

Political Leadership In France:
From Charles De Gaulle To Nicolas Sarkozy

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To the memory of my mother and father

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List of abbreviations

CD	Centre démocrate
CDS	Centre des démocrates sociaux
CERES	Centre d'études et de recherches socialistes
CFDT	Confédération française démocratique du travail
CGT	Confédération générale du travail
CIR	Convention des institutions républicaines
CNIP	Centre national des indépendants et paysans
CPE	Contrat première embauche
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CRS	Compagnies républicaines de sécurité
CSG	Contribution sociale généralisée
EEC	European Economic Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ENA	Ecole normale d'administration
EU	European Union
FDS	Fédération démocrate et socialiste
FGDS	Fédération de la gauche démocrate et socialiste
FLN	Front de libération nationale
FN	Front national
FNRI	Fédération nationale des républicains indépendants
GPRA	Gouvernement provisoire de la république algérienne
ISF	Impôt sur les grandes fortunes
MLF	Mouvement de libération des femmes

MRG	Mouvement des radicaux de gauche
MRP	Mouvement républicain populaire
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OAS	Organisation de l'armée secrète
ORTF	Office de la radiodiffusion télévision française
PACS	Pacte civil de solidarité
PCE	Parti communiste d'Espagne
PCF	Parti communiste français
PCI	Parti communiste italien
PDM	Progrès et démocratie moderne
PR	Parti républicain
PSA	Parti socialiste autonome
PSU	Parti socialiste unifié
RI	Républicains indépendants
RMI	Revenu minimum d'insertion
RPF	Rassemblement du peuple français
RPR	Rassemblement pour la république
RS	Républicains sociaux
SFIO	Section française de l'internationale ouvrière
SMIC	Salaire minimum interprofessionnel de croissance
SNESup	Syndicat national de l'enseignement supérieur
UCRG	Union des clubs pour le renouveau de la gauche
UDF	Union pour la démocratie française
UDR	Union des démocrates pour la république
UDSR	Union démocratique et socialiste de la résistance

UDT	Union démocratique du travail
UFD	Union des forces démocratiques
UGCS	Union des groupes et clubs socialistes
UGS	Union de la gauche socialiste
UMP	Union pour un mouvement populaire
UNEF	Union nationale des étudiants
UNR	Union pour la nouvelle république
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Introduction

On 1 June 1958, Charles de Gaulle returned to power in France as the last Prime Minister of the Fourth Republic. In the preceding three weeks, the country had experienced a series of events that seemed to be dragging it towards civil war or a military coup. The regime itself seemed to be collapsing, and the political elites were unable to impose their authority on the deteriorating situation. Twelve years earlier, in January 1946, de Gaulle had resigned as Prime Minister, leaving the new Fourth Republic to its fate. He had returned to his country home in Colombey-les-deux-églises, about 200kms south east of Paris, to write his Memoirs and observe politics sadly from a distance. His modest home and the village of Colombey became a kind of mythical site and place of pilgrimage where the great man lived. He was considered a controversial figure by many during the 1940s and 1950s, but for a brief, crucial moment in 1958, he was seen as the only person who could prevent the country from descending into chaos.

The Algerian War had begun four years before in 1954, and in 1958 the government was still searching for a solution to the continuing crisis. Most of the French army was in Algeria trying to suppress the rebellion. The main problem for government was that the French state's authority in Algiers was weak. Successive and unstable governments in Paris had been unable to impose reform or to defeat the independence movement or to satisfy the European Algerians, who regarded these successive governments as vacillating and untrustworthy. De Gaulle's return therefore had two related aspects. On the one hand, he was to solve the Algerian problem, and, it was assumed, keep Algeria French. On the other, he was to restore the integrity of the state and the effectiveness of the government. It took him four years for the former, and his solution, Algerian independence, was the opposite of what had been expected, the opposite of what he had been brought back to do. The latter saw him, in the

space of six months, introduce a new constitution and a new republic which exists to this day, over fifty years later.

Why was de Gaulle seen as legitimate? Why was he seen as able to solve both the problem of Algeria and the problem of France's political instability? What were the effects of conferring authority upon this individual? And what effects did he then have upon French republicanism and the regime he created in 1958?

De Gaulle's claim to legitimacy in France's crisis in 1958 did not arise only from his having become France's Prime Minister between 1944 and 1946, nor even from his having, Cassandra-like, predicted and warned against the '*immobilisme*' and instability of the Fourth Republic, and gone unheeded. An even greater source of de Gaulle's claim to legitimacy – and this was why he had been Prime Minister in 1944 – was that he had been a kind of warrior-philosopher of French national pride, embodying, personifying almost, French national identity through World War II. On 18 June 1940 de Gaulle, then a forty-nine year-old General and junior government minister, flew to London to continue France's struggle against the invading German army. He refused to accept the conditions of the armistice imposed upon France, or the legitimacy of the new Vichy regime, led by his former superior officer, Marshal Pétain.

In the summer of 1944, de Gaulle entered Paris as the commander of the Free French forces, the liberator of the nation and the hero of the Resistance. He had been right when most others had been wrong, and as the head of the provisional government he saw himself as a kind of personalized expression of the nation as it emerged from the trauma of the 1939-45 period. This was the 'persona', the character, and the man who came back to solve France's dire

problems in 1958. Another aspect of this persona – his own perceived view, his philosophy, his ‘vision’ – would have crucial influence upon the nature and development of the Fifth Republic. One of the essential characteristics of de Gaulle’s approach was his attitude to how a republican regime should be organized, given France’s history and political culture. More importantly, this attitude was based upon a fundamental conviction that certain individuals – in this case, himself – were endowed with the wisdom and the duty to impose their view, their will, upon reality. The lone individual based his action – and this framed his political ethics and self-justification – upon a love for France and a devotional commitment to its well-being.

There were of course others who had different views about the organising principles of the republic. In the Resistance period and the post-war provisional government he had to work with political parties and individuals who saw good governance very differently from him, and disapproved of his emphasis upon personal leadership and upon himself as the solution to France’s problems. The antagonism between him and the political parties was one of the most divisive issues in French political life. In the main, the political parties were based upon the democratic process and upon gradualism rather than the exalted individual and an envisioning personalism. Many felt that Europe had seen quite enough of that in the preceding decades. This difficult relationship between competing conceptions of democratic republicanism would be formative of the Fifth Republic.

The political actor who came to power therefore in 1958 was a complex, composite, and although acclaimed, controversial character. He was seen as singular, even unique: professing a philosophy of the state and of national pride; in an ambivalent relationship to republicanism and to the political parties; in personal terms was proud, brave, intelligent, self-certain,

devoted to a romantic notion of France – for many, had been anointed by history or some historical or mysterious force; and, finally, he was the man, the character, who had saved France (1940), returned in triumph (1944), then been as if rejected (1946), and was returning, vindicated, in dramatic circumstances, to save France once again (1958).

He was in a constructive relationship with the new regime he set up, but a destructive one with the regime he replaced. What was his symbolic significance in the Fourth Republic as it unravelled? And what was his symbolic significance as he stepped up onto the political stage to construct his own new Fifth Republic? This ambivalence is the focus of our study, how this integrating of an individual persona into the mainstream functioning of a new regime established in dramatic circumstances affects politics, and how such a beginning and the decisive presence of an individual within the newly configured political institutions goes on affecting the regime as it evolves through his presidency, then on into the post-de Gaulle period up until the present day.

De Gaulle brought to French politics not simply Gaullism but, as it were, himself; that is to say, by bringing his political ‘self’ and political persona to the heart of the Fifth Republic’s institutions, he changed French politics completely, and introduced elements into the French polity whose dynamism is still there. De Gaulle’s character and comportment meant that, in 1958 and thenceforward, both the real personality and the ‘imagined’ political persona would inform politics in fundamentally new ways; and this would continue to be the case in the aftermath of de Gaulle’s return and in the aftermath of his departure.

What all the French Presidents share is a set of circumstances in which both their real attitudes and actions and their symbolic selves have inordinate significance within the Fifth

Republic because of the way that the political performance of individuals within a particular configuration of institutions resonates within politics and the political culture. This is the real nature of the Gaullist settlement. Political ‘performance’ (of individuals – in action, in language, through ascription, and through the projection of a particular image) takes place within a particular configuration of institutions (e.g. of the presidency, Parliament, the parties, the media). The institutions are embedded within the political culture, and in the wider culture’s institutions, traditions, attitudes, memories, shared expectations, hearsay and experience, shared political past, shared understandings and misunderstandings of the meaning and significance of discourse and rhetoric and its place within the culture and within political relationships. Given the attitude and relationship of the French to de Gaulle in 1958 and subsequently, his own attitudes and behaviour, and those of each of his successors and contenders for leadership, and their relationship to the electorate, to the ‘people’, to the ‘nation’, and to ‘opinion’, the role and influence of culture upon the polity and institutions has been all the greater. The culture, in turn, is informed by myths and memories (for example, about France, about leadership, about past leaders, about imagined relationships between leaders and regime or nation, and between people and leaders). One could say this perhaps of all regimes: the wider culture and history and historical memory inform the institutions, and the configuration of these frames action, allowing political personae to act, perform and speak to political purpose and with a range of political outcomes. What makes the French case so compelling is the degree of ‘performance’ allowed to political actors given the configuration and the culture, and this because of the Fifth Republic’s dramatic beginnings and the performance of its first President. In order to demonstrate this, we shall take a narrative and analytical approach and show how the nature of the Fifth Republic has unfolded over the last fifty years. We shall analyse the narrative of the Fifth Republic through the prism of person and persona.

De Gaulle's stamp upon French politics meant that his own intervention not only took place in highly dramatic circumstances, but also brought drama itself inside the parameters of the republic, and that in various forms, and in crucial relation to persona and to institutions, it remains there dynamically informing the republic. 'Personality politics' therefore develops both dramatically and dynamically, in particular in its relation to political relationships and imagined political relationships within the polity and culture, so that it becomes in many ways the motor, the driving force of politics and the organizing principle of political activity. After the Third Republic, the Fifth is the longest surviving regime in France since the Revolution. In those two hundred years and more, when compared to the UK or the US, for example, the French polity has been chronically unstable and fragile. In part, the longevity of the Fifth Republic is due to the Gaullist settlement; itself arguably unstable, that is to say, the bringing to the heart of the institutions and practices of the regime a romantic and chivalric notion of a leader being needed and called forth by history and the nation to reaffirm the strength of the state and the integrity of the body politic, and develop a very particular relationship with the 'people', themselves a composite – as is the leader himself or herself – of both real and imagined characteristics.

Once the presidency of the Fifth Republic was established and took on the shape it did, it began to inform politics significantly. The President became the main political actor in the regime, with very different modes and style of political action from other regimes, whether presidential or not. Even though the President was the principal political actor, he also used all the ceremonial, ritual, and symbolic aspects of the new office to assert his position and the authority and legitimacy of the new regime. The presidency began to have decisive influence, and the political parties began to respond in a series of ways. The Gaullist settlement did not

just confer upon the President the authority to act in dramatic circumstances. By bringing the President to the heart of the institutional configuration, the Fifth Republic made the President central in all circumstances, and the character and comportment of the President also became central and formative. After de Gaulle, all the Presidents, in a variety of ways, asserted and reasserted the centrality of themselves and their persona as decisive political agencies within the configuration of institutions and in relation to opinion. This scope for presidential initiative and its emphasis upon the personal, and the consequences of these, link Charles de Gaulle through Georges Pompidou, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, François Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac, to Nicolas Sarkozy. Let us narrate the Fifth Republic from this perspective.

1: 1958: The Gaullist Settlement and French Politics

The Elements of the New Republic in 1958

De Gaulle's new Republic had two essential characteristics: the centrality of the personal, and the emergence of complexity. First, it introduced into the new configuration of political institutions the primacy of the President and all that flows from this as regards personal power, executive authority and decision making and its relation to public policy and the influence of the political parties. In so doing, it increased the significance of the interplay of the personal and the institutional. This is why strictly constitutional or institutional approaches to the Fifth Republic are inadequate, for what de Gaulle did was to add as a permanent and complex feature of the Republic the influence of the personal within the institutional. And the personal is not just personal, but cultural and relational, as we shall see. Beyond giving the President political primacy and importance within a given protocol, de Gaulle brought a dramatic but marginal political style and set of relations within republicanism into the heart of its institutions thereby transforming it.

Personal authority for de Gaulle meant the authority to act, based upon an imagined (inter)relationship between a visionary individual called forth by history, and the people who 'recognize' him and his authority to act. This brings us to a major consequence of this new and central relationship. At the very moment that the mass media itself comes into the mainstream of modern society, 'opinion' takes on a privileged role.¹ 'Opinion' is a contested term, and we shall use it here in a wide sense, in its most diverse range of meanings and categories, in order to show how it, or perhaps rather, they – opinions, become central players in the regime. Opinion is appealed to by political actors, referred to by the media; it is 'imagined' and given discursive reality. It also has in many forms a reality or realities of its

own. Opinion may be the nation, as perceived by de Gaulle, as the ‘Françaises, Français’ he always addressed in his broadcasts, or as a series of opinion polls, or the expressed result of an election or referendum, or an extrapolated population based upon consumption, or opinion as expressed through trade unions, associations, street demonstrations (orderly or disorderly), or newspapers, TV viewers, or anxious parents, disaffected youth, or any range of measurements and frameworks, ascriptions or assertions. Opinion may be pro or anti de Gaulle (or indifferent), pro or anti politicians; or it may be a movement large enough or bold enough to claim affinity with the country’s revolutionary, or anti-revolutionary traditions, or with ‘*la France profonde*’. However it is manifested or imagined as manifested, opinion becomes from 1958 onwards a major player in French politics (irrespective of whether it itself has any real power). A range of opinion/s and especially opinion as evoked in the imagination and discourse of the leader, and opinion as mediated through the mass media, floods into the institutions, practices and political exchanges in the republic, bringing the wider mass culture as well as the myriad of more discrete cultures to political prominence.ⁱⁱ

Introducing the culturalⁱⁱⁱ in this way into the mainstream of the political and the institutional meant that the discursive and rhetorical also became central; and unlike the relative isolation and self-referring nature of the political discourse of the Fourth Republic, the Fifth becomes in many ways a ‘discursive’ Republic (as we shall see below regarding Algeria, its first discursive-political challenge). ‘Utterance’ (and silence or omission – in the first years almost exclusively that of de Gaulle alone – and his interpretation of ‘opinion’) has major impact upon the political process. The media, radio, television, press conferences, speeches and pronouncements, and language itself, become decisive in the Fifth Republic. De Gaulle’s Republic was not only created by his own use of ‘persona’ and its interaction with the dying political days of the Fourth Republic, which we shall analyse below, it made persona, its

discursive performance, and its relation to opinion an essential feature of the new republic. It is true, as we shall see, that there was an assumption that this compelling aspect of the new regime would disappear when the Algerian crisis was overcome or else when de Gaulle left office; this was far from being the case and underscores once again how party political or constitutional interpretations are inadequate. The personal within the institutional configuration brings the discursive and rhetorical to the fore. And their often direct appeal to opinion ‘mobilizes’ opinion, in discourse at least and often in reality.

The second and related characteristic of the new regime was that the first characteristic – the centrality and ‘play’ of opinion and of the personal/discursive/cultural – would render politics in the Fifth Republic extremely complex. Many polities can be relatively accurately described in a quite straightforward way: a socio-economic base upon which parties are structured and where politics, within the framework of a set of institutions, allocates/distributes resources, structures political debate, and – through parties and their interactions with opinion – creates cycles of political power and the possession of political office and the elaboration and application of policy. In Fifth Republic France, because of the unusual and dramatic nature of its advent and the centrality of the personal referred to above, seven elements interact constantly, often creating dynamic ‘rushes’ of very consequential political activity, as we shall see. The seven elements are: first, the institutions themselves and their configuration and interaction. Any analysis of politics in the Fifth Republic has to appraise the powers and activity of the presidency, National Assembly, Senate, Constitutional Council and so on at any given moment.

Second, analysis needs to involve appraisal of the exalted notion of personalized leadership in the Fifth Republican French imagination, as well as the actual comportment of the President

(and later a whole range of political leaders and aspirant leaders), and the effect of character, personality, persona and personal initiatives upon the political process.

Third, accompanying the institutionally central role of character will be a consequential series of discursive and rhetorical resources such as visions, envisioning, a 'high' rhetorical register about France and its history/role/destiny; and a discourse upon the relationship of political activity/envisioning to the 'state' and its health and integrity; and the role of the 'people', the 'nation', the rally or '*rassemblement*' (e.g. a *rassemblement d'idées*), the 'electorate', '*la France profonde*', and later a series of additions to these rhetorical resources, often tied to other mythologies, such as '*projets*', '*projets de société*', '*le changement*', other kinds of '*rassemblement*', '*les forces vives*' and a continually evolving vocabulary, but, and this is the essential point, a vocabulary which has influence upon political developments. This elevated vocabulary will also have significant effect upon personal leadership, and upon France's self depictions, upon interpolations of '*grandeur*', upon political protocol and diplomatic protocol, and therefore upon foreign policy and France within a system of international relations.

Fourth, 'opinion' in a myriad of real or imagined forms will be a major factor in the evolution of the political process, and in more dramatic form: strikes, demonstrations, civil disorder (or their memory) will take on mythic qualities, or if not mythic then psychological. French street demonstrations, coordinated strikes, even tipping vegetables or wine onto roads, can have political effects well beyond those seen in comparable countries, and in fact, normally well beyond the financial or strategic power of the section of the workforce or community taking action. Because of the personal nature of the Fifth Republic, there is wide scope for reference to what opinion really feels, truly wants, demands, desires, and so on. Ironically, we should

stress that in spite of or perhaps because of the fact that ‘opinion’ has taken on such significance in the Fifth Republic, it remains time and again politically unpredictable in so many of its manifestations.

Fifth, the political parties (and other *forces politiques* like the trade unions) remained major players into the Fifth Republic, structuring its politics, its evolution, and its discourse, and in turn being structured and transformed by it. This irony was lost on many, though not all, political actors, analysts and observers, perhaps the most dramatic example being de Gaulle himself who overestimated the strength of the political parties and underestimated their mutability.

Sixth, all of these interactions take place in the context of a rapidly changing society.^{iv}

Seventh, the dramatic nature of the Fifth Republic’s creation, and the political dramatization of self and of events by de Gaulle, became a constituent element of political life; and whether real or imagined or rhetorically constructed, drama becomes continual (perhaps if it became continuous it would cease to be drama), in perceptions, in language, and, because of the often discordant other six elements, in reality. In the case of the Fifth Republic one cannot overstate the way in which the first six elements – the political institutions (and we would need to add to this, the ‘given moment’ of the cycles they find themselves in), personal leadership, discourse, opinion, the political parties, and societal changes – interact, particularly at political moments such as elections (but also referenda, second-order elections, moments of social protest, or events telescoped into the run-off period between elections) to produce what we might call storms of political activity in which a series of related developments occur and which have deep and far reaching effects upon those involved and

upon the political process more generally. The events often occur in such a closely packed and dramatic series, that they appear to be stunningly choreographed and follow consequential sequences like moments of revolution.

It is the interaction of the above elements in the context of a dramatic origin – the Fifth Republic truly began not on 28 September 1958 when it became a juridical entity but on 13 May 1958 (with the dramatic events in Algiers then Paris) – that accords a kind of dramatic licence to French politics. Most observers see the referendum confirming the new republic (28 September 1958) as the act that domesticated the drama of 13 May. The opposite is equally true: the 28 September brought the drama of 13 May into the Republic. And in drama, performance is crucial. And de Gaulle's was at this moment highly accomplished. From reading his *Memoirs*^v, we would believe, he would have us believe, that he foresaw the events of 1958-1962, and/or that a teleology unfolded. In fact, de Gaulle was often either mistaken about or unaware of issues, e.g. the consequences of the electoral law adopted in 1958. The apparent teleologies, however, can be explained if we bear in mind the seven elements constitutive of political action in the Fifth Republic that we have outlined above. So that, for example, between June and December 1958, de Gaulle's Fifth Republic was everything that the Fourth Republic was not: dramatic where the Fourth was workaday, problem solving, dynamic, personalized, bold on the international stage, and as if in touch with the people. In essence, however, the Fifth Republic was not that dissimilar from its predecessor, which had itself been trying to rationalize the executive and streamline the political process. Both were republics (this was the first time in France's history that there had been a republican sequence), the state bureaucracy remained, much of the political personnel, French foreign policy did not alter radically, the economy continued to grow and society to modernize in the same way as before. France's alliances remained by and large the

same, and so on. We can say that it was in large part in appearance, style, language and symbolism that the differences needed to be stressed, if de Gaulle's difference and therefore justification were to remain effective, and the new republic was to function. It is this that explains an important aspect of the character of the young Fifth Republic, and has so much influence upon the evolution of the republic.

From this we can say that not all political legitimacy was about republican integrity on de Gaulle's part, nor about his relationship to a coup (still argued), but about mythical legitimacy. For de Gaulle to attain and hold on to mythical legitimacy, both republican integrity and distance from the coup were necessary although not sufficient conditions. The overriding condition was for both elites and opinion to recognize the need for – and/or to allow – a (recognized) personal figure to restore the (fallen) state; and for a whole series of players to imagine the scene and their own parts, and enact their roles, or at least to stand back and allow those who felt they had these roles to so enact them.

De Gaulle's return to power in May 1958 (and the concept of 'return' was important) began, therefore, not only in real time but also in mythical time. This is crucial to an understanding of how the Fifth Republic then developed. In the context of our analysis, the immediate conditions of de Gaulle's return were three: that he had been the war hero who, in 1944, had restored the state's integrity from within a republican framework; that he had dramatically abandoned this ungrateful nation in January 1946 and had withdrawn to his home in Colombey; that by 1958, the state's authority was again faltering.

The Birth of the New Republic

The 'real' event that began the return of de Gaulle to power in 1958 was the May rising in Algiers.^{vi} Until this moment, he had either been almost forgotten or was seen as a potential leader but one who would probably not return to politics. A first point to note is that the event was characterized as much by emotion as by political/strategic calculation. Algerian nationalist fighters of the FLN executed three captured French soldiers. In response to this, one group, a *comité de vigilance* (which had organized a successful demonstration three weeks earlier), called upon the Algerian population to strike between twelve noon and 8pm, and to demonstrate at 5pm against the new government in Paris and its Algerian policies (at the same time as the National Assembly in Paris was setting up a new government to be led by the young and reformist MRP figure, Pierre Pflimlin). There was an assumption in Algiers that only a government committed to a major campaign against the FLN in the context of an unequivocal commitment to keeping Algeria 'French' was acceptable. In metropolitan France too, particularly among MPs, there was an overwhelming sympathy for this view. This is worth bearing in mind: that the aims of the Army and the Algiers crowd coincided with the general view. The demonstration was nevertheless 'insurrectionary' in as much as it hoped, from Algiers, to block or interfere with the nomination of a government in Paris (as it had continually and politically consequentially interfered for several years). Exactly how this would be done and to what political purpose was, however, unclear (to all). What was clear was the complete success of the strike call. Everything stopped: transport, cafés, cinemas, schools, and the university and the civil service all took action. By early afternoon, thousands of people (estimated at 100,000) were converging on the centre of Algiers, animated by young people on motor scooters exhorting the growing crowd. A minute's silence for the three dead was followed by calls for the army to take power. Government buildings were besieged and, after the riot police were replaced by soldiers, the demonstrators stormed the gates unhindered, in fact, were helped by soldiers, and proceeded to occupy the

government offices (throwing paper out of windows essentially, an insurrectionary gesture always highly symbolic of political attitudes and relationships but of no strategic interest). Irrespective of thirty years of right wing plots and disdain for elected politicians in the French military, it is worth underlining the spontaneous, almost ‘now-what-do-we-do?’ flavour of these events of 13 May in Algiers.

In the confusion and brouhaha, the demonstrators set up a committee of public safety (*Comité de salut public*) headed by General Jacques Massu, who himself, although a hero for and sympathetic to the local *pieds-noirs* population, was acting out of a desire to control the turmoil, with the help of other military and civilian activists (among them some Gaullists). Massu telegraphed Paris urging that a similarly minded government be sworn in there. *Comités* sprang up across Algeria’s main towns, and it is worth stressing here that a kind of *pieds-noirs*/Muslim solidarity and fraternity also seemed to accelerate over the next days in a kind of revolutionary celebration. In Paris, by the evening, the events in Algiers had (possibly predictably) had the opposite effect to their intention. Many parallels have been made with the riotous events of 6 February 1934 in Paris,^{vii} but one needs to stress that however potentially dangerous were the events in Algiers they posed no immediate danger to Paris. In a kind of republican, ‘*étatiste*’ solidarity (actually too late to stabilise the regime’s legitimacy), Pflimlin’s premiership/government was endorsed by an impressive 274 to 120 against (with 137 abstentions which in Fourth Republic terms was akin to a vote in favour). Only that morning had the newspapers predicted that if Pflimlin won it would be by only a handful of votes. Pflimlin’s government endorsement came after a period of four weeks where, effectively, the country had had no government. The Algiers revolt was like an electric shock into the French body politic. The French government gave orders not to open fire on the demonstrators, and soon (both outgoing and incoming Prime Ministers agreed)

accorded civil powers to the senior General in Algiers, General Raoul Salan, already in possession of military powers. In terms of our subsequent appraisal of de Gaulle's actions, that Salan's authority conflated civil and military powers is crucial. Salan, moreover, had been urged by Massu, himself at pains to avoid accusations of outright rebellion or mutiny, to take overall command in Algiers. Many commentators have quite rightly commented that Paris' recognition of General Salan, and therefore a certain complicity after-the-fact with the Algiers events, was simply realistic: he already held the power, and therefore could help stop an escalation into a military coup (most of the French army was in Algeria at this time) or even a civil war. All of this is true. As regards legitimacy, however, the ambivalence of attitude by Paris would simply find a certain echo in de Gaulle's failure to condemn. The following day, 14 May, there was a kind of stand off, with the massively endorsed Pflimlin forming his government. The government reached from Mollet and the tough-minded Socialist Jules Moch (who had faced down the Communists and Unions in 1947) across to Gaullists and the strong *Algérie Française* supporter, Georges Bidault. The problem for this, perhaps the strongest government of the Fourth Republic, was to know what to do.

There were two other 'actors' in the frame: de Gaulle himself, and public opinion, and the actions and reactions of these would also be decisive in a situation where the Algiers demonstrators were reluctant to embrace a Franquist putsch if they could still enjoy even tacit approval or acceptance, however reluctant (in the form even of silence), from Paris. Early on the 14 May, the President appealed to the Army to remain under the authority of the Republic. Interpretations of legitimacy, therefore, could still at this time be 'stretched' by the actors involved. The government too did not want to provoke the army, but had a very unclear view of how much authority it itself possessed. What both sides (Algiers and Paris) needed was for the other side to act the way it wanted so that it did not need to act itself.

Time itself, therefore, was the worst enemy of each as its passing demonstrated that neither side was taking the initiative. Into this almost freeze frame stepped de Gaulle on the following day. We shall come back to the true nature and significance of de Gaulle's actions below but should stress here that the condition of de Gaulle's initiative was the (true or apparent) moment of inaction of the 14 May by both sides. And inaction (true or apparent) by others was essential to de Gaulle's fortunes.

Before looking at de Gaulle we should stress that 'public opinion', the other 'actor' in France over this whole affair (Algeria, the fall of the Fourth Republic, the return of de Gaulle) was an enigma. It seemed rather unconcerned with the events (the war in Algeria had been going on for four years); holiday weekend plans went ahead, there had been few demonstrations outside trade union demonstrations for some years, no groups were pouring on to the streets; confidence in 'the system' and in politicians was very low, but few expected ever to see de Gaulle again, who was becoming a memory for many of the French, indeed for some not even a memory. Newspapers on the 14th expressed attitudes that ranged from seeing the events in Algiers as a coup, to seeing them as a passing protest, to stressing the huge confidence placed in Pflimlin by MPs, to (very few) calls for de Gaulle's return. The media coverage was wide ranging yet was beginning to canalize opinion, making it more aware that, whatever it was, something dramatic seemed, this time, to be happening. It is also worth mentioning here that 'opinion' was quiet partly because although having little faith in the Fourth Republic, it was, right across the spectrum, overwhelmingly in favour of keeping Algeria French, from the die-hards to those who simply did not want to abandon a people heartlessly. Into this strange scene where none of the actors – Army, Government, Opinion – were mobilizing, stepped de Gaulle. We can say outright, therefore, that whatever may have happened subsequently, his own initiative was the product of nothing at all but his own

personal gamble, and was initially a series of initiatives (almost exclusively discursive) that had no substance to them at all, and relied utterly on the perceptions of others (of each other and of him), and upon the inaction of others who, like bystanders or a theatre audience, watched him perform.

On the 15 May, Salan,^{viii} recognized as the only authority by the mushrooming Committees of Public Safety, and as the legitimate voice of Paris in Algiers, finished a speech to the crowd with the words ‘Vive de Gaulle!’. It is clear that a lot of demonstrators saw de Gaulle as their best or only or only legitimate way of attaining their aims, even though many *pieds-noirs* disliked de Gaulle, regarding him as a liberal. This included Salan. It is also true that a tiny group of conspiratorial de Gaulle supporters in Algiers were working overtime, and possibly even prompted Salan to utter these words.

Salan’s call echoed a certain shift towards de Gaulle in French public opinion, in the Army, in the Algerian population/s and by a growing trickle of party politicians. We have here the first and a classic illustration of de Gaulle’s significance: that different and opposing groups could see in him, some through devotion, respect or allegiance, others through cooler appraisal, the person who could help them achieve their aims or solve their problems. It is clear that in such a situation, de Gaulle had to respond, both by what he said and what he did not say. At five o’ clock on 15th de Gaulle put out a press release, his first significant public intervention in politics in three years. He commented, in fewer than one hundred words, that the state had faltered, the people were alienated, the army was in turmoil, and that the country had lost its independence. He added that the political parties were unable to stop the slide to disaster, and that the country had once put its trust in him. As the country once again was threatened, he was ready to assume the powers of the Republic:

‘La dégradation de l’Etat 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.

Naguère le pays, dans ses profondeurs, m’a fait confiance pour le conduire tout entier jusqu’à son salut.

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’.^{ix}

Four things are worth mentioning here about this crucial ‘moment’: de Gaulle makes no specific reference to Algiers, therefore leaving it and his reaction to it open to interpretation; he identifies everything as a symptom of the troubles (even the parties are not a cause but are simply inadequate); he puts the exclusive focus upon himself as the only solution; and he declares his willingness to ‘assume’ republican power (there is ambivalence as to who is to give him this power and authority – the candidates being the people, the public authorities but also almost destiny itself), but the Republic he will inherit, not (yet) overthrow.^x

The effect of de Gaulle’s declaration was to offer a solution in the form of himself being brought centre stage. The situation now involved not just the power of the army but the legitimacy of de Gaulle, so that the site of possible legitimacy now involved three places: Algiers, Paris and Colombey. The reaction of the parties in Parliament was to strengthen for a time their support for Pflimlin by condemning de Gaulle’s intervention, in particular for his failure to condemn the actions of 13 May. We can say here that de Gaulle was adding his ‘site’ to the duality Paris/Algiers, the latter already (however coercively) acceded to by Paris.

The condemnation of de Gaulle's not condemning Algiers therefore added to de Gaulle's authority by implicitly urging him to take on, as it were, 'Paris's' status. And Paris' own condemnations of Algiers had been extremely equivocal. Much more importantly, de Gaulle had placed his own 'site' (Colombey) symbolically between Paris and Algiers. There were to be two more weeks of this gavotte.

De Gaulle's 'I am ready' communiqué of 15 May indicates how, rhetorically, he enters the Paris/Algiers relationship. The immediate effect however was to strengthen opposition to him among politicians, in fact to reverse the developing change in their attitudes. On Friday 16, the first to engage de Gaulle in discussion in order to domesticate the Gaullist threat, and perhaps profit from it, even use it to the Republic's advantage, was Guy Mollet, perhaps the key figure of the Fourth Republic in the ultimate transfer of power to de Gaulle – for several reasons. As both vice-premier and leader of the Socialist Party (SFIO), he asked de Gaulle (via answers to journalists and – significantly in terms of the developing rhetorical matrix of May-June 1958 – without consulting his Prime Minister): did de Gaulle recognise the legitimacy of the Pflimlin government? Would he condemn the Algiers insurrection? And would he, if he, de Gaulle, were himself appointed Prime Minister, observe republican conventions? Such questions clearly constrained de Gaulle in terms of containing him within the Fourth Republic's legality, but the logic of Mollet's questions brought dramatically into the discursive framework the idea that if de Gaulle passed these tests, fundamentally of his own legitimacy within the Republic, then he (in discourse) became eligible for leadership of France (in reality).^{xi}

De Gaulle's response was to maximize his own symbolic significance, in that he did not answer Mollet's questions, but stated that he would hold a press conference the following

Monday, the evening of the 19 May. A weekend of deferred anticipation followed, and on the 19th, in front of the national and international press, with thousands of police and gendarmerie on the streets, limousines arriving and camera bulbs flashing, and in the context of demonstrations and actions by the Communists and the Unions (e.g. cutting electrical supply in the metro), de Gaulle arrived at the press conference. By announcing but deferring his press conference de Gaulle had slowed down the pace of the dramatic unfolding of events, while making the protagonists (Paris and Algiers) critically dependent upon his awaited words (and we have already stated that neither Paris nor Algiers, the first to hide its impotence, the second to hide its aggression, enjoyed or profited from the passing of time itself). He also did the opposite, that is – while bringing himself centre stage – speeded up discussion, debate, activity, and speculation to an extreme level, thus transforming the conditions of subsequent events. We have seen how opinion was still not politically mobilized, but it is worth noting that in this two week period sales of portable transistor radios quadrupled.^{xii}

At the press conference, a fundamental shift takes place in that de Gaulle's style as well as what he says (and does not say) become crucially important. It is also worth remembering (essentially via photos, journalists' descriptions and newsreels) how de Gaulle looked would be consequential. Many had not seen him for years. In 1958 (compared to January 1946), de Gaulle was a significantly older and more portly man, here in civvies (he would soon wear military uniform when visiting Algeria), and he used humour, generosity (towards Mollet and others), and a sense of care and concern that are crucial to understanding the unfolding events. Given, especially over the weekend, the PCF's depiction of him as dangerous, and a generalized concern about de Gaulle's anti-republican and monarchical comportment, his style and friendliness (he was rarely to be so relaxed in his many subsequent press

conferences – arguably not until between the two rounds in 1965) had a dramatically relaxing effect. The prevailing virtual notion of violence pervading the events of the previous week was transformed into ease and friendly exchange. This was the press conference where he asked, to much shared amusement, whether people really thought that at 67 he was going to start a career as a dictator.^{xiii} What is significant and rarely commented on is that the question was not only humorous but rhetorical – the answer could only really be an embarrassed one of – of course we never thought that, or else laughter.

As regards answering Mollet's other questions about his republican probity, first, de Gaulle was able to make reference to his republican integrity both as France's liberator but also as premier of one of its most reformist republican governments, where he had observed legality and convention between 1944 and 1946. In so doing, de Gaulle was not only justifying himself, he was focusing upon himself as France's hero. He acknowledged the concerns of the military without condemning them. We shall come back to this, but can say here that this defence here was, crucially, to stress that the government itself had not condemned outright the military insubordination and its alliance with the civil disobedience. De Gaulle's demeanour, moreover, was such that he was behaving as the equal – at least – of the government itself. This conference was a didactic, highly publicized lesson to government by an individual in Paris who was not himself in government. This kind of thing had never happened in French history. De Gaulle again portrayed the Algiers events as a symptom rather than cause, stressing that the defect lay in the institutions, that the country's trials all flowed from that. Having put the focus upon himself, his achievements and his views, he then stated that he would go back to his village and wait for 'the country' to come and get him (in so doing also stressing again this new and alternative reconciliatory site of political authority, his home, Colombey-les-deux-églises).^{xiv}

Two contradictory consequences flowed from de Gaulle's press conference and the rhetorical and symbolic insertion of de Gaulle into the developing equation, such contradiction illustrating the bewildering complexity of unfolding events. The first was the further legitimation of de Gaulle. We should remember that, given his 'I am ready' communiqué of the 15th, Parliament had reacted very strongly against him (and therefore could not simply change its institutional attitude). What happened were personal responses to his press conference persona of the 19th, a series of reactions by significant political leaders, across the board – who came out in support of him, by letter or in the press, or by engaging in meetings and discussions with him or with one another, thus creating massive impetus to his legitimacy – first Bidault, then Pinay, then Mollet, and so on, until all the major figures of the political elite of the Fourth Republic who would then transform their own parties' approaches, came out publicly in favour of him. This was not universal; some significant figures opposed him, in particular Pierre Mendès France and François Mitterrand; and the parties themselves split, but for the most part in favour of de Gaulle a week or so later.

The second and less commented upon consequence of de Gaulle's semi-legitimation was to radicalize activity in Algiers (and thereby threaten to further de-legitimize government inaction). De Gaulle's devoted supporter and Algiers hero, and former Governor of Algeria, Jacques Soustelle (escaping house arrest in Paris) returned to Algiers to wild welcome (on the 17th). The Army seemed now to be in open insubordination, and it was now less likely that the army and police would obey the legitimate government. It had also become clear that it and the Algiers *comités* would obey de Gaulle. Soustelle was like an ambassador for de Gaulle. The movement of allegiance to de Gaulle by Algiers was triggered in part by Paris' according him potential legitimacy. The consequence of de Gaulle's becoming potentially the

central player was that he too now faced the problem, previously only faced by Paris and Algiers, namely time itself which would strip him of his advantageous ambivalence if events in Algiers accelerated, and in Paris did not, pushing him towards sedition. And they did accelerate.

The following Saturday, after several days of de Gaulle's receiving and talking to people like Pinay, the Algiers movement was transformed into overt military action as contingents of parachutists based in Algiers invaded and occupied Corsica with, apart from some very limited symbolic republican resistance, no significant resistance whatsoever, from the authorities, the police, the CRS, or the population. It seemed as if the semi-secret operation 'Résurrection', a complete military takeover, was underway. The government in Paris began to take some action: press censorship, moving against MPs who seemed to be involved, and long-awaited constitutional revision in order to set up mechanisms that would strengthen government in times of crisis. In a sense, countering a military coup with constitutional revision was a clear demonstration of the utter ineffectiveness of the government. Late in the night of Monday 26, de Gaulle and Pflimlin met to discuss the situation. There is disagreement as to whether the principal instigator was Pflimlin trying to get de Gaulle to denounce the coup, or de Gaulle's simply bullying Pflimlin to stand aside. What is significant is that de Gaulle's refusal to denounce is understandable both strategically (the threat of a coup was bringing the Republic down) but also mythically – he had to maintain his symbolic position as observing the coup as a symptom of the Republic's malaise. De Gaulle could do no more without either supporting the coup or abandoning his strategic and symbolic advantage by rallying to the defence of the republic he detested. The government seemed to have confirmed both its own powerlessness and his centrality. He too, however, had run out

of (his own invented) time, and therefore would soon face the choice of becoming a Fourth Republic politician or a putschist.

What he did, once again, was to perform an act of discourse that, once again, had no base at all in the reality of power, but mercifully for him, did in the perceptions of all the other actors involved. He simply publicly pretended, after having left his stalemate meeting with Pflimlin, that he was in complete political command, whereas he was not in command of anything at all (except perhaps via some of his wilder conspirator lieutenants such as Delbeque a potentially catastrophic coup attempt). He pretended the opposite: that he commanded republican legitimacy. On the morning of the 27 May, that is soon after leaving Pflimlin, de Gaulle put out a communiqué saying that he had the day before begun the process of setting up a republican government, that any threat to public order would threaten this, and that all armed forces should show exemplary behaviour and obey their superiors, who he named, including Salan. The tone of the press release was as remarkable as its contents:

‘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.

Je compte que ce processus va se poursuivre et que le pays fera voir, par son calme et sa dignité, qu’il souhaite le voir aboutir.

Dans ces conditions, toute action de quelque côté qu’elle vienne, qui met en cause l’ordre public, risque d’avoir de graves conséquences. Tout en faisant la part des circonstances, je ne saurais l’approuver.

J’attends des forces terrestres, navales et aériennes présentes en Algérie, qu’elles demeurent exemplaires sous les ordres de leurs chefs : le général Salan, l’amiral Auboyneau, le général Jouhaud.

A ces chefs j'exprime ma confiance et mon intention de prendre contact avec eux.'^{xv}

It was as if he were the commander in chief of the army and the symbolic Head of State and of government. This symbolic self-depiction would become a national perception once his own self-legitimizing had been transferred to the level of the whole polity. In terms of the text's content, it was republican, yet responded, for the first time, to the army, as if telling it to 'stand down'. This was all the more impressive given that he had no power in either camp. Once again, the politicians reacted against de Gaulle. The socialists voted a motion of 112 to 3 against him. Such reactions again increased not his immediate legitimacy but his symbolic presence. All the left wing organizations followed suit, and on the next day, Wednesday, a rally of between a quarter and half a million marched in Paris against the putschists. For some, though not all, it was also a demonstration against de Gaulle. In terms of the emerging pattern of 'moves' in this series of events, what is odd is that, at this moment, each of the putschists' moves was intended (as a political solution) to bring de Gaulle, and not the army, to power; each of the government and politicians' moves was a gesture of support for Pflimlin, for blocking de Gaulle (but with de Gaulle in their minds), and for the initiation of reforms, none of which had any real backing. Each of de Gaulle's moves was made in a vacuum of authority and power; and now the 'crowd's' moves were formidable yet ambivalent. No one's plan to overcome the crisis, even de Gaulle's, were clear and concerted; each was a gesture that provoked each other actor to react in some way while nothing actually happened. And the vacation of power was increased on the same day as the demonstration against the putschists because Pflimlin resigned along with his whole government.

De Gaulle met in secret, this time with the Presidents of the Assembly and Senate but, as with Pflimlin, there was no outcome. The following day, as the result of one act, the Fourth

Republic fell, or rather fell into de Gaulle's lap. Its President, René Coty, who now had no Prime Minister and no government, was free to take a crisis initiative. He decided to call de Gaulle himself to be appointed as Prime Minister and form a government. He threatened to resign if this did not happen. De Gaulle of course accepted, and proceeded in an utterly Fourth Republic manner to meet all the party leaders (except the communists) and establish a government that included all the party bigwigs, appointing Mollet, Pinay, Pflimlin and others, and not appointing Soustelle (at this point – and when he did, not for long).^{xvi}

On Sunday 1 June de Gaulle was voted in as Prime Minister by 329 against 224 (36 abstentions). All the parties of the right voted for, those of the centre (Radicals, MRP, UDSR) voted in majority for, the socialists split down the middle, and the PCF voted against. To have turned an almost totally hostile political class into a largely sympathetic one in the space of a week was astonishing. And over the next three days with three more majority votes, de Gaulle got everything he had (ever) wanted: special powers to deal with the Algerian crisis, the right to rule by decree on all but the most fundamental rights and liberties (and electoral law) for a period of six months, and the right to draw up a new constitution. How had all this been possible? If we can answer that question it will help us understand the nature of the republic that was coming into being.

Understanding The New Republic

France in 1958 was a rapidly changing society. Based upon an economic boom that had been going on for over ten years (and would continue for nearly another twenty, although it is true that 1958 was not without economic difficulties),^{xvii} the late 1950s were witness to rapid social and economic change. This socially, culturally and economically rich context was the paradoxical setting for a government in paralysis and under threat of a military coup, and

even civil war. Even if the government had had more grip on itself and on political power, it was extremely uncertain whether it would have the support of the police, gendarmerie, and CRS, if the situation exploded, let alone the army, which was threatening to invade its own mainland. What is significant for our purposes, is how symbolic politics and rhetoric filled the political space and gave a dynamism and outcome to four dramatic weeks in which, apart from symbolism, gesture, and discourse, nothing really happened; and yet the language and ‘grammar’ of this dramatic symbolic politics seemed to be understood by all the actors involved, even though no one knew the true significance of what any one actor was doing or saying. It was as if everyone understood the language but had different interpretations of the specific gestures and utterances.

The Algiers events seemed immediately readable – once again, force was being used to move against a weak regime. The nearest parallel seemed to be 6 February 1934. In this case of course, the Mediterranean would have to be crossed, although this too almost happened. In many ways, however, the Algiers events evoked left-wing traditions too: the *Comité de salut public* had echoes of 1793 and a lot of the commotion and declarations were reminiscent of 1789; the fraternizing of the crowds in Algiers and other Algerian cities between Europeans but also between Europeans and Muslims, and especially between the ‘crowd’ and the soldiers, the sporadic outbreaks of joy, and the sense of celebration, were reminiscent of French revolutionary tradition. The declarations and appeals (the ‘*appel*’ is a very French and dramatic political form of address cf. de Gaulle, 18 June 1940) of the main players like Massu and Salan demonstrate acute historical awareness. The invasion of Corsica was strategic, cautionary, but also highly symbolic, and ‘liberationist’ – Corsica had been a springboard of the liberation of France in 1944 from Nazi rule.

A further element of the grammar that all actors shared and which played a major role in both thinking and outcome, was the idea of ‘unity’ (*‘unité’*, *‘unicité’* etc) that pervades French political thinking. Colonial thought based upon difference and racism is not part of this; but a strong part of *Algérie Française* thought was arguably not racist, in fact, was high-minded (and perhaps unrealistic): and the joyous fraternization that went on through May 1958 attests to a desire for a kind of transcendence of difference. This desire for unity informed all of the actors: the army, the party politicians even in moments of deep crisis; and de Gaulle’s political philosophy was based upon the partly Thomist idea that unity is the constantly to be striven for prerequisite to greatness and happiness. And the Rousseauist notion of an all-embracing General Will underpins French republicanism – distinguishing it from other forms of democracy. In many ways, this is where legitimacy lies in the French political imagination, and this in all ideologies; and if one bears this in mind, we can see that a great deal of the manoeuvring, the claims, the *mises en garde*, the reassurances, and so on made by each and all between 13 May and 1 June are actually about unity as opposed to division, or rather claims to legitimacy in the name of unity. Each actor used ‘unity’ and ‘division’ to define themselves and their opponents and gain symbolic advantage in relation to this mythical notion. In de Gaulle’s thought the emphasis is upon the state, but even this is in order that France be maintained and prosper as a near-sacred unified entity.

This was the aim: that effective politics was to be the expression of an all embracing mythical national unity. The question was how to do it in the context of the division of France into two political camps: military/*colons* dissent v. Parisian political legitimacy. The representatives of the former were almost illegal but not quite totally; the latter almost incapable of action and without authority. De Gaulle’s success would depend upon his being seen to reconcile the two without becoming one or the other. To do this, he had to maintain the coup as part of that

which had to be transcended, and to do this he had to ensure that it remained in the public's imagination a symptom of a sickness created not by the French tradition of virulent nationalism, but by the absence of the true legitimacy of the political institutions. And having true legitimacy would depend upon the leader's relation to 'the people' (in some form) on the one hand, and to 'France' on the other. De Gaulle was therefore not a republican in the classic or received sense, but was no less committed to the Republic for that, in that republicanism, the overwhelming choice of the French at this moment of history, was necessary to his being on the side of unity. And it is this personally envisioned notion of unity that would inform the republic henceforth and become the essential condition of its strength. We can add that this is an extraordinary political phenomenon – a person who, in a crisis, refuses to condemn or endorse either side (almost an imperative in crises) and who posits himself as the transcendent site of legitimacy. This will become the true source of legitimacy of the new republic.

In the almost empty space opened up to symbolic politics in May 1958, rhetoric became crucially important, and then a major feature of the new republic. It is the discourse and rhetoric of individuals, echoing, interpolating, bringing onto the scene, the mythologies of unity, greatness, strength, happiness, extraordinary and exemplary leadership, and so on, in dramatic and arresting ways, that become, in part, the currency of the new republic.

For de Gaulle to claim supreme legitimacy and provoke reaction in this empty space of inaction, meant making rhetorical interventions in the hope that, recognized as significant in the mythologies informing French politics, others would react in particular ways so that these would indeed inform politics. It is essential to our understanding to recognize that these were all discursive gambles de Gaulle made, and depended upon the shared mythological grammar

in the first instance, and upon people reacting to them, in the second. De Gaulle knew better than anyone that the army, the press, the government, and the public's failure to respond to him (negatively or positively) would leave his initiatives *lettre morte*.

It is a truism in history and political science that 'what ifs' have no currency in analysis, but even though not anything could happen in 1958, nothing was determined. It is not to speculate fruitlessly to mention but a few things that could have happened or not happened; and this not to know what might have happened but in order to underscore the contingency of what did happen. There was no finality to Massu's having become the figurehead of the rebellion, for example, and if he had not, things would almost certainly have developed differently. Similarly, if he had not in turn called on Salan to take on the overall leadership of the rebellion, or Salan had refused, or Paris had disowned him, things would have developed differently; or if de Gaulle had felt his 67 years more heavily, or if de Gaulle had denounced the rebellion, or identified more closely with it, or if Mollet had not asked his questions of de Gaulle or had not been persuaded by de Gaulle, or if Coty had not decided to facilitate de Gaulle's accession to power; if de Gaulle's press conference had been a less masterly performance, and so on, then things would have developed differently. What each of these semi-counterfactuals shares is that each involved nodal actions by individuals. And it was the myriad individual actions which were so consequential. None more so than de Gaulle's three (discursive) interventions: the communiqué of 15 May, the press conference of 19 May, and the communiqué of 27 May. Let us look at these three crucial discursive acts again, for a moment. They have generally been recognized in the literature as crucial. Rémond as well as Bernstein and Milza note that what was remarkable about them was that they were each simply discursive interventions: a first press release, a press conference, and a second press release.^{xviii} What has not been stressed is the nature of the discursive interventions and their

consequences. The first and last were simply communiqués, press releases, but ones that had the tone of the leader, the last communiqué especially had the tone of someone already in power, like the pronouncement of a President or king giving orders to the political class, the people, and the army. These framed the perceived character of de Gaulle, but they remained just that, frames in which his authoritative ‘character’ was portrayed. We should add that both communiqués triggered the ire of the political class, particularly the National Assembly and most of the political parties. The alternative, however, would have been his irrelevance. It is also the case that the ire was, in large part, from those who wanted him to denounce the rebellion, but by demanding that he do so, legitimated him, ascribing to him power over the rebellion, and a potential republican legitimacy.

The truly consequential discursive intervention, however, was de Gaulle’s press conference of 19 May. We have to understand it as a performance. The contexts of the performance were four: 1) that de Gaulle had almost been forgotten by the public and was being dramatically reintroduced into the public’s imagination;^{xix} 2) even physically his appearance was novel – he was older and greyer than he was remembered. He had withdrawn almost totally from the public’s view certainly for three years, but for many the memory of de Gaulle was of 1944-1946, and to a lesser extent of the creation of the RPF in 1947; 3) the received view of de Gaulle was that he was aloof, austere, unsmiling, monarchical, indeed old fashioned by 1958 standards, and his somewhat frightening image had recently been confirmed by the first communiqué, and had been continually stressed throughout the Fourth Republic by the opponents of personal power; 4) the events of the previous week and the calling of a press conference themselves conferred upon de Gaulle enormous significance, as well as injecting further drama into the series of events. These made up the context. The performance itself brought the question of perceived character decisively into the (beginnings of) the Fifth

Republic; for de Gaulle was not at all as people expected him to be: he was relaxed, urbane, generous, spirited, funny, and responsive, and this was the persona that the French and the political class, and the military, and the national and the international media^{xx} saw and heard (on newsreels, on radio and in papers and in magazines, and through personal exchanges and hearsay). It was this new aspect of character, this new persona, that accompanied, replaced, vied with, complemented as it were, the high-minded aloof character that would have himself the incarnation of France itself. The ambivalence associated with character and with discourse, and the performance of persona, brought so consequentially into the mainframe of politics, would play a central role here, in the aftermath, and then throughout the Fifth Republic.

The near totality of political debate about de Gaulle in 1958 and subsequently has revolved around four ambivalences: was he involved more than he ever admitted in the 13 May rising and its aftermath (even the possible coup against the Republic, 'Opération Résurrection')?; was he always going to give Algeria independence?; was his Republic in the true tradition of republicanism or was it a distortion of it?; where does or should power and authority truly lie in the Fifth Republic? All of these questions are necessary and their answers informative of the nature of 1958 and the Republic (although none of them has ever been answered with clarity). What these debates have ignored is the new political significance of ambivalence and ambiguity themselves, for in all four cases the answers need to include the fact that de Gaulle's ambivalence had major effects: upon the coup, upon developments in Algeria, upon the nature of republicanism, and the nature of power in the republic. Ambivalence feeds into the political process at the founding moment and then at every moment. Ambivalence and ambiguity do not just lie in the actor or spectator, they lie in the language itself: this is in part why de Gaulle could be all things to all people; and the register he used quite naturally

involves striking, yet ambivalent, concepts: France, greatness, the nation, and so on, but even apparently more straightforward terms such as Republic are rich in ambiguity. Add to this the desire on the part of a listener, member of the public, party leader, putschist etc that he mean something they wish to hear (or might mean something that they do not), and ambiguity, paradoxically, is added to by listener expectation that would have it reduced. The ambivalence or polyvalence of intention, accident, of language itself, and of listener reception, all are made more consequential by the emphasis that was put, during the drama of 1958, upon what individuals said, should have said or did not say. We should remember the formative role not just of words but of silence too, again, de Gaulle's case being the most important. Williams refers to his silences at this time as 'delphic'.^{xxi} De Gaulle himself as early as 1932 in his writings on leadership^{xxii} had stressed the importance of silence. In terms of his persona, his not condemning the Algiers rising was significant, but more so was that he had been silent (more or less) for a decade, so that his stepping back into the (discursive) arena and performing so (rhetorically) dramatically meant that a communiqué, a press conference, would confer upon him the image of a returning saviour (or that of a fool if circumstances had been different). We can add on the question of character that – to the extent that it is ever truly known to observers – actual character will also become significant: de Gaulle's pessimism, his overblown view of himself, his depressions, his coolness towards even those who devoted themselves to him, his ingratitude, his higher calling, and so on also play into the early Republic informing the nature of executive authority.^{xxiii}

We can make two observations. The first is that for the early Fifth Republic, a series of extremely important factors other than institutional and constitutional change have critical influence: a sense of drama, the role of exceptional individuals, a sense of the complexity of politics, 'crisis' as a political concept, the mainstream role and 'foregrounding' of myths

about France, an emphasis upon unity, the role of rhetoric and political image, and the imagined relationships between things and people; all these will be formative, and understanding the republic will be dependent upon their analysis.

The second observation is that de Gaulle could only have succeeded in a polity and political culture in which he and the things he believed in were recognised and understood as existing by others – or these latter could at least be persuaded of the existence of these things, whether they be in the military, the political class, or the general population: that is to say, a polity that subscribes to the notion that the state needs to be united to be strong, that exceptional individuals exist and can change history, that the notions of Gaullism had a currency in French political culture. It was these parts of the culture – in the name of democracy – that the Fourth Republic had pushed to the margins; in a sense, even the Fourth Republic itself ‘recognized’ de Gaulle, not as a has-been but as its own antithesis, so that when he re-entered the public political arena, it immediately – negatively and positively – responded to him, both in the context of Algiers, and in the context of its own paralysis, thus beginning a process which over just a three-week period handed him the possibility of changing the regime.

Two related phenomena must be taken into consideration in any appraisal, and seen as significantly informative: a relative social stability and economic expansion, on the one hand, and the role of opinion on the other. Stability and expansion are usually seen as an infrastructure that ‘explains’ the transition from the Fourth to the Fifth Republic (e.g. a new part of the Resistance elite fulfilling the same socio-economic function, i.e. modernization). This is not wrong, but to compare the socio-economic and the political in this way explains very little. What this wrong view does, however, is provide us with a very interesting question, namely, what was the relationship between de Gaulle and his context? We can say

that social stability and economic expansion do in fact set a stage for de Gaulle. Unlike other regime changes in France, there had been no economic collapse, no war, no massive dislocation, no famine etc. The opposite was true and set the limits of that ‘stage’ and performance, but facilitated it too, that is to say that economic stability allowed for instability in politics, and increased the political system’s ‘tolerance’ of individual performance, allowing it to claim that it stabilized rather than destabilized democracy and the regime. This aspect of the Fifth Republic has continued up to the present day.

The second and related aspect of this is that it brings ‘opinion’ in as a key player.^{xxiv} Here ‘public opinion’ and surveys can be real, scientific, and so on, but they are still just a version of ‘opinion’ playing a significant role. ‘Public opinion’ with or without inverted commas may be ‘real’, may exist in society or as an object in and of discourse, or both, and inform politics. We are interested in how the ‘informing’ informs the politics. For example, as we have noted, commentators often refer to public opinion as late as January 1958 assuming de Gaulle would never return to power. How are we to appraise the value of public opinion if it can change so rapidly? What does it mean for our understanding of opinion if it can go from near ignorance to devotional followership in a few months? What is the value of de Gaulle’s relationship to the French if he can be acclaimed so soon after being ignored? What should we think? Perhaps ‘opinion’ can step on to the stage where a stage is there for it to step on to, and then it, and de Gaulle, perform. Perhaps the ‘stage’ must be discursively created before it can be ‘real’. This means that three things happen: the first is that the politics of drama, the politics of ‘the sudden and unexpected’ (although ‘recognized’) becomes politically significant.^{xxv} The imagining of alternative (previously imagined) politics has increased salience. The ‘unexpected’ moves into a more privileged relationship to the institutional political process, and takes on a more active role, and will become the foundation for politics in the post-1958

republic. Second, given the ‘January polls’ idea – that de Gaulle was expected never to return – the notion of inevitability actually becomes absurd, or else in the French case we need to include the unexpected in any definition of the inevitable. Third, a further consequence is that all the actors – the Army, the communists, individuals, activist groups, the Algerian crowds, and participants and observers (‘opinion’, the electorate, the media) start to ‘live’ politics as drama.

The overall result of this was to alter the nature of political legitimacy in the closing months of the Fourth Republic and the opening months of the Fifth Republic. In a great deal of literature on 1958 – and this becomes the standard for analysis of the Fifth Republic from then onwards – there is great emphasis upon understanding the juxtaposition of the parliamentary and the presidential, and on a wider scale, republicanism and personalism or personal leadership. These preoccupations have often masked the truly interesting point about the events of 1958 and their aftermath, namely the evolving nature of French political legitimacy. It remains within republicanism generally, but its modalities are fundamentally altered. The dramatically heightened level at which political relationships are imagined and enacted through symbolic politics is carried into the new republic.

The Characteristics of the New Republic

The regime became other than some of its architects had assumed because of the way de Gaulle (mis)interpreted his own constitution, often, in fact, ignoring it, ‘inventing’ the presidency after he had taken office.^{xxvi} This is something of a puzzle: that the architect of a constitution would treat the constitutional settlement he had striven for, for almost twenty years, with a cavalier attitude, so that it took on new characteristics. The answer lies in the constitution’s introduction, that is to say that Algeria and the collapse of the Fourth Republic

provided a dramatic context in which the persona now in the frame would have relative freedom of action that would have far-reaching constitutional and political consequences. We could almost argue that the constitution and its elaboration became but a moment of a much more wide-ranging process which elaborated simultaneously an unwritten constitution based upon de Gaulle's comportment. We shall analyse the reasons for this below, but can say that procedurally also the constitution was part of a dynamic and dramatic process. On 2 June de Gaulle had the special powers (voted since 1956 to the Prime Minister) to try to deal with the Algerian crisis, new full powers for six months, and the go-ahead for a government-led constitutional law to be ratified by referendum.

De Gaulle maintained an enigmatic distance from his own constitution. It is equally the case that his distance from everything was an imperative. This often excruciating aspect of de Gaulle's – we can say real – personality all his active life was crucial to the development of the regime. Distance from the political parties, from constitutional obedience as we have mentioned, but also from the army, from the media (very formal press conferences/broadcasts), distance from the political activists of Algeria, and, as we shall see, from his own Gaullist supporters. These latter, however, are a key: his distance is both real and apparent, that is to say that his own 'army' of support had to act utterly in accordance with his views in order that he could behave as if he were not in any relation to them, or to anything else apart from a mythical relation to France, and a highly-contrived equally mythical relation to '*la nation*'.

De Gaulle's first government was like one of national unity, like 1944, and the drafting of the constitution throughout the summer of 1958 replicated his probity so that conflict could not arise. The four ministers of state, like deputy Prime Ministers, included Mollet (SFIO) and

Pflimlin (MRP). The others were an independent (Louis Jacquinot, who had been in London with de Gaulle) and a Radical/UDSR African, Félix Houphouët-Boigny. Three Gaullists held portfolios, Malraux, Debré, and Michelet, but it was Debré as Garde des Sceaux (Justice) with a team of legal advisors in control of drawing up the new constitution who was crucial. This is not to say that there was not input from others, particularly Mollet, but the true significance of all this lies elsewhere. Many writers allude to the fact that ‘real’ power lay with de Gaulle (and with his *cabinet* run by Pompidou). The point of wider significance, however, is that republicanism as a doctrine could not really fault de Gaulle at this point. If a doctrine (parliamentary republicanism) does not understand that it – and its rivals, here Gaullism – is a discourse as well as a doctrine, that is, has potentially far wider connotations and implications than its formal elaboration, it is vulnerable to discourse itself. This means that the question: will you maintain a parliamentary regime?, can be answered, and was. The far more consequential question: will you by your complex comportment introduce what we might call romanticized mythical leadership into the centre of the new institutional configuration and its practice? cannot even be asked, because for parliamentary republicanism only a very rudimentary understanding of this – related to Louis Napoleon and ancient Roman notions of tyranny – exists; and de Gaulle had already demonstrated that he was neither a Bonapartist nor a Tyrant.

From its June 1958 beginnings, the constitution was drafted, debated, modified, submitted to referendum and became law within three months. De Gaulle was called to give evidence to the consultative committee, chaired by Paul Reynaud. Once again, there is clear evidence here of republicanism’s (all doctrines’) forensic concern with doctrine, which almost by definition (because it is there to focus meaning rather than encourage ambivalence) could not ask the fundamental questions of the political use of leadership persona and character, nor

interrogate the issue of the mythical establishment of an imagined, politically transcendent relation between leader and people. On this last point, of course, the constitution would – in true republican fashion – be submitted to referendum, for sanction by the people. But, once again, this referendum would also and simultaneously be a plebiscite (as were all de Gaulle’s referendums). More, in fact, than a plebiscite: an act of anointing by the people. Subscription to doctrine precludes discursive attention to the wider symbolic implications of a political act, and the new space given to persona meant it would now influence greatly what was actually meant by republicanism itself.

In the Fourth Republic’s constitution, the section on the presidency came only sixth. In the Fifth it came first, immediately after the section on ‘De la souveraineté’. This discursive arrangement of the Fifth Republic’s constitution was far more telling (though constitutionally inconsequential) than any of the issues debated. Having said this, yet another ambivalence – paradox, in fact – emerges, in that, ultimately, as the non-Gaullist drafters assumed (and doubtless Gaullist ones too, especially Michel Debré), the Fifth Republic’s constitution, particularly as regards the President, was not that different from those of the Third and Fourth Republics.^{xxvii} For example, and here we come back again to the crucial role of (ambivalent) language, the President of the Fifth Republic – like the President of all republics, has as his/her mission to maintain the integrity of the state, and of the nation, to uphold national independence, and the constitution itself, and ensure that the state’s institutions function. For de Gaulle, such a charge probably meant just about everything (excluding concern for the price of artichokes). We can see that the debate (still lively, 50 years later) surrounding the true meaning of ‘*arbitre*’, for example, is necessary within the forensics of constitutional law, but, as we have seen, to paraphrase Durkheim, all that is in the constitution is not constitutional. Most constitutional lawyers and political scientists at the time debated the

interpretation of the term '*arbitre*'. Few identified the ambiguity in the language then, and in relation to which meaning is elaborated. Upon a de Gaulle, that is to say a leader who is allowed to establish a particular kind of political authority based upon a mythical relation with several entities (France, people, nation, state, destiny), the words of a constitution bestow magical powers. 'Arbitration' can be interpreted as relating to anything. Authority to act is conferred not only upon the office of the presidency but also upon the persona of the President.

There was further ambivalence in the public presentation of this constitution. De Gaulle, at a grandiose event 'staged' by Malraux, presented his draft constitution to 'the people' at a highly symbolic public event (with a lot of the 'people' – and in particular PCF protestors, kept well away from the action by the police). In many ways, the event was what all observers said it was: a republican spectacle, of a kind not seen since the late 19th century. The date was the anniversary of the Third Republic (4 September). The place was *Place de la République*, a huge 'RF' adorning de Gaulle's podium which was fronted conspicuously by Republican guards, and the whole square surrounded by huge 'Vs' denoting the Fifth Republic. Observers stressed how carefully republican all this was. The symbolism, however, is all this and more. In fact, film and photographs of the event do not seem republican at all to the Anglo-Saxon eye, but, rather disconcertingly, darkly imperial, as do the towering podium and the, as if, praetorian guard. Over and above this spectacular symbolism, moreover, we need to stress that this was the public celebration not just of a constitution but of personal leadership. The two would be difficult to counter because (in part, recovered) memory of de Gaulle was now that of a man who through courage, fortitude, and lonely certainty, was now, at last, celebrating his mystical union with France as public spectacle. Over and above this, de Gaulle used this occasion as a very personal plea, a warning that for him, and France, and the

republic, this referendum on the constitution had to win. De Gaulle made this, like most of his ceremonial moments, one in which emotion was fired, but with a sense not only of the magnificence but also the fragility of his envisioned France and the necessary centrality of himself.

Opinion polls at the time suggested that 50 per cent of the French – as with most texts of this kind – had not even looked at the draft constitution they would vote upon, and only 15 per cent claimed to have properly read it at all.^{xxviii} The text itself had a significance, but more as an object that symbolized de Gaulle rather than as a constitutional text that defined the workings of the republic. We should add that the success of the constitution was also seen – irrespective of allegiance to de Gaulle or a ‘strong man’ – as a means to avoid a return of the ill-loved Fourth Republic, a communist takeover, or even a civil war. Cast in this way, except for the PCF (and minimal intellectual opposition), it becomes a text that almost cannot be voted against. On what grounds? And of course the political parties had themselves helped make this constitution, even though, in reality, they were almost all split over it and the events surrounding it. Not for the last time in fact, not for the last time by any means, would either opposing or supporting de Gaulle really only benefit de Gaulle himself.

The Radicals, because of the vicissitudes of the previous few years, were in pieces, and called for a ‘yes’ vote. The SFIO was already actually split and would probably have voted against but for the efforts of Mollet and latterly Gaston Defferre of the powerful Bouches-du-Rhône federation who supported the ‘yes’ and came through with a (September 1958) 69 per cent conference vote.^{xxix} The MRP, de Gaulle’s natural allies, also recommended a ‘yes’ vote. Little good fortune would it bring them. This first storm of events in favour of de Gaulle would go on through October and November like a developing rally, a *rassemblement*, a

phenomenon more associated with de Gaulle's RPF rally of the late 1940s.^{xxx} Surge politics, rally politics, normally on the margins of political life, particularly of non-revolutionary republican politics, was brought right into the mainstream, with 'opinion', now on a national scale, fuelling it. It was as if the surges of opinion were now right in the centre of politics, aggravating the stresses the parties were under and in some cases, tearing them asunder.

A further feature of these developments was the fact that the stresses and strains that were fracturing the parties (often, as a result of the Algerian War itself as much as de Gaulle's return) had a long term effect upon some of them. Reduced to virtual electoral annihilation, many little groups, the PSA, UGS, and so on, and a myriad of individuals would criss-cross one another through political clubs and little think tanks, and small political parties, and become the seeds (albeit at this time without seedbeds) of doctrinal renewal of the left, of left Catholicism, of the trade unions, and of the right, and the extreme right, in the post-de Gaulle Fifth Republic. Many of the brightest, most modernizing and forward thinking political actors were against the now apparently unstoppable tide of political renewal.^{xxxii}

The univocal nature of the referendum was symbolized by thousands of posters exhorting 'Oui à la France', implying that a No was tantamount to treason, or to allegiance to a communist party that was suspected of solitary allegiance to a foreign power. The turnout was 85 per cent (France throughout this period had a 20-25 per cent average of abstentions for elections and referenda), and 80 per cent of that 85 per cent voted 'yes' (including an estimated third of the PCF's voters).^{xxxii} The Fifth Republic became a juridical entity on the 28 September, less than four months after de Gaulle's re-emergence into mainstream politics.

From the referendum triumph, the political process then moved immediately into its next phase, one that would tie the non-Gaullist political parties even further into the contradictory situation they found themselves in. On 1 October, that is, immediately after the referendum, the Gaullists created a new party, the *Union pour la Nouvelle République* (and there is ambiguity even in the word ‘pour’). Distant as ever, de Gaulle forbade his name to be used in the party’s title. We should add that his apparent distance was only apparent. He was now synonymous with the new Republic. His will, his intentions, however, were ambivalent. The party had, therefore, to become a party that had no views of its own, because even his anticipated views could not be depended upon. The first casualty was his greatest supporter, Jacques Soustelle. From the beginning, the strongest *Algérie Française* supporters were replaced by Gaullists whose Gaullism either resembled a kind of state bureaucracy mentality or else was a kind of vacuous *pensée gaulliste*. Soustelle would happily have taken the presidency of the party, but de Gaulle himself imposed an administrative secretary general (Roger Frey). And it was Frey and his entourage who chose the candidates for the forthcoming legislative elections (as would Malraux, another utter devotee, four years later).

The voting system chosen during the course of the summer (and therefore very hurriedly put in place) resembled that of the Third Republic. Any of the many forms of proportional representation was excluded because it might reproduce the Fourth Republic (and favour the PCF). The two round, single-member constituency system with a run-off one week later and usually leading to standings down and therefore run-offs between two candidates, had strange but very formative effects on the Fifth Republic. It is arguable that de Gaulle himself was unaware of the effects it would have. It gave him his highly successful Gaullist party, and would establish the party political basis of a bi-polar, and potentially bi-partisan and stable political regime in which the political parties would play a role that was far more positive

than de Gaulle could have imagined. The *scrutin d'arrondissement uninominal à deux tours* also maintained or brought back a kind of Third Republican style local and personal element to legislative politics that de Gaulle did not envisage either. Such local fiefdoms, and local politics generally, became the breeding ground for a new breed of personalized politicians, even though at this time they gained their seats solely through association with de Gaulle.

The newly formed Gaullists were the real winners. Their success was amplified dramatically by the two round system; and the Gaullists controlled most of the state machinery for distributing publicity, commandeering the airwaves, and had the means to finance their campaign. And the UNR stood unequivocally for the new Republic. The other parties who had stood for the constitution now had to campaign as if against it. On the first round of 23 November, the PCF vote (as in the referendum) fell by one third to just above 19 per cent. The Socialists and the MRP held on to their 1956 vote of just over 15 per cent and 11 per cent respectively. Ahead of all three came the UNR, only two months old, with over 20 per cent. The 'moderates', the CNIP, a loose but large conservative federation that had supported de Gaulle (and had a lot of *Algérie Française* supporters) gained just over 22 per cent. The Radicals (depending on how the party now in pieces is measured), the Mendésists, and non-SFIO socialists, and the Poujadists were virtually wiped off the map. The abstention rate was 22.9 per cent – a sign perhaps of the uninterested, the very confused, the very hostile, the anti-parliamentarian, and those who having given de Gaulle his republic were not interested in legislative politics.

One week later on 30 November 1958, in round two the PCF was decimated. In 1956, it had 150 seats. With the electoral loss we have indicated, one might assume therefore a fall from 150 to 100. They won ten seats only, such was the new logic of round-two *désistement*, and

the need for alliances, agreements, and some ideological affinity between neighbouring parties. By the same or similar token, the socialists and MRP who as we have seen remained steady in round one compared to 1956, lost respectively, 50 and 30 (they held, respectively, 44 and 57) seats. Of the 475 sitting MPs 334, including figures such as Pierre Mendès France, François Mitterrand, Edgar Faure, Gaston Defferre, and other leading Radical and MRP figures lost their seats (over and above the 475, there were 87 seats that represented, Algeria, the Sahara, and the overseas Departments and overseas Territories). Between them, the UNR now with 198 seats, and the Moderates (CNIP) with 133, held a commanding majority.

On 21 December to crown this tumbling series of victories, de Gaulle was elected President by the new electoral college of 80,000 elected '*notables*'. He took office with 75.5 per cent of the vote against the PCF candidate who gained 13.01 per cent and the leftist UFD candidate with 8.4 per cent.^{xxxiii} The UFD candidate, an academic, did rather well considering the ramshackle UFD had only gained 1 per cent in the legislative elections, an early though forgotten sign of how presidential elections can amplify a vote. But the hour was de Gaulle's. A year earlier he had himself assumed he would never return to power. On 8 January power was formally handed over to him by the outgoing President Coty, whose decision the previous May had helped bring de Gaulle to power. Together they laid a wreath for the Unknown Soldier at the Arc de Triomphe, and de Gaulle left him standing on the pavement, and had himself driven down the Champs-Élysées without him, as if the Fourth Republic had never existed. It had, of course, and de Gaulle can only be properly understood with reference to it. Several more events marked the end of the sequence. Michel Debré was appointed as Prime Minister on the 9 January 1958. The socialists soon moved into opposition. The moderates (CNIP) remained (with Pinay still at Finance), as did some MRP and non-partisan 'technical' ministerial appointments. A shift would begin however that would eventually

push all but the Gaullists and their close supporters out of the nest, some of them for a decade, some of them forever.

Chapter 1: The Gaullist Settlement and French Politics

ⁱ For a detailed discussion of the growth and influence of the press, radio and television, see J.K. Chalaby (2002) *The de Gaulle Presidency and the Media* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).

ⁱⁱ Opinion is usually taken to mean opinion as measured through opinion polling and often brought together in annual appraisals such as SOFRES' *L'Etat de l'opinion* published yearly (Paris, Seuil), in SOFRES and IFOP polls and the quarterly publication *Sondages. Revue française de l'opinion publique* (Paris: Chancelier), or in the *Figaro Baromètre* devoted to the popularity of politicians. It is clear that we use the term much more widely to refer to the views, perceived views, imaginings (and forgettings) of individuals aggregated by polling organisations as well as other collective political or social actors. See J. Charlot (ed.) (1971) *Les Français et de Gaulle* (Paris: Plon). See also, G. Dupeux, A. Girard and J. Stoetzel (1960) 'Une enquête par sondage auprès des électeurs', Association française de science politique, *Le référendum de septembre et les élections de novembre 1958*, (Paris: Presses de la FNSP), pp.119-193.

ⁱⁱⁱ We do not wish to choose one definition of culture out of the hundreds of definitions and approaches. We shall use the term here to designate the formative and shared ensemble of traditions, attitudes, values, symbols, memories and dispositions that inform a national community. For a discussion of the topic and its application, see J. Gaffney and E. Kolinsky (eds) (1991) *Political Culture in France and Germany* (London: Routledge).

^{iv} See J. Gaffney & D. Holmes (eds) (2007) *Stardom in Postwar France* (Oxford: Berghahn); H. Mendras with Alistair Cole (1991) *Social Change in Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), an earlier version of which was published as H. Mendras

(1988) *La seconde révolution française, 1965-1984* (Paris: Gallimard); M. Larkin (1997) *France Since the Popular Front* (Oxford: Clarendon), pp.176-222.

^v C. de Gaulle (1954, 1956, 1959, 1970, 1971) *Mémoires de Guerre* and *Mémoires d'Espoir* (Paris: Plon).

^{vi} The range of literature on Algeria and on the creation of the Fifth Republic is vast. Among the most interesting are W.G. Andrews (1962) *French Politics and Algeria* (New York: Appleton); P. Viansson-Ponté (1970) *Histoire de la république gaullienne I* (Paris: Fayard); P. M. Williams and M. Harrison (1960) *De Gaulle's Republic* (London: Longmans); J. Charlot (1983) *Le Gaullisme d'opposition, 1946-1958* (Paris: Fayard); J. Touchard, 'La fin de la IV^e République', *Revue française de science politique*, 8, 4, December 1958, pp.917-218; S. Bromberger and M. Bromberger (1959) *Les treize complots du 13 mai* (Paris: Fayard); Sirius (H. Beuve-Méry) (1958) *Le suicide de la IV^e république* (Paris: Le Cerf); J. Ferniot (1965) *De Gaulle et le 13 mai* (Paris: Plon); J. Lacouture (1985) *De Gaulle 2. Le politique* (Paris: Seuil); J.-C. Maitrot and J.-D. Sicault (1969) *Les conférences de presse du général de Gaulle* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France); A. Siegfried (1958) *De la IV^e à la V^e république* (Paris: Grasset); J. Touchard (1969) *Le gaullisme* (Paris: Seuil); P. M. Williams (1970) *Wars, Plots and Scandals in Post-War France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); C. Nick (1998) *Résurrection* (Paris: Fayard); L. Terrenoire (1964) *De Gaulle et l'Algérie* (Paris: Fayard); R. Salan (1974) *Mémoires vol. 4, L'Algérie, de Gaulle et moi* (Paris: Presses de la cité); B. Tricot (1972) *Les sentiers de la paix en Algérie, 1958-1962* (Paris: Plon); P.-M. de la Gorce (1963) *La France et son armée* (Paris: Fayard); *Revue française de science politique*, 9, 1, March 1960.

^{vii} On 6 February 1934 a demonstration by far-right groups led to a riot in the *Place de la Concorde*, just over the river from the National Assembly. For many at the time and since

this incident in which 16 died and thousands were injured was seen as a moment when the Third Republic was almost overthrown.

^{viii} For a partisan but very interesting study see J. Valette (2008) *Le 13 mai du général Salan* (Sceaux: L'Esprit du livre).

^{ix} In J. Lacouture (1985) *De Gaulle 2. Le Politique* (Paris: Seuil), p. 468.

^x 'Assumer' is an interesting word in French. It means 'take' or 'take on' in a constitutional sense but also implies both the taking responsibility for something and the taking on of a mantle.

^{xi} Also, taking on personally the attributes of the republic is to symbolically conflate 'la chose publique', the *res publica*, and an individual. This is very unusual. One has a sense that in spite of his being a major player in 1958, Mollet had no idea of the symbolic consequences of his actions, in particular his creating the conditions of de Gaulle's performance.

^{xii} See R. Rémond (1983) *1958: Le retour de de Gaulle* (Brussels: Complexe), p.81. In 1958, the daily print run for newspapers nationally was about eleven and a half million; J.K. Chalaby (2002) *The De Gaulle Presidency and the Media* (Basingstoke: Palgrave), p.9.

^{xiii} See C. de Gaulle (1970) *Discours et messages* (Paris: Plon), pp.4-10.

^{xiv} For a compelling discussion of de Gaulle's sense of his burden but also on the relationship between this reconciliatory aspect of his character and humour, see R. Gary (1977) *Ode à l'homme qui fut la France* (Paris: Gallimard).

^{xv} See J. Lacouture (1985) *De Gaulle: Le politique* (Paris: Seuil), pp.476-477. For good general coverage of the period see pp.447-489, and P. Viansson-Ponté (1972) *Histoire de la république gaullienne* (Paris: Fayard), pp.19-60.

^{xvi} The government looked remarkably similar in its political make up to his government of 1944. See J.-J. Becker (1988) *Histoire politique de la France depuis 1945* (Paris: Armand Colin), p.77.

¹⁷ See S. Berstein (1989) *La France de l'expansion* (Paris: Seuil), pp. 145-150. See also D. Borne (2002) *Histoire de la société française depuis 1945* (Paris: Armand Colin).

^{xviii} R. Rémond (1983) *1958: Le retour de de Gaulle* (Brussels: Complexe), p.77; and S. Berstein and P. Milza (1991) *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle, 1945-1958* (Brussels: Complexe), p.302.

^{xix} In January 1958, opinion polls suggested that he would never return to power. S. Berstein and P. Milza (1991) *Histoire de la France au XXe siècle, 1945-1958* (Brussels: Complexe), p.298. We should add that his not being expected to return meant that his return was all the more dramatic.

^{xx} The international media became less indulgent towards de Gaulle once he took office.

^{xxi} P. M. Williams (1970) *French Politicians and Elections 1951-1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p.69.

^{xxii} C. de Gaulle (1999) *Le Fil de l'épée* (Paris: Plon), pp. 180-185.

^{xxiii} For a persuasive explanation for and justification of de Gaulle's haughtiness, see R. Gary (2000) *Ode à l'homme qui fut la France* (Paris: Gallimard), pp.18-44 (first published in *Life Magazine*, December 1958).

^{xxiv} See *inter alia* J. Charlot (ed.) (1971) *Les Français et de Gaulle* (Paris: Plon).

^{xxv} For two extremely interesting discussions of de Gaulle's relationship to France's political culture see B. Gaitti (1998) *De Gaulle prophète de la cinquième république* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po), and N. Tenzer (1998) *La face cachée du gaullisme* (Paris: Hachette).

^{xxvi} For an interesting discussion of this see W.G. Andrews (1982) *Presidential Government in Gaullist France* (Albany: Suny Press). For a succinct account of the constitution's elaboration see R. Rémond (1983) *1958: Le retour de de Gaulle* (Brussels: Complexe), pp.119-126. See also, G. Mollet (1962) *13 mai 1958-13 mai 1962* (Paris: Plon), pp.17-31, and G. Mollet (1973) *15 ans après. La constitution de 1958* (Paris: Albin Michel).

^{xxvii} See J-J. Becker (1988) *Histoire politique de la France depuis 1945* (Paris: Armand Colin), p.81.

^{xxviii} Association française de science politique (1960) *Le référendum de septembre et les élections de novembre 1958* (Paris: Presses de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques), p.128.

^{xxix} R. Rémond (1983) *1958: Le retour de de Gaulle* (Brussels: Complexe), pp.131-133.

^{xxx} For two definitive discussions of the notion of the rally (*rassemblement*) in politics see B.D. Graham (1993) *Representation and Party Politics* (Oxford: Blackwell), pp.69-111; and C. Fieschi (2004) *Fascism, Populism and the French Fifth Republic. In the Shadow of Democracy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp.75-97. For us, the essential quality of the rally in practice is that it holds itself in opposition to the ‘ordinary’ political party. It is more than anything else a way of imagining politics and political organization as a dynamic, emotional, and transcendent political movement that comes into being (often as the result of a ‘call or ‘*appel*’) in order to transform or renovate politics or conquer power or give voice to the people. It sees itself as a kind of pure, unmediated movement. It often sees itself as organized around ideas (*un rassemblement d’idées*); in practice, it is usually organized around an individual. It is imbued with a kind of myth of original essence or migration. Given its often personalist nature, it sees itself as responding to an exceptional person, and as necessary to lifting that person to power. In this it is almost Homeric (charisma and glory) rather than Aristotelian (harmony and process), and is arguably both a form of ‘pure’ democracy – free individuals engaged in an unmediated political relationship, and an anti-democratic political form of unquestioning hero-worship.

^{xxxi} Although it was not just the ‘forward looking’ who suffered. Not only *Mendésisme* but *Poujadisme* too was wiped out by the tide of Gaullist support.

^{xxxii} J. Chapsal and A. Lancelot (1975) *La vie politique en France depuis 1940* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France), p.348. For a thorough analysis of both the September referendum and the November elections, see, Association française de science politique (1960) *Le référendum de septembre et les élections de novembre 1958* (Paris: Presses de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques).

^{xxxiii} See S. Berstein (1989) *La France de l'expansion* (Paris: Seuil), p.41.

Chapter 2: 1958-1968: The Consolidation and Evolution of the Fifth Republic