De Gaulle and Eisenhower, some of them already cited above, the visits of the President of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union could have been an occasion to make Khrushchev understand which is the natural way of life of the Western peoples. This aspect is also wanted by De Gaulle when writing to Khrushchev to invite him to visit France; in his invitation, he wanted him to remain as long as possible, in order to meet lots of people.

Furthermore, the General in many occasions had disapproved the presence of a totalitarian regime on the doors of Europe. He affirmed that :«les satellites que le régime soviétique tient sous sa loi éprouvent de plus en plus dans leur sentiment national ce qu'il y a de cruel dans l'annexion qu'ils ont subie»<sup>167</sup>, and in the same occasion he continued by accusing the Soviet Empire to impeach the realization of détente, that it had to stop to threat the peace of the world. The General also remembered which was the position of France at that proposal, that is the availability to pursue a politics of relaxation, followed by entente and cooperation, opened to all the European countries, even the Eastern ones, with which the French nation shared the same European values<sup>168</sup>.

In his message for the greetings of 1961, he reiterated that the role of France, for the new year, would have been its contribution to made the people of the world, still under the subjugation of totalitarian regime, as the communist was, to access the modernity of the free world<sup>169</sup>.

De Gaulle did not avoid to define Soviet Union as the last colonizer, that while decolonization process was going on, was a very tough accusation regarding a power as the Soviet was.

Regardless of the opinion about the totalitarian regime, De Gaulle was convinced that one day, the communist ideology would have overcome.

As well expressed by Georges H. Soutou in a work entitled :«Teorie sulla convergenza nella Francia degli anni Sessanta e Settanta», the main idea of De Gaulle was that as long as the time passed, it would have been a convergence

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<sup>167</sup> *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Elysée, 5 Septembre 1961, ibidem*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>169</sup> *Allocution radiodiffusée et télévisée prononcée au palais de l'Elysée, 31 Décembre 1960, in DM 1958-1962*

between the two systems that dominated the world, so that the communist ideal, that proved to be unable to impose on the will of the people, would have been outdated<sup>170</sup>.

Soutou underlined that :«convergence was not possible in the immediate future, there was not a return to a policy of national interest in Eastern Europe, that could erode communism and the Soviet dominium on the latter»<sup>171</sup>.

At the same time, that was not the idea of the highbrow circle of the society and of government, according to which convergence would have been possible, in the immediate future if to surround politics between the two blocs, there would have been détente.

The differences in the De Gaulle's thought taken so far into account, as far as concerned the split between national Russia and totalitarian communist Soviet regime, will highly influence the decisions taken by the French President in leading his foreign policy to the East. He was convinced, as well expressed in his press conferences of July 23<sup>rd</sup> and December 31<sup>st</sup> 1964, that the communist regime had arrived to its end. As a matter of fact, he affirmed that : «le régime communiste, en dépit de l'énorme effort qu'il mène en Russie depuis un demi-siècle et des résultats qu'il atteint dans certaines entreprises, massives, aboutit à un échec quant au niveau de vie, à la satisfaction et à la dignité des hommes, par rapport au système appliqué en Europe de l'Ouest, lequel combine le dirigisme avec la liberté»<sup>172</sup>. To contribute to this new framework, there was also the Sino-Soviet split that spread out at the beginning of the Sixties, and that would have confirmed the convergence theory, sustained by the French government line.

The second aspect that impeached a relaxation of tensions between the two hegemonies, and at the beginning also between France and Soviet Union, was certainly the German question. The division of Germany into two different countries, namely the Federal Republic of Germany, belonging to the Western bloc, and the German Democratic Republic, belonging to the Eastern bloc, was

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<sup>170</sup> Soutou G.H., *Teorie sulla convergenza nella Francia degli anni Sessanta e Settanta*, in *Ventesimo Secolo*, 09 Marzo 2006

<sup>171</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>172</sup> *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 23 juillet 1964*, in *DM 1962-1965*

established in 1949 when the occupying powers conceded respectively sovereignty to the neo-constituted two republics. This event can be considered as one those which marked the beginning and consolidation of Cold war between the two hegemonies.

In this perspective, and in the framework of the French idea of *détente*, it is necessary to look which place occupied the German question in De Gaulle's foreign policy. And to which extent it has conditioned the rapprochement between France and Soviet Union when a policy of *détente* seemed to be proposed.

It is true that the German problem was a limit to *détente* for France, not only because both France and the Federal Republic of Germany belonged to the Western bloc, being consequently under the umbrella of the United States, but, mainly, because they were tied each other by special relations, at the interior of the European Economic Community, and also because with the coming back of De Gaulle to power a Franco-German rapprochement took place.

Then, in order to put under analysis the limits that proved to block the Franco-Russian *détente*, at the outset, it is necessary to look, briefly, at the Franco-German rapprochement, that took place from 1958 onwards and culminated in 1963 with the signature of a bilateral treaty with the Federal Republic of Germany.

The Franco-German rapprochement was wanted mainly by the two leaders of the countries, namely General De Gaulle and Chancellor Adenauer. These two man of state, when coming to power had already in their background lots of features that shared. As a matter of fact, both were forced to leave their countries, with the beginning of Second World War and both shared their strong opposition to Nazism. Moreover, De Gaulle was an appreciator of the German culture, in fact he spoke German too; in addition, they both had catholic roots<sup>173</sup>. This similarities, at least, according to De Gaulle could have facilitated to have strong and easy relations with the German homologue.

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<sup>173</sup> Vaisse M., *op.cit*

To be honest, the Franco-German relations had already been stabilized during the last months of the Fourth Republic, through cooperation at European level, with the signature of the Treaty of Rome in 1957.

:«Following his return to power, General de Gaulle contributed powerfully-sometimes reversing the attitude he had taken prior to 1958-to the improvement of Franco-German relations»<sup>174</sup>.

Actually, at the beginning of the Fifth Republic, De Gaulle was not so appreciated by the Western German leader, because of his first acts. As a matter of fact, a tripartite system had been established, as remembered before, among France, Italy and West Germany in order to cooperate in the research for atomic arsenal. As soon as the new French Prime Minister took power, he suspended this program, because the will was that of following an independent via to national defence. Moreover, the French decision to send a Memorandum to the two Western atomic powers in 1958, with the proposition of establishing a tripartite system in N.A.T.O., that GFR joined in 1955, was perceived in Germany as an hostile act, because Germans feared that the American could have left their nation exposed at the Soviet threat.

The first act by De Gaulle to demonstrate, contrary to what was thought by the German leaders, the will for cooperation was the invitation to receive Chancellor Adenauer in France at the beginning of September 1958.

An important aspect, that soon confirmed the General's will, was that of hosting the Chancellor in his private residence at Colombey-les-deux-Eglises.

At this meeting De Gaulle and Adenauer dealt with different objects of discussion, and among them the continuity of the Franco-German relations and arguments concerning world problems. One of the main point on which the two converged, concerned the danger that communism could provoke in Europe<sup>175</sup>. But the substantial difference between Adenauer and De Gaulle, was that the former saw Soviet Union as a permanent threat, and as evil because of occupation of one part of its territory, whereas De Gaulle perceived it as a reversal of the current alliances, and as an opportunity to detach from the Americans. After all, the constitution of a Paris-Bonn axis, since the beginning,

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<sup>174</sup> Grosser A., *France and Germany: Divergent Outlooks*, in 44 *Foreign Affairs* 26 (1965)

<sup>175</sup> Vaisse M., *op.cit.*



has been seen by the French President as an opportunity to strengthen the relations in Europe in order to proceed to the departure from the United States' leadership in the old continent.

The relations between the two nations proceeded with exchange of visits between the two leaders during the year 1962, revealed to be a success both on the part of their governments and by the peoples of the two countries. De Gaulle welcoming Chancellor Adenauer in his visit to France in July 1962, pointed out that two countries, despite the events that have opposed them throughout history, made of wars and desire to dominate each other, were then ready to cooperate with the aim of unify around two great countries all the others European partners<sup>176</sup>. Moreover, he confirmed that such a reconciliation, would have rendered it possible, one day cooperation and equilibrium of the whole continent, because:« de l'autre coté du mur, l'esprit de détente et de paix, finirait par prélever »<sup>177</sup>. This last concept, has been reaffirmed by the General some days later, on July 8<sup>th</sup>, when the visit of the Chancellor ended. De Gaulle wished for a long German-Franco cooperation, that could profit all the mankind of Europe, both on the Atlantic side, and then perhaps to the entire continent<sup>178</sup>.

The same sentiments were expressed by the President of the French Republic during his visit to Germany in September 1962. De Gaulle reaffirmed the French desire of cooperation between the two countries, taking into account the enormous progresses made thus far between two peoples that were in conflict<sup>179</sup>. The reconciliation of the two nations, after years of conflicts, is confirmed by the General when, during this visit, addressing to the German young people, in Ludwigsburg, defined them :«les fils d'un grand peuple», that even if their people had committed serious mistaken during history, the French people appreciated them<sup>180</sup>.

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<sup>176</sup> *Toast adressé au Chancelier de la République Fédérale d'Allemagne C. Adenauer, 03 Juillet 1962, in DM 1958-1962*

<sup>177</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>178</sup> *Allocution prononcée à Reims à l'occasion du départ du Chancelier Adenauer, 08 Juillet 1962, in DM 1958-1962*

<sup>179</sup> *Réponse au toast prononcé par le président de la République Fédérale d'Allemagne Lübke, 04 Septembre 1962, in DM 1962-1965*

<sup>180</sup> *Allocution à la jeunesse allemande prononcée à Ludwigsburg, 09 Septembre 1962, in DM 1962-1965*

It was at the occasion of the German visit, that the conversation that will lead to the signature of a bilateral treaty, began. As pointed out by Vaisse, the treaty was highly wanted by the German Chancellor, that, conscious of the opposition of some parts of his country, wanted the Franco-German cooperation to be imprinted in a solemn document, approved through ratification of the Parliament as established by the *Grundgesetz* (the German Constitution).

The culminating moment of the Franco-German rapprochement was reached with the signature of the *Traité de l'Élysée* between the two European countries, on January 22<sup>nd</sup> 1963.

With the signature of the treaty, the Paris-Bonn axis was created. For both De Gaulle and Adenauer, it revealed to be a success. As regards the Gaullist perspective, it was a major step towards the establishment of a policy of independence towards the United States<sup>181</sup>. For the Western German government, it represented another step towards the resurgence of Germany in the world. Moreover, if seen at the interior of the European construction, certainly, the treaty was the confirmation of a Franco-German leadership in the integration process.

As far as concerning the *Traité* itself, it is possible to distinguish three main areas. The first one dealing with the establishment of stable cooperation between the two countries; the single articles provided that meetings, at different level, should hold for a minimum of twice per year, and that a permanent interministerial commission which should have dealt with all the problems that could have arisen from the cooperation. The second aspect, concerned defence. Even if, it was impeached to the Federal Republic of Germany to possess a nuclear armament (a provision shared by De Gaulle himself), the treaty provided for putting in common the production of conventional armament. The third aspect, instead, provided for the creation of a commission that should have established relations in the cultural and educational fields.

Even before the signature of the Treaty, during the press conference on January 14<sup>th</sup>, De Gaulle restated the immense value that the treaty had for France and

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<sup>181</sup> Schoenborn B., *Sens et portée du Traité de l'Élysée*, in *La Mésentente apprivoisée*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 2007

Germany, but also for the European continent. The French President affirmed that: « parmi les éléments qui sont en train de façonner le monde d'à présent, je crois qu'il n'y en a pas qui soient plus frappants et plus féconds que le fait franco-allemand »<sup>182</sup>.

How could the Western Germany-French treaty be a threat for Soviet Union, and in the framework of détente, what could have impeached the Franco-Soviet development of relations?

The answer to this question, is furnished by the document sent on February 5<sup>th</sup> 1963, by Soviet Union Prime Minister Khrushchev, to protest again the signature of a treaty between France and Germany.

Before taking into consideration the answer furnished by General De Gaulle to his Russian homologue, it is necessary to remember that already during the De Gaulle-Khrushchev meeting in Paris in March 1960, the German problem was at the centre of conversation. During that summit, the General had reassured the Soviet leader that he was favourable to maintain the borders of the German state, even when reunited, on the Eastern side, correspondent to those established in Potsdam in 1945, that is the border with Poland on the Oder-Neisse line. In addition, the General was not pressed for a sudden reunification, that could have been possible, according to him, just when a real détente between the two blocs would have realized. Nor, France could have recognized the German Democratic Republic as a sovereign state, being it a territory illegitimately occupied by a government under the direct control of Soviet Union<sup>183</sup>. In that occasion, the French President invited the Soviet Prime Minister, to exclude the German problem from the process of détente that he wanted to initiate to the East.

What the General did, indeed, with the strengthening of relations with the German Federal Republic, was the application of one of the points concerning the French idea of détente that has been abovementioned, namely the separation of the German problem from the conflict between the two superpowers, to convert it in an European problem.

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<sup>182</sup> *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 14 janvier 1963*, in *DM 1962-1965*

<sup>183</sup> During press conference of July 23rd 1963, De Gaulle criticized the Soviet totalitarian regime, and wished for the independence of those countries in the Eastern side of Europe. Surely, De Gaulle referred to the Pankow regime too.

The accusations made by the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs towards the new-signed *Traité de l'Élysée*, consisted, mainly, upon the second point of the agreement. Accordingly, the Soviet Union retained that it was a :«traité de guerre»<sup>184</sup>. In addition, the French government was accused to have betrayed the anti-Hitlerian coalition as resulted from the end of the war. The Treaty was perceived from the Soviets as a threat directly to them, because of the provisions concerning the cooperation in defence. Therefore, the note read :«La France soutient désormais les Allemands de l'Ouest, selon la note soviétique, dans leurs aspirations à entreprendre une nouvelle marche vers l'Est, à rétablir les frontières du Reich et surtout à accéder à l'arme nucléaire»<sup>185</sup>.

In the telegram mailed by De Gaulle to the French Embassy in Moscow, in response to that of the Soviet notification on February 5<sup>th</sup>, De Gaulle used a tough tone, that demonstrated as the détente of three years before could be compromised because of the attitude of Soviets as regards the German issue.

The telegram recited that: :«the French government had notified as the Soviet government persisted in his critical attitude constantly adopted, throughout the last years, towards the rapprochement and cooperation policy put in place from France and the German Federal Republic»<sup>186</sup>. In addition, the Treaty nothing change towards the defence of Europe and in Europe; that is why it is not understood the reasons that lead Soviet Union under threat. Forward, the communiqué denied the Soviet critics concerning the application of the non-military provisions of the *Traité* to Berlin-Ouest. The French government confirms that it is his intention to respect the agreements on the status of Berlin, as decided at the end of the war, and that no action will be undertaken in disagreement with the other occupying powers.

If the Soviets suspected to be under threat whenever the Federal Republic of Germany would have possessed nuclear weapons, they had not to be worried

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<sup>184</sup> Schoenborn B., *Charles de Gaulle et l'Europe orientale : le problème allemand*, in op.cit.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>186</sup> *Télégramme à l'ambassade de France à Moscou en réponse à la note soviétique du 5 février 1963*, in DM 1962-1965

about such a problem, because the first one, who did not wish for a German nuclear power, was De Gaulle himself. Rather, he hoped for a German acceptance of the Multilateral force proposed by President Kennedy, so that their armaments could have been put under the control of the Atlantic Alliance.

As it is known, the German question was not resolved definitely, until the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. Attempts to try to reunify the two sides of Germany were made by Adenauer's successors, that did not managed in their intent. Only, in 1969, with the election of Chancellor Willy Brandt that adopted the so called *Ostpolitik*, there was an intensification of relations between the two Republics, that recognized themselves with a treaty in 1972, *de facto* postponing the reunification.

On the French side, the German issue was treated as an European problem, so that it could not impeach France to pursue its Gaullist idea of détente to the East, that following 1963 will developed in a more substantive way, as it will be analysed forward.

### 3.3 The evolution of French policy towards the East during 1964-1965

As it has been demonstrated previously, it was not easy to put into effect the realization of the French idea of détente, in those points that have been previously illustrated. Notwithstanding, the difficulties presented by the two main limitations to the foreign policy of the General to the East, the desire of achieving détente between France and the East bloc, in its entirety, continued, in spite of the verification of critical moments.

With the consecration of the Franco-German rapprochement, and the consequently cooperation, with the *Traité de l'Élysée* at the beginning of 1962, Soviet Union and more in general those countries at the borders of

Germany<sup>187</sup>, that were terrified by a West Germany resurgence of power, highly opposed the French posture towards its major new European partner.

Accordingly, the Russian attitude, after that the situation calmed down, was that of trying to put France exclusively on its side.

As consequence to the ratification of the Treaty of the Élysée by the German *Bundestag*, at the end of April 1963, the Soviet government sent another communiqué both to France and West Germany, where it criticized once again the stipulation of a military alliance. In the same document, the Soviet government defines France and the U.S.S.R. as «alliés naturels», that, as pointed out by Schoenborn, was an attempt from Soviet Union to divide the Franco-German couple<sup>188</sup>.

As said above, the Soviet totalitarian regime was highly criticized by the President of France during both his press conference of July 23<sup>rd</sup> and the short speech at television of January 31<sup>st</sup>.

The Soviet Union really believed that it was necessary to re-establish a cooperation with France, in order to avoid that the détente process begun between the two, would have reached a sudden end, and that France would have returned to be a «colony» of the United States, or worse to create a stronger Franco-German alliance, whose aim, at least in Bonn was oriented to disrupt the East side of Europe. That is why, at the beginning of 1964, the Soviet government made an invitation to President De Gaulle to go to officially visit the U.S.S.R.. In a still unstable situation, De Gaulle did not accept personally to go to Moscow, but he retained necessary a renewal of rapprochement, sending his Minister of the economy, Valéry Giscard D'Estaing, that would have met the Soviet leader in Soviet Union. As it will be seen in the next pages, the beginning of this conversation, will end up in the signature of an economic treaty between France and Soviet Union, in October of the same year.

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<sup>187</sup> At the same time Soviet Union sent its note to the French government on February 5th 1963, to oppose the content of the *Traité de l'Élysée*, the Polish and Czechoslovakian governments sent notes of disapproval of the same document, because of their fear of a possible German modification of its Eastern borders whenever there had been a reunification of the two sides

<sup>188</sup> Schoenborn B., *op.cit.*

1964 opened the way to the realization of French policy to the East, not only involving Soviet Union, but all the countries belonging to the communist bloc. Of course two factors, concerning international level, have contributed to the rebirth of détente in this year: first, the end of the Algerian war in 1962, that had eliminated the national problem; second, the engagement of the American in the Vietnamese war<sup>189</sup>.

As regard to the France *ouverture à l'est*, there is certainly the decision by the French government to recognize the People's Republic of China, that was not thus far considered the legitimate representative, at international level, of China. It is worthy to remember that, actually, since the revolution of 1949 in China, a new communist regime led by Mao Zedong was installed, whereas the national legitimize government of Chiang Kai-shek, was forced to take refuge in Taiwan. The communist regime, until 1958 completely related to Soviet Union, was not recognized by the major part of Western countries, consequently it did not occupy any post at international level nor in the international organization.

In the framework of the spirit of détente and detachment from the directive of the United States at that proposal, the De Gaulle decision for the establishment of diplomatic relations, implying the reconnaissance of the Mao's Republic in China, arrived on January 27<sup>th</sup> 1964.

As it is possible to read from the joint communiqué released by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of both countries to the press, on January 27<sup>th</sup>, :«Le gouvernement de la République française et le gouvernement de la République populaire de Chine ont décidé, d'un commun accord, d'établir des relations diplomatiques. Ils sont convenus à cet effet de désigner des ambassadeurs dans un délai de trois mois»<sup>190</sup>.

As it is easily imaginable, at international level the reactions to this decision, taken unilaterally by De Gaulle, without any communication with the American allies, were negative. As a matter of fact, *Le Monde* published a note delivered by the Department of State at six a.m., in which it was affirmed that:

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<sup>189</sup> Vaisse M., *Une belle et bonne alliance à l'est?*, in *L'influence ou la puissance ?*, Paris, Fayard, 2009

<sup>190</sup> The text of the communiqué was published by *Le Monde*, 27 Janvier 1964

:« les États-Unis regrettent la décision de la France»<sup>191</sup>. On the other side, as wrote by the news correspondent of *Le Monde* in Moscow, just one hour after the communiqué was delivered, a spokesperson of the Soviet Foreign Affairs, affirmed:« Cette décision va dans le sens de la paix. Le gouvernement soviétique considère l'établissement des relations diplomatiques entre la France et la Chine populaire comme un pas en direction du renforcement de la paix dans le monde»<sup>192</sup>. As it was understandable, the reaction of the Nationalist China was not positive; actually it announced that :«par son établissement des relations diplomatiques avec le régime communiste de Pékin, le gouvernement français a commis un acte inamical envers la République de Chine (...) Cet acte non seulement porte atteinte aux droits de la République de Chine ainsi qu'aux intérêts du monde libre, mais affecte gravement l'équilibre international vis-à-vis de l'expansion communiste»<sup>193</sup>.

From De Gaulle's interior allies, the French government's decision was welcomed with interest. The secretary of the U.N.R., Jacques Boumel, appreciated that French position, stating that France had rediscovered its place in the world, exalting the work that the General was doing in foreign policy<sup>194</sup>. The President himself during his press conference soon after the communiqué on January 31<sup>st</sup>, expressed the reasons why the French government had taken such a decision. Firstly, the General praised the Chinese people for his characteristics and culture; secondly, De Gaulle, as he usually did, reminisced the most important moments of the Chinese history, focusing mainly on the last twenty years; thirdly, the French President explained the reasons why such an act was deemed necessary according to the French government. The French President affirmed that :« La République française a jugé, pour sa part, le

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<sup>191</sup> Le Monde, *In Paris Et Pékin Annoncent Officiellement L'établissement De Relations Diplomatiques Formose Parait Pencher Pour La Rupture Avec La France*, 28 Janvier 1964

<sup>192</sup> Le Monde, *MOSCOU : cette décision va dans le sens de la paix*, 28 Janvier 1964

<sup>193</sup> Communiqué released from the embassy of Nationalist China in Paris, published by Le Monde on January 29<sup>th</sup> 1964

<sup>194</sup> It is worthy to report the integrity of Baumel's statement, published in Le Monde on January 28th 1964 :«La France a enfin repris sa place dans le monde. Elle n'est plus le pays faible et malade dont la voix n'était presque plus écoutée. Quel Français n'éprouve ras une légitime fierté devant les initiatives et les succès du général de Gaulle sur la scène internationale ? (...)Fidèle à ses alliances et à ses amitiés, la France a retrouvé sa liberté de mouvement, c'est-à-dire sa souveraineté et son indépendance»



moment venu de placer les rapports avec la République populaire de Chine sur un plan normal, autrement dit diplomatique»<sup>195</sup>. Forward, the General explained that, in spite of, the exchange of ambassadors, between the two, France did not accept the regime imposed in that nation, but at the same time, as the French government had relations with other similar countries, as far as concerned their political system, the only thing France could do, was to accept :«le monde tel qu'il est»<sup>196</sup>.

This political move, as well expressed by Boumel, inscribes itself, in those acts which set forth the establishment of an independent policy both vis-à-vis the United States, and Soviet Union. France, in 1964, had demonstrated once again, to be able to regain sovereignty and freedom of acting without fearing repercussions from the two hegemonic power. Therefore, :«that move was as much as a proclamation of independence from Washington as a discrete reminder to the U.S.S.R. that it had now better come to terms with Western Europe»<sup>197</sup>.

The politics of détente towards the East continued for the whole 1964. New relations were established with Romania, in 1964, and Poland, in 1965. As a matter of fact, a delegation composed by twelve delegates of the Romanian government, and led by the Prime Minister Maurer, were received in Paris between the 27<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of July. The Romanian Prime Minister, according to De Gaulle, seemed to be opened to a possibility of détente and of cooperation with the West bloc<sup>198</sup>. At the same time, even Polish delegates visited the French capital, trying to establish stable relationships with the Western country. Furthermore, an exchange of visits between the respective Ministers of Foreign Affairs occurred. As it is possible to read from a telegram<sup>199</sup> sent from Paris to the Embassies of France in the world, a positive reaction was given to the foreign policy towards Eastern Europe. A positive result of those

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<sup>195</sup> *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 31 janvier 1964*, in *DM 1962-1965*

<sup>196</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>197</sup> Soutou G.H., *De Gaulle's France and Soviet Union from conflict to détente*, in *Europe*, in W. Loth, *Europe, Cold War and Coexistence*, London, Fran Kass, 2004

<sup>198</sup> Schoenborn B., *op.cit.*

<sup>199</sup> The extract of the telegram, quoted by B. Schoenborn, disclaims :« perspectives intéressantes de dégel d'une situation figée depuis vingt ans »

new relations was the signature on February 1965, of a commercial agreement between France and Romania, that will contribute to that *dégel* evoked by the Quai d'Orsay, the year before. The General that was surprised already by the attitudes of the Eastern European countries, of interest towards France, mainly from a political perspective, was curious to understand what interested so much those nations that so far had been under the political control of Soviet Union. The answer to the General's question, was given by Giscard D'Estaing, the then Minister of Economy when coming back from Bucharest. As remembered by Peyrefitte, the Minister stated that Romanians were fascinated by the politics of independence of France, and because of their important national sentiment, they would have played at East the same role that France was playing in the West<sup>200</sup>.

As far as the relations between France and Poland are concerned, they had historical roots, that have contributed, before the tragedies and consequences of the war, to establish political, economic and cultural ties between the two countries. As it is affirmed by De Gaulle to the Prime Minister of Poland, during his visit in Paris in September 1965, despite the ideology and the international context separated the two historical allies, France was ready to begin a cooperation with Poland, from which would have benefited both their countries and Europe<sup>201</sup>.

In this perspective, De Gaulle several times during his speeches referred to the rapprochement between the Eastern and Western European countries, as the only solution to establish peace and equilibrium in Europe<sup>202</sup>, and to consolidate that union begun in 1964-1965, he would have visited those countries after the rapprochement to Soviet Union was consecrated.

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<sup>200</sup> Peyrefitte A., *op. cit.* p. 914

<sup>201</sup> Toast adressé au Président du Conseil des Ministres de la République populaire de Pologne, M. Cyrankiewicz, in DM 1962-1965

<sup>202</sup> See the *Allocution prononcée à Strasbourg, 23 novembre 1964*, in DM 1962-1965, where the General affirmed that :«étant donné les perspectives d'évolution intérieure et extérieure du bloc totalitaire de l'Est, sous la pression élémentaire des hommes qui y aspirant à retrouver leur dignité et des peuples qui y tendent reprendre leur libre arbitre national, il y a là le seul moyen qui puisse, un jour peut-être, permettre d'envisager le rapprochement de l'Europe toute entière»

The rapprochement to the East involved, as it has been said several times, the strengthening of relations between France and Soviet Union.

During 1964-1965, those relations ameliorated thanks to the meetings organized at level of interministerial's visiting and ambassadors' receptions.

As said above, the first French Minister to visit Soviet Union in 1964 was Giscard D'Estaing, who was welcomed in Kiev by Khrushchev. During his interviews with his Soviet homologues, the guide lines to the creation of another agreement on commercial plan had been discussed, after that the agreement of 1963 would have expired in 1965; as reported by Michel Tatu, the atmosphere seemed to be positive<sup>203</sup>. The commercial agreement between France and Soviet Union would have been signed in October 1964, and it mainly provided for French exports of goods, for Soviet petrol.

In the meanwhile, Khrushchev had been replaced by Kosygin at the head of the government, whereas Brezhnev replaced Mister :«K» at the head of the Soviet Communist Party.

General De Gaulle in his press conference on February 4<sup>th</sup> 1965 clarified French position towards the German issue. Briefly, he affirmed that the German problem should be discussed at the interior of the European borders. First of all, he restated what had already been said several times. The German borders had to remain those as established at the end of the war. Moreover, the issue could be discussed, according to De Gaulle, only when a real spirit of détente had prevailed upon the Cold War conflict<sup>204</sup>.

If the German question could have not be an element of rapprochement between Paris and Moscow, it was necessary to find other aspects upon which constructing new fields of cooperation. Therefore, General De Gaulle fostered to launch cooperation in the technological field. At this proposal, the French President boosted for having a meeting between the French Minister of Information, Alain Peyrefitte and his Soviets homologue. It is necessary to remember that a French firm had patented a system for coloured television,

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<sup>203</sup> Tatu M., M. Giscard d'Estaing et les ministres soviétiques étudient les principes d'un nouvel accord, in *Le Monde*, 21 Septembre 1964

<sup>204</sup> *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Elysée, 4 Février 1965*, in *DM 1962-1965*

called SECAM, while those proposed by the Americans was called PAL, which was more advanced against the French one.

Before proposing the adoption of this system to the Russians, the French had already made a proposal to the German and to the Italians, that, contrary on what the French President wished, were convinced to adopt the American system, even because in the case of West Germany, the Minister of Information declared that to favour one system against another was avoided by the German Constitution. Accordingly, De Gaulle invited his Minister to go to Moscow and to propose such a cooperation on technological innovation to Soviet Union.

In December, the Soviet ambassador in Paris, Vinogradov, communicated to the Minister that his proposal to go to Moscow had been accepted. Moreover, the French ambassador in Moscow, M. Baudet, had reported to the French President that the Soviet Premier, had expressed his will to continue the Franco-Soviet cooperation, substantially continuing the same politics of Khrushchev. De Gaulle was convinced that the critical moments of the Cold War had arrived to an end<sup>205</sup>. In his conversation with Peyrefitte when the latter had to propose a technological partnership to the Soviets, he told him that by then the fragmentation at interior of the Eastern bloc, as those represented by the detachment on many issues of Poland, Romania or the ideological and political split from China, had made Soviet Union understand, that :«la France représente pour eux un atout de premier plan»<sup>206</sup>.

Peyrefitte in his return from Moscow presented a compte-rendu of his conversation with Kosygin. As it is possible to read from the Minister's memoirs<sup>207</sup>, the Soviet Prime Minister hoped for a stronger political cooperation between France and the U.S.S.R.. Furthermore, he appreciated the fact that between Paris and Moscow there were several shared views concerning the problem of the world, notably on question concerning German borders, the South-East Asia context and the position towards the continuation of war in Vietnam by the United States.

De Gaulle was gratified for what the Prime Minister of Soviet Union had proposed to France. To the General, it was the confirmation of the greatest role

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<sup>205</sup> Peyrefitte A., *op.cit.* pp. 910-914

<sup>206</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>207</sup> *Ibidem*

that France was acquiring in the world. It was also the confirmation that the French idea of leading the world to détente, outside of the blocs, had worked in order to reach equilibrium and stability in Europe, and to lead France to *grandeur*. To Peyrefitte, De Gaulle said:« Nous sommes le seul pays occidental dont tout le monde veuille bien et qui ne compromettre personne. Le jeu de la France s'est ouvert»<sup>208</sup>.

In addition, the real reason that had pushed Peyrefitte to Moscow, namely the necessity to reach an agreement on SECAM and made the system acceptable to the Russians, and potentially to its satellites, succeeded. As a matter of fact, at the end of January 1965, the Soviet government sent a notification to the French one with a draft of the agreement, as proposed by the French, accepting the cooperation. The SECAM adoptability had to be discussed at the conference of the Consultative Committee on International Radio in Vienna, the following Mars. The Soviets declared to be in favour of the collaboration with France and the cooperation on the perfection of the system.

Then 1965 opened with a positive step for the Franco-Soviet relations. It continued with exchanges of visits of ambassadors and Ministers of Foreign Affairs. On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, during a reception in honour of ambassador Vinogradov, the President De Gaulle, remembered the importance of the cooperation between the two countries and that both shared :«la meme conviction, quant à la nécessité de la coexistence et de la paix, (qui) inspire maintenant nos deux peuples»<sup>209</sup>.

Another important moment for the consolidation of Franco-Soviet relations was the meeting in Paris between De Gaulle and the Soviet Foreign Minister, Gromyko, that took place at the end of April of the same year. From the interview between the two, it is possible to understand how the Soviets, wanted to make clear their political will to strengthen their relations with the French. Gromyko reported to De Gaulle the desire of Kosygin to establish permanent

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<sup>208</sup> Peyrefitte A., *op.cit.* p.913

<sup>209</sup> Toast adressé à Vinogradov, 23 Mars 1965, in *DM 1962-1965*

relations at institutional level, that surely could have helped favouring equilibrium in Europe, both its Western and Eastern sides.

As regards to the progresses made in international relations during the last two years, and expressed in these last pages, De Gaulle gives confirmation through a short speech given to television on April 27<sup>th</sup> 1965<sup>210</sup>.

It is worthy to analyse this speech, in order to confirm what has been said thus far concerning the principles leading the Gaullist foreign policy.

First of all, the General evoked the situation, from an international point of view, when he came back to power. According to him, France was a nation that had not the deserved weight in the world. At the end of the war, there was who internally had proved to put France under the totalitarian regime of the Est or under the total dependence from the American allies. But choosing one or another of the option, De Gaulle sustained that :«il n'y aurait plus la France. Eh bien! Le fait capital de ces dernières années c'est que nous avons résisté aux sirens de l'abandon et choisi l'indépendance»<sup>211</sup>.

Second, the President sustained that independence implied some conditions, that France has been able to accomplish. Hence, without renounce to the American friendship, it has been possible to bring France to be the leader of a new Europe, that will involve the entire continent, through politics of cooperation and entente with the Easter countries, and with Soviet Union in particular. Instead, as regards the problems which appear in international scene, France, because of its independence, had proclaimed the respect for the independence of others nations as far as their national policy is concerned.

Thirdly, the General expressed his opinion about security. At this proposal, he thought that in the nuclear era, it was necessary for the nation to possess the right mean for its defence, namely the atomic power. As concerned the participation into the Atlantic Alliance, De Gaulle, once again, moved critics to the organization, saying that the equipping by itself of a nuclear armament

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<sup>210</sup> *Allocution radiodiffusé et télévisée prononcée au Palais de l'Elysée, 27 Avril 1965, in DM 1962-1965*

<sup>211</sup> *Ibidem*

would have not been more expensive than being part of an integrated system as N.A.T.O., remaining the :«auxiliaires subordonnés»<sup>212</sup>.

Forward, the General took into account the independence as related to cultural, scientific, technological and economic fields. Of course, it was necessary in all of those sectors to make the French necessities prevail. That spirit had to lead also the decision at the interior of the European Economic Community.

Finally, De Gaulle acclaimed France independence, affirming that by then the division of the world as appeared at Yalta was overcome. The two hegemonic powers had no longer the same weight that they had at the end of the war. Actually, another third element had made its appearance on the world scene, namely France. He concluded by saying that :« un autre ordre, un autre équilibre sont nécessaire à la paix».

Through the analysis of this speech, it is possible to understand which were the two fundamental points that withstand to the French idea of *détente*, and that had to be served together : the necessity to affirm French independence from the two hegemonic powers, and the necessity for peace and equilibrium, an element always present in De Gaulle's speeches when dealing with international situation.

## Chapter 4 The realization of *détente*

### 4.1 Consolidation of the Franco-Soviet relations

The Paris-Moscow rapprochement during 1964-1965 had been, certainly, the result of the transformation of the Gaullist conception of *détente* into action. After all, De Gaulle, since the beginning of his mandate, had always tried to translate the leading principles of foreign policy into decisions, to which withstand the foundation of all his politics that was the achievement of French

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<sup>212</sup>Allocution radiodiffusé et télévisée prononcée au Palais de l'Elysée, 27 Avril 1965, in DM 1962-1965

*grandeur*. As it has been seen previously, those principles were both applied towards the Western and the Eastern blocs.

The political moves towards the East in the two years taken into consideration here, in order to show the evolution the French idea of *détente* in the Sixties, have been absolutely conditioned by the change in the international situation, and in the modification of the French foreign policy towards the American allies.

In order to proceed to the analysis of a further consolidation of *politique à l'est*, it is well to recall the culminating moment of the Gaullist policy of independence from the Western hegemonic power, namely the United States, arrived at the beginning of 1966, with the decision by the French government to withdraw all the French troops from the integrated military command of the Atlantic Alliance. With this move, both strategical and political, De Gaulle had actualized the principle, already forecast in 1958, of a Nation :«aux mains libres».

As the header of this paragraph suggests, 1966 was the year of the consolidation of the Franco-Soviet relationships, realized through the official visit of the President of the French Republic to Soviet Union, in order to return the 1960 visit made in Paris by Khrushchev. In this way, De Gaulle finally responded to the several invitations<sup>213</sup>, already made since 1960 by the Soviet leaders, Khrushchev before, and Kosygin after, to go to Moscow. The Soviet Prime Ministers, as a matter of fact, in order to present to the world their new partnership with a Western country, that in their idea represented the fragmentation of the American leadership in their sphere of influence, needed a precise symbol, and a French official visit could represent it.

Actually, in De Gaulle's mind, it was already present the desire to go to Moscow, as demonstrated by the acceptance of the proposal made by Gromyko during their conversation of April 1965. But, the General told the Soviet Minister that he could not visit the U.S.S.R. during that year, and that it was his intention to accept one day those several invitations.

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<sup>213</sup> Alain Peyrefitte remembers, as reported in a conversation between the Minister and De Gaulle, that every time he met Vinogradov, the Soviet Ambassador in Paris, the latter asked him :«quand vient le Général»



De Gaulle approved the path that the French policy was traversing ; indeed at the press conference of September 9<sup>th</sup> 1965, he affirmed:« Nos échanges et nos contacts vont se multiplier avec les pays de l'Est, chacun d'entre eux n'étant, bien entendu, traité par nous qu'en considération de sa personnalité nationale. À cet égard nous attachons une grande importance au cours nouveau que prennent nos rapport avec la Russie»<sup>214</sup>.

The decision of De Gaulle to visit Soviet Union, was communicated by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Couve de Murville, to the Soviet Ambassador in Paris, Valerian Zorine, that in March 1965 had replaced Vinogradov, on January 27<sup>th</sup> 1966.

In Germany the reactions to the announced visit of De Gaulle to Moscow, were different into the two different major parties. As reported by Schoenborn, the Christian Democrats feared of a strong Franco-Soviet alliance, going to detriment of Germany; instead, the Social Democrats, were pleased by such a decision, because if France and Soviet Union agreed on the German issue, that could have helped them to achieve easier the German reunification<sup>215</sup>.

As pointed out by François Honti, in his article published in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, the visit would have taken place in a favourable moment for the French President, made possible by an American-Soviet conflict due to the escalation of the Vietnamese war, and to the cooling down of the Franco-German relations. Of course, Honti, specified, in diplomacy it is not an habit to :«faire des cadeaux», hence De Gaulle will ask something in change to the Soviet leaders<sup>216</sup>.

The visit to the Soviet Union took place in June 1965, and De Gaulle remained there from the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month to July 1<sup>st</sup>. The long permanence of the French President in U.S.S.R. is symptom of the real will to strengthen the, already achieved, cooperation between the two Nations and to foster it forward.

Couve de Murville, some days before De Gaulle had to leave for Moscow, stated before the Commission of Foreign Affairs of the National Assembly:«

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<sup>214</sup> *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Elysée, 9 septembre 1965*, in *DM 1962-1965*

<sup>215</sup> Schoenborn B., *op.cit.*, p.68

<sup>216</sup> Honti F., *De Gaulle à Moscou*, in *Le Monde diplomatique*, Juin 1966

ce qu'il y a plus de spectaculaire dans ce voyage, c'est justement qu'il ait lieu»<sup>217</sup>.

Actually, it was not clear to the Quai d'Orsay nor to the General, which could have been the result of such a visit to U.S.S.R., as said also by the President, to the press at the February press conference.

In order to understand which was the spirit of the French visit to Soviet Union when De Gaulle arrived to Moscow, it is worthy to take into consideration the various speeches that the French President pronounced during his journey, that did not only touched the Soviet capital, but covered different places in the extended nation.

At his arrival to Moscow on June 20<sup>th</sup>, President De Gaulle answering to the toast addressed to him by Podgorny, the President of the Soviet Supreme, confirmed the importance that the official visit had in order to, firstly, foster the economic, scientific, technological and cultural cooperation between the two nations and secondly, to find a common solution to the problems that concerned the world. Accordingly, both France and Soviet Union could have contributed to the assurance of peace, equilibrium and progress of the whole world<sup>218</sup>.

General De Gaulle in his speech<sup>219</sup> given on the same day, during a reception in his honour in Moscow, toasted the President of the Soviet Supreme, highlighting one central idea, which animated his visit to Soviet Union: the stability of the European continent. The French President affirmed that, in spite of the confrontation of blocs, as flowed from the end of the war, in spite of the opposing political and economic systems and ideologies adopted in the two divided zones of Europe, in spite of the differences that contrasted their two nations, France and Russia could be the leaders in restoring peace and equilibrium in the whole Europe. In addition, he pointed out that it was France's intention to cooperate with those countries defined :«de l'Europe de l'Est», but, in order to achieve that purpose, it was necessary to address to the

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<sup>217</sup> Quoted from Vaisse M., *La grandeur*, p.425

<sup>218</sup> *Réponse à l'allocution de bienvenue prononcée par M. Podgornyï, 20 Juin 1966*, in DM 1966-1969

<sup>219</sup> *Réponse au toast adressé par M. Podgornyï, 20 Juin 1966*, in DM 1966-1969

major of those Eastern European countries, namely Russia. Furthermore, he explained that it was not French desire to deny the important role of the United States in Europe, but at the same time, it was of fundamental importance :«le rétablissement de l'Europe en un ensamble fécond, au lieu qu'elle soit paralysée par une division sterile, qui en est la première condition»<sup>220</sup>. Of course, all the problems concerning Europe, should have be treated at European level.

According to the General, the only possibility to reconcile the two divided parts of Europe, in order to actualize the Gaullist desire of an Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, was the cooperation between two big independent nations. A cooperation that had not just confined to the discussion of political problem, but that had to be shared on different fields, as already the two nations were doing. Evidently, it was not enough: it was necessary to push for a stronger cooperation, that will have benefited the maintaining of *détente à l'est*.

The role that De Gaulle reserved to the cultural, scientific, technological progress as better means to reach cooperation between the two countries, is showed also by the speeches that he addressed to the student of the University of Moscow, during his visit on June 21<sup>st</sup><sup>221</sup>, and to that pronounced at the scientific Academy of Academgorod, in Novosibirsk (Siberia), on June 22<sup>nd</sup><sup>222</sup>. The following days, the French President went on visit in Leningrad, Kiev, and Volgograd, three cities about which he acclaimed their history, and in particular defined Leningrad, (the city from where the Russian Revolution started), :«la porte de la Russie sur l'Occident»<sup>223</sup>. In visiting the U.S.S.R., De Gaulle reiterated the necessity for French and Russian cooperation to serve peace.

At the moment of his departure from Moscow, during a reception given at the Kremlin by the members of the Soviet Supreme, De Gaulle took stock of what

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<sup>220</sup> Réponse au toast adressé par M. Pogdorny 20 Juin 1966, in *DM 1966-1969*

<sup>221</sup> See *Allocution prononcée à l'Université de Moscou*, in *DM 1966-1969*

<sup>222</sup> See *Allocution prononcée à Akademgorodsc (Novossibirsk)*, in *DM 1966-1969*

<sup>223</sup> See *Allocution prononcée à Leningrad*, in *DM 1966-1969*

that visit had meant for France and Soviet Union. In addressing to the Soviet Supreme, he stressed two main points<sup>224</sup>: the moment was come for the end of the period of Cold war, because the times were ready to establish peace in the world; the second point, was that the visit was necessary to consecrate the new Franco-Soviet partnership in different fields.

Moreover, the General addressed to the Russian people, through a message at television. It was very meaningful, the beginning of the speech; as a matter of fact, De Gaulle started by saying: « la visite que j'achève de faire à votre pays c'est une visite que la France de toujours rend à la Russie de toujours »<sup>225</sup>. De Gaulle confided in the role that the unity of two peoples could have had in the contribution to achieve peace and cooperation between their respective countries. He wished for a reunification of all the peoples of the :«Ancien Continent», that has to retake his role of leading the universe to peace, equilibrium and progress.

So far, they have been analysed the results that publically De Gaulle wanted the visit had to achieve, and summarizing them, it is possible to individuate an only major concept: the aim was to arrive at the peace and progress of Europe and of those peoples that were involved in, without taken into consideration the ideological and political division.

It is necessary to take into consideration even the documents that report the content of the conversations between the President of the Republic, De Gaulle and the President of the Soviet Supreme, Brezhnev. The two leaders had two major conversations, that have been summarized by the French Ambassador to Moscow Baudet to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Couve de Murville, on June 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>.

In the first conversation<sup>226</sup> they had, the main arguments upon which they focused, concerned the European problems, and mainly the German question.

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<sup>224</sup> *Allocution prononcée à Moscou*, in *DM 1966-1969*

<sup>225</sup> *Allocution radiodiffusée et télévisée prononcée à Moscou*, in *DM 1966-1969*

<sup>226</sup> The following analysis is based on the compte-rendu sent by the French Ambassador in Moscow, Baudet to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Couve de Murville. The document is reported in *Document Diplomatiques Français tome II 1966 (1er Juin-31 Décembre)*

First of all, General De Gaulle asked if the decisions took at Yalta and then at Potsdam, concerning Germany (at that time not divided yet) were, for the Soviets, definitive or they could have imagined any change. According to the compte-rendu written by Baudet, the Soviet President Brezhnev answered that the division of Germany in two different States, had provoked an important change. Moreover, the German Federal Republic, to the eyes of U.S.S.R., still followed a politics of revenge, with the aim of changing its frontiers, and the aspiration to become a nuclear power. Thus, the Soviet leader was mainly worried about the issue of security in Europe, stating that :«la France et l'Union Soviétique doivent conjuguer leurs efforts pour que l'Allemagne devienne un État pacifique». As regards a possible reunification, U.S.S.R. did not foresee it in the immediate.

Baudet reported that the views about reunification of Germany were shared by the President of the Republic, although he pointed out that it was necessary to give the Germans at least a hope of reunification, in order to have peace. Forward, he confirmed that, according to France, the borders of Germany, had to remain those decided at the end of the war. De Gaulle esteemed also that, directly related to the problem of Germany, there was the issue of the two superpowers' presence in Europe.

As it has been said several times in these pages, the French President retained necessary to deal with the German issue at the interior of Europe, and he reaffirmed this concept, saying:« il est important de sortir le problème allemand de cette contestation et d'en faire un problème de bonne foi entre Européens, y compris les Allemands eux-mêmes». At this proposal, De Gaulle wished for a Soviet contribution to facilitate on human level the relations between the German people of the West, with that of the East. The answer of the Soviet President showed that he shared the vision of De Gaulle, but he added that in order to find a solution to the German reunification, the Americans should have left the territory, something that seemed to be impossible at the moment, also because the Germans did not make pressure on that sense.

According to Brezhnev, the German problem, once excluded the American presence in Europe, could have been discussed at the interior of a conference on security, where also other European nations could have taken part. De Gaulle pointed out that such conference would have been possible, but not in the immediate period, and that it would have actualized only if a real détente would have put in place, to which :«l’U.R.S.S. devrait se preter comme nous». So far, it seems that the visions between France and Soviet Union on Germany and European security are the same.

The only element upon which they disagreed was the recognition of the German Democratic Republic as a state. That was a proposition highly suggested by the Soviets, already at the time of Khrushchev, but the General retained that the GDR was:«une institution artificielle dont la reconnaissance ferait échouer les perspectives pacifiques en Allemagne». Dealing with the issue of cooperation in Europe, an additional proposal, made by Kosygin, concerned the organization of a stable conference among European countries and Soviet Union, on problems that did not directly affect the Americans. De Gaulle deemed it possible to organize a conference on economics perspectives.

From this first meeting between the Soviet leaders and the French President, all things considered, it is possible to note how the will to cooperate between the two countries was real.

The representatives of the two countries had other two meetings during the permanence of General De Gaulle in Moscow. The second one dealt with the exclusive cooperation between France and Soviet Union, and from these conversations, originated the Franco-Soviet common declaration, that will establish the terms of the cooperation between the two nations. It will be taken into consideration in the next paragraph, when dealing with the pragmatic results of the meeting.

The third meeting took place at the Kremlin, between De Gaulle on one side, and the three Soviets leaders, namely Brezhnev, Kosygin and Podgorny, on the

other, on June 29<sup>th</sup>. From the analysis of these conversations<sup>227</sup> two main elements arose.

The first one was the agreement of the Soviets and French leaders on the role of the international organization, specifically of the United Nations, that had to serve as forum to discuss problems concerning all the nations involved, and not as a mean for the Americans to establish their leadership.

Secondly, Brezhnev clarified an important theme, that was appreciated by De Gaulle. It concerned the relations between Soviet Union, the United States and France. He specified that the Occidental press, sometimes, wrote that the true partner of Soviet Union were the United States, and that U.S.S.R. was just waiting for an amelioration of the world situation to then abandon the cooperation with the French; equally, it was said that the French interest to the East was just provisional. The Soviet leader affirmed, on the contrary, that: « la politique soviétique vis-à-vis de la France correspond à une orientation stable, à un intérêt d'Etat ».

De Gaulle too confirmed that the French policy to the East was something deemed of extreme importance by France and by the French people, that choosing him as President, have also approved his decisions in foreign policy, mainly concerning the concept of independence. Thus, the French détente to the East, De Gaulle assured, would have continued.

Once again, the two leaders convened that the policy of independence from those who were not directly interested on the matters of the European continent, would have facilitated détente, and open new perspectives to manage the German issue.

General De Gaulle concluded the meeting, stating: « nous croyons que l'Union soviétique est pacifique et qu'elle à l'intérêt à l'être. C'est pourquoi nous n'avons aucun embarras à nous concerter avec elle et à coopérer dans tous les domaines ». According to the President, the collaboration between France and Soviet Union could have led, finally, to the end of Cold war.

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<sup>227</sup> Also this analysis is based on the compte-rendu sent by Baudet to Maurice Couve de Murville on June 29<sup>th</sup>, and contained in *Document Diplomatique Français tome II (1er Juin-31 Décembre) 1966*

As regards to this last private conversation, the atmosphere seemed to be quite relaxed between the leaders of the two states. A great harmony arose from the voyage that De Gaulle accomplished to Soviet Union.

In France, the visit to Moscow was appreciated, as demonstrated by *Le Monde* that in an article of July 2<sup>nd</sup> wrote: « Le sentiment de l'appartenance à une même communauté, à une même famille, l'emportait largement sur celui des divergences idéologiques. Sans doute la glace était déjà un peu brisée auparavant, mais il fallait un événement spectaculaire comme la venue du président de la République pour mettre en lumière la disponibilité des niasses »<sup>228</sup>. At the same time, the journalist stressed that it was then necessary to manage to remain the door just opened, open, through a real cooperation between the two countries<sup>229</sup>.

The foreign press, instead, seemed to define the visit as something negative. As reported by an article published in *Le Monde*, the most critical towards De Gaulle were the Dutch, that defined the visit just a : « geste spectaculaire de pure façade dépourvu de résultats concrets » or an anti-American manifestation, as wrote by the weekly magazine *Die Nieuwe Linie*<sup>230</sup>.

The same article, actually, tells about the satisfaction of the German Federal Republic, for having defended it against Soviet Union, and appreciating De Gaulle for having defined the GDR : « une institution artificielle »<sup>231</sup>.

An element that surely appears from this voyage as reported and noticed in several articles, is that De Gaulle did not criticized in public the Soviet totalitarian regime, and the ideological aspects that Moscow government imposed on the other satellites. The result, all things considered, had a positive echo. In France, the public opinion, two years before the President's voyage had an appreciation of Soviet Union in the amount of 25%, then after the

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<sup>228</sup> *Le Monde*, *Premiers Resultats*, 03 Juillet 1966

<sup>229</sup> Quoted from *Le Monde*, *Premiers Résultats*, : « Il faut à présent maintenir ouverte la brèche ainsi opérée, et pour cela chercher à imaginer des actions politiques communes susceptibles de faire progresser le règlement des questions internationales en suspens. C'est là que commencent vraiment les difficultés ».

<sup>230</sup> *Le Monde*, *Vive satisfaction en Allemagne de l'Ouest*, 04 Juillet 1966

<sup>231</sup> *Ibidem*



voyage, it was of 35%<sup>232</sup>. Certainly, it was a sign for De Gaulle that his foreign policy, thus far, had been accepted from the people that had given him the mandate.

The relations between Paris and Moscow continued. And as first sign of the stable cooperation established in June, the Soviet President of the Council of Minister went to visit Paris in the following December 1966.

Alexis Kosygin was hosted in France from December 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup>. During his visit, he travelled across the main French cities, like Toulouse, Lyon and Grenoble.

At his arrival, De Gaulle toasted him, affirming that his presence in France meant that both countries had to do :«conjointement et amicalement» something for peace, equilibrium and progress in the world<sup>233</sup>. Moreover, the aim of the President's visit to Paris was that of multiply the exchanges in every sector of cooperation, beginning from the scientific, economic, cultural, technological exchanges. Forwards, he remembered that the new relations between their two countries, have as main objective that of fostering :«la détente, c'est-à-dire entre tous les Etats de notre continent, la pratique délibérée des relations normales à tous égards. Cela implique ensuite l'entente, autrement dit la possibilité de considérer objectivement, les uns avec les autres, tous les sujets d'intérêt commun»<sup>234</sup>.

The most important points faced by De Gaulle and Kosygin during the official visit, concerned disarmament, German issue and Franco-Soviet cooperation.

As regards to disarmament, De Gaulle restated the will of France to possess a complete nuclear armament, that will permit the nation to defend itself whenever it was case. The President reaffirmed to his Soviet homologue that France was in favour of an American-Soviet agreement on disarmament, but as he had always sustained, it had to mean the stopping of armament production. At the same time, he was against a treaty like that of non-proliferation, because it would have meant that just the two superpowers could have possessed atomic

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<sup>232</sup> Vaisse M., *La Grandeur.*, p. 429

<sup>233</sup> *Toast adressé à Kosygin Premier Ministre du Conseil de l'Union Soviétique*, 01 Décembre 1966, in *DM 1966-1969*

<sup>234</sup> *Ibidem*

bombs, impeaching to those who were producing them, to not possess one, or to other states to not give them the possibility to have it in future. Anyway, the General declared himself against any possibility for West Germany to have a nuclear armament, and if necessary he would have lined up with the Soviets to oppose such a possibility<sup>235</sup>.

On the German question, as De Gaulle had already sustained in Moscow during his June visit, it was necessary first of all to reach détente in Europe, in order to completely resolve the German issue, that is to say to arrive to German reunification. He suggested to the Soviets to made it possible to have conversations with West Germany, and the same had to do the Federal Republic firstly towards Eastern Germany, and obviously towards Soviet Union. The French President foresaw that such a new *modus vivendi* could have been possible, thanks to the new government established in Bonn and led by the coalition Kiesinger-Brandt<sup>236</sup>.

As far as Franco-Soviet cooperation was concerned, the General and Kosygin went on sustaining the necessity for a stronger collaboration in all the fields established with the different agreements in June 1966, that will be analysed in the next pages, together with the new paths to the East, opened by the General's visit to Moscow.

#### 4.2 The aftermath of the Franco-Soviet cooperation and the evolution of French policy to the East

The results of the President's visit to Soviet Union are listed into the *Déclaration commune Franco-Soviétique*, published by the two governments on the last day of the General's permanence in Moscow, June 30<sup>th</sup>.

As it has been anticipated above, in order to analyse the results achieved during the voyage, the document furnishes a precious source, because it represents an exhaustive summary of the issues the leaders of the two countries had taken

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<sup>235</sup> Informations about the conversations are quoted in .Vaisse M., *La Grandeur*, p.432

<sup>236</sup> Vaisse M., *op. cit.*

into account, both dealing with the international problems on which both states are concerned, and the more specific Franco-Soviet cooperation.

The *Déclaration* begins with the confirmation of the good atmosphere that has characterized the conversations between the French President and the three Soviet leaders. Forward, it reads that the European issues have engrossed the major argument of conversation between the two delegations, mainly as regards European security, directly related to the solution of the German problem. As far as the European issues are concerned, French and Soviets agreed that: « c'est de leur solution que dépend l'établissement dans le continent tout entier d'une situation normale et, par conséquent, d'une paix réelle et stable »<sup>237</sup>. In addition, they convened that all the European problems had to be solved in an European framework, and all the European States, both on the East and the West, should make efforts in order to reach a climate of détente between them, because it is only with this perspective that those common European issues could be solved. Moreover, at this proposal, a fundamental principle, (as remembered also when the conversations have been taken into account), was proclaimed: the independence of each state and the not intervention on the interior issues of a state. As it will be seen forward, the Soviets will violate this principle in 1968 in Prague.

So far, it can be seen that the French views about the role that Europe had to have in dealing with European issues are confirmed. It means that De Gaulle's détente principle of bringing the German issues outward from the American-Soviet pure conflict, had been confirmed. The objective was that of making Europe a leader in the management of problems concerning just the old continent countries. Certainly, according to the vision that De Gaulle had about what Europe should have been, a concept several times recalled, Soviet Union, was directly involved in Europe. Hence, it can be said that one of the objective of De Gaulle has been actualized. As a matter of fact, it is from that perspective, that the future German's Chancellor Brandt *Ostpolitik* will derive.

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<sup>237</sup> *Déclaration commune Franco-Soviétique du 30 juin 1966*

The second issue that is underlined into the *Déclaration* is the international situation, with a particular attention to South-East Asia. At this proposal, the Vietnam war had been directly discussed by the delegations, and they declared to have the same position on that issue. To them, it was necessary to put an end to the conflict, and to avoid any foreign presence in the territory: the reference was, surely, addressed to the United States<sup>238</sup>.

Moreover, it was examined the issue of disarmament, upon which both France and Soviet Union agreed on the necessity to proceed to a true elimination of threat represented by the nuclear armament, that was conceivable only if all the interested countries agreed on adopting a general and controlled disarmament.

With respect essentially to the Franco-Soviet relations, the two states have acknowledged the progresses made in the last years in the sectors under cooperation between them, and the visit of the General was the confirmation and consecration of such a cooperative framework.

It is worthy to take into consideration the results achieved as regards the specific cooperative agreements between France and Soviet Union, looking at both those already into effect and those whose signature arrived during the visit.

The most important agreement was that already in place concerning commercial exchanges. As said above, it was in place from 1963. Later, it was reformulated in October 1964, entering into effect on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1965, for the duration of five years. During the visit, as highlighted even into the Declaration, in relation to the commercial agreement, it was approved the principle that led to the creation of a so called :«commission mixte permanente franco-soviétique», composed by high level delegates of the two States, directly related to the executives of the two countries. Therefore, a strictly contact between the respective governments was created. The Commission had to analyse the possible problems that could arise from the commercial

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<sup>238</sup> The text of the Declaration reads :« Le gouvernement français et le gouvernement soviétique continuent de penser que la seule issue possible à une telle situation, qui représente une menace pour la cause de la paix, est un règlement sur la base des accords de Genève de 1954, excluant toute intervention étrangère au Vietnam»

agreements and to envisage the possible renovation of the provisions contained into the text of the agreements, after it would have expired in 1969.

The commercial pact provided for the doubling of the exchanges between U.S.S.R. and France: the former would have sold energetic raw materials, minerals, and also capital goods like machines; instead, the latter would have sold capital good and semi-handled products<sup>239</sup>.

The Commission, called la *Grande Commission*, gathered for the first time, in January 1967. From its reunion, the major result concerned the establishment of sectorial groups, with the aims of studying new formula of cooperation, according to the different necessities of industries and their scientific potential<sup>240</sup>. Moreover, a *group de travail sur l'information économique réciproque* was established, with the aim of exchanges scientific information.

Two other agreements were originated from the visit of General De Gaulle in Soviet Union.

The first one was an agreement for scientific and technical cooperation, with the aim of fostering the exchanges in the field of science and technology, in the most developed sectors. At this proposal, as remembered also by Pigasse, another commission, named la *petite commission* has been established. Its aim was that of investigate the means to boost the cooperation in those sectors.

With the establishment of these two Commissions, the relations between the two States, certainly, would have benefited of a major correlation between them, which would have contributed to foster the entente, although still on specific sectors.

The second agreement, instead, was signed by the two Ministers of Foreign Affairs, respectively Couve de Murville and Gromyko, and it concerned the research and exploration of the Space with pacific aims. According to the Declaration, the two governments attributed high importance to those two agreements.

As regards the already existing agreements of cooperation on the SECAM system, that on cultural relations, and the 1960 agreement on research for the

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<sup>239</sup> Pigasse J.P., *La coopération économique entre la France et l'U.R.S.S. - Champ d'application et limites*, in *Politique étrangère*, n°2 - 1967 - 32<sup>e</sup>année pp. 155-172

<sup>240</sup> *Ibidem*

pacific use of nuclear energy, the two parts were convinced to continue cooperation on those fields, and evidently to push for a stronger relations, mainly in the sector of cultural exchanges.

Thus far, the agreements taken into consideration have not a specific political weight, rather they concern other sectors, and their aim is to help opening the way for a political cooperation. Nevertheless, the political cooperation, so highly wanted and requested several times by the Soviet leaders, was actualized with the establishment, first, of a consular mission both in France and Soviet Union; and secondly, they agreed on pursuing regularly consultations between them. Of course, it is the mark of a political cooperation<sup>241</sup>, despite the ideological differences, and will to share some views on international problems, as said above.

In order to practically demonstrate this political will, it would have been installed between the Élysée and the Kremlin, a direct line of communication, similar to the so called red telephone established between Moscow and Washington some years before.

What can be understood from the text of the Declaration and from the several agreements of cooperation, is that France had succeeded to be on the same level of a superpower, albeit not having the means of a superpower.

It demonstrated that the politics of *grandeur* pursued by De Gaulle from the beginning of his mandate, had reached its culmination. As a matter of fact, France had both achieved independence from the United States and détente on the East. Actually, De Gaulle's visit to Moscow represents the partial realization of the triad :«détente, entente, coopération», remembered by the President himself also during his speech to the Soviet television.

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<sup>241</sup> The text of the Declaration at this proposal, states :« Les deux gouvernements s'efforceront de concerter leurs efforts dans l'intérêt de la paix et de la sécurité en Europe et dans le monde. Les consultations porteront également sur les relations bilatérales, compte tenu de la volonté des deux parties de développer les relations amicales et une coopération plus poussée entre la France et l'U.R.S.S.»

Notwithstanding the great successes of the visit, as showed by the content of the Declaration, the limits to a stronger link between the two states remained, as Pigasse pointed out in his article<sup>242</sup>, due to the differences deriving from the two opposite economic systems. Indeed, France had an economic system based on market economy, differently from the planned and communist economy of the Soviet counterpart. Sure enough, those limits could have been overcome from a cooperation in those particular fields, and provoked that convergence between the two systems, as already stated as regards to the convergence of ideologies, and of which De Gaulle was convinced.

The successful results concerning the following of the politics of independence and of détente were illustrated by the President of the Republic to the French people in two different occasions. As a matter of fact, the General, despite his thought about the French people<sup>243</sup>, deemed always necessary to sum up the objectives reached in both foreign and interior policy, to the French, through the use of press conferences, twice a year, and short speeches at television each time, he deemed it necessary.

During the press conference<sup>244</sup> of October 1966, De Gaulle remembered the progresses made by the Nation vis-à-vis the Soviet bloc in developing cooperation in different sectors. Moreover, the General envisaged the possibility to strengthen cooperation with others Eastern European countries, mentioning Poland, Romania, Hungary, among others. As it will be seen forward, the French President did travel to the East to confirm this expectations.

Moreover, the evaluation of the achievements during the last year, as he usually did, was done during the short speech the last day of the year. In his intervention, De Gaulle remembered how the French action weighted, at that moment, in the world. Moreover, the President, in analysing the current situation, stated that by then Cold war in Europe was arriving at its end. That had been also possible, thanks to the new role of France in strengthening

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<sup>242</sup> Pigasse, *art. cit.*

<sup>243</sup> Actually, as said in the previous pages reporting a dialogue between De Gaulle and Peyrefitte, it was necessary, according to the General, to give the people a sentiment of grandeur, meaning that the role of French policy was to wake up the spirit of nationalism that sometimes was forgotten by the people itself.

<sup>244</sup> *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 28 Octobre 1966, in DM 1966-1969*

relations to the East. Indeed, he stated: « la France, qui a repris son indépendance et qui s'en donne les moyens, va donc continuer d'agir dans le sens du rapprochement continental »<sup>245</sup>, both towards the nations belonging to the Eastern bloc, and to those closer to France.

As regards, instead, to the South-East Asia context, he affirmed something very tough and meaningful. Concerning the American intervention, De Gaulle defined the Vietnamese conflict: « une guerre détestable, puisqu'elle conduit une grande nation à en ravager une petite »<sup>246</sup>, *de facto* condemning the American involvement into the war. To conclude his speech, the General expressed his appreciation for the reform of the constitutional powers occurred almost nine years earlier, that had contributed to the establishment of such a more independent and stronger Nation.

The necessity to reinforce the *rapprochement à l'Est*, led the French President of the Republic to go to visit both Poland and Romania, during the last years of his mandate. As it has been said above, once the rapprochement with the major Eastern nation, namely Russia, was ended, it was necessary to approach new relations towards others Eastern European countries.

The official voyage to Poland took place between 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of September 1967. It was the first visit, for the President, to an Eastern nation after having visited Moscow, one year before. Of course, the visit was prepared by meetings between the different Foreign Affairs Ministers that took place during the first months of 1967.

As arrived to Warsaw, De Gaulle was received by a delegation of the State Council. In addressing to them<sup>247</sup>, the General remembers the strong links between France and Poland, from cultural and historical points of view. Forward, the French President stressed the importance of having cooperation between their two countries, in order to make Europe a safe place for both nations. Through cooperation it could have been possible to arrive to manage

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<sup>245</sup> *Allocution radiodiffusé et télévisée prononcée au Palais de l'Elysée, 31 Décembre 1966*, in *DM 1966-1969*

<sup>246</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>247</sup> *Réponse au toast adressé par Ochab, Président du Conseil de l'Etat de la République Populaire de Pologne, 6 septembre 1967*, in *DM 1966-1969*



all the problems that affected both Poland and France, namely the German issue. As a matter of fact, the Poland position against the German question was quite different from that adopted by France. As it is possible to understand also by the compte-rendu<sup>248</sup> of the conversations that the General had with Gomulka, the First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party, Polish were reticent even to have relations with the German Federal Republic. France and Poland, certainly, shared their views about the borders on the Oder-Neisse line, as De Gaulle had affirmed several times, but they did not share the Gaullist vision of the necessity to reach détente between the GFR and Eastern countries. De Gaulle, toasting President of the State Council Ochab, wished for a stronger cooperation of the two countries in all sectors, namely the economic, scientific, technological and cultural ones.

From the speech pronounced in Warsaw, it is possible to understand how the General was trying to transplant all the successes obtained in Moscow to Warsaw. Moreover, during his interventions, he wished for the resurgence of an independent great Poland, as France had become.

The concept of independence and detachment from the superpower that had, since the end of the war, put Poland under its sphere of influence, namely Soviet Union, was evoked also during De Gaulle's speech to the Polish Diet, in Krakow. The President, in almost all his interventions in Poland, stressed that despite the differences between the French and Polish political systems, the two states never fought each other, indeed they were always allies in the different conflicts that had concerned Europe. In addressing to the Diet, De Gaulle acknowledged the progresses made by the nation since the end of the war, affirming also that he saw Poland :«aussi convaincue que jamais de sa personnalité nationale»<sup>249</sup>. Forward, he affirmed:« de son côté elle a entrepris, au dedans, une vaste transformation matérielle, sociale, technique et scientifique qui l'assure de sa propre valeur et repris, vis-à-vis du dehors, la totale disposition d'elle-même, ce que lui permet de traiter chaque problème

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<sup>248</sup> The document is collected in *Documents Diplomatique Français (1er Juillet 1967-31 Décembre 1967)*

<sup>249</sup> *Discours prononcée devant la Diète polonaise, 11 Septembre 1967, in DM 1966-1969*

sans entraves et sans préjugés»<sup>250</sup>. To this provocation, or better to the hope that De Gaulle had to see a Polish State independent from the U.S.S.R. control, President Gomulka answered that the alliance with Soviet Union, together with the treaties signed with the others Socialist Republics of Eastern Europe, include the German Democratic Republic, was the cornerstone of the People's Republic of Poland<sup>251</sup>.

There was any possibility, according to Gomulka, to accomplish what France had done towards the United States, and that De Gaulle hoped that all Eastern European countries, under Soviet bloc, would have done someday: to be independent nationally, in order to construct an independent Europe.

Of course, in the same speech, the President of the French Republic, looked at the importance that the achievement of détente, entente and cooperation entailed for the two nations, to assure peace and equilibrium in Europe.

The voyage to Poland, despite some misunderstandings concerning the management of the German problem and the attachment to the maintaining of blocs observed by the President, had positive results, in the increasing of cooperation on the economic, scientific and cultural sectors.

In his repaying the visits of Eastern European leaders in France, namely the Polish and the Romanian ones, De Gaulle in 1968 was received in Romania.

The Paris-Bucharest détente, entente, and cooperation was stronger than the one resulted from the Polish visit. As already said before, an agreement of economic cooperation had been signed at the beginning of 1965 by the French Minister of Economy and Finance, Giscard D'Estaing. The latter at his coming back from Romania reported to the General the interest of that government for the principles leading foreign policy of France, namely independence.

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<sup>250</sup> *Ibidem*. Moreover, on the same theme, the General before the Polish leaders, declared: «A nos yeux, vous êtes une réalité populaire, solide, respectable et puissante, dans un monde qui doit être d'équilibre et d'indépendance; vous êtes un peuple qui doit être au premier rang»; in another occasion, he declared: «la France n'a pas de conseils à donner à la Pologne (...) Elle espère que vous saurez voir un peu plus loin, un peu plus grand que ce vous avez été obligé de faire jusqu'à présent». Both declarations are quoted from Vaisse M., *La Grandeur*, p. 439

<sup>251</sup> Quoted from a note in *DM 1966-1969*, pp. 212

The visit in Romania lasted from May 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, even if the permanence had to last more, but De Gaulle was forced to leave earlier, because of the problems that were affecting France in those days.

From the first speech<sup>252</sup> pronounced in Bucharest in response to the toast given by the President of the State Council of the Socialist Republic of Romania, Ceausescu, it is possible to underline the difference between the concept of independence in Romania and that in Poland.

De Gaulle affirmed that the France and Romania had in common historical roots, deriving both from the Latin world, but also the desire for independence was the same, despite they did not share the same political system and role of public powers. He stated: « ils se sont formé une conception pareille quant au droit de tous les peuples, à commencer par les leurs, de disposer librement d'eux-mêmes, quant au principe suivant lequel c'est sur l'indépendance, la personnalité, la dignité de chaque nation que doit être bâti l'équilibre de l'Europe »<sup>253</sup>.

Because of this affinity, concerning the desire to be independent, the General stated that it was not only necessary to continue to cooperate in the framework of the agreements stipulated three years before, whose results were good, having the commercial exchanges had doubled, or in that of the cultural, scientific exchanges, but it was necessary to improve them. At the same time, it was needed to be conscious of the political responsibility that the two countries had in being independent not only for themselves but also for the others. According to the French President, the main aim of Romania and France was to contribute to the making of a stable, safe and equilibrated Europe.

It is very interesting even the comment that the General did about the concept of independence, in Bucharest. He affirmed that to be independent, it did not mean to deny the proximity to Russia, as it was in the case of Romania, and the political and economic links, that this nation had against Soviet Union. Yet, those links had to be exploited in order to reach proximity between U.S.S.R.

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<sup>252</sup> *Réponse au toast adressé par N. Ceausescu, Président du Conseil d'Etat de la République Socialiste de Roumanie, 14 Mai 1968, in DM 1966-1969*

<sup>253</sup> *Ibidem*

and others Eastern European country, and Western European countries, in order to build up Europe<sup>254</sup>.

De Gaulle visiting the National Parliament of the Socialist Republic of Romania, restated the importance that the Franco-Romanian cooperation had<sup>255</sup>. The concept of independence was the cornerstone of his speeches in Romania. It is interesting to note that the role that De Gaulle gave to independence was of fundamental importance not only for his country but also for the others European nations that did not manage to return to national independence. Moreover, what De Gaulle affirmed during his speech at the Romanian Parliament, was that the return to nationalism should not have meant a closure in the nation itself, but it had to be a value-added to the contribution that the single nations could give to the building up of a greater Europe. In addition, he stated:« pour l'union de notre continent, donnons ensemble l'exemple. Faisons-le pour des raisons qui sont, assurément, nationales et européennes, mais qui, par là même, intéressent tout le genre humain».

It is sure that De Gaulle in Romania had found a valid partner as regards the sharing of his idea of independence. That also facilitated the détente between the two countries, since 1965, and improved the entente and cooperation with the visit of De Gaulle to Romania.

The Romanian detachment from the Soviet directives and control, that was already proved by declarations made by Ceausescu before the Central Committee of his party, in April 1968, denouncing the :«purges» of his predecessor, engaging Romania in a different via to communism, is also demonstrated during the Prague spring of the same year.

Indeed, the first event that swaying the politics of détente that De Gaulle had undertaken towards the East, was the events that took place in Prague during 1968. In Czechoslovakia, at the beginning of the year, Novotny was replaced

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<sup>254</sup> The General affirmed:« Ces conjonctions locales, bien loin de nuire, doivent au contraire contribuer à l'harmonie générale. Ce que notre continent attend de Bucarest, de Moscou et de Paris, comme de Bonn, de Rome et de toutes ses autres capitales, c'est le grand mouvement qui l'unira pour la paix et le progrès»

<sup>255</sup> Discours prononcée à la Grande Assemblée Nationale de la République Socialiste de Roumanie, 15 Mai 1968, in DM 1966-1969

by Dubcek, who tried to liberalize the political life of his nation, and limited the censure. Soviet Union, after that already Romania and even earlier Yugoslavia, had undertaken a national via to communism, feared of a possible detachment of the Czechoslovakian state from its satellites. The decision of invading the territory of a national state with the Warsaw Pact troops, excluded the Romanian ones, between August 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, violated the principle of sovereignty of a state and that of non-intervention on the interior affairs of a sovereign state, as affirmed also in the Common Franco-Soviet Declaration of June 30<sup>th</sup> 1966.

The reaction of France to that event was very tough. As a matter of fact, from a declaration published by the French government, it is understandable that France condemned the decisions taken by U.S.S.R.. The French communiqué :«dénonce le retour à la politique des blocs et des accords de Yalta, qui est incompatible avec les droits des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes»<sup>256</sup>.

The French Presidency in answering the oral communication by the Soviet Ambassador in Paris, Zorine, on August 24th, expressed :«les grandes préoccupations que lui inspire l'intervention soviétique (...) qui porte atteinte aux principes de l'indépendance des Etats et de la non-intervention dans les affaires extérieures»<sup>257</sup>.

Did General De Gaulle's idea of détente was compromised ? Did he underestimate the Soviet system nature? According to Hélène Carrère D'Encausse, the French President :«n'a pas donné toute sa portée à l'importance du dessein idéologique dans la nature du système soviétique et par conséquent dans la stratégie qui en découle»<sup>258</sup>. Therefore, he could have not provided what was actually conceivable, as the Prague suppression.

As regards the French idea of détente, as it has been seen, it was possible; nevertheless, it was still too soon to arrive to a real détente among both the blocs, and in Europe too. Concerning, the ideological aspects' differences ,

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<sup>256</sup> Vaisse M., *La Grandeur*, p. 446

<sup>257</sup> *Réponse à la communication orale du gouvernement soviétique, 24 août 1968*, in *LNC 1966-1969*

<sup>258</sup> Carrère d'Encousse H., *La politique à l'Est du général De Gaulle*, in *Espoir*, n° 62, 1988

whatever De Gaulle might say, they were still too much radicalized into the two blocs, and especially in the Eastern one. De Gaulle putting apart this element, did not manage to get rid of it, and the consequence was that in moments like that of 1968, in Prague. Then, it was necessary a choice: to return to Cold war as it was at the outset, or to continue to cooperate, in those sectors where agreements could have easily established. In practice, it was to split détente in different moments and concerning several fields. De Gaulle chose the second option.

## Conclusion

De Gaulle had arrived to power in 1958 because he was called to solve the internal governments' crisis, exploded from the Algerian conflict that was in progress, since 1954. The dramatic events of Algieri, pushed the President of the Republic Coty, to call back the saviour of the Nation, to save France once again. Did De Gaulle succeeded in saving *Patriae* again?

The fact that De Gaulle stayed in office for eleven consecutive years, is a first demonstration that he succeeded to lead France towards a better destiny, compared to what would have been if the General would not have come back to power.

As it has been showed by the events analysed in this work, it is possible to affirm that the main aim of General De Gaulle when began his mandate as Prime Minister of the former Fourth Republic, namely to bring France to *grandeur*, has been achieved. In the international arena, France had come to occupy the rank to which a great nation, as it had been in the past, was entitled to. The detachment from the West hegemonic power, and from the United States leadership, as the first objective to have a nation :«aux mains libres», able to face other powers, and in the context of Cold War, both superpowers, is a valid reason to affirm that De Gaulle's intentions came true.

On the other side, the French idea of *détente*, that at this point could be defined the Gaullist idea of *détente*, due to the personal engagement of the President in leading such a policy, for the period of his mandate had given to France good results. As a matter of fact, it is from this perspective that has to be seen the German-Soviet, or better defined Eastern, rapprochement, during the years of Brandt's *Ostpolitik*. The breach that led to the successive *ouverture à l'Est*, during the Seventies that made even later the European *détente* continue, when, instead the American-Soviet relaxations of tensions, arrived to an end because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, was possible because of what De Gaulle did during the Sixties.

As it has been said in the first chapter, it was necessary to lead France outside of the stalemate provoked by the instability of the Fourth Republic. The entrustment of foreign policy to the President helped for the establishment of France independence in the world, because, by entrusting a single man with the task of leading the nation to, substantially, detach from the United States, was easier than entrusting an entire Parliament to do the same.

It has been demonstrated in this work, how the Gaullist policy led France to be great in the world. Despite, De Gaulle was conscious that his nation had not the same means at disposal of the two superpowers, and France never could have been able to become as great as the United States or Soviet Union were. From the analysis that has been done in the previous pages, it is understandable that the in De Gaulle's thought, it was not necessary to make of France a superpower, nor in the world, nor in Europe. What, instead, was useful was that the others, and in that case the Americans, would have thought that France should have been considered a great nation, that could have helped the U.S. to lead Europe to independence.

Instead, towards Soviet Union the most important element to consider was the necessity to make it understand two major concepts. The first one being the necessity for a relaxation of tensions from which it could have been benefited France, Soviet Union and consequently Europe. The second one, to involve, according to De Gaulle, directly Soviets in Europe. These two arguments correspond to the major principles of French idea of *détente*, as analysed in the second chapter. De Gaulle, in dealing with the Soviets, had demonstrated that *détente* was divisible, that it was possible to avoid a direct contraposition between two nation, if they wanted it, based on ideological conflicts, as well as on the German question. Furthermore, it was possible to not only relax tensions between the blocs, so reaching *détente*, but it was even possible to achieve entente, as it was between France and Russia as regards the German issue, and even to cooperate. The several cooperation agreements that have been signed between French and Soviet governments proved that De Gaulle's policy was good. The *détente*, entente, cooperation with the U.S.S.R., facilitated also the cooperation with other Eastern European countries, so that the Gaullist hope of



realizing an Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, as he had several times stated, was feasible.

In this framework, it can be said that, despite the great differences that contraposed the Western country, with its Eastern partner, a comprehension of the respective necessities was possible and achievable.

Once the French idea of détente, by then in 1966-1968, was realized and the will to cooperate was strong enough, neither the crisis that occurred could have broken this relationships.

General De Gaulle in his of one last intervention before leaving office, gave a good assessment of the French foreign policy. As a matter of fact, De Gaulle stated during his September 9<sup>th</sup> 1968 press conference, that: « l'élan de son (of Czechoslovakia) peuple pour obtenir un début de libération, puis sa cohésion morale vis-à-vis de l'occupant, enfin sa répugnance à accepter le retour partout de l'Ouest de notre continent devant le risque de voir revenir la guerre froide, démontrent que notre politique, pour momentanément contrariée qu'elle paraisse, est conforme aux profondes réalités européennes et, par conséquent, qu'elle est bonne »<sup>259</sup>. In evaluating the Prague events, De Gaulle appreciated the impulse coming from the people of that nation, that on the example of France's desire for independence, understood it was necessary to detach from the hegemony, in order to reach national grandeur, and to contribute to the formation of a new leader in the world, namely Europe.

It is necessary to answer to the question made in the introduction, if the French *grandeur* could have been achievable if there would have been someone else in place, different from General De Gaulle, during the Sixties.

Of course, as it is understandable from the several speeches and messages analysed in this dissertation, to demonstrate the application of the Gaullist idea of foreign policy to the reality, that of De Gaulle was a strong personality. It is sure that, in dealing with his homologues, both Americans or Soviets, from his words, it is denotable that he did not was embarrassed, and that was convinced of his role in leading his nation to *grandeur*. By such an affirmation, it is

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<sup>259</sup> Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 9 septembre 1968, in DM 1966-1969

possible to deduce that, probably, the French foreign policy of the post-De Gaulle period, would have changed.

Before, it is important to remember that as De Gaulle was called to come back to power in 1958 by the French people, that approved his project of a new Constitution by a large majority, in the same way the French people put an end to his mandate, before of its natural expiration. It was proposed by the President a reform of the Senate and of the regionalization of the nation, in 1969, that was not approved by the French people. De Gaulle understood that the time for departure was arrived.

The new President to be elected directly by the French, as the Constitutional reform of 1962 provided, was Georges Pompidou, one of De Gaulle's major collaborator.

Would have Pompidou continued to lead foreign policy on a Gaullist perspective, or would have he changed the path to grandeur? To answer to this question, that has been raised in the introduction, it is worthy to briefly take into consideration what happened in the aftermath of the General departure.

As Angela Stent has pointed out in one of his article, *Franco-Soviet Relations from de Gaulle to Mitterrand*, the line adopted from Pompidou was not so close to that of the former French President<sup>260</sup>.

The change in the international context, due to the election of President Nixon in the United States, which, as said above, led to international détente, caused a rapprochement of France to the United States. But, at the same time, the relations with Soviet Union continued to be maintained. Moreover, « France, rejecting the Gaullist approach toward military doctrine, accepted a modified version of NATO's flexible response doctrine and engaged in what amounted to a policy of selective military cooperation with NATO. Moreover, Pompidou approved of Britain's entry into the Common»<sup>261</sup>.

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<sup>260</sup> A. Stent, *Franco-Soviet Relations from de Gaulle to Mitterrand*, French Politics and Society, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Winter 1989), pp. 14-27

<sup>261</sup> Ibidem

On the contrary, the Presidency of Giscard D'Estaing returned to the Gaullist approach, at least on the vision towards Soviet Union. At the moment of the crisis of international détente, the French President refused to align to the American positions when U.S.S.R. invaded Afghanistan. Furthermore, Giscard D'Estaing opposed the United States' decisions to impose economic sanctions on Afghanistan.

François Mitterrand, instead, even being the first Socialist President of the Republic, and involving some Communist Ministers into the government, was not so much appreciated by the Soviet leaders, who preferred to deal with the conservative governments<sup>262</sup>. Because of this :«refusal», Mitterrand was closer to the United States than to the U.S.S.R..

Finally, the French idea of détente and France's idea of grandeur were strictly related to the person of De Gaulle. Even if his successors did not changed so much the policy launched by the General, also because of the change in international arena, it was very difficult to maintain, contemporary, independence on one side, and détente and cooperation on the other, keeping in mind all the differences divided the two countries.

In conclusion, to answer the question raised before, as regards to the application of a Gaullist framework to the current situation, it is necessary to say something at this proposal.

To sum up once again the fundamental perspective of De Gaulle foreign policy, in its entirety, it is possible to affirm that the French President wanted at the same time, both grandeur, then protection of national interests and cooperation, different from the scheme of integration, imposed by the hegemonies..

Today, in my opinion, the Gaullist policy could be certainly applied. I mean, in order to put aside the political parties that want a return to nationalism *tout court*, it could be answered in Gaullist terms. As the President said addressing the Romanian Parliament, the national factor is a value-added element, that

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<sup>262</sup> A. Stent, op.cit.

does not have to lead to closure, but it is necessary to be shared with others national elements, in order to cooperate between different realities and make peace and equilibrium, both of Europe and of the world, to prevail. In this way, cooperation between nations, is an absolute positive element, that does not put aside the specificity of nations, and does not cover the necessities of a specific people, namely national interest, whose protection, according to De Gaulle, as he had several times repeated, represented the cornerstone of the independence of a State.

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## Summary

Twentieth century has been defined by Hobsbawm as «the short century», because it was considered to have last less than a normal century does. Therefore, the author put the beginning of the century in 1914 and its end in 1991. Those dates correspond, respectively, to the beginning of World War I, and the fall of Soviet Union, determining the end of a silent conflict, called Cold War.

Indeed, the second half of the century has been characterized by the division of the world into two different spheres of influence: the Western side , where the hegemonic leader were the United States; and the Eastern side, led by Soviet Union. The ideological conflict between the two superpowers, that promoted political models based on liberalism and communism, led to the split of Europe in two different parts at the end of the war, whose maximum reproduction reflected, mainly, the division of Germany in two states.

Western Europe experienced since in 1952 with the signature of the Paris Treaty, through with the European Coal and Steel Community was founded, and confirmed by the Treaty of Rome, that established the European Economic Community among the six founding States, a gradual process of integration. Today the European framework, is threatened by the raising of political parties that promote the idea to return to nationalism, and the protection of national interests against those of the Union. Taking into consideration this factor, it is worthy if to wonder whether it is possible to return to such a national closure or to find new via to integration. This issue has raised the research question of this work.

The main aim of this dissertation is to investigate the French foreign policy framework during the De Gaulle's mandate, who began in 1958. It is interesting to look at that period because of the similarities in certain aspects of the Gaullist foreign policy, compared to the ideas supported by those European political parties. As a matter of fact, as the title of this work suggests, the Gaullist foreign policy was based on detaching from the two superpowers and make France a greater nation, as it had been in the past.

Therefore, the research question that raises from the analysis of the current context, is whether a model based on Gaullist foreign policy principles, is still valid today, meaning by that if the reinterpretation of De Gaulle's idea of independence and grandeur for France, could be necessary to give a new model to apply in Europe. Moreover, it is necessary to look if that model depended on De Gaulle or could be reproduced by someone else.

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to analyse the Gaullist foreign policy, both from a political perspective and an historical one, starting from the return of De Gaulle's back to power, to the end of his mandate.

The analysis led in this work can be split in two parties. In the first one, it is taken into consideration, De Gaulle's foreign policy towards the Western allies of France, and in particular towards the United States. In the second one, instead, the rapprochement towards the East will be taken into account.

In the international situation of that period, under Cold war, the French nation belonged to the Western bloc, under the hegemony of the United States, from which the Fourth Republic was dependent, from a political, economic and military points of views; *de facto* impeaching France to be independent and to resurge as a great nation in Europe and in the world. Thus, when De Gaulle came back to power, the main idea that dominated his actions in foreign policy was *grandeur*. In order to put into effect a politics of this genre, and to allow France to resurge and to matter in the management of international problems, it was necessary, firstly to detach the nation from the complete subjugation to the Americans, mainly concerning the leading of foreign policy; and secondly, to open the way to a French idea of détente, that is to say to establish new relations with the Eastern European countries, and the Soviet Union in particular. The implementation of such a framework was the only possibility that France had, so that being again a leading nation in the world stage. Of course, as it will be seen, De Gaulle was conscious that France could have never been a superpower, as the U.S. or the U.S.S.R. were. Nevertheless, with his foreign policy, he made possible to France to matter in the international arena.

Because of the dependence of the De Gaulle's foreign policy on the national political structure of France, it is necessary to begin from the analysis of the interior situation of France in 1958, that led to power, once again, the former Saviour of the *Patriae*. The first chapter, as a matter of fact, is titled *The Fifth Republic: an instrument to achieve foreign policy*.

In the first paragraph of this chapter, the analysis is based on the interior political situation of France that led De Gaulle to power in 1958 and on the consequences that this return would have caused.

It is necessary to briefly recall to mind which was the situation of France before 1958 and which were the decisive causes for De Gaulle coming back to power.

The Fourth Republic established with the Constitution of 1946, based on the strong power of Parliament and of political parties, proved unable to face the situation that France was living from 1954 onwards in Algeria. As a matter of fact, in this French colony a conflict was going on, with two contraposed parties: one asking for independence of Algeria from the Metropole, the other one demanding for the remaining of the colony under the power of France.

The crisis in Algeria of May 13<sup>th</sup> 1958, where Generals of the French army took the power established a *Comité de Salut publique*, because of their fear of an abandoning of the colony, asked for the return to power of General De Gaulle, who they considered the only one person able to solve the Algerian crisis.

General De Gaulle, accepting the mandate of Prime Minister of a new government, asked the National Assembly, on June 1<sup>st</sup> 1958, to give him all the necessary powers for the duration of six months, in order to put an end to the Algerian crisis and to draft a new Constitution<sup>263</sup>. The French Parliament approved both the formation of a new government led by General De Gaulle and gave him the charge to write a new constitutional text.

The new text, approved by referendum on September 28<sup>th</sup> 1958, and entered into force, from October 4<sup>th</sup>, marked the passage from the Fourth Republic to the Gaullist Fifth Republic. The main elements contained in this new

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<sup>263</sup> Allocution prononcée à l'Assemblée Nationale, 01 Juin 1958, in DM 1958-1962



fundamental law for the country, were that already presented by De Gaulle in his speech at Bayeux in 1946<sup>264</sup>.

First of all, the new Constitution, as presented by De Gaulle in his speech<sup>265</sup> at Place de la République, on September 4<sup>th</sup>, provided a strong separation of powers, between the executive and the legislative powers. The former would have lied in the hand of the government, with President of the Republic having an important role, who would have been elected by a Council of *notables*, and no longer by the Parliament.

The main differences between the political system of the Fourth and Fifth Republics were in the role of the President of the Republic, that was no longer a representative figure of the State, but how it is affirmed by article 16 of the new Constitution, the President of the Republic has the duty to take all the necessary measures, whenever the institutions of the Republic, the national integrity, the independence of the nation, or the respect of international obligations, were threatened.

The new role assigned to the *Président de la République* by the Constitution was also that of leading the foreign policy of the country, belonging it to the so called *domain réservé*. But, in order to put in place such authority, De Gaulle was convinced that his power had to come directly from the people. Therefore, the 1958 Constitution had not completed the reform of the political system of France, that had the aim of assuring to the nation a stable and stronger institution. The attempts to the life of De Gaulle in the first years of the Sixties, meanwhile elected President of the Republic in December 1958, made it possible to propose a reform of the Constitution, whose aim was that of the election of the President of the Republic at universal suffrage, in 1962. The referendum was approved by the French people by a large majority. In this way, the President was also legitimate to take important decisions in foreign policy, because of the legitimation derived directly from the people.

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<sup>264</sup> Discours de Bayeux, in DM 1940-1946. In this speech, soon after the end of the war, De Gaulle invited the political forces to draft a Constitution, which would have done strong powers to the executive power, in order to avoid the repetition of crisis of 1940. The government should have had necessary powers to protect the integrity of the Nation.

<sup>265</sup> Discours prononcée à Place de la République, le 4 Septembre 1958, in DM 1958-1962

Once the reform of the political system of France had been accomplished, the terrain was ready to lead the nation to his natural role: to be a great nation in the world. As already said, from the direct election by the French people, of the President of the Republic, this latter derived also the power to lead foreign policy of France.

The principles of foreign policy that led the Gaullist decisions in this field, were sovereignty and independence. The first one has a juridical meaning, why the second one had a political signification. As Maurice Vaisse has pointed out: «l'indépendance de l'Etat est la traduction politique de la notion juridique de souveraineté»<sup>266</sup>. In De Gaulle's perspective, in order to make a state independent, it was necessary someone who could embodied that concept of sovereignty. According to the Constitution, the *souveraineté* belonged to the people. Obviously, it is impossible to think that the people would have led foreign policy, thus it was necessary someone who directly embodied the juridical notion of sovereignty. With the directly election of the President of the Republic, the juridical principle was transferred from the people to the President, who in this way enjoyed the necessary legitimation to transform principles into actions.

The political principle of independence, instead, was directly related to the context in which De Gaulle's acted, namely Cold war. As said above, France was under the umbrella of United States, but for De Gaulle it was necessary to rediscover national independence. Even because, only in this way, the concept of sovereignty could have been put into place, defending the national interests of the country. The independence from the United States became the cornerstone of the Gaullist foreign policy action during the first years of his mandate. As a matter of fact, according to De Gaulle, the only element that should be considered in the Gaullist perspective when acting in foreign policy was the defence of national interest. But, that, could have been achievable only if the nation was independent from any other country, in any moment.

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<sup>266</sup> M. Vaisse, *La grandeur, politique étrangère du Général De Gaulle*, p.

Certainly, to be independent did not mean to be isolated or to not to be aligned<sup>267</sup> with none of the superpowers; instead, it meant to be directly involved in the decisions taken in the international arena and concerning France.

The first act of foreign policy that put in place the notion of independence of France arrived when De Gaulle was still Prime Minister. As already said, the independence that De Gaulle wanted to reach was in general from the two hegemonic powers, and in particular from the United States hegemony. Independence during Cold War did mean also to be independent to be able to ensure national defence, under a period where the risk of a conflict was high.

As a matter of fact, the main aim of the Memorandum<sup>268</sup> sent by the French President, in September 1958 to the American President Eisenhower and to the Prime Minister of Great Britain Macmillan, was to affirm both France independence from the decisions taken at the interior of the integrated military command of the Atlantic Alliance, and to propose to the U.S. and Great Britain, the creation of a tripartite system, at the interior of the Alliance, where France would have participated in the decision-making process, concerning defence. Moreover, because the threat of a possible conflict did not only was in Europe, it was necessary, according to De Gaulle, to enlarge the zones interest of N.A.T.O., in the Mediterranean and in Middle East, in particular, even because it was in that zones that France had national interests to be protected. This possibility was not, in a first moment, accepted by the two others partners, and in particular by the U.S. that wanted to maintain their leadership at the interior of the military alliance of the Western countries, that contraposed the military allies of Soviet Union and its satellites, established in 1955 by the Warsaw pact.

The refusal to the proposition contained into the Memorandum led, in March 1959, to the withdrawal of the French Mediterranean Fleet from

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<sup>267</sup> On non-alignment of France, see the Etienne Burin de Bouziers, *Le non-alignement*, in *La politique étrangère du Général De Gaulle*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1985

<sup>268</sup> *Lettre et Memorandum au Président des Etats Unis D.D. Eisenhower, 18 Septembre 1958*, in *Lettres, Notes et Carnets 1958-1960*, Paris, Plon 1985

N.A.T.O., justifying this decision by the conflict in which France was involved in Algeria<sup>269</sup>. The decision taken by De Gaulle did not mean, somehow, to not be allied with the U.S. in the management of the international crisis that could have been exploded. As a matter of fact, during the Berlin crisis provoked by Soviet Union at the end of 1958, De Gaulle assured to the American President<sup>270</sup> that, whenever there was a war, France would have fought together with the countries of the Western bloc, and with the United States too.

In the second chapter the main aim is to analyse the notion that entailed the idea that De Gaulle has of France, always present in De Gaulle's thought, namely: *a certain idée de la France*. In order to realize this *idée*, it is worthy to look at the ideal that was present in De Gaulle's thought and that allows to formulate those principles of foreign policy above-mentioned, namely *grandeur*.

To understand this concept of *grandeur*, to then translate it into actions, it is necessary to make a mental effort, in order to construct around the idea of France, a myth.

As a matter of fact when De Gaulle presented his nation to the people, he imagined it to be as :«la princesse des contes ou la madonne des fresques»<sup>271</sup>. It was necessary, in order to make the Nation great, to present an imagine of the country both internally and externally, able to return to the greatness of the past. During the Third and Fourth Republics France had not the necessary means in order to accomplish its role, deriving directly from his great history of the past and from its destiny. With the political system established by the Fifth Republic, instead, the country had the necessary instruments to be able to matter in international arena.

It was an issue of transforming this concept into strategy, through specific actions. First of all, a nation to reach *grandeur*, had to be independent. An

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<sup>269</sup> As specified during *conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 25 Mars 1959*, in *DM 1958-1962*

<sup>270</sup> The strong cooperation between France and the United States is perceivable from the letter sent by De Gaulle to Eisenhower, March 12, 1959, where they both agreed that in case of any action of the U.S.S.R. in Berlin that would have provoked a conflict, France and the U.S. would have been on the same side. See *Lettre au Président des États-Unis d'Amérique D.D. Eisenhower, 12 Mars 1959*, in *LNC 1958-1960*

<sup>271</sup> De Gaulle Ch., *Introduction*, in *Mémoires de guerre*, Paris, Plon, 1954

independence that had to be declined in different fields. The first one that is taken into consideration, is the defensive aspect. As a matter of fact, as soon as De Gaulle came back to power, it was decided that France had to possess a *force de frappe*, namely a dissuasive force against any possible enemy. In that case, the possible threat could have derived from the Soviet Union. De Gaulle was conscious that it was not possible for his nation to have the same nuclear armament of the two superpowers, but the fact of possessing it, was the symbol, first of independence, also political, because having the means to defend themselves, French had not to comply with the all the American decisions. Secondly, a *force de frappe* was also a deterrent against those who possessed it.

The second element of concretization of the French idea of grandeur into strategy and actions, was the refusal of the American new President Kennedy's proposal, to establish a multilateral force, concerning nuclear weapons, between the members of Atlantic Alliance, that were the United States and Great Britain<sup>272</sup>. The refusal of the proposed arrived by Kennedy was due to the necessity to be independent. As a matter of fact, according to De Gaulle, a state in order to be politically independent, had to have an autonomous defensive system.

The third and last act that marked the desire of France to be great, only possible if the nation had :«les mains libres», was the withdrawal of all the French troops from the integrated military command of N.A.T.O. in March 1966. This decision, finally, put an end to the search for independence from the United States leadership, because it was achieved at least in defensive field. As said above, it did not mean to refuse the friendship of the Americans, but first of all, to allow France to protect national interests, that as it will be seen forward, corresponded to a relaxation of tensions with the Eastern bloc. Thus, it was necessary to detach completely from the United States.

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<sup>272</sup> On this refusal, it is possible to read some conversations between De Gaulle and Peyrefitte, where he affirmed that the fact of being part of a multilateral force for Great Britain was just an illusion, because practically the U.S. would have continued to decide, in Peyrefitte A., *C'était de Gaulle*, Paris, Editions Gallimard Fayard, 2002

After that De Gaulle had led France to be independent, from the Americans, and because the internal troubles as the Algerian conflict had finished with the colony's independence in 1962, France had reached its objective, and it was :«une nation aux mains libre».

In order to complete the scheme of grandeur, that provided for the nation to be directly involved in the management of international problems, and mainly those concerning Europe, it was necessary to reach détente to the East.

As specified in the dissertation, the historical period that is commonly recognized as détente, is that starting with the election to the Presidency of Nixon in the U.S., and finishing with the invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet troops.

In De Gaulle's foreign policy had, since the beginning, present the idea of reaching détente with the countries belonging to the Eastern bloc.

At the beginning of the sixties, two international crisis arrived to threaten the equilibrium of Cold War, namely the Berlin crisis and the Cuban missile crisis. The French President understood that there was not still the possibility to have a détente, that once achieved it had to lead to entente and finally cooperation, between the two blocs. Instead, because of France demonstration of independence, it was possible to establish a French via to détente.

In the second paragraph of the chapter, an analysis of the Gaullist concept of détente is conducted.

It is possible to individuate some points<sup>273</sup>, that distinguishes the French idea of détente from the following period of the Seventies.

The first point of the Gaullist idea of détente was the refusal of blocs, that is to say the refusal of the presence of two hegemonic powers from which all the others countries had to depend.

Directly related to this refusal, there was one the element of foundation of the division of the world in two parties, namely the ideological conflict. As it will be seen forward, the ideological aspect represented a limit to détente both between France and the U.S.S.R., and ,mainly between the two hegemonies.

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<sup>273</sup> On this subject see Puaux F., *La conception gaullienne de la détente 1964-1988*, in *Espoir*, 1966

The second point characterizing the French concept of détente is the separation from the two bloc's confrontation of the German issue. As it is known, the creation of two different states in Germany was one of the reasons at the base of the formation of Cold war between the two hegemonic powers. According to De Gaulle, the German issue should have been considered an European problem, so that European countries, together with Germans and nations of the Eastern blocs, involving Soviet Union, or better Russia as the General defined it, could have found a solution.

The third point concerned the possible divisibility of détente. It means that, contrary to what would have been done during the following détente period of the Seventies, it was necessary, according to De Gaulle, to split the process of détente into different sectors.

Once détente would have been in place, it was necessary, according to De Gaulle, to proceed in realizing entente, meaning the comprehension of between the two parties of different points of view, and finally to find a common ground, and lastly cooperation.

De Gaulle translated the French idea of détente into actions, since the beginning of his mandate. As a matter of fact, the third chapter investigates this concretization of détente, from 1958 to 1965. In this part of the work, they are also taken into account the limits to détente that could have been posed by the confrontation of blocs, namely the ideological aspect and the German issue.

From the analysis of the letters and of speeches of De Gaulle, it is possible to understand that the desire for relaxation of tensions between the two blocs, with the final aim of their elimination, and of the necessity for France to establish relations with the East, there was since his coming back to power.

The arguments, to demonstrate the French concept of détente, that are taken into consideration, are substantially represented by two major events that occurred from 1958 onwards.

The first mark is the invitation made by De Gaulle to the President of the Council of Minister of Soviet Union, Khrushchev, to go to visit France<sup>274</sup>.

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<sup>274</sup> *Message au Président du Conseil des Ministres de l'U.R.R.S. N. Khrouchtchev*, in LNC 1958-1960

The visit took place at the end of March 1960. From the conversations<sup>275</sup> between the French President and Khrushchev, it is possible to individuate two main points. The first one concerned the problems related to the German issue, upon which France and Russia shared the same views. As a matter of fact, according both De Gaulle and Khrushchev the borders of Germany had to remain the same as those decided in Potsdam in 1945. In addition, they shared the idea that West Germany had not to access the nuclear power and that an immediate reunification was not possible. The only point upon which the two countries disagreed was the recognition of the German Democratic Republic as a State.

The second point faced by the two leaders during their conversations concerned disarmament. French opinion on this subject, that was several times communicated also to the Americans, was clear: they agreed on a general and controlled disarmament that would have concerned all the nuclear powers in the world, with the destruction of nuclear armaments. In that moment, because of the unwillingness of the two hegemonies, it was not possible. Indeed, France would have refused also to sign the treaty on non-proliferation of nuclear experiences in the atmosphere, signed by the United States, Soviet Union and Great Britain in 1963.

Nevertheless, De Gaulle and Khrushchev, decided to sign an agreement on the beneficial effects of nuclear energy. This agreement marked also the first attempt of cooperation between France and Russia.

The second element that shows the will of De Gaulle to reach détente, is the organization of the Paris Summit Conference in May 1960<sup>276</sup>, to which the President of the United States, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, the President of the Council of Ministers of Soviet Union and the French President participated. The main themes that had to be faced at the conference concerned

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<sup>275</sup> See Entretien De Gaulle-Khrushchev, <http://www.charles-de-gaulle.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Lentretien-entre-de-Gaulle-et-Khrushchev.pdf>

<sup>276</sup> The consideration about a possible Summit conference to hold between the four major powers, was already communicated to the American President Eisenhower in the letters sent during the second part of 1959, and mainly after the visit of the Soviet leader to the U.S., who made understand that it was necessary to maintain pacific coexistence between the blocs. Before the official invitation to be sent to the Soviet leader, De Gaulle and Eisenhower agreed on organizing a meeting between the Western powers, France, U.S. and Great Britain to agree upon the positions to have at the Summit conference. Letters from September to December 1959 between De Gaulle and Eisenhower, can be read in *LNC 1958-1960*



the regulation of German issue, in order to put an end to the Berlin crisis, and the issue of disarmament. The conference did not success because of the Soviet accusation to the United States to have sent an espionage plane in U.S.S.R., which was dropped down by the Soviets. Khrushchev sustained at the conference that the Americans did not really want to reach détente between the two blocs. In order to participate to the conference, the Russians pretended public excuses by the Americans and the guarantee that these latter would have not adopted such a policy again. Eisenhower, admitting the responsibility of the incident, refused to apologize. Therefore, the conference failed, despite the suggestion of De Gaulle, who from the conversation it is possible to understand was the only one to really desire détente, to continue<sup>277</sup>. In fact, the issue of disarmament was one of the theme to face at the conference.

The second paragraph, instead, as abovementioned, deals with the limits to put in place détente. The main limits to French idea of détente are those represented by the difference in ideological aspects, and by the German issue. In the first place, it is worthy to look at the ideological differences that there were between France and Soviet Union. Indeed, the main split did not concern the different ideology that adopted the two countries, but the political systems that derived from ideologies. As a matter of fact, what De Gaulle criticized the totalitarian regime imposed to the Russian people<sup>278</sup>, and to the satellites states of Soviet Union, more than communism, which being an ideology, in Gaullist opinion, would have overcome, because of the convergence between the two blocs<sup>279</sup>. From the speeches of De Gaulle, and his press conferences, it is possible to note one specific element. When the French President had to refer to Russia, as it was in the past, and of which he appreciated the culture, Soviet Union was called :«la Russie»; when instead he had to criticize the totalitarian political system adopted by communist leaders, De Gaulle referred to it, saying :«le régime soviétique» or simply Soviet Union.

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<sup>277</sup> Memorandum of Conversation of the Paris Summit Conference of May 16, 1960, in <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v09/d168>

<sup>278</sup> *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 23 Juillet 1964*, in *DM 1962-1965*

<sup>279</sup> On convergence theories see Soutou G.H., *Teorie sulla convergenza nella Francia degli anni Sessanta e Settanta*, in *Ventesimo Secolo*, 09 Marzo 2006

Nevertheless, De Gaulle, even not sharing that political system, was conscious that it was not possible to avoid to have relations with Soviet Union.

The second limit was represented by the German issue. The point that the two countries shared, have been mentioned above. Nevertheless, it is worthy to take into account the German issue from a French perspective.

De Gaulle, since his coming back to power, wished for a Franco-German rapprochement, useful to France to become a leading power in Europe.

In this paragraph what it is taken into consideration is the strengthening of relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Gaullist France, that was consecrated into the *Traité de l'Élysée*<sup>280</sup>. This treaty signed by Chancellor Adenauer and President De Gaulle, provided for cooperation between the two countries, in three different fields. The first one, was the cooperation into the defence sector, with the common production of conventional armament. This aspect of the treaty was highly criticized by Khrushchev that in a note to the French government on February 1963, few days later of the signature of the treaty, and was defined as a military alliance, that would have allowed GFR to possess nuclear armament.

The second aspect of the treaty concerned the decisions of the two governments to have stable relations, with meeting that had to be organized at least once per year at the highest level.

The third aspect was the organization of cooperation in cultural sector, with the increase of exchanges between the two countries.

De Gaulle gave an important value to this rapprochement because it implied that France was able to lead, together with West Germany, an independent and stable foreign policy in Europe. In practice, it was the demonstration to the Americans of the will to have an independent European pole, that would have taken autonomous decisions. Nevertheless, that remained a French interpretation of the agreement, because the Federal Republic of Germany would have continued to depend on American relations.

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<sup>280</sup> For an analysis on *Traité de l'Élysée* and its consequences, see Schoenborn B., *Sens et portée du Traité de l'Élysée*, in *La Mésentente apprivoisée*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 2007

The consolidation of the policy of *ouverture à l'Est*, arrived in 1964-1966.

The Gaullist will of detachment from the United States' leadership and the pursuing of détente went at the same pace. The major event that in 1964 proved this thesis is the establishment of diplomatic relations between France and People's Republic of China. The French decision violated the American suggestion at this proposal, that still recognized, as France had done until 1964, the nationalist government of China, which was forced to leave Beijing in 1949 because of the establishment of the Mao Zedong communist regime.

This decision, despite the ideological split occurred between Chinese and Soviet communism, was welcomed in U.S.S.R., because it demonstrate that France was really detaching from the leadership of the United States.

The other step towards a consolidation of détente in 1964-1965 was the adoption by Soviet Union and France of the SECAM, the system for coloured television. This system was patented in France by a private firm; whereas the United States had brevetted, earlier, a system called PAL. After that the proposal by the French Minister Alain Peyrefitte, to the Western European countries, mainly the German Federal Republic and Italy, to adopt SECAM, in order to have an European system, was not accepted, De Gaulle proposed to his Minister to advice it to the U.S.S.R.<sup>281</sup>. Indeed, the method used by the General to reach the French idea of détente was that of achieving cooperation in specific areas, in order to eventually have complete détente between the countries.

Peyrefitte succeeded in convincing the Russians to adopt the system, that defended it before the Americans at the Vienna conference of the Consultative Committee on International Radio. During the French Minister's visit in Moscow, at the beginning of 1965, he met also the new President of the Soviet Supreme, Brezhnev, who had replaced, together with Kosygin and Podgorny, the former President of U.S.S.R. Nikita Khrushchev. From this meeting, apart from the decision to share researches on SECAM, it was reported by Peyrefitte to De Gaulle, that Brezhnev wished for a stronger political cooperation

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<sup>281</sup> See conversations on SECAM adoption between De Gaulle and Peyrefitte, in Peyrefitte A., *op.cit.*

between their two nations<sup>282</sup>. Moreover, as the Russians had several times suggested, they wanted the cooperation be consecrated by a French President's visit to Soviet Union, as remembered also by the Soviet Ambassador Vinogradov, to the French President.

Moreover, at the beginning of 1964, after a further invitation made by the Soviet government to De Gaulle to go to visit Moscow, the French President decided to send the Minister of Economy and Finances, Valéry Giscard D'Estaing. His visit will lead to the opening of conversations for an agreement on economic cooperation, whose signature arrived at the end of October 1964. The aim of the agreement was to lead to increase the economic exchanges between the two states, since January 1<sup>st</sup> 1965. Indeed, it already existed an agreement on economic cooperation of 1963, but it needed to be renewed. The economic cooperation, that will be the cornerstone of the Gaullist policy to the East, is the additional demonstration of the possibility to split détente into different sectors.

The last chapter deals with the consolidation of détente between France and others European states, in particular with Poland and Romania.

In the first paragraph, the main aim is to expose the voyage that President De Gaulle did in Soviet Union, in 1966. This analysis is led by the using of De Gaulle's speeches<sup>283</sup> in the different cities of U.S.S.R. and of the compte-rendu of the conversations between the French President and the Soviet leaders<sup>284</sup>.

The voyage took place between June 20<sup>th</sup> and July 1<sup>st</sup>, and the main cities touched by the President were Volgograd, Leningrad, and Kiev. In his speeches, the President exalted the Russian people and its culture, and remembered the historical ties that there had been during history, between the two countries. Moreover, the General visited also the Soviet Academy for science, in Siberia, where he remembered the fundamental importance of cooperation in scientific and technological innovation, between France and Russia.

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<sup>282</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>283</sup> The speeches taken into account are collected in DM 1966-1969, pp. 40-57

<sup>284</sup> *Compte-rendu des conversations entre De Gaulle et hommes d'Etat Soviétiques, in Document Diplomatique Français, tome II, 1 Juin-31 Décembre 1966*

The most important moments of the visit, certainly, occurred during the French President's meeting with the triumvirate leading Soviet Union.

From the compte-rendu of the conversations, sent by the French Ambassador in Moscow, Baudet, to the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, it is possible to individuate mainly three arguments of discussions.

The first one was the German issue. At this proposal, the General reiterated his visions, according to the solution to the German question. He told to his Soviet homologues, that France was in favour of the maintenance of the German borders, as established in Yalta and then in Potsdam, in 1945. In addition, he did not hope that West Germany would have possessed a nuclear force, as after all, the Soviets wished for, and, as well as the U.S.S.R. had made clear, De Gaulle did not envisage the possibility, in the immediate, of a possible reunification of Germany. The Soviets, on their side, agreed on the proposals made by the French President, but asked him which was the French position towards the recognition of the German Democratic Republic, to which De Gaulle answered by saying that it was: «une institution artificielle», therefore, it could not be recognized by France. For this position towards GDR, he was appreciated in West Germany by many members of the government.

A further important point stated by the General, that confirmed the abovementioned principles of French idea of détente, was the question of dealing with the German issue, as it was an European problem and not an international cause of division. In this way, French, Soviets and both German States, together with the others European countries, should have been involved in finding a solution to the situation. This point was really appreciated by the Soviet leaders, that saw in it another sign of detachment of France from the U.S. and a possibility for putting aside the Americans, in Europe. But, in order to achieve such a scope, it was necessary that Western Germany would have agreed, something that, at least in that period, seemed impossible.

The second argument of conversations was the issue concerning disarmament. In practice, De Gaulle, since the visit of Khrushchev in Paris six years earlier, had not changed his opinion. As a matter of fact, he told to the Soviet leaders that he deemed it necessary to have disarmament, that should have been

general and controlled, and that would have concerned all the nuclear forces of the world, then the two superpowers too. The Soviets too agreed in that point, but it seemed almost impossible in that moment because of a resurgence of conflict between the two hegemonic powers, due to the American involvement in the Vietnamese conflict, that the French President had several times, condemned. As a matter of fact, he had defined it a «guerre détestable» during a speech<sup>285</sup>.

The third major argument upon which the two superpowers had conversations, concerned their specific relations and cooperation. The Soviet leaders demonstrated to be favourable to the continuation of cooperation, once that *détente à la française*, and consequently *entente*, seemed to be achieved. The French President too, expressed his desire for the continuation and enlargement of the sectors of cooperation between France and Russia. The content of the Franco-Soviet cooperation is published by the two parties in a common Declaration on June 30<sup>th</sup>, whose analysis is the subject of the last paragraph of the work.

The results of the visit of De Gaulle in Soviet Union, could be said to be certainly positive, concerning French foreign policy, meaning that De Gaulle had succeeded in putting into effect the triad *détente, entente, cooperation*, through the signature of different cooperation agreements in several sectors.

In the last paragraph, instead, an assessment of the De Gaulle's visit to Moscow is taken into consideration, through the analysis of the *Déclaration commune franco-soviétique*.

The two governments in this document stated, first of all the necessity to continue in cooperating, in order to ensure peace and equilibrium in the European continent.

Then, the declaration analysed the different positions about the arguments of their conversations, as said above. Notably, the German issue, the disarmament question and the condemnation of the Vietnam war.

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<sup>285</sup> *Allocution radiodiffusé et télévisée prononcée au Palais de l'Élysée, 31 Décembre 1966, in DM 1966-1969*

In addition, the Soviet and French leaders agreed on a fundamental principle of international right, but also useful to well understand the French idea of *détente*: the non-intervention of a nation into the interior affairs of a sovereign state (a principle that the Soviets would have violated in Prague in 1968), and the independence of European countries, in order to have stability and a real *détente* between the two sides of Europe, to which both Soviet Union and France were devoted.

Moreover, the French and Soviet leaders exposed the different agreements of cooperation, both those already into force and those that had been signed during the President's visit to Moscow.

It is worthy to take into consideration this agreements and to highlight the main elements of each of them.

The cooperation agreements already in place in June 1966, were three.

The first one was the agreement on the common research for pacific uses of nuclear energy, signed by De Gaulle and Khrushchev in April 1960. During the visit, it was provided to continue cooperation in this sense.

The second agreement, already in force, was that concerning the economic cooperation between the two countries. At this proposal, it was established a permanent mix commission, called the Grande Commission, depending directly from the governments of the two nations, that had the duty to take under control the economic exchanges and to research new formulas of economic relations, in order to renew the agreement, once that in place would have expired in 1969. The creation of such a commission is an important element, because for its permanent nature, demonstrates the will of the two countries to really want to continue cooperation between the two.

The agreement on SECAM, in place since 1965, was renewed, by deciding to advance researches in that sector.

But, also a scientific and technological agreement of cooperation was signed in that occasion. It provided for the establishment of a *petite commission*, which had in practice the same duty of the great commission, with the difference that it was divided in sector groups.

A new agreement concerning research and exploration of the Space with pacific aims was signed by the two Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Détente was not only reached with Soviet Union by De Gaulle, but it was also extended to the Eastern European countries. The cases taken into consideration are the Polish and Romanian ones.

As regards to Poland, a delegation of Polish government had already visited Paris in 1964, from which an economic cooperation agreement had originated. De Gaulle went to visit Poland in 1967. In his speeches to Warsaw and Krakow he remembered the personal reasons that tied him to that State and the historical and cultural ones that, instead, had associated France and Poland during history. He underlined the fact that two countries during history never fought one against the other, being it an important element in order to establish, then, pacific relations between them<sup>286</sup>. In his private conversations with the Secretary of the Polish Workers party, Gomulka, De Gaulle underlined the problems they had in common, namely the German issue that so much worried the Polish government, in particular for German borders. The French President repeated to Gomulka the French opinion as regards the German issue and wished for a future cooperation and opening of Eastern European countries to the West, in order to manage the European problems in an European framework, to assure the continent peace and equilibrium.

The cornerstone of the Gaullist speeches in Poland was independence. The French President invited Polish to take the same path, France had taken some years earlier, in order to declare their independence from the hegemonic power of Soviet Union<sup>287</sup>. To this invitation, De Gaulle received a negative answer from Gomulka, who affirmed the Polish alliance with Soviet Union and to all the members belonging to the Warsaw pact, and defined that the cornerstone of the Polish policy. Nevertheless, it was Polish government's intention to continue to cooperate with France as regards the economic exchanges.

A total different attitude was that of the Romanian leaders when De Gaulle visited Bucharest in 1968. As for Poland, there was already cooperation in

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<sup>286</sup> See the *Allocutions prononcées à Varsovie et à Cracovie*, in DM 1966-1969

<sup>287</sup> See *Allocution prononcée à la Diète polonaise*, in *ibidem*



economic exchanges between these two countries, after that the French Minister of Economy and Finance, Giscard D'Estaing, had signed a cooperation agreement with the Maurer, the Romanian Prime Minister in 1965. As remembered by the Minister<sup>288</sup> at his coming back to Paris, he was pleasantly surprised because of the interest showed by the Romanian leaders towards the French attitude towards the United States in order to declare their independence. As a matter of fact, because of the split between the Soviet communism and the Romanian new path to socialism, Ceausescu appreciated the speeches of De Gaulle in Romania, whose cornerstone was independence. Being conscious of what Romania wanted, the French President wished for a stronger cooperation between the two countries, even if they had never been related, because of differences in political system, and of the geographic distance that separated France and Romania. De Gaulle thought that the two countries could have been leaders in Europe, one in the Western side, the other one in the Eastern bloc, in order to cooperate and lead their common continent to détente, peace and equilibrium<sup>289</sup>.

The détente equilibrium established by De Gaulle during the Sixties demonstrated to be strong enough when Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968, because of the liberalization of politics wanted by the people and led by Dubcek. Despite the condemnation of De Gaulle, during a press conference<sup>290</sup>, of the Soviet actions, that did not break the relations and cooperation between France and Soviet Union.

In conclusion, it is necessary to answer to the questions raised in the introduction. To the first one, that is to say, if French *grandeur* was strictly related to the person of De Gaulle, the answer is positive. It means that, as for the successors of De Gaulle, once, the French President had achieved its objective, the path was opened to continue on that road. But, it was necessary to have a strong personality, able to represent that national interest to which De Gaulle several times made reference and to mythologize the idea of France.

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<sup>288</sup> See Peyrefitte A., *op.cit.*, p.914

<sup>289</sup> *Réponse au toast adressé par N. Ceausescu Président du Conseil d'Etat de la République Socialiste de Roumanie, 14 Mai 1968*, in *DM 1966-1969*

<sup>290</sup> *Conférence de presse tenue au Palais de l'Élysée, 09 Septembre 1966*, in *DM 1966-1969*

To be honest, it is necessary to say that, the French idea of détente was in part imitated by the German Chancellor Brandt in his leading *Ostpolitik*. Unlike Brandt, the successive French Presidents tried to re-equilibrate French policy towards the United States. It is worthy to mention the characterizing features of De Gaulle's successors. Pompidou continued his policy towards the East, but at the same time looked for a Franco-American rapprochement, even accepting to participate in specific missions of the Atlantic Alliance, even if France continued to remain outside of the military command of the organization. Giscard D'Estaing, instead, when the international détente period arrived to an end, he did not declared to be in favour of sanctions towards Soviet Union, when invading Afghanistan, unlike what the Americans had imposed, thus proving to want to continue on the path of détente. Lastly, Mitterrand, the first Socialist President of France, because of the will to find a specific via of French socialism, had not good relations with Soviet Union, even because, as stated by Angela Stent<sup>291</sup>, in his article *Franco-Soviet Relations from de Gaulle to Mitterrand*, the U.S.S.R. preferred to have the stability of conservative governments

In conclusion, it is necessary to answer the other question, from which the research question of this work has raised, namely if the Gaullist foreign policy could be adopted and reproduce in the current European context. In my opinion, the analysis made so far had demonstrated that some elements of the Gaullist foreign policy are still valid today. It is worthy to answer with the concepts expressed by De Gaulle during his short speech to the Romanian Parliament<sup>292</sup>. The protection of national interests should be the cornerstone of the foreign policy of a state, and it should affirm the independence of the nation. At the same time, it is necessary, in order to reach equilibrium and peace in the continent, to cooperate. Therefore, an integrated system of nations should be replaced by a cooperative one, where the national interests and differences among states, should work as a value-added element, in the

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<sup>291</sup> Stent A., *Franco-Soviet Relations from de Gaulle to Mitterrand*, in *French Politics and Society*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Winter 1989), pp. 14-27

<sup>292</sup> *Allocution à la grande Assemblée Nationale de la République Socialiste de Roumanie*, 15 Mai 1968, in *DM 1966-1969*

relations among states, with the final aim of assuring equilibrium, peace and stability.