

Why Has the Franco-American Security Relationship Been so Semi–Hostile for so Long?

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Abstract

Many people assume that Franco-American relations since 1776 have been far more harmonious than those of the United States' relationship with Great Britain. After all, France fought on the side of the new aspiring republic in the American War of Independence against a colonial power. Although still a country ruled by a king, France itself became a republic shortly after the American Declaration of Independence was ratified. But in fact, France and the United States (and the colonies that preceded them) have often had poor relations. In his book *Sister Republics: Security Relations between America and France*, David Haglund asks why security relations between France and the United States been so fractious since the beginning of the American republic, and even well before it. He debunks the generally accepted mythology and its attendant symbology of two sister republics. The French-built and donated Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor and the statue of General Lafayette on the Seine opposite the Quai d'Orsay in Paris are misleading. In truth any special relationship between France and the United States has been special on the whole in its lack of mutual liking, even respect. Haglund traces this difficult, even suboptimal, relationship over three centuries and shows how the weight of history still continues to upset Franco-American relations regularly.

Keywords: France; United States; strategic culture; *Erbeindschaft* (ancestral hatred); leadership; diaspora

In his book *Sister Republics: Security Relations between America and France*, David Haglund asks us to consider how the security relationship between France and the United States has evolved since the first establishment of colonists on the North American continent and, in particular, since the French and American revolutions of the eighteenth century.¹ Haglund is a well-established commentator on French relations with the United States. Here, he tackles a series of extremely difficult questions about these relations using the lens of “strategic

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¹ David G. Haglund, *Sister Republics: Security Relations between America and France* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2023), xv, 294.

The West has rarely gone to the aid of any non-European people faced with a genocidal dictator, a painful fact that has been pointed out by many people in Africa. Indeed, on occasion they accuse us of *being* that genocidal dictator. The current wave of coups d'états in former French colonies since 2020 (Niger and Gabon being the most recent examples) have had a distinctly anti-French flavor. More worrying for the cause of Western liberal democracy has been that the coups' supporters have often been waving Russian flags. French thinkers about social justice, like Foucault, touch on this problem in our own Western societies and help us understand what happens in others. The West has been just as cruel to its own populations as has Russia in its own neighborhood.

So it seems to me particularly interesting to use strategic culture to examine the relationship between France and the United States, both of which have hardly got clean hands in their dealings with places where they have not been made to feel welcome. France, in particular, has historically (if not, I think, contemporaneously, despite the African coups) had many stains on its national character, and they continue to sour relations between *la Métropole* and Algeria, indeed, the Maghreb in general.⁵ French politics and the “national psyche” (an even braver category?) still suffers enormously from its defeat in 1940; hence, the centrality of Charles de Gaulle, a devout Catholic nationalist (Gaul by name and by nature), still seen by most of the French as the Messiah who had saved them from total humiliation and restored their pride and dignity. In reply to chapter 6, “Do Leaders Matter?” of this book, they certainly do. Even Raymond Aron, in my estimation the greatest liberal thinker that France has produced since the Second World War, gave de Gaulle his due place in the pantheon. And he understood that standing up to the United States was part of what de Gaulle had been forced to do best, even though Aron himself can be counted among the best French friends the United States ever had. The couple that is France and the United States has driven the development of the West by virtue of what Haglund calls “suboptimality” every bit as much as has the other special relationship with Britain. As I read through the chapters it became apparent, not for the first time, that the English-speaking states of the Atlantic triangle have been drivers of the creation of an unhappy but essential and perennial debate about what we now call the “West.”⁶ This debate is the core of the book.

Haglund's opening pages are a good summary of this prickly relationship. French diplomats have been constantly bitter and humiliated about the disrespect they see coming from both London and Washington, DC. They were often right: the Anglo-Saxons have often worked behind the scenes to undermine French positions on just about everything. This has been increasingly so after 1919, when the Anglo-Saxons created the beginnings of a think-tank universe, ironically in the very corridors of the Paris Peace Conference. The Council on Foreign Relations and Chatham House were at the heart of that universe, as they still arguably are. The French have had no real parallel means of influencing Anglo-American foreign policy debate. In the interwar period, the respectively opposed stances by the Americans, British, and French toward world order arguably left the way

⁵ Jennifer Sessions, *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014); Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁶ I do not think Haglund should exclude Canada from this analysis, a country where he teaches and was born. Adolf Berle, a key official in Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration in 1940, could not stand Lord Lothian for what might well be called cultural reasons, but got along very well with the Canadians who interpreted Lothian for him. A lot more might be made about Canada's mediating effect on France and the Anglo-Saxons.

clear for the rise of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Nazi Germany, and many other horrors. De Gaulle's difficult relationship with Churchill and Roosevelt is a picture-perfect example of the psychological drama that was Franco-American relations during the Second World War.

After that war, the United States undermined French confidence in Vietnam, and not just the supercilious John Foster Dulles, who believed that “[t]he American people, far more than the people of either Britain or France, are a religious people who like to feel that their international policies have a moral quality.” Constantine Brown, the *Evening Star* correspondent, described France in 1954, the year of the disaster at Dien Bien Phu, as “an overripe [*mûrissante*] *prima donna*, who has lost the finest qualities of her voice, but retained a semblance of temperament and prestige, and receives from her public respectful but unenthusiastic applause.”⁷ The cruelty of this jibe is shown by the awful fact that one entire graduating-year group of St. Cyr, the French equivalent of Sandhurst or even West Point, had been wiped out in Indo-China. The French were also upset about what they saw as American influence in North Africa in the 1950s, “real interference in North Africa [*véritable ingérence dans les affaires de l’Afrique du Nord*] ... to the point of it being damaging to French interests [*néfaste aux intérêts français*].”⁸ This was mainly because, at that time, the United States was seen by the locals as a liberating force.⁹ The Suez Crisis was seen as a vile American plot in Downing Street and the Elysée palace, not in Cairo. Maybe the mystery there is that Washington, DC, managed to throw away that advantage in fairly short order, much as they did in Baghdad in 2003. Strategy and culture were self-evidently factors in all these cases and for both France and the United States.

As anyone who has studied the relations between the United States and France will know, we can be constantly surprised by how societal, intellectual, and certainly governmental differences can appear between these “sister Republics.” In mining language, we often see sink holes appearing that often correspond with long-forgotten mine workings but immediately lead to statements such as “well, are you surprised?” What Haglund does in this book is to dig a lot deeper than most analysts who write off the relationship as inevitably stormy. He questions why these relations are so difficult and how they have resonated historically and continue to do so. I sometimes felt while reading his subtle and intriguing thoughts that he was trying to square a circle that might best be just described as a stormy marriage, or as I prefer it, a *ménage à trois* with the two Anglo-Saxon states, Britain and the United States alternately flirting and schmoozing with France as they have found it in their interests to do so. As Haglund is nice enough to say in a footnote, I am one of the few scholars to find this dynamic compelling. In the book, he stresses the importance of the idea of special relationships and

⁷ “The ‘Big Three’ Alliance,” 19 July 1954, Box 7, John Foster Dulles Papers, Eisenhower Presidential Library. Andrew J. Williams, “My translation of ‘*une prima donna mûrissante, qui a perdu le plus clair de sa voix, mais a encore un reste de temperament et de prestige, et reçoit du public des applaudissements respectueux mais sans enthousiasme*,’ Constantine Brown, *Evening Star* ‘Les Nerfs de la France’, 1 April 1954, Dossier Général, AM 1952–1963, Etats-Unis, File 92QO/349,” *France, Britain and the United States in the 20th Century: A Reappraisal, Volume 2 (1940–1961)* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 230.

⁸ Charles Lucet (Washington), “Note sur la politique Américaine en Afrique du Nord,” 1956 (n.d., possibly October), Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, Paris: Box 351, Dossier Général, AM 1952–1963, Etats-Unis.

⁹ Some of the above quotes were gathered in Williams, *France, Britain and the United States in the 20th Century*, especially chapter 4.

contrasts that of the Anglo-American stereotype and the suboptimal version that is the Franco-American.

In so doing, he is taking on a number of big dragons. On a theoretical level, he has to climb over the heights of a number of disciplinary silos that he wants to bring to more mutual understanding. The historians are, indeed, often criticized for being so focused upon individual trees as to be incapable of comprehending the meaning of a forest. There have been moves within both political science and history to bridge that gap, or rather to rebridge it after far too long a period when many within political science dismissed history as journalism, incapable of rational analysis, even verbiage. The debates between two very clever intellectuals, French historian Jean-Baptiste Duroselle and American political scientist David Singer, that I observed first hand during the years of my doctoral studies in Geneva (the late 1970s and early 1980s) were simultaneously stimulating and deeply depressing and still mark the debates that separate Anglo-Saxon political science and history from that of the European continent. Constructivism, Haglund suggests, has been one such bridge. All of us will have sat through discussions in which the importance of historical study is nodded at. The normative turn in international relations that preceded constructivism did much to help because it re-emphasized political theory and gave space, in Britain at least, for ideas to re-emerge. Equally, historical sociology (eg, the works of Michael Mann) liberated both political scientists and historians to play with ideas again. But, optimist as I am, the problem with this is that such deep trenches were dug in the 1970s and since, that I cannot see the chances of a real ceasefire or peace treaty ever being signed.

Haglund has also taken on a powerful populist dragon. How culture can be a useful tool for understanding security issues has always been a fraught question. I was very struck by a conversation I had with one of my neighbors in the Ardèche region of France in the early spring 2022. When I remarked how awful the invasion of Ukraine was, he simply replied, “*C’est la faute aux Américains—ils l’avaient voulu.*” Roughly translated, “the Americans put the Ukrainians up to it.” This was said in a region of France known for its independence from Paris, but it is a deeply entrenched position among a large part of the French population, and among ordinary people and intellectuals alike, accentuated since the stupidities of US foreign policy under George W. Bush.

The historical roots are certainly there to see and admirably traced for us in this book. Listening to my French neighbor, the feelings of de Gaulle in 1958 and many other examples tripped easily into my mind, as in his conviction that France needed a nuclear deterrent—*force de frappe*—so the Americans could not again use French soil to fight their battles as they had in 1917–19 and 1940–45. When talking to the then-young Henry Kissinger on a mission in February 1962 in an attempt to understand, precisely, de Gaulle’s strategic culture, diplomat François de Tricornet de Rose, the main specialist in the *Quai* for atomic affairs told him, “[T]he United States had to realise that France was not a little country to be pushed around ... Franco-American relations were at an all-time low. He would not say they were as low as it was possible for them to get, had not experience taught him that the depths of folly were unplumbable.”¹⁰ In 1963, and only three days after Kennedy’s assassination, President Johnson’s ambassador to France,

¹⁰ Niall Ferguson, *Kissinger, 1923–1968: The Idealist* (New York and London: Penguin, 2015), 527–28.

Charles Bohlen, reported that although Kennedy's passing was regretted, "[d]e Gaulle reiterated his well-known thesis that France cannot depend for protection on a United States which had entered the First and Second World Wars at a relatively late date." If the Russians were to attack, said de Gaulle, "Europe would be overwhelmed. Europe must therefore look to herself."¹¹ But, as Reid Davis claims Aron believed, this independence was more apparent than real; the *force de frappe* was minuscule in comparison to the arsenals of the United States, the USSR, and Britain, at the time the only other nuclear powers.¹²

None of the urgings of Eisenhower, then Kennedy, and Johnson would persuade de Gaulle that the American nuclear umbrella would protect France from all comers. Haglund brings out this anti-Americanism very well. To be sure, the British have their own form of anti-Americanism, which, in the security and diplomatic domains, often comes over as class snobbery but also as a superiority of knowledge based on longevity and a Yoda-like grasp of the true meaning of life: When you have had an empire as long as we had, you will understand Haglund is right to often conflate the British and Americans as Anglo-Saxons, an expression used on many occasions by the French. He is also right to see the origins of that in the wars that preceded 1776.

One of the most convincing, and probably original, parts of the book is where he examines the question of the importance of considering ethnicity in Franco-American relations, which is in chapter 3 on historical context. This is another difficult and controversial concept for many analysts of the last hundred years. I had to read the chapter several times to clear my mind of the horrors with which I associate the term *ethnicity*. But of course, the horrors were there in even my reading of the subject matter of this book but buried in a different silo of my own memories of childhood and adulthood. The essential part of the chapter is a record of French encounters with what were then colonial British forces with their French¹³ equivalents from the 1600s to about the 1750s. These were wars as bad as anything seen in the Balkans in the twentieth century, with ethnic cleansing pursued on a grand and horrific scale. The success of the film "The Last of the Mohicans" and the book on which it was based, by James Fennimore Cooper, which I lapped up as a child, are testament to the *Erbfeindschaft* ("traditional or hereditary enmity") thesis elaborated here,¹⁴ one which has, on occasion, reemerged in recent times, for example under the strain of poor Franco-American relations over the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The 1826 novel was about the campaign of 1757 during the Seven Years War (also called the French and Indian War), which has been described as the moment when Britain became the great power that it was to remain until 1914 (or later). This was notwithstanding the American War of Independence, hailed as a victory for all concerned by none other than British politician Edmund Burke, so more akin to a misunderstanding compared with the real battles against France and between tribes of indigenous native Americans that preceded it, in that case, the wars of 1675–76, "the bloodiest in American history, not excluding even the Civil War."¹⁵

¹¹ Bohlen—Secretary of State (Rusk), 25 November 1963, Box 169, NSF Country Files, Johnson Library.

¹² Raymond Aron, *Memoirs: Fifty Years of Political Reflection* (London: Holmes and Meier, 2008), 260, quoted in: Reid Davis, "A Once and Future Greatness: Raymond Aron, Charles de Gaulle and the Politics of Grandeur," *International History Review* 33, no. 1 (2011): 33.

¹³ Haglund, *Sister Republics*, Chapter 3, especially 87–98.

¹⁴ Haglund, *Sister Republics*, Chapter 3, 77.

¹⁵ Haglund, 94.

To relativize the period, France ended up in the 1750s losing its most important and lucrative colonies in North America and elsewhere to Britain. Meanwhile, the native Americans, forgotten in the Great Power competition, were mostly wiped out in wars of extermination. To paraphrase Hitler: Who now remembers the Algonquian and the Iroquois? Britain ended up gaining a global empire. Many in London saw 1783 as a relief: the thirteen colonies were seen as a burden, less than the real value of a couple of West Indian slave and sugar islands. Certainly the Crown was able to indemnify most of those who had supported the King and the American loyalists, the alleged losers, who often went on to rebuild the British Empire in Africa and the Indian subcontinent.¹⁶ The French and the Americans chose, says Haglund, esp. 8–85, to attempt to forget what had happened, with myths of the War of Independence, and a “suboptimality” born of “relational realism”.

Chapter 4 extends the ethnicity discussion to an exploration of what Haglund calls the “Duroselle-Tardieu thesis,” a reference, of course, to the great French post-1945 historian Jean-Baptiste Duroselle and André Tardieu, the sometime premier of the Third Republic before 1939. Essentially this holds that “America’s demographic mix ... has redounded poorly for French interests in the past, and perhaps still does.”¹⁷ Certainly at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, the French felt disadvantaged by the influence the United States exerted across the globe due to its diaspora relationships. I have no quarrel with Haglund’s analysis (or that of Duroselle and Tardieu) about the interwar period. Where I do disagree is to link it to the threat felt by the current French president about the import of dangerous ideas. This rather echoes my point made earlier about Franco-American disagreements about how we should study, even think about, politics. Haglund seems to emphasize his feeling that the thesis by Duroselle and Tardieu is one that has its current echoes in Macron’s dismissal of “certain social science theories” that he thinks risk politicizing the French debate about identity in dangerous ways and emphasizing “gender, race and post-colonialism.”¹⁸ This is echoed, to some extent, by some French theorists of international relations, though I could, in particular, point to the work of Bertrand Badie, who embraces very French sociological theorists like Emil Durkheim and his successors who believe that Durkheim “affirm[ed] the social nature and the social origin of all cultural phenomena.”¹⁹

On the current debate highlighted by Macron, we can hardly blame the United States for Foucault and many other French social theorists who arguably changed the debate about, precisely, gender, race, and post-colonialism in the United States, not the other way round. But where I agree with both Duroselle and Tardieu on one hand and Haglund on the other is that there has been little meeting of minds on the questions of race and gender until recently between France and the United States. Macron is wrong is to entirely blame US social theorists for this, and many French people think “Me Too” and “Black lives matter” were way overdue, be they generated at home or imported from the United States. Moreover, France’s relationship with gender equality and its former colonies has been problematic for decades; these are not recent problems. France’s educational system has long

¹⁶ As brilliantly shown by Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Vintage, 2012).

¹⁷ Haglund, *Sister Republics*, 114.

¹⁸ Haglund, 115.

¹⁹ Bertrand Badie, *Inter-socialités: Le monde n’est plus géopolitique* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2020); Robert Marjolin, “French Sociology. Comte and Durkheim,” *American Journal of Sociology* 42, no. 5 (1937): 693–704.

been ridiculously elitist, as Macron admitted and then did nothing to change. So this chapter was the one that I was most intrigued about, but potentially is the most important of the whole book for the future of both France and the United States, indeed, of the West.

After looking at ethnicity as the reason for the suboptimality of the Franco-American relationship, Haglund turns to the question of the importance of ideas in chapter 5. This is, of course, another area that raises as many dilemmas as it solves. Where do ideas come from and how do they get mediated into actions? In the two countries and cultures being contrasted, Haglund quotes Roger Cohen as saying, “no other countries make such claims for the universality of their virtue,” a line that I exemplified earlier in my Dulles quote. I can think of no scholar who would seriously disagree. Haglund suggests, and I agree, that the First World War was the moment when this really started to matter, when France (and Britain, of course) had to start thinking of themselves as no longer *primus inter pares*. That led, as Haglund notes, to the most significant period of anti-Americanism in France.²⁰ (I will confine my comments on that period because it is the one I know best of all the examples used.)

My question would have to be, why was Britain not so affected as France after 1919? Partly it was due to my point about the existence of think tanks: better communication. Britain had also carried out a kind of preemptive strike, marrying off many destitute peers to rich American heiresses, the stuff of American novelists like Henry James and Edith Wharton. No feelings of universal virtue can be said to taint the British psyche. American heiresses married more than a third of the House of Lords. The *Diaries* of the Chicago-born “Chips” Channon, that have been such a literary sensation in Britain, have helped that impression. Channon’s many indiscretions have given us a new window into not only Anglo-American relations before and after 1939 but also on Anglo-Saxon views on the French. He wrote extensively in his *Diaries* about the divide in British politics between those British parliamentarians who supported the “virile” Germans and those who supported the “effeminate” French.²¹ Channon was an appalling snob, a social climber, and an acute observer of British politics and society. This is what makes his judgements so amusing and recognizable. But here is one answer to the question asked earlier: in effect, Britain and the United States, who certainly had their own differences, ganged up on France and presented her as effeminate.

Simultaneously France felt diminished, humiliated, and not in the least pragmatic, with an obsession about its reduced population (a source of huge angst) and the dreadful losses in the trenches, hurtling through the 1920s and 30s to the disaster of 1940, getting progressively more embittered. Both historian Marc Bloch and Pétain agreed that this was because French school teachers had taught far too little about the martial past of France and stressed such organizations as the League of Nations, also unpopular in much of Britain and the United States. In terms of ideas, there was also a huge reaction against the League on the French right. Duroselle’s most read book on the period of the 1930s was entitled *La décadence*.²²

²⁰ Haglund, *Sister Republics*, 167.

²¹ Simon Heffer, ed., *Henry “Chips” Channon; The Diaries, Volume 1: 1918–1938* (London: Hutchinson, 2021).

²² On the “school” issue, see M. L. Siegel, *The Moral Disarmament of France: Education, Pacifism and Patriotism, 1914–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). On the French right and the League, see: P. Mazgaj, *Imagining Fascism: The Cultural Politics of the French Young Right* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2007); J.-B. Duroselle, *Politique étrangère de la France. La décadence, 1932–1939* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1979).

mystic],” and he was.²⁷ But there has been such denigration of France’s military prowess (many more French were killed in the First World War than British Empire and US troops combined) that de Gaulle is still ridiculed in Britain and the United States. I have a British sense of humor, so I do not mind being accused of being the only British Gaullist (to muted boos), but the French can be deeply offended. I found Haglund’s pages on Roosevelt’s views on *le grand Charles* far more measured and insightful, and hopefully will be further discussed over a *pastis* at some point.²⁸

In conclusion, a few comments. If I have an overarching concern, it might be that “methinks he doth protest too much.” This is not a criticism of Haglund’s sincere wish to explain the French, but rather my own belief that the French have been, and still are, vital counterpoints of the whole Anglo-Saxon liberal imperial project, even of the inevitably self-interested actions of both Britain and the United States in Ukraine. I like the way the French are usually realists in foreign policy, and that includes being unpredictable; that they can be rude, certainly condescending, snapping at the hand that feeds them. Churchill understood that only a great man could behave like de Gaulle. Kennedy was far more worried about his first meeting with de Gaulle in 1961, which actually turned out to be a breeze, than he was about his subsequent encounter with Khrushchev, which turned into a nightmare for the young president. De Gaulle and Churchill were gentlemen who accorded respect to their adversaries, as in the apocryphal story from the battle of Fontenoy, a French victory of 1745, when a French officer met his British adversary on the battlefield with: “*Messieurs les Anglais: Tirez les premiers*” [English gentlemen: Shoot first.]. When French politicians went to Washington, DC, with the intention to curry favor, they always, or mostly, were treated with contempt. Badly advised maybe, French Premier Guy Mollet was ridiculed for his attempts to seem a “regular guy” by boasting about his collection of dolls after Suez in 1957, while John Foster Dulles made sanctimonious statements about the upholding of the rule of law in international relations. Eisenhower, on the other hand, treated de Gaulle as a fellow general and they hunkered down in his rumpus room in the American’s Gettysburg farmhouse for a productive and friendly chat. De Gaulle is said to have loosened his tie for the occasion! Stalin held France and de Gaulle in contempt at Yalta in early 1945, refusing to invite them, until de Gaulle refused to sign the joint invitation to the upcoming San Francisco meeting. As de Gaulle said, “*je n’ai d’estime que pour ceux que me résistent, mais je ne peux pas les supporter* [I only have respect for those who resist me, but I cannot stand them].” A good basis for an equal relationship.

De Gaulle is the central figure who must be considered, not just on the theme of leadership. He gave a narrative to a wide sweep of French history. He actually wrote his own script in his prewar writings. The experience he had as a prisoner of war after he was captured in the battle of Verdun in 1916 gave him the opportunity to write a book, *Le discorde chez l’ennemi* (1924), about Germany that persuaded him that his present and future foe was potentially amenable to change and to act as a companion in creating a world where Anglo-Saxons did not rule the roost. He wrote another book that his erstwhile commandant and future

²⁷ The Willkie quote is in “Report by the Directeur of the Sureté Générale des Armées, 11 September 1942,” De Gaulle Papers, Archives Nationales, Paris, AG/3 (1)/ 256: Dossier 1b. For a very thoughtful analysis of de Gaulle, see S. Hazareesingh, *In the Shadow of the General: Modern France and the Myth of de Gaulle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

²⁸ Haglund, *Sister Republics*, 214–20.

foe Marshall Philippe Pétain had hoped would be “his” book on *le soldat français* but turned into *Le fil de l'épée* [*The Edge of the Sword*] (1932).²⁹ This wide-ranging, though admirably compact work—he was called by one admirer “the last of the Romans”—showed the English to be bitter but worthy foes of France, and the Americans as *des arrivistes*, with nowhere near enough real history for de Gaulle to take them seriously. It is hardly surprising that with such a national hero, Franco-American relations were always going to be difficult. But without de Gaulle, it is perfectly possible that France would not have had the influence to create a new Europe with Germany, and without that the West would have been in deep trouble.

What would I improve in this book? First, I always have to moan about not letting the French tell their own story more. The Anglo-Saxon thinkers about the subject matter of this book dominate, indeed, in places I felt they should have been put in their place a bit more. There are, frankly, too many American theorists here. I am glad that Duroselle has had his say, but there are many political scientists and historians who do not. In addition, there are British historians that Duroselle would have liked to see here, the “English School” were very much to his liking. Many Americans liked and admired him as well, and he had no beef with what we now call classical realists. But he could not abide behavioralists. One reason was his own association with Verdun, where his father lost an arm; history was personal. In one of the most nervous encounters of my youth, I sat beside him at the Hotel Richemont in Geneva one evening in about 1981 at a meeting of *Relations Internationales*, a journal he had established and co-edited with my then-boss, Jacques Freymond. The other memory was him telling me about his love of *Série Noir* crime thrillers, still being published today. My only true lifetime intellectual triumph was telling him to read Raymond Chandler, though I am not sure he ever did. Laurence Badel, professor of international history at the Sorbonne, has directed a very good book on his influence, which might be a good source for more exploration of the themes Haglund highlights.³⁰

Second, I think Haglund has missed an important trick in his argument about incompatible strategic cultures where Russia is concerned. Russia is, of course, mentioned and the war in Ukraine is referenced quite a few times.³¹ But in terms of how Russia fits into French strategic culture, we could make a stronger case that France and the United States have very different views on the country. The first thing that de Gaulle did when he became president of the provisional government in the summer of 1944 was to go for his first major foreign policy visit not to London or Washington, DC, but to Moscow. There, he was treated with some contempt, Stalin ignoring him and getting Molotov to meet him at the airport and show him the sights. Then there was the abovementioned treatment of de Gaulle over Yalta. It is true that he backed Kennedy very strongly and warmly during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. In the all-important battle for hearts and minds in the newly entitled “Third World,” de Gaulle was perfectly happy to both alarm and pacify his American friends about his views on Russia. Kennedy was told by his advisor Bob “Blowtorch” Komer in the buildup to his visit to Paris in 1961 to have no doubt that de Gaulle was “deeply convinced of the gravity

²⁹ Andrew J. Williams, “Charles De Gaulle: The Warrior as Statesman,” *Global Society* 32, no. 2 (April 2018): 162–75.

³⁰ Laurence Badel, *Histoire et relations internationales* (Paris: Editions de la Sorbonne, 2022).

³¹ See, for example, Haglund, *Sister Republics*, 193–94.

of the threat the Soviet Union poses to Western civilization,” and he will agree with the idea that “a united West must deal firmly with the Soviets.” But significantly, Komer thought de Gaulle also thought that the Soviet Union was nothing more than a “temporary phenomenon,” for, in the long run, “Communist China will become the great menace—the yellow peril.” Eventually, de Gaulle was said to believe the Russians would realize that China was a greater threat than the West. Russia “will realise it is a European nation and will return to the family.” Hence the “door [must be left] open to the Soviets,” and he was preparing the ground by “propos[ing] joint Soviet-Western projects for aid to underdeveloped countries.”³²

Much as there are many members of the Russian elite who disagree profoundly with Putin’s actions on Ukraine, there were members of the *Quai d’Orsay* (and beyond) who disagreed with de Gaulle on Russia and Franco-American relations generally.³³

In France, Macron fits this Gaullist mode quite well. He was the most prominent Western leader to propose giving Putin an “exit ramp” in early 2022, not a popular idea among any of my British or American acquaintances or commentators I admire. France has been one of the least generous with its hardware for the Ukrainian government. I am told by several of my Parisian academic friends that the majority of their colleagues were pro-Russian at the start of the war, fully swallowing the line that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was to blame for the invasion. *Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose?*

³² Robert Komer, “Program for President Kennedy’s Visit to Paris ... Position Paper; Relations with the Soviet Bloc,” 22 May 1961, NSF Box 233, Kennedy Library. Komer got his nickname “Blowtorch” because of his later views on Vietnam. Unfootnoted quotes in this paragraph are from the Komer source.

³³ Maurice Vaïsse, ed., *De Gaulle et la Russie* (Paris: CNRS editions, 2012).