

**THE STRUGGLE OF THE BRITISH AND THE FRENCH INSIDE  
NATO**

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**BA THESIS  
WORD COUNT: 10, 370**

**BACHELOR OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES  
LEIDEN UNIVERSITY  
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**MAY 2016**

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## INTRODUCTION

It is generally held that the era of European domination in world affairs had come to an end after World War II. It is interesting to note that a power shifted across the Atlantic Ocean, where the American government represented a model of economic and military power. Needing to rebuild after the devastating losses of the war, most European countries were in dire need of economic and military assistance. Therefore, the American government, Europe's biggest ally, came to the European political sphere and offered to provide assistance in the process of rebuilding.

After several years of intense American involvement, NATO was established as an effort to confront the spread of communism in Europe. The formation of NATO also marked the beginning of a period where Europe came under American control. Following the signing of the NATO treaty, France and Britain were the two of the most influential and powerful European countries working closely with the US. But American hegemony was not without problems. Political friction grew between the US on the one hand and its allies, Britain and France, on the other.

The British and the French disliked their own position of inferiority, but they reacted differently in their resentment of NATO, especially during the 1960s. After the return of Charles de Gaulle to power, the advent of so-called *Gaullism* and the newly formed Fifth Republic, de Gaulle's displeasure with France's position within NATO was apparent. The withdrawal of France from NATO's Integrated Military Command in 1966 did not come as a surprise. While considered a hasty action, France viewed itself as being in an insufferable position of subordination. On the other hand, Britain acknowledged its long-standing history with the US and its resentment towards American hegemony was politically somewhat more stable and sensitive. Unlike France, which chose to leave NATO, Britain decided in 1968,

under the leadership of Harold Wilson, to withdraw its military operations in the east of Suez and relied totally on NATO for its defense. Underlying Britain's decision was a growing belief in the idea of a "Special Relationship," a political "intimacy" with the US government that was perceived to be beneficial and worthwhile for Great Britain.

The power to define the position of one's country in international affairs and its relationship with the world is an important aspect of the power that the leader of a country wields. However, the influence of leaders in countries on international affairs is often neglected by scholars. Thus, it is useful to examine the figures of Charles de Gaulle and Harold Wilson, specifically by comparing decisions that these two leaders have made in defining the position of their countries in international politics. Then the rational nature of choices and the reasoning underlying different actions can be clearly seen. Historical analysis of both leaders should also be accompanied by realism. Realism is known as the politics of power. As such, it is the most appropriate theory to analyze the struggle of de Gaulle and Wilson for power in American-dominated NATO. The classical realist literature of Hans Morgenthau, in particular, will form the center of this study of both of these two historical figures.

Analyzing these leaders is an attempt to draw out differences in reactions of both Britain and France in the international political arena. However, besides analysis of both leaders, there is another crucial faction in demonstrating how influential these leaders are at the national level. This can be done by examining and comparing the internal power relations concerning the structure of government institutions, power of political parties, and roles of these leaders.

In light of the aforementioned, and to be able to provide more in-depth analysis, this paper will explore the following research question: "Why did Britain, during the leadership of

Harold Wilson in 1968, and France, during the leadership of Charles de Gaulle in 1966, react differently towards American hegemony in NATO?”

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The essence of the academic literature is the exploration of potential reasons why France and Britain behaved differently towards American hegemony in NATO. In order to answer the main research question, there are three groups of scholars who have advocated different ideas but are nevertheless linked to each other. These scholars provide different positions that will be used in this thesis in order to answer the main research question that I have offered.

The first group of scholars includes David Calleo, Geir Lundestad, Mark Trachtenburg, and Ulrich Krotz. They encompass important research that describes political tensions in NATO as well as the rationale behind its formation. In general, these authors have argued that American hegemony did exist within Europe and that, importantly, it triggered conflicts in Europe. These scholars believe that the imbalance of power between America and that of Britain and France was the main issue. Furthermore, scholars such as Mark Trachtenburg have claimed that due to American dominance in Europe, France became more isolationist and came to exercise a more defensive approach within international politics. On the other hand, scholars such as David Calleo have claimed that Britain has tended to be more inclusive with America due its long shared political history. Based on these two scholars, a different views of the British and the French toward the presence of America in Europe can already be seen. Thus, the argument from this first group of scholars is crucial in providing background information, and is a good starting point in encouraging the conduct of a deeper analysis of the differences in reaction of both countries.

The second group of scholars includes several international relations theorists, including influential scholars that rely on the realism theory, such as Hans Morgenthau, Richard Ned Lebow, and Jack Donnelly. Realism in international relations theory refers to *Realpolitik* or the politics of power. This theory is crucial to illustrate how power is the main reason behind the differences of reaction between Britain and France with respect to NATO. Furthermore, the classical realism of Hans Morgenthau is preferable to other forms of realism theory because it is the dominant paradigm in explaining the politics of power during the Cold War. The signature of classical realism is reliance on the assumption that human nature drives people to obtain power and to wield greater power than anyone else. Thus, this theory brings another dimension to the analysis of Wilson and de Gaulle, their influence in Britain and France, and place both of them in an historical and international perspective.

The last group of scholars includes Sten Rynning and David Watt. They point out several key elements at the national level that have had a strong influence in the shaping of the behavior of France and Britain, including political culture, political ideology, and the personal relationships of leaders. These elements are paramount because they represent fundamental realities that resulted in differences of responses from the French and British in facing US domination. For example, David Watt holds that Britain acted as a “bridge” for Americans to enter European politics, while at the same time “accepting” their own inferiority as long as this relationship could benefit their own political agenda. In contrast, Sten Rynning has explained how France held a unique position in European and international politics toward the existence of the US. He holds that the French national political ideology built by Charles de Gaulle, while viewing France as an ally, did not bind France to be aligned strictly with NATO. Furthermore, he claims that several important elements shaped the French attitude toward NATO, such as the change of its military structure, strong patriotic ideals, and

political interests. In general, this last group of scholars has claimed that reasons why the British and French had different reactions toward American hegemony.

However, in order to answer the main research question, which seeks to clarify the differences of reactions of the British and the French toward American hegemony, this paper needs to go into further detail. This paper will answer the research question by utilizing the two case study of the French withdrawal from NATO in 1966 and the decision of the British to withdraw from the east of Suez in 1968 as the basis of de Gaulle and Wilson's comparison. Thus, with all of the differences between Britain and France, the comparison will be feasible since the event or period of time where both leaders were in power was more or less the same period of time. Another important element that will also be taken into account in this paper is the notion of French patriotism under the doctrine of *Gaullism* and the diplomatic intimacy of Britain and United States of America, called their "Special Relationship".

In addressing the research question, this paper will analyze three pivotal points. First, it will explain the development of US hegemony in the European political sphere that resulted in friction between the US, France, and Britain. Second, it will analyze the different reactions of Charles de Gaulle and Harold Wilson in the 1960's towards NATO. In this part of the paper, other than historical analysis, the international relations theory of classical realism will be used to demonstrate how the struggle for power led Britain and France resulted to have different reactions towards NATO. Moreover, this chapter will also utilize the notion of *Gaullism* and the "Special Relationship" in order to provide a clear view on how national political doctrine could affect the leaders to make such decision. Last, the third part of the thesis will dissect the internal power relations of Britain and France. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how powerful and influential the leaders were within national politics. This will include a comparison and analysis of the role of ministries, the power of political parties, and last, the role and power of both leaders in the regimes.

## **CHAPTER I – AMERICAN HEGEMONY IN NATO**

This chapter will examine the background and development of political tensions between Britain and France towards the Americans in the early years of NATO. This particular chapter will observe how the post war period left Europe with no choice but to accept the “assistance” from the US that cost them their sovereignty. Furthermore, it will focus on how the imbalance of power that triggered internal tensions in regards to Britain and France. At the end of this chapter, a case study of the two contrasted decisions, made by Britain and France in the 1960s, will be introduced.

### **1.1 The beginning of power imbalance between the US, Britain, and France**

The Second World War was a nightmare for many European countries. On the other hand, it marked a new beginning in US-European relations. Initially, the US had no interest in joining the war. The Pearl Harbor tragedy that struck America changed that (McKay et al 2011). Relations between the US, France, and Britain developed during the war period when they formed an alliance in order to defeat Nazi Germany. One thing that made that political bond stronger was the fact that the US, France, and Britain upheld democratic and liberal values as the basis of their political systems. The aggressive political maneuvering and the rapid spread of communism launched by the Soviets on Eastern European soil in the postwar period was considered to be a challenge to the freedom and democracy of all Westerners. In that early postwar period, the conditions in Europe left its leaders with no choice but to invite the US into the European political arena in order to maintain security and stability.



The end of World War II did not end American presence on European soil, but instead only marked the beginning of a deeper relationship between the US and the countries of Europe. Geir Lundestad described this relationship as “volatile”, with Europe and the US later shifting from alliance to opposition. As Lundestad argues in his book, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945*, the relationship started when several Western European countries such as France and Britain “invited” the US as an ally to assist their country in tackling political turmoil. Since the war did not occur on American soil, it allowed the US to thrive in the world economy and increase its military status. However, Lundestad adds that the relationship between the US and Europe later shifted from one of a “unity” to a bitter one due to the struggles of national interests. The beginning of this unsteady relationship occurred as the US injected significant amounts of its own national interests into European politics.

As the most powerful country during that particular period, the US was rightly considered the only country that had credibility to offer assistance to Europe. As Lundestad argues, America had a justifiable claim to be the most powerful country in the Western hemisphere: “American strength relied on four pillars such as economy, military, foreign policy, and international ideological support (Lundestad 27)”. The US, he argues, had greater influence in international affairs, because it had both soft and hard power, and greater influence, globally, compared to Britain and France in the 1940s.

This intense political relationship eventually laid foundations for Britain and France to increase their dependency on the US government. This was due to the fact that both relied heavily on aid given by the US government. This was crucial for both Britain and France in order to keep their governments operating and speed up their recovery from the war. However, inviting the Americans to solve problems in Europe came at a price, meaning that they were expected to accept American hegemony on their own soil. The immediate

consequences of this choice was that Britain and France were expected to accept they would be in a global position of inferiority.

## **1.2 Challenges From Inside Of NATO**

A new level of a deeper relationship between the US and certain European countries occurred during the rapid expansion of communism in Europe and the aggressive political maneuverings of the Soviet Union. Both the Europeans and the Americans had one unified objective: democracy. It was the fundamental element in both the European and American political systems. Thus, the diplomatic relations between the Europeans and the Americans were becoming more intense and resulted in the formation of a military alliance in 1949 called NATO (Calleo 6). This was an attempt to balance the power of the communist Soviet Union. However, other than tackling the spread of communism, the British and the French were faced with another problem. Another challenge would come from within NATO itself, where the US dominated and ruled the alliance. In this particular period, early in the Cold War, the US sat at the top of the hierarchy and controlled most NATO decisions.

In the early years of NATO, there were three important nations that dominated the alliance. These countries included the US, Britain, and France (Lundestad 11). In Europe, France and Britain were the most influential figures, especially in the postwar period, because they possessed one of the largest and the best military forces in Europe (Lundestad 17). However, as mentioned earlier, the global political order had shifted from Europe to the US in the post war period. As a result, the US overcame the power of both Britain and France on their own soil. For example, the US had the power to decide every military activity in NATO and could dictate who the enemy was and who the allied members of NATO would be

(Lundestad 30). This imbalance of power turned into a hindrance for the very core values that were set down by all members at the very beginning, including the values of consensus and democracy.

US dominance of European countries engendered political friction toward American hegemony on the part of the British and the French. Even though America protected Europe, the primary reason that Britain and France disliked US influence was because it limited their independence. To a certain extent it confirmed that both Britain and France was less superior compared to the US. This internal tension fueled frustration on the part of a Britain and France unable to challenge American dominance in Europe, and placing their leaders in the unique position of inclining to condemn American hegemony in NATO while at the same time being dependent on American aid.

### **1.3 NATO, Imbalance of Power and Pressure From Inside**

NATO is a military alliance, consisting of twenty-eight members, signed and ratified in 1949. According to the NATO treaty, the principle of equality and the idea of consensus were adopted as core values in this organization (Webber 4). In theory, the existence of NATO was beneficial for Europe because it assured security and it united Europe while promoting integration in postwar Europe. There are two main pillars in this alliance: politics, relying mainly on diplomacy, and military cooperation, consisting of a joint military operation (NATO). They also believe that military operations are supposed to be a last resort because the main purpose of NATO was to promote peace (NATO). One concrete example of upholding the principle of peace can be clearly seen from the former British Prime Minister and foreign secretary, Sir Anthony Eden. His primary ideology on foreign affairs was referred to as: “peace comes first” (Cameron Watt 76). Thus, it is apparent from the perspective of the dominant forces in NATO such as France, Britain, and the US, that they positioned NATO as

a defensive organization to counter threats to the Western community (Calleo 46). However, the reality of how NATO operated different from what was described in the NATO Charter, because the power imbalance between Britain, France and the US resulted in political tensions between these three countries.

In practice, the amount of the American influence within NATO, challenged the idea of equality and consensus that was agreed on by all members from the outset. In fact, the US had the largest role in NATO, particularly in shaping its vision and mission. According to David Calleo, the imbalance of power in NATO was unhealthy for the diplomatic relations of countries involved. For example, the flow of authority concerning nuclear policy was always passed down from Washington, followed by the US military commander and continued by US military based in Europe (Calleo 28). Furthermore, the US was seen to have implemented American foreign policy in NATO in the early years of the Cold War simply because they had more power than other NATO members. It can be clearly seen where the US was seen to positioned NATO in an offensive way toward the Soviets, while the British and the French were more relaxed towards the Soviets because they could not afford to have another war in Europe (Calleo 7). As a result, this political behavior undertaken by the US triggered reactions from the British and the French as European counterparts.

The way the Americans controlled Europe resulted in differences of reactions from the British and the French. Both Britain and France were ruled by the US on their own soil and both countries loathed being in an inferior position. However, even though the British were controlled by the Americans, they were at least in a better position compared to France. This was largely due to the close, personal relationship of Britain and the US (Reynolds 18). Thus, to some extent the British were prioritized by the Americans. In general, the British were the only European countries that had a very close diplomatic relationship because they had strong bilateral relations in many areas. For the military, the relationship became more intense,

particularly in the period of the Cold War involving the creation of nuclear weapons. Both British US scientists as well as the military were working side-by-side in exchanging scientific data to develop their own nuclear weapons (Smith 1386). In fact, the US, as the sole nation with political hegemony in Europe, wanted the British to be more engaged in Europe and act as a bridge for the Americans to European politics (Smith 1390). Again, the close relationship of the US and Britain benefited the British government, despite the loss of autonomy on the part of the British. It was natural and logical for the British, then, to be less resistant toward American domination of NATO.

On the other hand, relations between the US and the French were different than the Anglo-American relationship. The French government had no experience working closely with the American government, and no prior, personal relationship between the leaders of these two countries. Thus, the French had different experience with the British while they were both ruled by the Americans in their own countries. The French government did not receive all the benefits that the British in diplomatic relations with the US government (Trachtenburg 187). While the Americans wanted the British to be the leader and the most influential nation in Europe, the Americans pressured the French government on the issue of anti-imperialism (Kaplan 21). One prime example is when the Americans pressured the French government to give their colonies in Asia and Africa independence. American pressure led directly to France's loss of their colonies in Asia and Africa (Kaplan 23). The swift decolonization of Asia and Africa, due to American hegemony in Europe, was viewed with humiliation by the French public (Kaplan 23). The embarrassment and sense of inferiority on the part of the French fueled French resentment of American hegemony thereafter.

Based on these two examples it is apparent that the British benefited more compared to the French. Despite their inferiority, the British were in a better situation than the French in

regards to obtaining power in Europe. The British also realized that they lacked their prior world position, but despite their embarrassment, they grasped that they were in a better situation compared to other European countries and that their relationship with the US was worth keeping. Following the lead of the US and accepting American hegemony was the logical choice. France was in a more difficult position, and its leaders viewed their country as a powerful nation that should have some autonomy from American control. They saw France as the most influential country in Europe, and believed that NATO benefited more from having France than France benefited from being a member of it (von Riekhof 281). The first challenge to NATO would therefore come from the quality of its member's diplomatic relationship, prioritizing one country from the other resulted disintegration.

#### **1.4 The Reaction From Britain and France in Facing Power Imbalance Within NATO**

American domination prevailed in European politics since the beginning of NATO, leading to a power imbalance as the primary source of political friction among its member countries. The climax of this political dispute can be clearly seen from Britain and France during the period of 1960's under the leadership of Charles de Gaulle and Harold Wilson. However, these two leaders had showed two contrasting reactions towards the American hegemony in NATO.

In 1964 Harold Wilson won the election and became British Prime Minister from the Labor Party after the long domination of the Conservative party. One of the most notable events during his period of leadership was in 1968, when he decided to withdraw all British military forces from east of Suez. The idea behind his decision, many have claimed, was purely for economic purposes, because he wanted to increase social spending (Vivekanadan 53). He believed that the budget for defense, which was more than 7% of the GNP, was inefficient (Taylor 8). Wilson also had to face another issue, as in this period Britain's

financial problems were worsened by the devaluing of the Pound. Therefore, Britain was faced with the dilemma of having to choose either to maintain their overseas military operations and maintain their position as the global military power. In the end, Wilson chose to withdraw the military from the east of Suez in 1968 and saved billions of Pounds from cutting the defense budget, particularly from the sector of research and development. This political decision was not purely economic decision but instead a political one. Thus, to stay in Europe and fully rely on the defense to NATO was a win-win solution according to his view, because it lowered government spending and their strategic position in NATO will assured their security from the Soviet Union (Longinotti 331). In that particular period NATO was the most important organization that was able to deter the Soviet Union and Wilson realized that Britain would not be able to protect itself against the Soviet Union alone (Vivekanadan 61).

As the result of the withdrawal from the east of Suez, Britain intensified the deployment of troops and focused their defense in Europe. Within this context, Wilson agreed to allow the Americans to take part in the European defense and politics (Longinotti 328). Furthermore, intensifying their defense in Europe came with a price, as Britain had to make concrete contributions to European defense, such as supplying 55.000 troops in Europe (Longinotti 334). This was considered as the “cost of commitment” for participating in European defense. Thus, Wilson’s decision to withdraw had three motives. First, it was cheaper for the British government to run military operations in Europe. Second, relying on NATO enhanced their security relative to the Soviet Union and at the same time maintained diplomatic relationships with the US. Lastly, to some extent, it built up solidarity with other European countries because Britain was certainly in need of allies on the European continent.

On the other hand, France under the leadership of Charles de Gaulle had a different reaction towards American hegemony in Europe. General de Gaulle came back to power at

the end of the 1950s with a much dissatisfaction over the French position of inferiority in NATO. His reaction when he came to power was to address the inequality issue within NATO with the Americans (Kaplan 30). As time passed, de Gaulle felt that the American did not adequately respond to his reactions. Thus, in the early 1960s, de Gaulle tried to make his own move by accelerating the nuclear independence through France's *Force de Frappe* (Kaplan 31). After he declared his political move, Washington DC finally responded to French reaction, but did so by responding negatively. They argued that America's nuclear arsenal should be enough to serve Europe and it would be dangerous if one of NATO member had nuclear independence (Kaplan 31). However, from de Gaulle's perspective, it was seen as a confirmation that the Americans were not happy with France's attempt to balance their power under the umbrella of NATO. As the result, the climax of de Gaulle's political friction with the US was France's withdrawal from NATO's Integrated Military Command in 1966. He sent a letter to the British Prime Minister and the American President that all non-French military forces should depart from France (Kaplan 33). De Gaulle's political decision to withdraw from NATO Integrated Military Command was seen as an attempt by him to gain power and respect from the other superpowers and restore France as an influential power. Neither the Americans nor the British were surprised with de Gaulle's efforts to strengthen France.

These two case studies indeed occurred in the similar period of time but the political interests of both countries led to different reactions to American hegemony in NATO. There are many factors at the national level and their leadership style as well as personality that impact these differences. It was only two years after de Gaulle's withdrawal from NATO that the British, under Wilson, decided to withdraw their overseas military and instead rely on NATO for defense. The key difference between the decisions made by these two leaders was the issue of independence or dependence on NATO.



## **CHAPTER II – BRITISH AND FRENCH LEADERS**

This chapter will try to analyze and answer how the leaders of France and Britain could have had different reaction towards American hegemony in the 1960s. In order to better understand the nature of these differences, the leaders of both Britain and France will also be measured using international relation theory of Classical Realism. This will allow a two dimensional analysis that combines both historical analysis and also analysis of the politics of power. Furthermore, the influence of French patriotism that was expressed in the Fifth Republic and the notion of the “Special Relationship” will also be examined and explained in this chapter.

### **2.1 The French Fifth Republic and the “Special Relationship”**

The purpose of this sub-chapter is to provide information regarding two pivotal elements within the regimes of these two leaders that more or less affected their decision-making processes. These two things are 1) the French patriotism that was expressed through the Fifth Republic by Charles de Gaulle and 2) the intimate relationship of Britain with the US that is known as their “Special Relationship”.

The French Fifth Republic began in 1958, and was initiated by Charles de Gaulle after his return to power. The main characteristic of this system was the implementation of a semi-presidential system and the replacement of the previous problematic parliamentary system in the Fourth Republic (Thody 19). In 1958, the birth of the Fifth Republic was also marked by the new constitution, known as the French Constitution of 1958 (Malézieux 220). In the new constitution, the President was allowed to have more power in the government compared to

the previous parliamentary system. Thus, the Fifth Republic is better viewed as a revolution, compared to a revision of the constitution (Malézieux 221). Furthermore, one of the most notable efforts undertaken by de Gaulle was the injection of high levels of patriotic values in the regime by declaring that France should be independent (Thody 41). The background of this was to recover the confidence of the French people after a decade of humiliation in Europe and international politics.

The most famous doctrine of his return into politics known as *Gaullism*, and that was the basis of the French approach towards its foreign policy. It was a political doctrine of de Gaulle that combined left-wing appeal, populism, and nationalistic approaches (Thody 51). That was indeed quite unclear about its position in the political spectrum. However, many scholars identified this notion as de Gaulle's unique style of leadership.

On the other hand, Britain had its "Special Relationship" with the American government. It is important to note that the figure of Winston Churchill was crucial in regards this notion. He is considered to be the initiator of this relationship when he proclaimed this term on his speech in 1946. This notion actually referred to the intimate diplomatic relationship of Britain and the US that had existed for a long period of time (Watt 2).

This doctrine of the "Special Relationship" started to become a national obsession due to a belief that this could take the UK to a safer place (Watt 3). In political terms, the main reason of maintaining the relationship with the US was because it was a beneficial relationship for the British and it was also because they were the closest European country with the US government (Watt 4). Furthermore, the context of this "Special Relationship" shifted during the postwar period, where it also meant cooperation in the field of military, economy, and politics. Thus, the idea of a "Special Relationship" became a major element for British foreign policy that would affect their decision-making process with respect to the international politics.

## **2.2 Charles de Gaulle and an attempt to “Counter” American hegemony**

Charles de Gaulle was one of the most important figures in French politics, both in the war and the post-war period. During the WW II period, he was the leader of the French resistance movement that continued to fight the Axis during the Nazi occupation of France, and thus he considered to be a French national hero (Thoody 11). After coming out from his retirement to rejoin French politics, de Gaulle proposed the new Fifth Republic in order to recover from all the problematic political system in the Fourth Republic that caused France to be inferior (Ryning 23). One of the biggest motivations for him to come back to the Presidential Palace was to make France the most powerful country in the continent. In the process, he shaped the mindset of the French people by declaring the independence of France from the influence of other countries through his patriotic messages.

As previously mentioned, the key difference between the Fourth and the Fifth Republic was the political structure that gives the president more power in the government (French 1958 Constitution). It allowed de Gaulle to react towards American hegemony in NATO more freely. This political approach allowed de Gaulle to spread his *Gaullist* doctrine across the nation more freely. This political doctrine cannot be placed on the political spectrum, as it does not belong either to the left or the right, as it heavily relied on the leadership style and the figure of de Gaulle (Thody 50). Moreover, with the success of this political doctrine in the early 1960's, it could justify and assure to his people that political decisions he made were the best approaches for France in order to remain powerful in the international world. Consequently, the figure of Charles de Gaulle was very strong in the national level and he gained a lot of trust from his people (Thoody 11).

Charles de Gaulle became the President of France on the basis of great dissatisfaction toward French performance in the international world, including American foreign policy

implemented in NATO. A year after his appointment as French President, he often voiced his thoughts on how the Americans betrayed the principle of equality in NATO. His dislike of American influence became stronger when the US government did not respond his idea for restructuring of the defense plans of NATO in Europe (Kaplan 33). He saw US offensive strategy towards the Soviet Union as putting France in danger because it would sharpen the political cleavages between the East and the West (Rynning 25). However, in political terms, France's rejection of American influence was based on de Gaulle's realization that both France and the US had similar goals regarding the obtaining of political power. Both countries wanted to gain power in international politics, but they had different focus. France believed that they should be the most powerful nation in the continent of Europe, unlike the US, who wanted to maintain its hegemony. There was an embedded belief in French political culture that France was the rightful continental superpower, and that they should aspire to maintain that.

His political interest to gain power in the continent of Europe can be seen when he initiated European integration with other five countries in 1961-1962 with the Fauchet Plan. In this proposal, de Gaulle proposed a new intergovernmental institution that he called "Union of States" with its own defense policy (Dinan 43). To some extent it has structural similarities with NATO, the only difference being that de Gaulle excluded Britain and the US from this grand plan. In order to gain power in Europe, he believed that the American should stay out of Europe. In fact, Britain, under the leadership of Macmillan and Wilson, applied to join but de Gaulle vetoed Britain two times due to the potential of bridging the US to enter European politics for the second time (Dinan 44). Thus, the political interest of de Gaulle to gain power in Europe and anti American was clearly visible, even though de Gaulle received severe criticism and was rejection by other European leaders, such as Dutch Foreign Minister Joseph Luns in 1962 (Vanke 97). Furthermore, one thing that made de Gaulle confident about

his plan to dominate Europe was because France experienced economic growth in the early years of his regime and the country he invited was politically less influential at that time (Dinan 48). Some countries such as Germany, and Italy were busy in recovering from the WW II. Thus, based on this reason, it will place de Gaulle as the most important figure that has control in the European Community and it was an obvious attempt to exclude the Americans from Europe.

As the result of constant American influence that limited French independence in the Supreme Headquarter Allied Powers Europe or SHAPE and North Atlantic Council, de Gaulle declared France's withdrawal from NATO Integrated Military Command in 1966 (Rynning 26). De Gaulle believed that every French political maneuver in regards to foreign policy, including nuclear policy, must be decided on the basis of the interests of the French people. From the perspective of the French, American hegemony in Europe was an attempt to stop them from achieving equality of power (Kaplan 32). This was perhaps one of the biggest reasons why de Gaulle saw American existence as a problem. In response to this, de Gaulle specifically addressed the importance of independence in a speech at a military academy in 1959:

*“ The defense of France must be French. This necessity has not always been well appreciated these past years. I know it. It is indispensable that it happens. A country like France, if it makes war, it must its war. Her effort must be her own. Otherwise, our country would be in contradiction with its origins, its role, its self esteem, its soul ...”* (Rynning 26).

This was surely intended to proclaim that de Gaulle did not accept American assistance because it made France, and particularly de Gaulle himself, viewed as weak. A decision like this from de Gaulle was not a surprise, though de Gaulle was able to challenge the Americans

at that particular time, as France was not dependent from the US. But from his perspective, France's withdrawal should have been a huge loss for NATO, but not for France (Krotz and Sperling 309). Again, patriotic doctrine of *Gaullism* plays a huge part in shaping this political mindset that France as the most powerful country in Europe should always be independent.

In order to grasp how a figure like de Gaulle could show such an aggressive posture toward American hegemony, it is necessary to trace back and analyze him as a person. Charles de Gaulle was a captain when World War II happened. During the war his position was not as influential as when he became the President of France in 1958 (Thody 32). In general, de Gaulle had no experience in working closely with the US government, so he has no personal relationship with that country. During the war, he also viewed both Britain and the US as imperfect allies for France because the intimate relationship they have would cause France to be less prioritized (Thody 79). Thus, when he came to power in 1958, his skepticism towards the Americans and British persisted. His decision to veto Britain from entering European Community was enough evidence for his views. Also, he often criticized American foreign and defense policies on many occasions, such as his speech in Quebec in 1966, even after he withdrew from NATO (Thody 30). Thus, his personal feeling and perception about the two countries, particularly the US, affected his political decision in 1966. Furthermore, his admiration of previous French leaders such as Napoleon Bonaparte, George Clemenceau, and Louis XIV, all motivated him to make his revolutionary political maneuvers and give shock therapy to the Americans (Thody 32). Finally, his rebellious character certainly affected the way France reacted toward American hegemony.

### **2.3 Harold Wilson, East of Suez and the influence of the “Special Relationship”**

The “Special Relationship” of Britain and the US, introduced by Churchill, began to shift after World War II. The meaning of this relationship had evolved into a more intensive

context where it encompassed bilateral relationships of the two in the context of economics, military, and politics. The Americans and the British came to work side by side on joint military operations, in the sharing of intelligence notes, and in collaborating in the nuclear project (Eberle 155).

The period of the “Special Relationship” was a period of “partnership for purpose” as described by William Wallace and Christopher Phillips. The relationship between Britain and the US can be seen as a symbiotic relationship, where one country needs the other. However, due to America’s dominant position in the world in the post WW II period, the “Special Relationship” became unequal (Perkins 49). Thus, what Wallace and Phillips really meant was that the British needed the relationship with the Americans more than the Americans needed the relationship with the British. The “Special Relationship” became one of the most important elements for the British foreign policy and it continued to remain a high priority for the British, particularly with respect to the issue of NATO and defense. The Special Relationship also affected Harold Wilson’s decision in 1968.

In 1964, Harold Wilson won the election and became the British Prime Minister from the Labor Party. It was indeed a new fresh start for the British politics that the Labor Party became the majority in the parliament after a long period of domination by the Conservative Party. One of his first steps after he was elected was to increase social spending in order to increase the quality of life his people and it was clearly written from the 1964 Labor Party manifesto (Longinotti 320). This was perhaps because of his political background as a leftist politician that supported the rapid increase of education and health (Vivekanadan 54). Thus, from the political point of view, Wilson already showed different political approach compared to the previous Prime Ministers that came from the Conservative Party that were eager to expand the British power over their overseas territory in Southeast Asia and Persian Gulf, which cost a lot of money.

Similarly with de Gaulle, Harold Wilson also one of the most important figure in that period. Unlike de Gaulle that came as the national hero, Wilson was the “chosen one” by the Labor Party to lead the party and the country (Colman 11). The main reason Wilson was appointed to run the country and the party was because he was young and ambitious compared to any other potential leader at the time. He was forty eight when he took the job as the leader of both the country and the party (Colman 14). Furthermore, he was known to be opportunistic and egocentric (Colman 11). Thus, he was the perfect figure that could lead Britain that faced many internal problems such as the crisis of pounds. British withdrawal from their overseas military operations in the East of Suez can be viewed as a concrete example of Wilson as an opportunist where he could balance between the British interest to maintain its power, assure security toward the Soviet Union, and maintain the relations with other countries.

Britain had been faced with two options: either to leave East of Suez and focus on Europe, with the total reliance of NATO, or else maintain their overseas military but let go of their relationship with Europe. Wilson ended up choosing to focus in Europe and withdraw their military. However, behind his decision, the “Special Relationship” was one of the main considerations that affected Wilson chose to withdraw. By utilizing their intimate relationship with the US president, Wilson was confident that if they stayed in NATO they would be safe from the Soviet Union because that he knew Britain could not fight them alone. Again, another example of Wilson as an opportunistic leader can be clearly seen. Wilson maintained his close personal relationship with the US because they were Britain’s closest ally. One of the concrete examples was during his first visit to the White House after he was elected. During his first visit he declared his support for the American government in regards to Vietnam (Colman 15). It was indeed his attempt to increase the chemistry with the US leader. To some extent, Wilson’s decision to rely fully on NATO implicitly agreed to allow the



American military to take part in the British defense. NATO was vital for the deterrence of the Soviet Union (Longinotti 329). Unlike France, who decided to leave NATO due to American hegemony, Britain chose to stay in NATO due to the Anglo-American relationship that benefit them. Thus, it was apparent that British political interest under Wilson was different with de Gaulle, where Wilson had more interest for survival in the international world while de Gaulle eager to obtain power (Colman 39).

#### **2.4 Charles de Gaulle's Fifth Republic and Harold Wilson's East of Suez Decision from the Perspective of International Relation Theory**

In order to grasp the choices of these two leaders, it is necessary to include in the analysis of the two leaders ideas from international relations theory. The theory that will be use in this analysis is classical realism, mainly the literature of Hans Morgenthau. The main reason for using classical realism instead of any other type of realism, such as neo-realism, is because classical realism is considered by many scholars as the dominant paradigm in the international relation theory that accurately portrays the politics of power during the Cold War period (Lebow 216). Thus, this theory would be appropriate for international relations theory in order to analyze the figure of these two leaders because the two different decisions of Britain and France occurred in between the period of Cold War.

Classical realism was actually referred to the *Realpolitik* or power politics (Donnelly 29). The main principles for it are state centrist and rationality, which means that state is the main actor in the international relations theory (Donnelly 31). As argued by Morgenthau, classical realism is based on human nature, which is based on human selfishness (Donnelly 31). A desire for self-survival and eagerness to be more powerful than others, which is considered by many scholars as the heart of the international relation conditions of the Cold War period (Lebow 219). Moreover, this theory rests on three main assumptions of Thomas

Hobbes in his book, *Leviathan*: that men are equal, interact in anarchy, and are driven by competition.

However, there is one point that most international relations theorists often neglect: they often fail to look after the influence of individuals, meaning the leader of a country. Morgenthau and other realists are too focused on their analysis at the level of state. However, Morgenthau himself wrote on his book that people are striving for power start from the level of family into state (Morgenthau 17). Morgenthau and other scholars such as Lebow did mention about the role of individual in the international politics, but they did not accentuate how powerful an individual could be. Thus, it is crucial to also apply classical realism in evaluating Charles de Gaulle and Harold Wilson concerning their decisions in 1966 and 1968 towards NATO. This was because these leaders themselves who had power to divine the position of their country in the international world as well as decide to protect their status quo or to be an imperialist state (Morgenthau 159). Furthermore, Morgenthau also believed that the continent of Europe is consisted autonomous states that are driven by self-interest and the key to achieve their interest is depend on the leadership (Morgenthau 125). Again, another convincing argument from him that is indeed highly crucial to analyze the leader of Britain and France that were striving for obtaining power.

In regard to Charles de Gaulle's decision to withdraw from NATO in 1968, it was apparent that he was motivated by realism. His political decision to challenge American hegemony was the perfect example of the classical realism theory because by withdrawing from NATO, de Gaulle gained more independence to obtain power. Power basically refers to armed strength, which is one of the main determinants of becoming powerful under the perspective of classical realism (Morgenthau 15). This can be seen from how de Gaulle was accelerated the independence of nuclear program in 1959-1961 that was condemned by the Americans. Furthermore, he was known as a leader who had lack of trust towards

international institution as well as the idea of supranationalism (Malézieux 245). Thus, it can be clearly seen that de Gaulle had a serious disdain for commitment within an institution that limits his country's independence.

On the other hand, Britain, under the leadership of Harold Wilson was very different from Charles de Gaulle. His political decision in 1968 to withdraw from the East of Suez and rely the defense on NATO was far from the characteristic of a classical realism theory. His decision in 1968 was seen as his effort to protect the status quo and clearly not an attempt to obtain power like de Gaulle did in 1966. One of the common features of this international relations theory, as mentioned, is that a believe of state as the primary and deny international institution. In fact, Wilson decided to rely on NATO, which an international institution. Furthermore, his decision to share power with the Americans in regards for defense showed that he has no realist way of thinking.

## **2.5 The Leaders Reactions Comparison**

Based on the analysis of these three leaders, it was clear that the British and the French leaders had different views toward American hegemony in NATO. From the French side, de Gaulle, is known as the conservative nationalist political leader who rejected the idea of French as inferior. Even though it was a fact that they were dominated by the Americans within their own soil, de Gaulle, through his patriotic Fifth Republic, attempted to fight that stigma. This was because de Gaulle, as a person, had the characteristics of a right wing leadership style. Furthermore, one interesting fact is that he idolized previous charismatic leaders such as Napoleon Bonaparte, this heroic history could justify that motivated him to lead France to be a powerful and independent nation like they were. Consequently, American hegemony was considered as an insult to France and it was logical that he responded by led France to revolt against it aggressively.

On the other hand, the British under the leadership of Wilson had different reaction towards the American hegemony. He saw NATO not as a threat to the freedom of their country but instead an important element for their defense strategy. This was also because the British had several advantages by maintaining the relationship with the US such as security from the Soviet Union and lower government spending on defense. Thus, it allows Wilson to execute his plan to increase social spending, which was the objective of from the Labor Party. Moreover, the “Special Relationship” did played an important role towards Wilson’s decision to rely on NATO.

## **CHAPTER III – France and Britain’s Internal Power Relation**

In this chapter the focus would be the analysis of the internal political structure of both Britain and France in 1960’s. This would allow to measure how influential the leader was within their regime. The components that would be analyze include the ministries, political party, lastly the role and power of the leaders. The aim of this chapter is to measure whether or not national political structure limit the power of the leader it self or even supported the view of the leaders.

### **3.1 Internal Affairs under de Gaulle’s presidency**

In 1958 when de Gaulle came to power under his Fifth Republic, he aimed to recover from the problematic Fourth Republic. One of the first steps he made was to restructure defense policy. The ministry of defense was one of the most important government bodies, particularly when France was facing the pressure from the American hegemony and also planned for nuclear independency in the 1960’s. As a result, the French ministry of defense led by Colonel Charles Lacheroy initiated a new defensive policy that was strongly influence by de Gaulle’s doctrine of *Gaullism*.

Colonel Lacheroy proposed the so-called revolutionary warfare or “*la guerre révolutionnaire*” as an attempt to recover from the embarrassment from the Indochina and Algerian independence war where the US considered France as incompetent in fighting communism on his colony (Rynning 28). This new concept that was proposed by Lacheroy urged de Gaulle to be more independent and responsible with the strategy of defense policy (Rynning 32). The figure of de Gaulle was very influential because his patriotic messages

were applied by his ministries such as the Ministry of Defense. This was an obvious political maneuver played by the French Ministry of Defense to balance the power of the American in NATO. Thus, it proved that the figure of Charles de Gaulle within his regime was very influential. De Gaulle was successfully made his circle to have the same vision and mission about what French politics should look like and how being patriot French.

Furthermore, the political structure of France made de Gaulle to be able to exercise his political maneuver more freely. This was because, after the Fifth Republic was formed, a new constitution was also formed. De Gaulle has more freedom because he was a head of state that has an exclusive power according to the Article 8 of the French constitution, he able to appoint and dismiss the Prime Minister as well as his ministries (Constitution of France 1958). Thus, it was really matter on what de Gaulle think and feel about the position of France in the international world. Furthermore, he also has exclusive power on a matter of defense where: the president has a role as the Commander in Chief of the French Armed Force and also has the right to order the use of nuclear weapon. Thus, it is allowed the president to have more power and freedom to define the defense policy. As the result, the national political structure was actually “supported” and enables de Gaulle to take such decision in 1966.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Foreign affairs and political party under de Gaulle’s period did not have much influence compared to the Ministry of Defense. This was because de Gaulle himself who actively participating in the international forum and declared his views towards French position in the international politics. Furthermore, in regards to NATO, French main problem was mainly about the issue of defense. Thus, only the Ministry of Defense who has direct influence towards the decision in 1966.

### **3.2 Internal Affairs under Wilson’s leadership as Prime Minister**

The political system in Britain is a constitutional monarchy, one of the longest and most stable political systems in Europe. Unlike France, British political system remains one of the oldest political system with minimum changes in Europe. Within this political system, the British Prime Minister is chosen from the election and represent the interest of the political party. Political parties play a huge and important role on British political system because it represents the interest of the people. It was apparent that during Wilson's leadership, the role of political party was influential towards every decision taken by the Prime Ministers, including the withdrawal from the east of Suez in 1968. One of the concrete examples is when Wilson became the British Prime Ministers and represent the Labor Party that focus on increasing social spending rather than increasing budget for defense (Taylor 6). Technically, the Labor Party was the one who initiated to reduce the budget for defense in 1965-1966 because they wanted to allocate government budget on social spending (Longinotti 323). Thus, his decision to withdraw from the east of Suez was heavily influenced by the interest of the party. Wilson's political maneuver was indeed different with the previous Prime Ministers that came from the Conservative Party while his political maneuver was more into leftist. Furthermore, there are only two influential parties in Britain, thus if one party replacing the other as the majority in the parliament, it caused the political decision to be completely different. The Conservative party wanted to deploy the military in the east of Suez and protecting the British position as the global military power while the Labor party wanted to withdraw and increase social spending.

Under the British constitution, the role of the Prime Ministers is a head of the government, which obviously has limited power within the government and unlike the position of de Gaulle who was the head of state which allow him to has more power (The Role and Power of The British Prime Ministers). Wilson has the role to lead the House of Commons for the legislature process. Another role is to bridge the monarch and the

parliament. Meaning that every decision that has been taken in the House of Commons must reported, reviewed, and agreed by the monarch. From this point of view, Wilson had less freedom in regards to expressing his political view compared to de Gaulle. The only exclusive power for the British Prime Ministers is to appoint the ministers of the cabinet and coordinate the policies with all government departments. However, according to the constitution, the position of Wilson as the Prime Ministers was more or less equal in the decision making process as his ministers because he has no power to decide on his own. Thus, the British Prime Ministers has relatively more limited power because he or she did not have the power to decide everything on his or her own.

In regards to Wilson's decision in 1968, the ministries particularly the ministry of defense under Denis Healey also plays an important role towards the decision. He was in the same position as Wilson in regards to the withdrawal from the East of Suez. For him, the cost of maintaining the position as the global military actor was too high for the British government, especially during the economic crisis in the 1960s (Longinotti 324). He was the one who stated that the biggest spending for the military was the cost of logistics of the British armed force and the withdrawal from the east of Suez will save government budget for billions of Pounds. Thus, despite of having limited of power due to the political structure, the cabinet was relatively supportive towards Wilson's decision. Thus, it allows Wilson to execute his plan for increasing social spending.



## CONCLUSION

In 1950's, the period of internal conflict between the three powerful members of NATO began. American hegemony did exist and dominated NATO that resulted to political disputes in Europe. Owing to the fact that the "failed" principle of equality in NATO. The US as the political hegemon made the other two European superpowers, namely France and Britain seemed inferior. Consequently, both Britain and France had reacted towards the heavy American influence. The reaction in general was not positive yet the British and the French had different reactions in 1966 and 1968. However, the difference of reaction from the British and the French depends on how they perceived the American in Europe. For the British, they were indeed less superior by the American, however, they perceived the Americans as their ally because they gained multiple benefits; due to the fact of their previous close yet personal relationship that involves the British leaders and the Americans. Thus, in response to the American hegemony in NATO, the British showed relatively less aggressive response and even maintain the relationship with the American government as it can be seen from Wilson's decision in 1968. In contrast, the French perceived American involvement in Europe as an insult to the French integrity that limited the independence. France considered the existence of the Americans in the European politics weakened their position in the international politics. Thus, de Gaulle's reaction in 1968 was rather more aggressive compared to the British. Again, patriotic doctrine under his regime played a very important role in shaping his decision.

The figure Charles de Gaulle was indeed very crucial towards French decision in 1968 and power was surely the main element in the Fifth Republic. Not only because the regime that was striving for power in the international world, but also the figure of de Gaulle himself as a powerful man. He has a huge influence in the politics because he was a national hero that instigated a revolution on the French politics. He could bring a new start for the French politics after series of humiliation. His charisma could increase the confidence of the French people towards his regime. Furthermore, his role as the head of state did also enable him to exercise his political decision. One of the prime examples is the ability to appoint his ministries and prime ministers. Thus, he has power to decide which person on his cabinet that has the same vision and mission as him. Therefore, it was obvious that most people on his circle supported his decision in 1966.

Britain on the other side has a different leader compared to France. Harold Wilson was a young successful politician that came from the Labor party. His personal that is known as the opportunistic can be clearly seen from his decision in 1968 when he chose to withdraw from the east of Suez. He utilized the “Special Relationship” with the US to solve the internal problem. Moreover, power to some extent was seen as not his biggest interest. This was perhaps his political background as a leftist politician. Furthermore, the internal political structure was also completely different as the French. Wilson has limited of power because of his role as the head of the government. He did not have power to decide everything based on his interest because it must agreed by both the monarch and the parliament. Thus, the government, particularly the Labor party has a huge influence towards Wilson’s decision in 1968.

From the perspective of the international relation theory, again, it showed another differences from the figure of de Gaulle and Wilson. De Gaulle was clearly has classical realist way of thinking. He has the eager to obtain more power in Europe and was a state

centric person. His dislike towards the existence of the American on the European soil was because it will challenge his desire for power. On the other hand, Wilson's decision in 1966 was clearly the evident of his classical realist way of thinking. His decision in 1968 was not represent the feature of a classical realist because he decide to rely on NATO which is an international institution. His decision to maintain his close relationship with the US was also far from the category as a realist leader. This was because it is apparent that his decision to withdraw from the east of Suez was not a political agenda that striving for power.

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