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## **How to determine if Emmanuel Macron's foreign policy is truly inspired by Gaullism?**

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***How to determine if Emmanuel Macron's foreign policy is truly inspired by  
Gaullism?***

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## ABSTRACT:

Charles de Gaulle's legacy over French foreign policy is well known. He left behind him a political doctrine, Gaullism, which takes up his key ideas and is considered as a central element in French decision-making on the international scene. De Gaulle's continued influence over his successors is a substantially treated subject. However, this thesis deemed interesting to tackle upon de Gaulle's legacy over Emmanuel Macron. It argues that studies on Macron's Gaullist inspiration do not entirely allow to determine if there is a profound and genuine Gaullist nature to Emmanuel Macron's foreign policy. This thesis aims to determine the latter using critical discourse analysis, as it believes that to identify clear signs of continuity between Charles de Gaulle and Emmanuel Macron, the best approach is to analyse both statesmen foreign policy discourses. This paper is inspired by the idea that someone's discourse shows his genuine beliefs and vision. Through critical discourse analysis, this thesis tries to identify patterns between de Gaulle's and Macron's discourses, as their presence would indicate a genuine continuity between these two leaders. Two major themes of Gaullism are identified as constituting the core of the doctrine – universalist champion of peace and disruptive diplomacy. This thesis concludes that Emmanuel Macron's discourse borrows heavily from Charles de Gaulle's key principles. Both see France as a country whose destiny is to lead the world as France embodies universal values. They both portray France as a champion of peace and dialogue through an open-door diplomacy. They as well are leading a deeply disruptive and unsettling foreign policy deemed necessary in Gaullist thinking to achieve France's great power status, affirm its international rank and assert the role of a leader on the world stage.

## INTRODUCTION:

It is commonly accepted that Gaullism plays a central role in French foreign policy. Charles de Gaulle's legacy over the French 5th Republic is the subject of numerous studies and academic literature. Since 1969, French presidents are often compared to the former Free France leader. To what extent is this true? How can we determine with more certainty whether Charles de Gaulle continues to have such an impact? The difficulty here is to contribute to a subject so vastly studied. De Gaulle's influence over French foreign policy even after his death is well known and is often mentioned when describing French actions on the international scene. His legacy took the form of a political movement, Gaullism, which found its way in the French political landscape even half a century after de Gaulle's death. Emmanuel Macron has shown on the international stage a Gaullist inspiration. However, this thesis argues, Macron's Gaullism deserves a closer look. Studies of the latter so far show similarities between Macron's foreign actions and de Gaulle's, but they rarely propose a more profound comparison of the two leaders, one that could really demonstrate whether Macron is truly positioning himself in continuity with Charles de Gaulle's foreign policy.

This thesis's focus on Macron as the subject of this comparison with de Gaulle is justified by two elements. The first is that Macron is the current ruler of France, thus his presidency is timewise the most distant vis-à-vis de Gaulle's years. Hence out of all French presidents of the 5th Republic, Macron is most likely the least studied in that regard. Moreover, this means that the world that both leaders had and have to face is radically different. On one side, de Gaulle ruled France at the height of the Cold War, in a bipolar international order. On the other side, Macron is leading in the context of an arguably multipolar world, with France and Europe trying to find their place in times of a questioned Western hegemony. The second element is Macron's political background. He did not come from the successor of de Gaulle's party, *Les Républicains*, or any party known for its Gaullist inspiration. He served in François Hollande's socialist presidency

as Minister of Economy. During his 2017 electoral campaign, he framed himself as being neither right wing nor left wing. Emmanuel Macron wants to break the traditional left and right political cleavage. These two elements make Macron a very interesting subject to be used in this thesis as it aims to study Charles de Gaulle's continued influence over French foreign policy. If Macron is shown to be strongly inspired by Gaullism, this could show how de Gaulle's legacy transcends political lines and remains meaningful in a radically different world than the one its founder existed in.

Studies on Charles de Gaulle's influence over his successors' foreign policy are numerous and substantial. However, this thesis argues that when it comes to Emmanuel Macron, studies are often focused on simply and occasionally mentioning Macron's Gaullist inspiration, putting Macron's foreign policy in continuity with the one of Charles de Gaulle, or identifying parallels between the two leaders' diplomatic actions. Most of them do not allow a deeper grasp on the accuracy of the comparison between the two leaders. They focus mainly on a conceptual comparison, drawing similarities between de Gaulle's and Macron's foreign policies. But this thesis wants to contribute by proposing a more personal take on both statesmen, an approach centred around discourse analysis. De Gaulle's and Macron's speeches, writings, comments, and other statements regarding foreign policy are critically analysed. The aim is to identify what key themes of Gaullism can be found in Charles de Gaulle's discourse, and whether they reappear in Macron's discourse. This way, this study could determine if there is on a more personal level a profound and genuine will of Macron to draw on Charles de Gaulle's legacy on matters of foreign policy. This thesis believes that this genuineness can be found through Macron's discourse, less so in secondary literature offering a more critical and distant analysis of their respective foreign policies. Furthermore, if we were to determine that Macron is inspired by Gaullism when conducting foreign affairs, this could help shed light on what guides France on the international stage. Therefore, this thesis tries to answer the question: how to determine if Emmanuel Macron's foreign policy is truly inspired by Gaullism?

## CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW:

Charles de Gaulle's continued influence over his successors is a well-studied subject and defining French foreign policy as 'Gaullist' is common to this day. To what extent and depth is this also the case for Emmanuel Macron? In this literature review, this thesis shows at first an overall picture of studies focused on defining Gaullism, and what key themes for the latter are used for the analysis and findings. Secondly, it demonstrates how this thesis situates itself within the existing academic literature that has already tackled the topic of Charles de Gaulle's legacy over his successors. It includes an overview of studies that focused more specifically on de Gaulle's influence over Emmanuel Macron. Finally, this section exposes the motivation behind the writing of this thesis, why this topic seems to be worthy of even more scrutiny, what the intended contribution of this paper is, and why focus on Macron.

### 1. What is Gaullism?

Central to this thesis is of course Gaullism, which needs to be clearly defined. According to Leruth, Gaullism represents "a long-standing political movement representing key tenets advocated" by Charles de Gaulle during his rule. It created a legacy that according to Leruth "is one of the most successful national doctrines" that is "likely to continue shaping contemporary French politics" (Leruth, 2020: 36). According to Stanley Hoffmann, Gaullism is "a call for a will – the will to keep France 'mistress of herself,' with free hands and no other commitments than those she has freely chosen to promote her interests. It is also the will to keep France, no longer a 'mastodon,' as a nation of importance and weight," the whole guided by "the will to independence and grandeur" (Hoffmann, 1994: 232). For Charles de Gaulle, France had to always affirm its great power status through autonomy, as for him "no great nation could afford to relinquish its autonomy since it could not entrust any aspect of its destiny to outsiders whose interests



were not wholly compatible with its own” (Morse, 1973: 152). This shows already what seems to be the major goal of Gaullism – French international rank and great power status. The primary goal of Gaullism is to assure a prestigious international rank (Leruth, 2020; Moravcsik, 2012; Davis, 2011). It is nourished by a desire to put France on the same level as other great powers (Davis, 2011; DePorte, 2013). This idea of equality with others, to be as influential, is key (DePorte, 1990, 2013). Feeling secondary and unimportant is very badly perceived by France. Williams (2017), Hartbutt (2010) and Beaulieu (1995) show it by depicting French irritation of being left out of key discussions which established the post-WWII order through the United Nations organisation and the Yalta conference. For Charles de Gaulle, France was only to be France if it had a great power status. He sees in the past of France a great power, whose universal values placed it at the centre of the world and whose power was respected. The WWII military catastrophe and the rise of the United States as a superpower ensured French decline according to de Gaulle. As a result, he sought to reaffirm France’s strong international rank and prestige in order to compensate for French decline and lack of influence over the post-WWII world (Beaulieu, 1995; Kissinger, 1994; Williams, 2017; Harbutt, 2010; DePorte, 1990). Promoting France’s great power status was a way of promoting French greatness which in de Gaulle’s mind would “save the French from their permanent tendency to splinter and quarrel. Without a constant effort toward autonomy, and grand actions, France would become the victim of foreign machinations and internal demons” (Hoffmann, 1994: 232). How did de Gaulle seek to accomplish France’s great power status? DePorte (2013) demonstrates how Charles de Gaulle was aware that from a purely materialistic point of view, France was still greatly weakened by its 1940 demise, and this seriously compromised his claim to a great power status. How did the founder of Gaullism seek to bypass this obstacle and France’s serious weaknesses? This thesis believes that de Gaulle’s foreign policy strategy to bypass these latter can be summarized into two major themes – universal champion of peace and disruptive diplomacy. These two themes play a central role in determining if Emmanuel Macron’s foreign policy is truly and profoundly imbued by Gaullism. The next section defines those themes –

universal champion of peace, disruptive diplomacy – that aim to restore French international rank and affirm the country as a great power. Before defining these two elements however, it is necessary to look upon a key facet of Charles de Gaulle, one that helps at making a coherent whole out of all these different elements of his foreign policy: leadership.

Stanley and Inge Hoffmann offer a very interesting perspective of de Gaulle's will of being the "man of action," with a mission for his country, who defies whatever stands in his way (1968). Boldness, assertiveness, willingness to take "grand actions" – these were part of Charles de Gaulle's strong emphasis on leadership (Hoffmann, 1994; Gaffney, 2010; Cerny, 1988). As Cerny states, in de Gaulle's mind, "political action required of the individual to be a successful leader in general" (1988: 138). The former leader of Free France had a very personal perception of leadership. As Haskew states, "his ideas on leadership focused on the 'great man' theory: standing apart from the crowd, alone and unappreciated, but ready in a moment of crisis" (Haskew, 2011: ix). De Gaulle saw himself as a leader that must personally make sure to ensure France's greatness (Haskew, 2011). This very personal approach is institutionalised in the 5th Republic, with the President wielding the essence of the executive power (Haskew, 2011). This element of bold and disruptive leadership, with a sense of a mission of its country, is what introduces the two central themes of Gaullism.

Charles de Gaulle portrayed France as a peacemaking nation. He showed his motivation to promote peace around the world. Many scholars see in de Gaulle's promotion of multipolarity as being also motivated by de Gaulle's belief that a multipolar world had much better chances of ensuring peace than a polarized one around two conflicting blocs (Herpen, 2003; Clarkson, 1968; Giglilo, 1998-2000; DePorte, 1990). It is well illustrated in Torikata's and Cogan's texts, as well as in Montbrial's article, regarding de Gaulle's attempts at launching an international conference that went beyond the Cold War blocs in the hope of finding a solution to the Vietnam War (Torikata, 2007; Cogan, 1995;

Montbrial, 2004). It was exacerbated by de Gaulle's sense that he had a mission – promoting French greatness thanks to France's universal values (Kritzman, 1995; Célestin and DalMolin, 2016). According to Lawrence Kritzman, “de Gaulle's masterful statesmanship help reinforce the image that France was still a great power, one whose cultural mission and idea of ‘the nation’ was associated with a universalism” (1995: 5). This defence of peace and multipolarity, or more like peace through multipolarity, was meant to be achieved through an open-door diplomacy. Indeed, a good way of compensating France's fragilized great power status due to a lack of economic and military power (DePorte, 2013) was through diplomatic openness. By rejecting the bipolar division of the world, by portraying France as capable of questioning American interests, de Gaulle sought to give France bigger opportunities of opening diplomatic relations, thus improving its international standing (DePorte, 2013). Torikata demonstrates this very well in his article about Charles de Gaulle's attempt at pushing for a peaceful resolution of the Vietnam War that included Communist China. This played very well for French popularity in the Third World (Torikata, 2007), which also appreciated de Gaulle's criticism of American actions, portraying them as a threat to peace (Le Monde Diplomatique, 2021-2022). This way, Charles de Gaulle wanted France to be perceived as a mediating power between the two Cold War blocs (Torikata, 2007). Here already can be observed a certain boldness and disruptiveness, willingness to take "grand actions" in the name of peace and dialogue. It had a practical interest to it, as it gave France greater diplomatic presence, and was compatible with the claimed universality of French values thus French interests. But this was not the full picture of de Gaulle's diplomacy. His disruptiveness within the Cold War status quo and his determination to show that France had a leading role on the international stage is also embodied in a very assertive diplomacy, punctuated by bold statements which are meant to disturb the status quo, even if it meant to oppose France's allies and the two Cold War superpowers. This introduces to the second key theme of Gaullism: disruptive diplomacy.

Charles de Gaulle's diplomacy was full of surprises and bold undertakings. He sought *rapprochement* with the Eastern Bloc (Thomson, 1965; Clarkson, 1968; Barber, 2014), criticised the United States on several occasions, for example on NATO (Thomson, 1965; Montbrial, 2004; Giglioli, 1998-2000) or on the Vietnam War (Le Monde Diplomatique, 2021-2022; Logevall 1992; Torikata 2007), while never truly questioning France's alliance with the latter (Thomson, 1965; Vaïsse, 1994; Bozo and Emanuel, 2002). Through these bold actions, which were far from always being popular in the eyes of France's allies, de Gaulle sought to ensure France a leading role on the international stage. Charles de Gaulle multiplied very unsettling diplomatic decisions, such as visiting Moscow in the middle of the Cold War (Lipkin, 2016), leaving the integrated command of NATO in 1966 (Bozo and Emanuel, 2002), or portraying the United States as an obstacle to peace in Vietnam (Le Monde Diplomatique, 2021-2022). Some scholars emphasize how de Gaulle's bold diplomatic initiatives were primarily motivated by strengthening French prestige on the international scene (Davis, 2011; Leruth, 2020; Moravcsik, 2012). Bozo and Emanuel even talk about "a new era of assertive French diplomacy" which commenced under de Gaulle (2002: xi). These two major themes – universalist champion of peace and disruptive diplomacy – have a central role in this thesis as they are used to measure if Emmanuel Macron's diplomacy is profoundly inspired by Gaullism. The next section analyses the existing literature tackling on Charles de Gaulle's influence and legacy over his successors, and more specifically on Emmanuel Macron. It then tries to justify the reason behind the writing of this thesis on this topic.

## 2. Gaullist legacy

Books such as the ones of Falk Ostermann, especially vis-à-vis Chirac and Sarkozy (2018), and Demossier's (2019) show an overall picture of Charles de Gaulle's influence. This influence is predictable over former French Presidents coming directly from the Gaullist party. Pickles (1975) as well as Berstein and Bernstejn (2000) show the influence of Charles de Gaulle over his successor and former Prime Minister, Georges Pompidou.

This is also the case for the neo-Gaullist Jacques Chirac (Sicherman, 1995/1996; Montbrial, 2004). An interesting analysis was taken by Stephen Lequet (2010), who shows how Nicolas Sarkozy, despite defending an idea of representing French right that moved past Gaullism, still used Gaullist symbols, themes, and ideas to communicate his policy. This is also shown by Ostermann's work (2018). However, Charles de Gaulle's legacy is also visible in Presidents that do not originate from Gaullist political backgrounds. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing also has been the subject of studies on his relationship with de Gaulle's legacy (Soutou, 2004; Serfaty, 1976). François Mitterrand was a fierce opponent of de Gaulle (Moïsi, 1995-1996; Boniface, 2021), and yet his 14-year long rule, the longest one in the history of the French 5th Republic, is characterised by clear inspirations from Gaullism. The French geopolitical expert Pascal Boniface even alludes to the concept of "Gaullo-Mitterrandisme" (2021). Despite his opposition to the founder of the 5th Republic, Mitterrand's foreign policy was strongly inspired by Gaullism (Hoffmann, 1984). We can see here a clear sign that Charles de Gaulle has left behind foreign policy ideas that strongly guided his successors from all backgrounds. Overall, Charles de Gaulle's strong legacy over the French 5th Republic is well studied (Leruth, 2020; Leruth and Startin, 2017).

Emmanuel Macron's Gaullist inspirations are often the subject of studies in academic literature. Marion Demossier and her colleagues in their far-reaching book on French politics extensively show de Gaulle's influence over his successors. They compare Macron with de Gaulle by analysing Macron's strong embodiment of a strong presidential, 'Jupiterian,' leadership (Demossier et al., 2019), elements that are central in Gaullism. This is the case for many studies, which mostly focus on the symbolic parallel between the two, analysing Macron's centralised, personalised, 'regal' interpretation of the Presidential seat (Demossier et al., 2019; Chamorel, 2019). In foreign policy matters, Macron's Gaullist inspiration is also the subject of numerous studies. Alexandra Gheciu shows how Macron takes great care of symbols, theatrics, and images in his quest of reasserting French Gaullist grandeur on the international and domestic stage (Ghecui,

2020). David Cadier shows how Macron's attempt at building a strategic dialogue with Russia is framed as Gaullist, or more precisely, in Macron's words, inspired by "Gaullo-Mitterrandism" (Cadier, 2018), trying to get a seat at the table for France in key negotiations such as the one about the resolution of the Syrian conflict. He reiterates this finding in 2022 in a book chapter, where he defines Macron's Russia policy as propping up his "Gaullist credentials" (Cadier, 2022: 42). Duclos also mentions how Macron's attempt at establishing a dialogue with Moscow is inspired by Charles de Gaulle's legacy (Duclos, 2021). Staunton demonstrates how Emmanuel Macron's vision of Europe is re-using elements of Gaullism (Staunton, 2022), as well as Frécon on Macron's IndoPacific strategy and broader China policy (Frécon, 2022).

### 3. How can this thesis try to contribute?

As demonstrated, de Gaulle's foreign policy impact on his successors, including Macron, is far from being understudied. These studies have shown that Macron's foreign policy is similar to the one advocated by Charles de Gaulle, focused on non-alignment, boldness, multilateralism, multipolarity and on promoting French international prestige. Why does this thesis focus on this topic that seems to have already received so much academic attention? Because it argues that the Gaullist inspiration of Macron's foreign policy is mostly only mentioned and is rarely the subject of deeper scrutiny. Understanding in more depth what guides French diplomacy is imperative in times of great challenges surrounding Europe. Macron wants to lead the charge of a *Europe Puissance*, a more sovereign European "Civilization" (Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, 2019; Staunton, 2022). This makes it imperative to understand what guides French diplomacy in times when Europe and the wider Western world is facing an increasingly integrated Sino-Russian revisionist axis in the context of a challenged Western status quo (Stent, 2020; Lo, 2009: 1-7). If we were to determine that Macron is inspired by Gaullism when conducting foreign affairs, this could help shed a light on what guides France on the international stage. But how can this thesis contribute to such a matter? The aim of

this thesis is to propose a much more extensive and profound study on whether Macron's foreign policy is Gaullist. It aims to achieve the latter through critical discourse analysis. The following part seeks to explain the method used in this thesis, and to justify its case selection and its focuses.

## CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

This section justifies the methodology of the thesis. In the first place it explains the choice of discourse analysis and why it deems it as being the best approach. Secondly it exposes the reasons behind choosing Emmanuel Macron as the subject of this thesis that studies Charles de Gaulle's continued influence over the French 5<sup>th</sup> Republic. Finally, it presents how sources have been selected and on what scale.

### 1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis plays a central role in this thesis. According to Rosalind Gill, "discourse analysis is the name given to a variety of different approaches to the study of texts," motivated by a "rejection of the realist notion that language is simply a neutral means of reflecting or describing the world, and a conviction in the central importance of discourse in constructing social life" (Gill, 2000: 172). Language is very far from being objective and trivial. Being a natural central part of our everyday life, we could deem it to be inconsequential (White, 1984). However, it plays an essential role in building the reality we live in (George 1989: 272). Through language we can also have a grasp of someone's interpretation of reality (NG et al., 1995). As Broad and Daddow state, paraphrasing Fairclough, discourses are "performative, meaning-making attempts to make sense of the world through words and language" (Broad and Daddow, 2010: 208; Fairclough, 2001). This thesis takes on especially critical discourse analysis. According to Blommaert and Bulcaen, who strongly take on Fairclough's analyses, critical discourse analysis is an analysis of discourses' ability to shape power relations, social norms, to create a political consensus. It identifies these latter through a search of patterns in discourses regarding the use of vocabulary and language (Blommart and Bulcaen, 2000). Identifying such patterns is crucial in this thesis as it focuses on determining whether can be found the same patterns between de Gaulle's discourse and Macron's one, centred around the two major themes already identified. This observation of patterns is the key to



critical discourse analysis (Gill, 2000; Blommart and Bulcaen, 2000), and it is the guiding method throughout the thesis.

This thesis wants to propose a critical analysis of Macron's discourse, and to compare it with Charles de Gaulle's own discourse on foreign policy matters. The aim is to truly determine if Macron is profoundly inspired by Gaullism. It uses the same method as Staunton (2022) regarding Macron's European policy. Staunton identified recurring themes from speeches, press conferences, press statements, and others, and analysed whether there is continuity between de Gaulle and Macron regarding their European policy. In Ostermann's book, we can see an interesting analysis of Chirac's and Sarkozy's foreign policies through a study of their discourses, and how it shows their Gaullist inspiration (Ostermann, 2018). This thesis does the same for Macron, but on a larger scale. It focuses on Macron's and de Gaulle's general stance on world matters, but also with greater analysis about their vision of France's relations with Europe, Russia, China, and the United States. This makes discourse analysis the most adequate tool for this thesis, by identifying patterns in both Macron's and de Gaulle's press conferences, foreign policy speeches, statements and comments on international events. The thesis aims to determine if Macron is truly and profoundly inspired by Gaullism. As Broad and Daddow state, again paraphrasing Fairclough, "the structuring power of language fulfils a performative function because governments have to use language (written or spoken) to mobilise support, generate consensus around policy positions, and legitimise actions taken at home and abroad" (Broad and Daddow, 2012: 208; Fairclough, 2000). Therefore, this thesis argues that focusing on the language Macron and de Gaulle use, through discourse analysis, is the best approach.

## 2. Why Emmanuel Macron?

Choosing Emmanuel Macron as the subject of the thesis's attempt at showing de Gaulle's continued influence in French foreign policy is motivated by two factors. Firstly, Macron

is the current ruler of France, thus his presidency is chronologically the furthest from de Gaulle's years, and research concerning him is thus most likely lighter than concerning past French presidents. Furthermore, as of today, it has been more than half a century since Charles de Gaulle died. Emmanuel Macron is a 21st century leader, de Gaulle a 20th century one. The latter ruled in the middle of the Cold War. The former leads France in a much more globalized and multipolar world order. He faces radically different challenges. An undermined Liberal International Order by populism and economic crises (Ikenberry, 2018), rising powers such as the BRICS, or as many call it, "the rise of the rest" (Pieterse, 2017; Stent, 2020; Lo, 2009), the oil crises which even led to the rise of the 'geopolitics of oil' (Painter, 2014), the end of the Bretton Woods system that marked the end of the post-war British and American economic order that meant to tackle with economic problems similar to those that led to the outbreak of World War Two (Panić, 2003). Macron rules in an international context where the Western world is faced with a fragilized hegemonic status (Beeson, 2020). Therefore, if Macron's foreign policy is truly inspired by Gaullism, it would show how the latter keeps being relevant despite a radically different international context than the one of its founding thinker. It would strongly suggest that Gaullism wields themes and ideas whose influence is timeless. This makes it all the more interesting to choose Macron as the subject of this thesis on Gaullist influence over the 5th Republic.

A second factor is Macron's political background not being typically Gaullist. He comes from the *Parti Socialiste*, had a close relationship with François Hollande whom he served during the latter's presidency (Biseau, 2012), created his own party, *En Marche*, with which he ran for the 2017 presidential elections, claimed to be neither right wing nor left wing (Beauchamp, 2017). Thus, he did not come from the party *Les Républicains*, successor of Charles de Gaulle's party. Furthermore, strategic matters, diplomacy, France's geopolitical standing on the international stage were de Gaulle's speciality and priority (Beaulieu, 1995). For Macron, "strategic matters are largely terra incognita," and "during the campaign, his expressed views on foreign policy were generic and superficial

if classical” (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2017). These two elements make Macron a particularly interesting case for a study of Gaullism’s continued influence over French politics.

### 3. Case selection and study approach

Finally, to make it feasible, this thesis focused on finding patterns based on the two already identified major themes of Gaullism – universalist champion of peace and disruptive diplomacy. It focuses on finding these patterns in Charles de Gaulle’s and Emmanuel Macron’s speeches, press conferences, televised interventions, declarations. Regarding Charles de Gaulle’s sources, this thesis vastly relies on the website of the *Institut national de l’audiovisuel* (INA), a French repository of archives from French television and radio. It has a dedicated page for Charles de Gaulle’s foreign policy, *Charles de Gaulle: paroles publiques*. One of the noticeable characteristics of de Gaulle’s presidency was his huge press conferences, at least an hour long, during which he answered in detail and depth to questions from a group of 300 journalists from around the world. They are available on the website. They allow a close look of de Gaulle’s thoughts as he answers to the questions. Such a format means that de Gaulle did not have a strong prior preparation to each question before answering to it. Thus, he answered directly to each question with a strong degree of spontaneity, meaning that his answers are most likely genuine and truly represent his profound beliefs. The site also gave the possibility to listen to his speeches made around the world, from Mexico to Pnom-Penh. This thesis focused on his speeches made in the countries deemed the most central to de Gaulle’s attempt at building an alternative international order to the Cold War one. It analysed his speeches made during his state visit in the Soviet Union, as well as in Poland and in Romania. He also travelled in Latin America, a travel very symbolic as South American is deemed by the United States as their own backyard, thus the speeches made there were also analysed. Regarding Emmanuel Macron, this thesis almost entirely relied on the official website of the official presidential residence, the Élysée Palace. The

website collects the speeches and official statements from French presidents. In this thesis, the most important sources regarding Macron's foreign policy are his two ambassadors' conferences which the president held in 2017 and 2019. It was the occasion for Macron to share his vision of France and France's place on the international stage. Him sharing his vision in front of French ambassadors make these two sources central. But like with Charles de Gaulle, his speeches and statements made while traveling in countries deemed crucial were also analysed.

More generally, this thesis picked on instances where both leaders share their deep understanding of what France is, and how it should behave on the international stage. It then determines to what extent is Emmanuel Macron's discourse close to the two major themes identified as constituting the core of what Gaullism is – universalist champion of peace and disruptive diplomacy.

## CHAPTER 3: UNIVERSALIST CHAMPION OF PEACE

One of the most know attributes of de Gaulle's France was its advocacy of dialogue with all parties for the sake of peace, as well as for the sake of France's diplomatic prestige. This chapter looks at Charles de Gaulle's portrayal of France as this universalist champion of peace, showing his desire to strengthen France's international presence thus serving his goal of restoring French great power status. It compares it with Macron's own discourses and tries to determine whether a Gaullist inspiration can be clearly identified. In the first place, this chapter tackles the open-door diplomacy advocated by Charles de Gaulle. Then it analyses the Gaullist claim of universality. Each time the section is structured with at first de Gaulle's discourse, and then Macron's one, allowing an easier juxtaposition.

### 1. Open-door diplomacy

#### *a. Charles de Gaulle*

During his presidency, Charles de Gaulle persistently insisted on his desire to discuss with every country. This section aims at showing how this was visible in de Gaulle's discourses, to find in which instances and in what context did de Gaulle set out his open-door diplomacy. Throughout his ten-year long rule, he repeatedly reiterated his commitment to giving France an improved international presence and image by being open to setting diplomatic relations with anyone. This is especially demonstrated by his 1965 interview during the electoral campaign, during which he stated: "There is no reason we should exclude having a good relationship with these and with those" (INA Politique, 2012: 26:00-26:13). This shows how Charles de Gaulle wanted to improve French relations with countries all over the world, as it is visible in his New Year wishes for 1966 as he insisted on how he wants the French people to be "a good companion for any other country in the world" (INA, 1965d: 08:36-08:42). Indeed, his desire for 1966 is

to “further develop our economic, scientific, technical and political relations with the countries of the East, to increase our relations with China, and to strengthen the bonds of friendly cooperation between our people and those of Africa, the Orient, Asia and Latin America” (INA, 1965d: 06:34-07:04). Here it is easily identified de Gaulle’s desire to making France able to discuss with any country. He set out to strengthen France’s relations with a plethora of countries on all continents. His most likely known and controversial diplomatic opening was of course with the Eastern bloc. During his press conference on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1966, he stated: “we are in the process of profoundly renewing our relations with Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Hungary. Between all these peoples and ours, the Cold War now seems derisory, while a growing and friendly cooperation is being organised.” (INA, 1966a: 27:40-28:10). This idea of reconciling the European countries from both Cold War blocs was a cornerstone in Charles de Gaulle’s diplomacy. He initiated a series of diplomatic trips throughout Eastern Europe. In Bucharest, in 1968, in the Romanian Parliament, de Gaulle pronounced the following words: “How can we imagine that we can put an end to the situation in which the system of opposing blocs now holds our continent, without the Nations of the West, of the centre and of the East of our Europe being willing to practise the détente, the understanding, the cooperation” (INA, 15 Mai 1968: 03:35-04:06). In Warsaw, in the Polish Parliament, in the same spirit, he declared: “the real security of every state on our continent cannot, of course, result from the confrontation of two blocs, with opposing forces and pacts. On the contrary, a deliberate policy and practice of détente, understanding and cooperation should be established for all, from the Atlantic to the Urals” (INA, 1967: 17:42-18:26). This idea of building incentives for greater cooperation “from the Atlantic to the Urals” meant of course an opening up of relations with the Soviet Union. June 20, 1966, Charles de Gaulle made a state visit to the Soviet Union. In Moscow, he shared his belief that peace in the world is only possible if good relations and cooperation are fostered with Russia: “for our two countries, it is an excellent opportunity not only to strengthen their relations”, “but also to exchange views and, I hope, to coordinate their actions, with a view to contributing to the union and

security of our continent, as well as to the equilibrium, progress and peace of the whole world” (INA, 1966c: 01:54-02:39).

*b. Emmanuel Macron*

Since his 2017 election, Emmanuel Macron reiterated on multiple occasions his commitment to engaging in an open-door diplomacy, prone to dialogue with all countries. Freshly elected Macron held on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August in 2017 a conference with France’s ambassadors. During the latter, he stated that dialogue with everyone “is essential to our diplomacy”, and that “we must know how to respect our interlocutors, their own stories, their own evolution” (Élysée, 2017c: 55:18-55:51). While still repeating his engagement to promoting human rights when pronouncing these phrases, Emmanuel Macron shows here his strong willingness to dialogue with everyone regardless of their characteristics. It is something on which he strongly insists when calling for a peaceful resolution in the context of a crisis. During the Qatar 2017 diplomatic crisis, opposing Qatar and Saudi Arabia and their respective allies such as Iran (Zafirov, 2017), Emmanuel Macron stated: “it is essential in this context that we can talk to all parties” (Élysée, 2017c: 16:14-16:20). While explaining the wider context of the crisis, of the rivalry between Teheran and Riyadh, he added: “We will only achieve our objective of fighting terrorism if we do not enter into these reading grids that would like to impose a choice between Shiites and Sunnis, and in a way, force us to lock ourselves into one camp” (Élysée, 2017c: 17:11-17:30). He concluded the subject by stating that “the strength of our diplomacy, it is this capacity to discuss with everyone” (Élysée, 2017c: 17:38-17:42). Like Charles de Gaulle, Emmanuel Macron seeks to strengthen French diplomatic prestige by improving its ties with as many countries as possible. He wants to reach out to as many countries as possible, multiply French partnerships with a diplomacy that searches and studies “the basis for potential international alliances” (Kutsenko, 2020: 112). Emmanuel Macron insisted on France’s willingness to having a strategic dialogue with all significant players on the international scene. He did so with Russia. For him, “Putin is at the negotiation

table on multiple subjects of discussion” (LCI, 2017: 01:59:52-01:59:56), such as the Ukrainian and Syrian wars. He did so with China. While in China in 2018, Macron shared his objective of building a friendship with Beijing through an “agenda of friendship” (Élysée, 2018: 30:00-30:10). This open-door diplomacy towards China is part of the wider “inclusive Indo-Pacific” strategy, where France reaches out to all the actors in the region, including China (Frécon, 2022: 2). As stated in 2021 by the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign affairs, France wants to deepen its “relationship with China” (Ministère de l’Europe et des Affaires Étrangères, 2021: 2). Moreover, Macron had also shown reluctance in publicly condemning Chinese human rights violations. During the 2018 state visit in China, Macron claimed that such criticism did not serve any constructive purpose, and that “there are differences between us that are linked to our history, our deep philosophies, the nature of our societies” (Redaction JDD, 2018). It is visible that Emmanuel Macron puts himself in continuity with Charles de Gaulle’s open-door diplomacy, through his willingness to discuss with any country, regardless of their interests and characteristics.

## 2. Advocacy of an inclusive peace

### a. *Charles de Gaulle*

Out of all these declarations can be clearly identified a major theme that keeps being reiterated. Charles de Gaulle wanted France to cooperate with everyone for the sake of peace. In the 1965 electoral interview, he declared: “France seeks peace, cultivates peace, helps peace, everywhere. How can it do this? By being in touch with everyone” (INA Politique, 2012: 25:38-26:00). He portrayed France as a peace seeking nation, always in favour of dialogue and tolerance. This is particularly visible in his calls for a peaceful resolution of the Vietnam War. As he was convinced that the Americans were never going to be able to win in Vietnam, he advocated for an international conference involving China, to reach a peace agreement, thus calling for a solution that involved



both the communist bloc and the capitalist one (Torikata, 2007; Cogan, 1995). In 1966, while in Cambodia, in the thick of the Vietnam War, Charles de Gaulle made a speech, claiming that there was no other way for the war to end than through a peaceful resolution: “without a doubt, such a solution is not at all mature today, if it ever becomes so. But France deems it necessary to state that in its view there is no other solution, unless it condemns the world to increasing misfortune” (INA, 1966b: 05:02-05:37). During the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1966 press conference, de Gaulle stated that “no agreement, no important treaty is valid without China’s participation” (INA, 1966a: 12:18-12:35).

*b. Emmanuel Macron*

These declarations also show Macron’s commitment to portraying France as a peacemaker, putting herself amidst a conflict and advocating for a peaceful resolution through dialogue between all parties. “From the outset of the crisis between Qatar and its neighbours, I was keen to place France in a role of mediation support” (Élysée, 2017c: 15:58-16-08). Like Charles de Gaulle, Emmanuel Macron portrays France as a mediating power, always looking forward playing a key role in finding a diplomatic solution to any conflicts. What this section shows is that Emmanuel Macron seems to be very determined in portraying France as a peacemaker. He justifies his diplomatic openness as being the only way to de-escalate conflicts and find a peaceful solution. This idea of being the mediator, as shown in this section, truly shows a continuity with de Gaulle’s own use of the word ‘mediator’ when talking about the Vietnam War. During the 72th UN General Assembly, while inviting North Korea to cease its aggressive behaviour, while calling for a ‘political solution, Macron stated that “France will refuse any escalation and will not close any door to dialogue, if the conditions are met for this dialogue to be useful for peace” (Élysée, 2017b: 23:28-23:40). Both portray France as a peacemaker, willing to talk with everyone to resolve conflicts. However, what country doesn’t portray itself as a peacemaker? What makes in that aspect Gaullism more special? The next section

analyses how Charles de Gaulle places France in a universalist mission, where it plays the role of the champion of peace.

### 3. Universalist champion

#### *a. Charles de Gaulle*

In the 1965 interview is discernible in de Gaulle's mind a portrayal of France as a country with a special mission in the world. This determination to leading this inclusive diplomacy, open to all countries around the globe, motivated by a commitment to peace and dialogue, is imbued by de Gaulle's claim of the universal reach of French diplomacy, that the latter benefits not only France but also the world. During a press conference on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September 1961, Charles de Gaulle claimed the following whilst saying how any great state needs to contribute to de-escalation in the case of mounting tensions: "the agreements, the rapprochements, the joint efforts, which the great states on both sides will be obliged to undertake, unless a catastrophe breaks out. And our people believe that in that case they will be able to render a signal to the universe. Such is the France of today" (INA, 1961: 65:03-65:49). On the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 1964, during another press conference, the founder of the V Republic claimed that if French open-door diplomacy and multiple calls for peace are successful in decreasing global tensions, it would mean that the world found itself "a little less late, at the *rend-vous* that France gave to the universe, 175 years ago. That of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" (INA, 1964a: 90:00-90:22). Here, he directly identified the world's best interests as being compatible with French core values, thus portraying France as a global player whose actions are for the greater good. This is particularly visible in de Gaulle's 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 1964 press conference, where he declares that "by proposing and wanting Europe to have a policy of its own which is European and independent, and to organise itself accordingly, France is convinced that it is serving balance, progress and peace in the universe" (INA, 1964b: 42:32-42:58). This sense of French interests being given a universal reach, with even an

altruist feeling, is exacerbated by de Gaulle's emphasis on leadership. For the former leader of the Free French forces, for a political stance to be successful, it requires a strong leader (Cerny, 1988: 138), a 'great man', who differentiates himself from others through bold and assertive 'grand actions' that serve a mission for his nation (Hoffmann, 1994; Hoffmann S. and Hoffmann I., 1968; Gaffney, 2010; Haskew, 2011). This is particularly visible when Charles de Gaulle depicted France as a 'champion' of the values it defends, values that he deemed as universal. During the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 1964 press conference, while sharing his vision of France playing an essential role for the development of the world, he stated: "because of her genius, the character of her genius, which has always made her [France] a champion and ferment of human liberation" (INA, 1964a: 38:26-38:40). In another press conference, he claimed that France is "a champion of cooperation without which the troubles, the interventions and the conflicts which lead the world to war will spread" (INA, 1965c: 52:57-53:08). He then added that "France is eminently qualified to act in his sense, because of its nature, which leads it to human contact, and because of the opinion that people have of it historically, and which gives it a kind of latent credit when it comes to the universal" (INA, 1965c: 53:08-53:33). A strong sense of carrying a mission with a universal reach was present in Charles de Gaulle's discourse. It nourished his goal of an open-door diplomacy and his advocacy for dialogue in times of conflicts. Now can this be found in Macron?

#### *a. Emmanuel Macron*

For Emmanuel Macron, France possesses "one of the few universal diplomatic networks in the world" (Élysée, 2017c: 30:57-31:02). For him, France's influence "goes hand in hand with the defence of universal values" (Élysée, 2017c: 04:50-05:00), and "carries universality in its genes, which can only be understood, explained, and live up to its history and destiny when it is in contact with the rest of the world" (Élysée, 2017c: 01:57-02:10). This sense of universality goes together with a sense of mission. For Macron, as the world faces increasing threats, France "has an indispensable role in the

contemporary international order [...] given its history, given its place in the United Nations Security Council, given its place in Europe,” making the best suited to “make a pragmatic and realistic multilateralism heard” (Élysée, 2017c: 07:37-08:06). Moreover, he wants France “to speak for those who are unheard. Because speaking in their name is the same as speaking for us, today or tomorrow. On this day, it is these unheard voices that I want to carry” (Élysée, 2017b: 02:32-02:49). In Europe, Emmanuel Macron deems France to be a vital player in ensuring the EU’s success. Working closely with Germany, Macron’s France has “to organise an act of re-foundation of the European Union and the Eurozone” (Élysée, 2017a: 13:55-14:04). He goes as far as putting on civilisational lenses. For Macron, the liberal international order is under threat, and Europe must become its strongest advocate. France is the one that “must allow Europe to become the leader of the free world” (Staunton, 2022: 23), since “the European project...is vert profoundly a French project too...It is the spirit of Renaissance, it is the spirit of the Enlightenment. It is the very deep spirit of this French humanism that we have always embodied, invented and that we must reinvent today” (Staunton, 2022: 23). Emmanuel Macron portrays France as the heart of Europe and of the liberal international order, and that as it is under threat, it needs France to be saved, as he claims France’s “responsibility is unprecedented”, “it is particularly up to as Europeans, to defend the common goods of the free world. I assume this discourse of grandeur, because it is appropriate to the moment that we live” (Staunton, 2022: 23). Here, additionally to directly indicating his Gaullist inspiration, Macron shows how he sees France as the champion of the free world. However, having this discourse that suggests that France’s goal is in the interests of everyone does not impede Macron from reaffirming that it is also to “allow France, among a relaunched Europe, to maintain its rank in an international order that is profoundly shaken up” (Staunton, 2022: 23). This section showed how the current French president depicts France as irreplaceable, how it has a crucial role to play for the sake of universal values. This strongly suggests a very strong continuity with Charles de Gaulle’s foreign policy, with the same sense of a mission, with a universal reach, aimed at strengthening France’s international rank. More specifically, both de Gaulle and Macron

portray France as this champion whose mission is “to speak for those who are unheard” (Élysée, 2017b), in the name of the Third World (Torikata, 2007; Gendron, 2014), for the sake of the small ones against the big ones (INA, 1966a). This discourse of France being a champion of the world, led by a strong and very ambitious leader who wants to be the peacemaker, whose values are universal and who serves a mission for the greater good, introduces the next major theme of Gaullism. All these elements work in harmony and are exacerbated by a disruptive diplomacy. The next section thus analyses this crucial element of Gaullism, whose unsettling nature plays a vital role in de Gaulle’s objective to affirm France as a great power on the international stage, achieving its destined international rank. Then this section will try to determine if a similar element can be found in Emmanuel Macron’s foreign policy.

## CHAPTER 4: DISRUPTIVE DIPLOMACY

What probably made Charles de Gaulle so rememberable are his very unsettling diplomatic statements which punctuated his foreign actions, which marked the beginning of “a new era of assertive French diplomacy” as Bozo and Emanuel state (2002: xi). In this chapter, de Gaulle’s assertive and highly disruptive foreign policy is analysed especially regarding Russia, China, and the United States. Since this thesis focuses on de Gaulle’s attempts at reaffirming France’s great power status, it deemed important to analyse de Gaulle’s and Macron’s stance on those three great powers. In the first place this chapter tackles upon comparing de Gaulle’s Russia policy with Emmanuel Macron’s one, then it transitions into their respective relation with China, and then concludes with a section surrounding their approach to the United States of America.

### 1. Russia

#### *a. Charles de Gaulle*

De Gaulle’s stance on Soviet Russia was highly disruptive and motivated by an assertive diplomacy. His *rapprochement* with the Soviet Union was extremely unsettling, since the latter was the number one enemy of the United States whose culture and society focus on vilifying it. Roberto Gelado and Pedro Sangro Colón shw this in a very interesting article where they analyse the representation of the Soviet Union in American society, and the key role of Hollywood movies (Gelado and Colón, 2016). De Gaulle’s *rapprochement* with Soviet Russia had a quite ambitious discourse surrounding it, that goes beyond simply France and the USSR deciding to decrease tensions. According to Thomson, “from a surprisingly early date General de Gaulle seems to have been attracted by the idea that, since Anglo-American influence in Europe would be great after the war, it might be necessary for France to seem some counter-balance to it in the form of *rapprochement* with the Soviet Union” (Thomson, 1965: 13). For de Gaulle, “the Soviet

Union and France are continental powers and therefore have other goals and problems than the problems of the Anglo-Saxon countries, which are primarily sea-powers" (Thomson, 1965: 13). During the press conference in Washington, 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 1960, in the context of the incoming Paris Summit, de Gaulle stated that "there isn't, between the French people and the Russian people, at no time, any natural opposition, any dispute of political interest" (INA, 1960a: 14:35-14:50). During his state visit in Moscow, he declared "how moving it is for me to find, prosperous, powerful, filled with peaceful ardour, this Russia, this great Russia" (INA, 1966c: 00:45-01:04). De Gaulle shared his desire for France and Russia to "exchange views", "coordinate their actions, with a view to contributing to the unity and security of our continent, as well as to the balance, progress and peace of the whole world" (INA, 1966c: 02:10-02:39). Crucial element in de Gaulle's discourse is his emphasis on Europe being a continent that extends from the Atlantic to the Urals. When this is added to de Gaulle's 'continental power' vocabulary, it starts to look like he saw Europe, continental Europe, as better off without the Anglo-Saxon sea-powers. Amidst the Cold War, the fact that Charles de Gaulle reiterates his view of Russia as a key partner for peace is quite a bold strategy when the rest of the Atlantic Alliance is constantly wary of new Russian military expansions. While in the USSR, de Gaulle stated: "Russia and France unite for world peace" (INA, 1966d: 20:50-20:57). This statement goes hand in hand with de Gaulle's belief that both France and Soviet Russia have "many natural affinities and great common interests" (INA, 1965a: 05:40-05:45). All of this indicates that Charles de Gaulle was not afraid of showing signs of a relative alignment of France with Russia through a strong discourse which emphasizes their strong historical bonds, their great attachment to common goals, among them a mutual commitment to world peace. In the context of the Cold War, showing these multiple signs of alignment with the Kremlin is quite a disruptive diplomatic action, which perfectly fits into de Gaulle's vision of what leadership is. His goal was to undermine the bipolar division of the world which he deemed unfit for France's great power status. Thus, through 'grand actions', through a very ambitious, disruptive, and unsettling diplomacy, he sought to achieve the latter.

*b. Emmanuel Macron*

In 2017, once elected, Emmanuel Macron engaged right away in an attempt at building a strategic dialogue with Russia, a move that “surprised the geopolitical community” (Kutsenko, 2020: 112). Just after his electoral victory, “he hosted a meeting with Vladimir Putin in Versailles” (Faure, 2021), during which Macron started the press conference with a contextualisation of the long-term strong ties between France and Russia, starting with Peter the Great’s visit to France in 1717. Macron states: “this history, which is now three centuries old, is the dialogue between France and Russia that has never ceased, the dialogue between our intellectuals, our cultures, which sowed the seeds of a mutual friendship that lasts to this day” (FRANCE 24, 2017: 03:13-03:30). In 2019, this *rapprochement* policy with Russia picked up steam, as Macron “initiated bilateral steps to improve relations between Paris and Moscow”, such as the 2+2 format, “meaning regular meetings between the two countries’ foreign and defence ministers”, or the ‘working groups’ which regroup both country’s strategists to reinforce cooperation on major issues (Stewart, 2021: 31). For Macron, too often the distinction is made between Europe and Russia. During the ambassadors’ conference on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, 2019, he states that “we are in Europe, and so is Russia” (Élysée, 2019), and that “pushing Russia away from Europe is a profound strategic error because we are pushing Russia either into an isolation that increases tensions, or into an alliance with other great powers like China, which would not be in our interest” (Élysée, 2019). According to Staunton, “Macron has argued that a partnership between Russia and the EU is needed, because the former is also part of ‘European civilisation’”. Indeed, the French president states “it is Europe in the historical sense of the term, from the Atlantic to the Urals” (Staunton, 2022: 28). Therefore, the previously defined Europe as the last true defender of the free world is only possible to succeed if the latter works with Russia. Such an approach is extremely bold. These statements depict a strong willingness of Emmanuel Macron to demonstrate France’s strong historical bonds with Russia, and how both countries align on several



crucial topics, making a strategic partnership necessary and preferable. This does show a clear alignment between de Gaulle's and Macron's discourses regarding Russia, with both mentioning the strong historical ties and the necessity of a strong partnership.

## 2. China

### *a. Charles de Gaulle*

Charles de Gaulle's open-door diplomacy was deeply unsettling as it was not simply a cordial set of diplomatic encounters. During his foreign state visits, he put great emphasis on showing how France has profound relations and even sometimes friendship with the hosting state. In 1964, de Gaulle recognized Communist China, which according to Thomson was "calculated to annoy simultaneously London, Washington and Moscow" (Thomson, 1965: 12). De Gaulle's Asia policy and anti-American comments regarding Vietnam were very well received in Beijing (Cogan, 1995). The Chinese Foreign Ministry saw in French recognition of Communist China and in its harsh comments on American Asia policy a great opportunity for the country. It saw it as the first step at significantly improving China's international standing, its status in the United Nations and weakening Taiwan's position (since France promised in never supporting the principle of "two Chinas"). China accepted French diplomatic efforts as it would question the cohesion of the Western, 'imperialist' alliance that it was opposed to (History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, 1964). Chinese enthusiasm is understandable if a look is taken on Charles de Gaulle's statements regarding China. During the press conference of January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1964, de Gaulle fully recognized the legitimacy of Communist China, going as far as diminishing the legitimacy of Tchang Kai Chek's Nationalist China: "as soon as the Americans had withdrawn from the Marshal [Tchang Kai Chek] the direct assistance of their force which they gave him on the continent, he had to withdraw to Formosa, and the communist regime, prepared for a long time by Mao Zedong, established its dictatorship, 15 years ago" (INA, 1964a: 76:00-76:33). For

Charles de Gaulle, Mao's dictatorship was the logical consequence of China's history: "expeditions and invasions by Europeans, Americans and Japanese have all been humiliations and dismemberments. So many national upheavals, and also the will of the elites to transform their country, whatever the cost, so that it could attain the condition and power of the peoples who had oppressed it, led China to revolution" (1964a: 74:22-76:00). De Gaulle's China policy was part of his wider vision of a French diplomacy which does not respond to "ideological outbidding" (INA, 1964c: 07:34-07:36). This is a particularly disruptive diplomacy in the context of high tensions between China and the United States, whose relations are characterised by a direct military confrontation in Korea which happened less than 10 years prior to de Gaulle's recognition of Communist China, as well as the Vietnam war where both sides are indirectly fighting each other. Just like with Russia, de Gaulle led in China a highly unsettling diplomacy vis-à-vis the United States, thus the wider Western world.

*b. Emmanuel Macron*

While in China in 2018, Emmanuel Macron did not limit himself to calling for "an agenda of friendship". He as well, like with Russia, depicted Franco-Chinese relations as historically special, with a real bond. During a joint press statement with Xi Jinping, Macron stated that this agenda of friendship is "first and foremost the fruit of a multi-century history, of the fact that we know, respect and admire each other.". He then added: "France is a country that has always brought China to the forefront in Europe and that since 1964 France has been the first country to diplomatically recognize the People's Republic of China" (Élysée, 2018: 30:10-30:40). For him, both France and China "increasingly have visions that come together and can be married when it comes to peace and stability" (FRANCE 24, 2018: 01:07-01:17). Emmanuel Macron's France wants to work closely with China as it sees the latter as a strategic partner in pursuing France's crucial role of peacemaker. Like with Putin's Russia, he insists on the special relationship France has with China, one that finds its legitimacy in a long history. It is very different

from the American China policy. Washington's IndoPacific strategy publicly identifies China as an adversary: "The PRC is combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological might as it pursues a sphere of influence in the Indo-Pacific" by using "coercion and aggression", making it a 'bully' (The White House, 2022: 5). This shows how Macron's discourse concerning China is radically different from the American one, suggesting his strong willingness to promote a China policy in opposition to the American one. Like with Russia, his discourse shows also the continued cruciality promotion of peace has in Macron's mind, and how his peace is compatible with close relationship with China, while in the White House China rimes with insecurity and is portrayed as a threat to peace. Like with Russia and like de Gaulle, Macron demonstrates a clear desire to show the strong potential of a strategic partnership with China, through a discourse that is clearly in opposition with the American one. However, a noticeable difference with de Gaulle is Macron's stronger emphasis on Franco-Chinese historical bonds and how it constitutes a special relationship. But both end up leading a highly disruptive China policy, in a quite clear opposition to the United States. Both end up depicting their diplomacy as one that moves "beyond any logic of blocs", a refusal to "to lock ourselves into one camp" (Élysée, 2017c: 17:11-17:30; France Diplomatie, 2022; Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires Étrangères, 2021: 2; Davis, 2011; Aron, 1990).

### 3. United States

#### *a. Charles de Gaulle*

When Charles de Gaulle came in power in 1959, it was amidst the Cold War. Western Europe was living in the fear of a potential invasion of the USSR and its massive armed forces. The only way to deter such an invasion was through strengthening ties and creating the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949 (Ismay, 1955; Bitzinger, 1989). At least, this is what Charles de Gaulle believed in. According to him, "if the Atlantic alliance did not exist, nothing could prevent the Soviet dictatorship, the Soviet

domination, from spreading over the whole of Europe and the whole of Africa, and from there on, from covering the whole world. Nothing except, of course, total atomic warfare” (INA, 1959: 07:21-07:44). Therefore, de Gaulle deemed crucial a strong NATO, thus France’s alliance with the United States. During the 1960-1961 New Year’s wishes, de Gaulle emphasized how France, and Europe in general, must cooperate with the United States, in order to “defend the Free World and act together all around the globe” (INA, 1960b: 06:35-06:41), to ensure people’s freedom against the “totalitarian yoke” of the USSR (INA, 1960b: 06:51-06:53). However, this didn’t impede de Gaulle to lead a very disruptive diplomacy when it came to the United States. According to DePorte, for Charles de Gaulle, the Americans were, through NATO, “intrusive on France’s independence and hostile to its status claims” (1990: 26). Indeed, for him, “an American protectorate was installed in Europe under the cover of NATO” (INA, 2021: 01:26-01:36), thus directly compromised de Gaulle’s idea of France as a great power through independence and autonomy. For him, “no great nation could afford to relinquish its autonomy since it could not entrust any aspect of its destiny to outsiders whose interests were not wholly compatible with its own” (Morse, 1973: 152). As a result, he did not hesitate to harshly describe American foreign policy. He claimed that Washington was an obstacle to peace. According to Cogan, the US actions in Vietnam were seen by de Gaulle as “more and more threatening for the peace of the world” (Cogan, 1995: 56). During his Phnom-Penh speech in 1966 in Cambodia, when de Gaulle shared his desire to open peace talks, he stated “the opening of such a vast and difficult negotiation would obviously depend on the decision and the commitment that America would have wanted to take beforehand, to repatriate its forces within a suitable and determined period” (Le Monde Diplomatique, 2021-2022). Thus, for him peace in Vietnam was impossible if the American intervention went on, thus indirectly accusing Washington of being an obstacle to peace. Moreover, during the press conference on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1966, Charles de Gaulle accused the United States of violating their own core values in Vietnam, stating: “they [United States] would have to observe the principle that each people, whatever it may be, must settle its own affairs in its own way and by its own means. The Americans

should apply these principles to the Vietnamese people” (INA, 1966a: 11:15-11:36). Here, de Gaulle seems to have used Woodrow Wilson’s people’s right to self-determination. Using this concept introduced by the Americans against the Americans is quite bold. In the same press conference, he goes even further, by portraying the United States as this great power bullying a small and vulnerable Vietnamese nation: “we don’t propose any kind of mediation that no one would welcome and that would get us nowhere. But that does not prevent us from finding it absolutely detestable that a small people should be bombed by a very large” (INA, 1966a: 09:30-09:56). De Gaulle’s disruptiveness goes as far as nearly putting on the same level the United States, or more broadly the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ world, with the USSR, when describing the Cold War. He states: “there is the preponderant power acquired by two countries, America and Russia, which leads them to compete with each other and to place under their respective hegemonies the peoples within their reach” (INA, 1965c: 43:47-44:06). Charles de Gaulle affirmed that France’s place is neither with the American bloc, nor with the Soviet one, as he criticized both. For him, Anglo-Saxon’s capitalist “*laissez faire, laisser passer*” approach has also led to a great deal of unrest and a huge amount of injustice” (INA, 1965b: 10:02-10:12). On the other side, the Communist bloc ensures “the crushing of individuals who are never given choice or freedom” (INA, 1965b: 11:08-11:19). Here can easily be identified a clear illustration of de Gaulle’s bold leadership, incarnated in a disruptive diplomacy with extremely unsettling if not harsh statements concerning the United States. De Gaulle justified it as a way of getting rid of the American shadow over France and give it space to reaffirm its great power status.

#### *b. Emmanuel Macron*

On several occasions, Emmanuel Macron, like Charles de Gaulle, insisted on his commitment to the Franco-American alliance. In 2018, while in Washington, during a joint press conference with Donald Trump, Macron stated: “You recalled, Mr. President, [...] the importance and depth of the ties that united us. [...] They are ties based on our

mutual interests, deep attachments to freedom and peace.” (TIME, 2018: 09:20-09:50). Macron clearly aligns France with the United States. Yet, like de Gaulle, he does not hesitate to voice his opposition to the latter. In the famous speech he gave at Sorbonne University in 2017, Emmanuel Macron shared his deep conviction of the necessity of French and European autonomy when it comes to security vis-à-vis the increasingly disengaged United States: “in the field of defence, our objective must be Europe’s capacity for autonomous action” (Élysée, 2017d). During the 2017 televised debate with Le Pen, Macron justified his support of an improved and more integrated European single market as a way for Europe, and so France, to “be more credible vis-à-vis the United States of America” (LCI, 2017: 01:59:37-01:59:43). This shows that Emmanuel Macron’s wish of a stronger Europe is a way of making it more resilient and less vulnerable to Washington’s changing strategic thinking. This is highly sensitive since the United States have traditionally always supported very strong transatlantic ties, and always shared their opposition to the idea of a strategically autonomous Europe (Payne, 2007). It is not the only critique shared by Macron regarding American foreign policy. The French president clearly distanced himself from the American rhetoric regarding Russia in the context of the increasing tensions on the Ukrainian border in the beginning of 2021, as well as during the still ongoing war. President Biden stated that “the United States is prepared no matter what happens”, and that he will “respond decisively to a Russian attack on Ukraine, which is still very much a possibility” (White House, 2022). While giving a speech at the EU parliament, Macron never directly accused Russia of mounting tensions and of threatening Ukraine. He remained vague and used general terms to describe the tense situation (Le Monde, 2022). He confronted Biden’s use of the terms such as ‘genocide’, depicting Vladimir Putin as a ‘butcher’ that cannot stay in power. The French President opposed useless “verbal ‘escalation’” (Kemp, 2022; LCI, 2022: 05:24-05:44; Borger, 2022). Thus, Macron indirectly blames the United States of escalation, and portrays Biden as an obstacle to peace, just like Charles de Gaulle regarding the Vietnam War. This shows Macron’s readiness to confront the American

narrative vis-à-vis Russia, which is a way of showing to the world French resolve and capacity of affirming its position against even its much more powerful American ally.

## CONCLUSION:

Emmanuel Macron's foreign policy discourse shows clear signs of a profound and genuine Gaullist inspiration. The current president of France follows de Gaulle's steps by leading an open-door diplomacy. Motivated by going beyond the logic of blocs, camps or sides, Macron continues the Gaullist inspiration to discuss with everyone and anyone. Like de Gaulle, Emmanuel Macron's advocacy for an open-door diplomacy is justified as being the way of de-escalating conflicts, finding common grounds. Both statesmen want France to gain diplomatic prestige by making France a peacemaker, one that resolves conflicts around the world, whether it is in Vietnam or in Qatar. All these elements are strongly imbued and exacerbated by the Gaullist universalist inspiration. Charles de Gaulle portrayed France as this universalist champion of peace, whose values it protects are in reality common to everyone around the globe, this giving French interests a global reach. Emmanuel Macron's discourse strongly re-uses this "universalist" vocabulary, emphasizing how French values represent the best interests of everyone. Both leaders depict themselves as champions of everyone, especially those who are unheard, and of those who refuse to follow the logic of blocs, as well as those who are victim of inter-bloc conflicts. Finally, this thesis showed how de Gaulle's disruptive and assertive diplomacy finds in Emmanuel Macron a worthy successor. Emmanuel Macron imitates de Gaulle's disruptive diplomatic statements, with his own set of bold and harsh criticisms of American foreign policy, with a similar portrayal of the latter as an obstacle to peace. Macron seems to follow on de Gaulle's footsteps in his assertive affirmation of France's interests in opposition to the United States, an approach motivated by the Gaullist fear of seeing France becoming too dependent of its American ally thus questioning its autonomy, which is a questioning of its great power status in Gaullist minds. In Macron's mind this fear of absorption into an American bloc has a more European scale than de Gaulle, but both statesmen are aligned on their quest of reaffirming France's great power status, and Macron repeatedly explained how this is compatible, if not necessary, with a strong and autonomous Europe vis-à-vis Washington.



Their common disruptiveness also finds similarities in their approach to Russia and China. Both de Gaulle and Macron step up their efforts in depicting their relationship with these two great powers as being special by their historical nature, as well as their common views on international affairs and the needs of peace and cooperation.

In conclusion, this thesis argues that Emmanuel Macron's foreign policy is truly and profoundly Gaullist, through a universalist claim of being the champion of peace, and through a disruptive diplomacy that seeks to reaffirm France's great power status. Macron's discourse shows a clear inspiration from Charles de Gaulle's ideas, as well as his vision of what a leader ought to be, one with a strong sense of a mission and a determination to put France at the top of the world as a peacemaker, motivated by a universal reach and who is ready to lead a disruptive and unsettling diplomacy for its sake.

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