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The Memory of the Second World War in French Foreign Policy Discourses

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Discourses

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Introduction

Since the Second World War, collective memory in France has played a significant role in cultural, social, and political debate surrounding the idea of French national identity. France's past is often revisited, and at times reconstructed, by governments, political parties, and leaders in order to support their arguments, justify their policy decisions, and reinforce conceptions of French national identity. Consequently, varying narratives of France's role in the Second World War, as well as its colonial past, have emerged, creating a fractured landscape of historical representations. The narratives surrounding the Second World War can help us to understand the function of collective memory in French politics. This essay will argue that the memory of the Second World War has played a significant role in foreign policy discourses and show that leaders continue to draw upon the past to justify their policy decisions today, particularly during discourses concerning European integration.

To show the significance of collective memory in French politics, I will analyse primary sources which highlight the use of historical references in foreign policy discourses and show the discursive strategies employed by political leaders to garner support for their foreign policy. These sources include official speeches, political statements, and declarations in which political leaders draw upon the past and attempt to frame history around common reference points which help to explain and justify their policymaking. I will also draw upon secondary literature which outlines leaders' expressed viewpoints and actions to assess the extent to which the framing of memory reflects certain political objectives. An analysis of Charles de Gaulle's speeches and actions will provide evidence of the significance of collective memory in the aftermath of the Second World War, while an examination of President Emmanuel Macron's foreign policy

discourse will highlight the extent to which collective memory remains prevalent in French foreign policy today.

Defining Collective Memory

As it refers to a rather abstract concept, the term 'collective memory' is difficult to define and therefore often the subject of some debate. I argue that the term 'collective memory' refers to a group's shared memories of the past that may be employed and reconstructed by political actors in the present. French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs coined the term 'collective memory' in 1925[1], providing an important framework for the study of memory in a broader social context. Halbwachs argued that social structures and institutions shape the way in which history is remembered. He explained that the group to which individuals belong constructs the memory that individuals will preserve, and therefore the collective memory of any society is intentionally shaped by those who hold sufficient power and status to reconstruct past historical events and in turn define the memories of the wider public.[2]

Applying Halbwach's theory of collective memory to a contemporary Europe, Jan Müller explains that the death of Holocaust survivors, forced laborers, and all those who participated in World War II encouraged and intensified debates about history[3], exemplifying Halbwachs' idea that collective memory does not prevent varying and distinct accounts of history. Instead, these individual accounts depend on the social group that a person belongs to and therefore depend on the way in which this memory is constructed from within the social group. Müller developed his

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[1] Joseph R. Llobera. "Halbwachs, Nora and 'History' versus 'Collective Memory': A Research Note." *Durkheimian Studies / Études Durkheimiennes* 1 (1995) : 35– 36 http://www.jstor.org/stable/44708512.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Müller, Jan-Werner. "Introduction: The Power of Memory, the Memory of Power and the Power over Memory." Introduction. Dans Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past. Sous la direction de Jan-Werner Müller, p.32. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511491580.001. https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/B8A82BC95FFB6EE1AC3867237F0C911A/9780511491580int_p1-36_CBO.pdf/introduction_the_power_of_memory_the_memory_of_power_and_the_power_over_memory.pdf

ideas about the functioning of collective memory in the present, claiming that both politicians

and the wider public no longer care for the historical truth, but rather how this history can be

used to "make moral claims" and "prompt political action."[4] Müller here reinforces the idea that

politicians stray from the truth with specific goals and a political purpose in mind. Wulf develops

this idea further, explaining that "the past is not merely preserved but is continuously and

selectively reconstructed in the light of present interests, needs, and aspirations."[5] When we

accept the notion that politicians have the capacity to reconstruct the past, along with the idea

that memory can be manipulated to suit the political needs of the present, it is clear that

collective memory plays an important role in the political arena.

Collective Memory and National Identity

Meike Wolf argues that we can better understand national identity through the lens of

collective memory. According to Wolf, "the individual needs the social group not only as a social

framework for his or her memory but also for identity."[6] It is therefore necessary to consider how

the state can act as the social group that Halbwachs repeatedly refers to. Wolf explains that

conceptions of nationhood often originate through the construction of the "self and the other"[7], as

states attempt to distinguish themselves from the wider international community in pursuit of a

secure national identity.

Pierre Nora's major contribution to the study of collective memory also considers the

relationship between collective memory and national identity. Nora's *Les lieux de memoire*, a

collection of seven volumes published between 1984 and 1992, explores the role played by

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[4] Ibid.
[5] Wulf, Meike. "Understanding Collective Memory and National Identity." P. 18.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.

memory in the construction of a collective identity. The idea at the foundation of Nora's work is that the history and identity of a nation relies upon an "array of sites of memory that have been invested with enduring and emotive symbolic significance."[8] These sites may take the form of places, objects or ideas which hold historical significance for a nation, for example, a monument, a museum, or a symbol such as the French figure of Marianne. For Nora, "the memory of the past is central to the identity in the present."[9] This idea may suggest that the pursuit of a secure national identity acts as a motivation for the reconstruction of history by political actors in the present.

Establishing a Link between Collective Memory and Foreign Policy

Since the collective memory of the past significantly influences identity in the present, it is unsurprising that political leaders often draw upon history in foreign-policy discourses. Given their status, power, access to the media, and ability to reach millions of people, political leaders are ideally positioned to reconstruct the past and influence national collective memory in order to pursue foreign policy objectives. Ruth Wittlinger and Martin Larose explain that the constructivist approach to international relations provides a lens through which we may better understand the link between collective memory and foreign policy. The importance of the 'cultural and institutional framework'[10] that underpins policymaking and the way in which policy is received by the wider public suggests a significant link between collective memory and foreign policy. Wittlinger and Larose argue that collective memory "plays a pivotal role in determining the limits and possibilities of policy by providing ammunition to promote...or reject

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[8] Llobera, Joseph R. "Halbwachs, Nora and 'History' versus 'Collective Memory'
[9] ibid.
[10] Ruth Wittlinger and Martin Larose, "No Future For Germany's Past? Collective Memory And German Foreign Policy", *German Politics* 16, no. 4 (2007): 483, doi:10.1080/09644000701652490.

certain policy options."[11] This aligns with Halbwachs idea that interests of the present determine which aspects of history are remembered, forgotten, or reinterpreted, and helps to explain the significance of collective memory in foreign policy discourses today.

When we discuss the prevalence of collective memory in political discourses, it is necessary to consider the idea of memory-framing. Alex Mintz and Steven Redd provide an analysis of framing in foreign policy settings, discussing the way in which individuals and institutions frame their policies in foreign policy discourses. They draw attention to the specific intentions of political leaders, explaining that they often employ discursive strategies that will "affect how the targets themselves as well as the public and other actors (e.g., media) perceive an issue"[12] This supports the idea that the framing of history is an important strategy which allows leaders to emphasise a shared experience and in turn garner support for their policy decisions. Eric Langenbacher's collection, *Collective Memory and International Relations*, provides many examples of 'framing' and the way that words, images, and symbols from the past are employed by policymakers in the present. He explains that political actors ``invoke these tools from precedent to legitimize their current dispositions and future plans.''[13] For this reason, an understanding of how collective memory is framed is significant in understanding foreign policy.

In Langenbacher's collection, various authors discuss the tools used by political leaders to frame the past in a particular way. These tools include the reconstruction of past narratives, the application of historical analogies, the creation of memory sites, and the forgetting of the different aspects of history. Langenbacher explains that these tools allow political leaders to

[11] ibid.
[12] Mintz, Alex, and Steven B. Redd. "Framing Effects in International Relations." *Synthese* 135, no. 2 (2003): 193–213. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20117363.
[13] Langenbacher, Eric, and Yossi Shain, eds. *Power and the Past: Collective Memory and International Relations*. Georgetown University Press, 2010.p.6. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2tt597.

portray an actor or state as a "villain, victim, or liberator,"[14] therefore influencing the direction of international discourse and negotiations. This supports Wolf's claim that the construction of the 'self and the other' plays an important role in the framing of foreign policy as political leaders attempt to distinguish themselves on the international stage.

Memory of World War II in France

An exploration of the narratives of the Second World War in France will provide an important understanding of French collective memory and its significance. The presentation of World War II, in particular the narratives surrounding the French resistance against the Nazi occupation of France, was highly influenced by the need to promote a positive and secure national identity, both domestically and on the international stage. In his book about national recovery in Western Europe, Peter Lagrou explains that leaders encouraged their populations to identify with the resistance as a means of "legitimising their role in post-war international politics."[15] A narrative that emphasises French success and liberation was therefore introduced and imposed from above by de Gaulle and other elites, suppressing the memory of French collaboration with the Nazis and constructing the foundation for a new national collective memory. Henry Rousso's *Le Syndrome de Vichy* centres around Charles de Gaulle's presentation of wartime France as a nation of resistance. Immediately following the war, de Gaulle promoted the idea that it was the Gestapo, not the French police who had deported French Jews, and that France was victorious since the country had overcome the collaborationist Vichy regime.

This heroic presentation of the French resistance, along with the idea of 'self-liberation'

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Lagrou, Pieter. *The Legacy of Nazi Occupation : Patriotic Memory and National Recovery in Western Europe, 1945–1965*, Cambridge University Press, 1999. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/conncoll/detail.action?docID=201984.

from the Nazi occupation represented an opportunity to unite France, constructing a foundation upon which France could rebuild as a major power. Raoul Girardet explains that the extent to which the French collaborated with the Nazis was repeatedly minimised as de Gaulle intentionally shifted focus onto the bravery and success of the resistance.[16] Although the resistance movement constituted as low as two percent of the population, the myth of the resistance has become "embedded in constructions of French national identity" and has "consistently been used to considerable effect in political discourse."[17]

While French collaboration is often acknowledged today, present day actors continue to portray the Vichy government as a distant entity in national collective memory that is separate from the country's national identity. This reconstructed narrative of events, which minimises important aspects of French history, invoked the memory of past glory and contributed to the idea of French greatness and France as a symbol of liberty, rights, and justice. From the past to the present, French leaders have chosen to minimise aspects of history which contrast with this vision of French grandeur, instead focusing on events which reinforce this vision. The myth of self-liberation underpinned this idea, presenting a unified independent France. French national identity remains rooted in its history and leaders continue to project, to both its citizens and the world, an image of a global leader with a duty to protect. This explains why national collective memory continues to emphasise the Resistance Movement as an integral aspect of French identity and why the memory of the Second World War remains prevalent in foreign policy discourses.

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[16] Peter Jackson, "Post-War Politics And The Historiography Of French Strategy And Diplomacy Before The Second World War", *History Compass* 4, no. 5 (2006): 870-905, doi:10.1111/j.1478-0542.2006.00344.x.
[17] ibid.

De Gaulle: A Case Study
1945 – 1953

An exploration of Charles de Gaulle's foreign policy towards Germany, along with an analysis of his speeches will show how he influenced the national collective memory of the Second World War and used the past as a tool to justify and explain his policy. As chair of the provisional French government, de Gaulle immediately introduced a narrative of self-liberation in August 1944 when he declared "Paris liberated! Liberated by itself, liberated by its people…with the support and help of all France," reflecting his desire to re-establish France's position on the world stage. Peter Lagrou explains that "being liberated was too passive a mode to celebrate the recovery of national independence, and gratitude was a weak basis for national identity."[18] Although de Gaulle made sure to emphasise his individual role in the liberation of France, he was aware that it would be necessary to include the wider French public in the story of the French resistance and self-liberation to provide a basis for national recovery. In an attempt to begin a new regime, de Gaulle depicted a collective effort during the French fight for freedom, promoting the idea that entire nation had contributed to the resistance movement,[19] and appealing to the principles that underpinned French national identity. While this narrative would help to garner support for the new republic, it also encouraged the French government and French public to reflect upon the country's past victories, re-establishing France's vision for itself and its perceived role in the world as it embarked on a journey of recovery following the war.

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[18] Arthur Marwick and Pieter Lagrou, "The Legacy Of Nazi Occupation: Patriotic Memory And National Recovery In Western Europe, 1945-1965", *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 2 (2001): 634, doi:10.2307/2651734.
[19] Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner and Claudio Fogu, *The Politics Of Memory In Postwar Europe* (repr., Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). 73.

In most cases, the framing of memory allowed for the reconstruction of national identity, and, in certain cases, the framing of memory underpinned de Gaulle's pursuit of bilateral and multilateral negotiations and agreements. In a speech on France's role in peace in July 1946, de Gaulle claimed that "We French are among those who always remain on the stage and have never changed camps,"[20] in order to depict a proud and strong France before outlining his foreign policy objectives. His speech continued:

"A harmony presupposes an understanding between London and Paris. This understanding our country has long sought - let us say frankly at the price of many sacrifices. Certainly, when it was necessary in 1914 and again in 1939 to face up against those who sought to enslave Europe, England and France were side by side, sword in hand, from the first day to the last."[21]

Once again, de Gaulle attempts to suppress the memory of the Vichy Regime and French collaboration, instead promoting France as a nation of resistance and suggesting that the minority underground resistance was emblematic of French actions during both world wars. He promotes this version of the past in order to reinforce the idea of French grandeur, suppressing the memory of any events that conflict with the strength of French independence and security. De Gaulle's promotion of the idea that "England and France were side by side, sword in hand, from the first day to the last" seeks to rewrite the events that occurred less than ten years prior, constructing a new memory for the wider public to preserve. This exemplifies Müller's argument that politicians are prepared to undermine historical truth and presents the way in which the past can be used to "make moral claims" and "prompt political action."[22] De Gaulle here attempts to

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[20] "Text Of De Gaulle's Speech On France's Role In Peace; WARNS OF THIRD WAR", *The New York Times,* July 29, 1946. https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1946/07/29/93137085.pdf?pdf_redirect=true&ip=0.
[21] ibid
[22] ibid.

appeal to shared experiences of war and victory in war, suggesting these are important and justified motivations driving his decisions, in this case cooperation between France and Britain.

De Gaulle's public attitude towards European integration fluctuated over time. De Gaulle and Gaullists supported the dismemberment of Germany immediately after the Second World War, proposed a US-Britain-France triumvirate that excluded Germany in 1958, and eventually pursued a close bilateral Franco-German relationship after 1962.[23] These abrupt changes in direction required explanation and justification, often resulting in a change in the framing of memory in his foreign-policy discourse.

In the aftermath of World War II, France's policy towards Germany centred around the prevention of German aggression. De Gaulle looked to separate the coal-rich Saar region from Germany, integrating it into the French economy and having Germany pay reparations, principally to France, in the form of coal.[24] De Gaulle also wanted to separate the Rhineland from Germany and called for the complete demilitarisation of the country in an attempt to guarantee French physical and economic security.[25] He also sought to ensure that a future German government be decentralised to neutralise Germany politically. In his 1946 speech, de Gaulle outlined these plans, expressing his belief that France had a responsibility to protect Europe from such atrocities. He declared,

"France, in dealing with others, has the duty of opposing the possibility that Germany should again become a unified and centralised state, or in short, the Reich, whose structure and power have always resulted in warlike enterprises"[26]

[23] Krotz, Ulrich. Social Content of the International Sphere: Symbols and Meaning in Franco-German Relations. *Program for the Study of Germany and Europe Working Paper No. 02.2.* 32.
[24] John W. Young, "The Foreign Office, The French And The Post-War Division Of Germany 1945–46", *Review Of International Studies* 12, no. 3 (1986): 227. doi:10.1017/s0260210500113944.
[25] William I. Hitchcock, "France, The Western Alliance, And The Origins Of The Schuman Plan, 1948-1950", *Diplomatic History* 21, no. 4 (1997): 603-630, doi:10.1111/1467-7709.00090.606
[26] "Text Of De Gaulle's Speech On France's Role In Peace; WARNS OF THIRD WAR", *The New York Times*

De Gaulle's attempts to distance France from the actions of the Nazis with whom the Vichy government collaborated, while emphasising the threat and need to contain Germany, supports Wolf's argument that conceptions of nationhood often rely on the construction of the "self and the other"[27] In this case, Germany is the 'other,' and therefore poses a threat that France has a duty to contain. De Gaulle also draws upon events prior to World War II, explaining that Germany's structure had "always resulted in warlike enterprises," calling attention to their past behaviour to strengthen the idea that his policy was necessary and justify his support for a decentralised German government.

While the early governments of the Fourth Republic initially echoed de Gaulle's desire to punish and dismember Germany, senior members of the French government soon realised that France would be unable to contain Germany through its current policy. As Britain and the U.S. looked to reinvigorate West Germany, and concerns surrounding the Cold War mounted, it became clear that a change in tactics would be necessary in order to advance French interests.[28] The French government and important French elites, in particular Jean Monnet and Foreign Minister Robert Schuman, proposed the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), driving the construction of a united Europe. Monnet and Schuman supported supranational integration which would delegate sovereign powers to central European institutions; an idea that de Gaulle vehemently opposed. De Gaulle was highly critical of the ECSC and described its central institutions as a "cabal."[29] De Gaulle repeatedly expressed his

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[27] ibid.
[28] Hitchcock, William. "France, the Western Alliance, and the Origins of the Schuman Plan"
[29] "Press Conference Held By Charles De Gaulle (Paris, 25 February 1953)", CVCE.EU By UNI.LU, 1953, https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/press_conference_held_by_charles_de_gaulle_paris_25_february_1953-en-9bf9edb1-a616-4d81-b935-9917445789e0.htm.

opposition to European supranationalism, citing the importance of upholding French

independence. During a press conference, de Gaulle declared that "the only possible Europe...is

that of states" and described debates surrounding European integration as a battle between the

"utopian myths of supranational power."[30] He believed that an effective Europe would be a

Europe made up of independent governments with their own unique histories and cultures and a

system in which national sovereignty would maintain control over European institutions.

Although no longer French leader, de Gaulle continued to wield significant influence in

France, and in a press conference in Paris in 1953, he reiterated his vision for Europe, opposing

the creation of a new European Defence community. While he declared his support for defence

cooperation between states in Europe, he spoke sternly against the establishment of the European

Defence Community (EDC). The EDC was proposed by the French Prime Minister, Rene

Pleven, and looked to establish a European army among the six member states, including West

Germany. [31] In his press conference, de Gaulle stated,

 "In wartime, the French Government would find themselves totally excluded from the defence
of France. If, during the last conflict, from 1940 to 1945, the French Government
had bowed to such a regime, if, in the coalition of which he was part, he had not kept the right
and means of deploying French troops, Leclerc would not have taken the Fezzan and would not
have been launched, when necessary, on Paris, and Alsace would not have been defended"[32]

He draws upon the memory of the Second World War to support his argument against the EDC

and emphasises the importance of an independent French army. De Gaulle calls attention to the

past in this way as a means of explaining his opposition to a defence community that could

potentially weaken French sovereignty. He also continues to highlight Germany as a threat in this

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[30] Ibid.
[31] J.Richard Piper, *The Major Nation States In The European Union* (Pearson, 2005), 131.
[32] "Press Conference Held By Charles De Gaulle"

press conference, suggesting that it would be dangerous to include West Germany in plans such as these:

"It is absolutely false that the so-called European army treaty can rearm the Germans without rearming Germany at the same time. It is, however, very clear that this treaty combined with the current American policy, leads directly to military and political hegemony of the Reich in Europe."[33]

Here de Gaulle presents his opposition to any form of German rearmament due to the fear of a return to German militarism and the danger that this would represent.[34] Despite his calls for some level of cooperation between European states, de Gaulle continues to stress the importance of French independence, while also perpetuating his narrative from 1945 that constructs Germany as the 'other' that threatens French security

De Gaulle: 1958 - 1969

An analysis of de Gaulle's speeches and symbolic gestures from 1959 onwards will highlight the difference between his framing of memory in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and the framing of memory following his return to power. The contrast in the presentation of history allows us to identify the way in which collective memory can be moulded and manipulated in order to suit the needs of the present and support the pursuit of different policy objectives. Following the collapse of the Fourth Republic, Charles de Gaulle returned to power as the head of the Fifth Republic after twelve years largely spent away from the public eye. The establishment of the Fifth Republic had been a direct result of a right-wing military coup in Algiers in 1958, and the political crisis of 1958 had left France deeply divided[35]. In

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[33] ibid

[34] John Goormaghtigh, "France And The European Defence Community", *International Journal* 9, no. 2 (1954): 96, doi:10.2307/40197989.

[35] Joelle Hureau and Benjamin Stora, "La Gangrene Et L'oubli. La Memoire De La Guerre D'algerie", *Vingtième Siècle. Revue D'histoire*, no. 35 (1992): 123, doi:10.2307/3769749.

response to these existing divisions, de Gaulle redirected public attention to France's glorious past, commemorating the Resistance movement and reinforcing conceptions of French national identity. Benjamin Stora explains that de Gaulle emphasised the "unified character" of the nation upon his return to power. During the 1960s and 1970s, forty-three war museums opened in France to commemorate the First World War, the D-Day invasion, and the Resistance movement of the Second World War.[36] Stora explains that this was an example of the way in which de Gaulle relied upon the imagery of France's past and his own personal achievements during the Resistance, to reinforce the memory of French glory and direct attention away from the Algerian war.

The opening of war museums is an example of the way in which de Gaulle employed the memory of the Second World War to maintain the image of French greatness. With his return to power in 1959, de Gaulle had developed a new policy of grandeur that centred around French independence, nuclear deterrence, military expenditure, and the independence of the national armament industry and arm exports.[37] This policy of grandeur that prioritised national independence remained consistent throughout de Gaulle's time in office. He cemented the importance of French independence in his New Year speech on January 1st, 1964, when he stated:

"Between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31 (1963) we did not have to fire a single cannon shot, which had not happened in the space of a quarter of a century. It is a fact that we are, through the creation of our first atomic weapons and the modernisation of our forces, in the process of taking our destiny in hand, which had, since 1940, been in the hands of others."[38]

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] "Text Of de Gaulle's New Year Address", *The New York Times,* January 1, 1964.
https://www.nytimes.com/1964/01/01/archives/text-of-de-gaulles-new-year-address.html

This represents de Gaulle's tireless determination to preserve French independence, particularly away from reliance on the U.S., through nuclear armament. He here suggests that nuclear armament will allow France to "reclaim its destiny," suggesting that he seeks to increase French security and defence independently of the U.S. However, in his previous speeches that discussed the events of the Second World War, de Gaulle had consistently promoted the idea of self-liberation and emphasised France's ability to overcome the Vichy Regime. In his New Year speech of 1963, de Gaulle appears to acknowledge that France did not liberate itself when he explains that France's destiny " had since 1940, been in the hands of others." De Gaulle draws upon this aspect of French history, despite the fact that it contradicts his own narrative of self-liberation, in order to explain and justify his pursuit of nuclear weapons. This exemplifies Wulf's argument that the past is continuously and selectively reconstructed in the light of present interests, needs, and aspirations."[39]

It is clear that the narrative of French grandeur that he promoted between 1945 and 1953 to reject supranational authority in the form of the ECSC and the EDC remained an important characteristic of de Gaulle's foreign policy discourse throughout his presidency. Despite this, by the time de Gaulle re-entered the French political arena in 1959, it was no longer of use to oppose French membership in the existing European communities. Instead, he would have to look to use these structures to advance French interests. It was therefore necessary to reframe the memory of the Second World War through a process of reconciliation with Germany. The potential to increase French power and build a European power-bloc independent of the US may have been the driving factors behind de Gaulle's support for cooperation with Germany.

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[39] Wulf, Meike. "Understanding Collective Memory and National Identity."

However, it is of great value to examine the narratives, symbols, and discursive strategies employed to facilitate Franco-German cooperation and to garner support for this idea among the French public. When de Gaulle returned to power in 1959, these strategies would be of great importance as he prepared to consolidate Franco-German relations at the head of Europe.

In 1961, in an attempt to strengthen French defence, de Gaulle pursued the Fouchet Plan which involved the creation of a new 'union of states' that would cooperate on issues of foreign-policy and defence. He continuously emphasised the intergovernmental character of the plan and the capacity of members to act independently of the U.S. Due to competing visions among states concerning Europe's place in the world, along with the hardening of the French position, discussions eventually stalled and never resumed.[40] Following the failure of the Fouchet plan in 1961, de Gaulle turned his attention back to Germany and the West German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer. The two developed a close political partnership, underpinned by the theme of reconciliation, and eventually consolidated by the signing of the Elysée Treaty in 1963 which started the process of Franco-German integration around common security and defence policies. [41]

De Gaulle saw strong bilateral relations with West Germany as an opportunity to increase French power, although he remained firmly against any idea that constituted reduced sovereignty due to the importance of upholding French independence and the idea of French grandeur. Since he had spent a significant amount of time shifting blame away from France and onto Germany for the atrocities of World War II, as well as emphasising France's duty to contain Germany, it is

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[40] Anthony Teasdale, "The Fouchet Plan: De Gaulle's Intergovernmental Design For Europe", *LSE 'Europe In Question' Discussion Paper Series*, 2016, 1-10, doi:10.2139/ssrn.2857167.
[41] Hofmann, Stephanie C., and Frédéric Mérand. 2020. "In Search of Lost Time: Memory‑framing, Bilateral Identity‑making, and European Security." Journal of Common Market Studies 58 (1): 155–71.

necessary to consider how de Gaulle framed the need to cooperate with Germany when presenting his vision for closer relations. De Gaulle and Adenauer employed a distinct strategy to promote Franco-German relations. While de Gaulle pursued the establishment of France as a leader of Europe and Adenauer sought to solidify West Germany's attachment to the West, the two framed their aspirations in terms of Franco-German reconciliation. The symbolic acts that preceded the Elysée agreement helped to reconstruct the relationship between the two countries, drawing upon the idea of a shared past to frame their bilateral relations as a reconciliation which held a unique significance for both peoples.

In *Bilateral Identity‑making and European Security,* Hofmann explains how symbolic gestures enabled de Gaulle to "project a bilateral community of fate based on shared memory of conflict and bloodshed."[42] In 1962, the two leaders prayed together in the Reims Cathedral which had been destroyed during the First World War before attending the first joint military parade during which French and West German troops marched side by side.[43] Shortly after, de Gaulle accepted Adenauer's invitation to tour the Federal Republic of Germany where both leaders voiced their intentions to work together and forge an agreement that would connect their peoples and policies. The Reims cathedral represents a memory site which holds an emotive significance for both French and German peoples. De Gaulle and Adenauer's visit to the cathedral signals that they were drawing upon memories of the past in an attempt to foster a new atmosphere in which a future Franco-German agreement would be received. This exemplifies

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[42] ibid
[43] Hofmann, Stephanie,"In Search of Lost Time: Memory‑framing" 157.

Langenbacher's idea that leaders will often employ symbols from the past to legitimize their current dispositions and future plans.[44]

Many of the first European treaties, whether ratified or not, contain references to the question of Franco-German reconciliation. The common declaration that precedes the Elysée Treaty describes the agreement as a "reconciliation" that will end "a centuries-old rivalry, constituting a historic event which profoundly transforms the relations between the two peoples." [45] It was this transformation of relations that required a change in the framing of the past. The reference to a "centuries-old rivalry" in the common declaration highlights the way in which the two leaders repeatedly drew upon the past to frame their rapprochement as a necessary reconciliation when presenting their vision for close bilateral cooperation. In the same way that De Gaulle called upon the past to portray Germany as 'the other' and explain the enmity between France and Germany in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, de Gaulle and Adenauer's relationship called upon the past to explain and justify Franco-West German rapprochement. Historian Wilfried Loth explains that "the French president made sure that the reconciliation between Germans and French became deeply anchored in the cognisance of both peoples." This supports the idea that the past can be used and manipulated to suit the political needs of the present and highlights the framing of history as an important strategy which in this case allowed leaders to emphasise a shared experience and in turn garner support for their policy decisions.

The memory of French glory, reinforced by the myth of the resistance, remained

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[44] Langenbacher, Eric, *Power and the Past: Collective Memory and International Relations*.
[45]"Joint Franco-German Declaration (Paris, 22 January 1963)", CVCE.EU By UNI.LU.
https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/joint_franco_german_declaration_paris_22_january_1963-en-5c771e9f-810d-426d-94ff-ee035b542a
67.html.

consistent throughout de Gaulle's tenure. He employed these memories of perceived glory to emphasise the importance of French independence, reject supranational proposals, and pursue nuclear armament during his time as president. When we consider the way in which de Gaulle's framing of the past evolved between 1945 and 1962, however, a change occurred in the use of history, resulting in a new narrative taking its place in the national collective memory. Following the Second World War, de Gaulle repeatedly framed Germany as an enemy wholly responsible for the fate of French Jews, minimising French collaboration and pursuing relations with Britain and the U.S., which would exclude Germany. When it became clear that this approach was not going to succeed as a means of increasing French power, de Gaulle once again called upon the past, this time promoting the idea of Franco-German reconciliation to explain his change in policy. This discursive and symbolic strategy highlights the way in which de Gaulle employed the memory of the Second World War as a tool to justify and explain his foreign policy decisions.

Macron - A Case Study

The idea of a stronger Europe has underpinned French foreign policy since the beginning of the Fifth Republic. Emmanuel Macron, however, has taken France's approach to Europe one step further, often speaking of European sovereignty "not only in geopolitical terms, but also industrial and technological."[46] When we discuss French foreign policy, particularly towards European integration and European defence, it is necessary to recognise that the idea of French grandeur continues to play an important role as France looks to establish itself as a global leader. As I have shown, this sentiment was clear under the leadership of President Charles de Gaulle as he called attention to the French Resistance in order to support his rejection of supranationalism.

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[46]"Les Propositions D'emmanuel Macron," La République En Marche
!https://en-marche.fr/emmanuel-macron/le-programme.

An examination of President Macron's speeches will show that the idea of French grandeur remains prevalent as he makes many references to the past, particularly to highlight France's past glory and their role on the world stage. While there is an aspect of continuity on the broader issue of upholding French grandeur and remaining independent of the U.S., Macron's approach to Europe represents the shift towards supranationalism that has been developing since Francois Mitterrand's presidency. It is therefore valuable to explore the way in which he presents French history as he draws upon collective memory in a different way to present European integration as a means of achieving independence from the U.S.

Prior to his election, Macron often spoke about his vision for the future of French foreign policy, echoing de Gaulle's belief in France as an important player on the international stage. In a campaign speech in 2017, Macron declared that

"We have the means to regain our rank and, above all, to implement a foreign policy which strengthens our independence, our influence and our interests in the world. This is the course we must follow...Thanks to our history, our heritage, our culture, and our language...France occupies an exceptional place in Europe and in globalization. At the same time as we resolutely defend our interests, France must fight for the values that accompany them...human rights, the place of women and that of minorities in the world"[47]

Macron here discusses the importance of defending French interests and increasing French influence in the world, while invoking memories of the past by emphasising the need to "regain France's rank." This reflects the historical presentation of France as a strong, influential country with a duty to protect others, and therefore shows that the French elite continue to promote the idea of French grandeur. It is important to consider how the construction of French collective memory helps to bolster this argument. While the idea of French grandeur may be rooted in the

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[47]ibid.

past glory of French history, Macron links this memory of the past with France's current role in the promotion and protection of human rights, presenting these as values intrinsically linked to French history and culture. This idea has remained an important aspect of French national identity and is therefore embedded in the minds of French citizens. This reflects Pierre Nora's idea that the memory of the past is central to identity in the present,[48] as Macron appeals to the ideals traditionally associated with French identity to promote his vision for France and its place in the world.

Despite Macron's emphasis on France's duty in the world and his perpetuation of the idea of French grandeur, in one of his first speeches as French president at the Sorbonne University in September 2017,[49] the president called for further European integration in defence and security to transform the EU into a true political player on the global stage. In recent years, the approach towards independence in French foreign policy discourse has evolved. While de Gaulle focused on absolute independence underpinned by nuclear armament and bilateral agreements that strengthened French security, Macron places emphasis on the capacity of France to increase its influence, strengthen its security through European institutions, and assert its independence from the U.S. This approach towards EU foreign policy and integration is representative of France's shift towards the acceptance of supranational authority in Europe. References to France's past glory, however, remain prevalent in his foreign policy discourse. It is therefore necessary to consider the way in which Macron unites the idea of French grandeur and the need for further European integration, using collective memory to do so. In his Sorbonne speech, Macron stated:

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[48] Llobera, Joseph R. "Halbwachs, Nora and 'History' versus 'Collective Memory'
[49] Emmanuel, Macron, "DISCOURS D'EMMANUEL MACRON POUR UNE EUROPE SOUVERAINE, UNIE, DÉMOCRATIQUE." September 26, 2017.

"Europe alone can, in short, ensure real sovereignty, that is to say our ability to exist in today's world in order to defend our values and our interests. There is a European sovereignty to be built, and there is the need to build it."[50]

While de Gaulle totally rejected supranationalism and pursued French independence , Macron's discourse reflects his focus on guaranteeing independence from the U.S. His speech highlights his belief that supranational institutions can strengthen French security and increase France's influence in a world in which the U.S. has turned its attention away from Europe. The French leader therefore looks to convey European cooperation as a means of maintaining French influence in the world as this ensures that France does not rely on the U.S. in the field of security and defence. Discussing Europe, Macron told French policy journal *Le Grand Continent,*

*"*The United States will only respect us as allies if we are earnest, and if we are sovereign with respect to our defence. We need to continue to build our independence for ourselves."[51]

Here, Macron calls upon members of the EU to continue efforts to increase cooperation in the area of defence, emphasising the importance of European independence from the U.S. Both de Gaulle and Macron stress the importance of defending French interests, with the former arguing that supranational authority represents a threat to French interests and the latter arguing that supranational institutions allow for the protection of French interests. To reconcile the ideas of European sovereignty and French grandeur, Macron defines sovereignty as "France's ability to exist in today's world in order to defend our values and our interests," drawing upon the past to show that Europe strengthens France's ability to defend its values and interests. While de Gaulle

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[50]Ibid.

[51] Zack Budryk, "Macron Urges Europe To 'Build Our Independence' From US". Thehill, 2021. https://thehill.com/policy/international/europe/526111-macron-urges-europe-to-build-our-independence-from-us.

repeatedly called upon the memory of the war to explain his rejection of supranational authority, Macron uses the memory of war to support his pursuit of further integration and promote the idea that

"this Europe which has made it possible to turn our backs on war, we must regain our ambition. Today we hardly know anything about the destroyed cities, about these fathers, these sisters, these children who are buried with their throats tightened by misfortune...Let us seriously ask ourselves the question of the future we want and let us together have the courage to build it."[52]

Macron's reasoning that increased cooperation will help to guarantee peace in Europe is an idea that remains at the foundation of the argument for European integration. Macron here employs collective memory as a tool to support his belief that further integration is necessary to maintain France's status in the world; an idea that requires a belief amongst the public that he is acting in the interest of France. The Sorbonne speech presents the way in which Macron draws upon the memory of both world wars in an attempt to convey the importance of European cooperation and garner support for his plans for further integration. While de Gaulle concentrated on the victory of the French resistance to bolster his arguments against the Schuman Plan, and supranationalism generally, Macron frames his speech around the shared memories of loss and tragedy across Europe to justify his pursuit of policies that involve further integration. Although both leaders champion French independence from the U.S, they use the memory of the Second World War to advocate for different means of achieving this goal. Each leader draws upon different aspects of French collective memory in order to support their arguments for and against supranational authority. This exemplifies the way in which different

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[52]Emmanuel, Macron, "DISCOURS POUR UNE EUROPE SOUVERAINE"

aspects of the same past are emphasised by leaders "to legitimise their current dispositions and future plans."[53]

In a speech in Berlin in 2017, Macron once again called upon the shared memories of war to justify his future policy towards Europe. He stated:

"The European project aimed at stitching back together a ripped continent; at bringing back together the enemies of yesterday; at giving back peace and economic prosperity to a territory in ruin…We have to prepare a necessary treaty change, and we have to start now. That is why we do need at the same time a European ethic, a revamped democratic method, renewed policies, then renovated institutions. But we need to unite people. A European ethic, a desire to live together, an awareness of our shared identity, a loyalty to our values."[54]

Here we see how Macron connects events from the past to his plans in the present, this time linking the collective memory of the Second World War to the need to renovate European institutions and implement treaty changes. This illustrates the way in which leaders link specific aspects of national history to their policy positions, supporting Müller's argument that history can be used to "make moral claims" and "prompt political action."[55] Macron employs this discursive strategy in his pursuit of European integration, to influence how the public perceive the issue. It is clear that Macron repeatedly draws upon the existing national collective memory of war to support his belief in European sovereignty and garner support for this idea amongst the public and other actors.

While there is a shift in the presentation of history to support French policy towards European integration and supranationalism, the narratives surrounding Franco-German reconciliation represent a clear example of continuity in French collective memory since 1959

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[53] Langenbacher, *Power and the Past: Collective Memory and International Relations*.
[54] Emmanuel Macron, "Discours de Berlin." January 10, 2017.
[55] Ibid.

and the way that it is used as a tool in foreign policy discourse. As President Macron and

Chancellor Merkel navigate a tumultuous European landscape against which Britain's exit from

the EU and increased nationalism look to threaten European integration, the need to convey a

strong partnership at the head of Europe is more important than ever. For this reason, the theme

of Franco-German relations remains prevalent in contemporary discourses as the pair attempt to

project an image of European strength and power. In a campaign speech discussing the

challenges facing France, Macron stated:

"The European project is based on the Franco-German reconciliation. There is a cultural
dimension in the broadest sense that we should never forget, countries and people who killed
each other now work together. It is not because we do not think in the same way, because our
immediate interests sometimes differ, but because we share a history made of bloody conflicts
that we need each other, and that Europe needs us together." [56]

Here we can identify the continuity in the framing of memory as Macron evokes a

familiar memory discourse about the Second World War, calling attention to the horrors of war to

emphasise the importance of Franco-German relations and their ability to work together to

strengthen the EU. Macron's rhetoric displays a strategy that appeals to past experiences as

motivations for future actions. In this case he suggests that Europe "needs Germany and France

together" to prevent such a catastrophe from occurring again. Previously, I have discussed de

Gaulle's attempts to ensure that the idea of Franco-German reconciliation became deeply

anchored in the cognisance of the French people. This means that successive French leaders, in

this case Emmanuel Macron fifty years later, are able to draw upon this memory to support their

actions in the present. This exemplifies Halbwachs' argument that political leaders and

institutions can shape the way in which history is remembered. Since de Gaulle's government

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[56] Ibid.

reinforced the importance of Franco-German reconciliation, this remains a significant aspect of history in the memory of the wider public. This in turn allows Macron to employ de Gaulle's narrative of Franco-German reconciliation as a tool to amass support for his proposal to strengthen Franco-German ties even further.

In the same way that De Gaulle and Adenauer adopted a distinct strategy to promote Franco-German relations, President Macron and Chancellor Merkel have often performed symbolic gestures that call attention to their shared history. In November 2018, on the centenary of the 1918 armistice, the two leaders attended a railroad museum for a commemorative ceremony.[57] While this may not be as extravagant as de Gaulle and Adenauer's procession to the Reims Cathedral, this gesture represented an important commemoration of Franco-German reconciliation. Merkel and Macron were visiting the museum that houses a replica of the Compiègne wagon, the train carriage in which the Armistice of 11 November 1918 and the Armistice of 22 June 1940 were signed by Germany and France. During the highly symbolic ceremony, Macron and Merkel signed the guestbook, laid a wreath together, and unveiled a plaque celebrating their reconciliation. The plaque read:

"On the centenary of the November 11, 1918 armistice, Mr Emmanuel Macron, president of the French Republic, and Mrs Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the federal Republic of Germany, here reaffirmed the value of Franco-German reconciliation in the service of Europe and peace."[58]

As the place where the armistice was signed, the wagon became an important memory site that holds a cultural significance for both French and German peoples. The visit marked the first time since 1940 that leaders from the two countries had met at the historic location. Pierre

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[57]"Merkel Et Macron À Rethondes Pour Une Cérémonie Très Symbolique", Le Monde.Fr, 2018, https://www.lemonde.fr/centenaire-14-18/article/2018/11/10/merkel-et-macron-attendus-a-rethondes-pour-une-cere monie-tres-symbolique_5381726_3448834.html.
[58] Ibid.

Nora's memory site theory is underpinned by the idea that the present identity of a nation relies upon memory sites "that have been invested with enduring symbolic significance."[59] When we regard the Compiègne wagon museum as an important memory site, it becomes clear that the chosen location represents an intentional political message. The joint ceremony, at the place where the two countries had previously met in times of war, reinforces the narrative of reconciliation, and aims to promote the importance of Franco-German cooperation. The two leaders' visit to the symbolic location underlined the close ties between two countries that fought two wars in less than 30 years, but now present themselves as the guarantors of peace in Europe.

In another symbolic act in January 2019, President Macron and Chancellor Merkel met in the German city of Aachen to sign a new treaty on Franco-German cooperation and integration. The city is where Charlemagne, the king who united large parts of western and central Europe during the Middle Ages, was buried, and therefore represents another symbol of European unity. [60] The treaty was created to renew the basis of the Franco-German cooperation originally defined in the 1963 Élysée Treaty. The Aachen Treaty's preamble made reference to the history of Franco-German reconciliation, suggesting that this continues to act as an important driving force of Franco-German cooperation in the 21st century:

"Acknowledging the historic achievement of the reconciliation of the German and French peoples to which the Treaty between France and Germany of 22 January 1963 on Franco-German cooperation which has been the foundation for an unprecedented network of bilateral relations between their civil societies and public bodies at all levels" [61]

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[59] Llobera, Joseph R. "Halbwachs, Nora and 'History' versus 'Collective Memory'
[60]Guy Chazan, "Macron And Merkel Sign Aachen Treaty To Deepen Franco-German Ties", Ft.Com, 2019, https://www.ft.com/content/fecf3854-1e37-11e9-b2f7-97e4dbd3580d.
[61] "Franco-German Treaty Of Aachen", France Diplomacy - Ministry For Europe And Foreign Affairs, 2021, https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/germany/france-and-germany/franco-german-treaty-of-aachen/.

This highlights the way in which the narrative of Franco-German relations remains prevalent in current foreign policy discourses, particularly as a driver of Franco-German cooperation. The signing of the Elysée Treaty was a significant moment in the history of Germany and France, as well as Europe as a whole. The fact that the Élysée Treaty signalled the end of a centuries long rivalry and constructed an important foundation for successful European integration, suggests that the decision to mention the treaty in the preamble of the new agreement was an intentional strategy to highlight the European spirit of the agreement. The Aachen Treaty aims to increase cooperation and unity through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms which address a wide range of policy areas, including foreign and defence policy. Outlining France and Germany's aims to take their bilateral relations to the next level, the treaty states:

"The close friendship between Germany and France has been decisive for a united, efficient, sovereign and strong European Union and continues to be an indispensable element."[62]

Macron and Merkel vowed to develop their levels of cooperation at the bilateral as well as a European level, making references to Franco-German reconciliation to signal that both leaders are committed to the friendship that underpins peace in Europe. They continue to promote a shared vision of foreign policy interests and democratic values, despite their differences in opinion on several issues, to maintain the image of a strong Europe with strong leaders at its head. In a time when increasingly populist and nationalist sentiments are spreading across Europe, Merkel and Macron seek to preserve the image of their countries' strength and unity, drawing upon the history of Franco-German reconciliation to reinforce the importance of the Franco-German relationship in Europe today.

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[62] Ibid.

The renewed agreement with Germany was highly criticised by France's far-right, in particular the leader of the far-right National Rally, Marine Le Pen, who claimed that the treaty would see the French region of Alsace placed under Germany's "tutelage" and accused Macron of weakening French sovereignty. President Macron responded to these claims in a formal statement titled *The Truth on the Franco-German Treaty*.[63] The statement called upon the memory of war in Europe to emphasise the necessity of the agreement, presenting the Franco-German relationship as a linchpin of peace on the continent:

"By trying to rekindle the ashes of a rivalry between France and Germany, those who are spreading false information are betraying all the work of reconciliation that enables us to live in peace…They are betraying the memory of our ancestors who sacrificed their lives in the conflicts of the 20th century, and they are threatening our security."

While memories of war and reconciliation have the potential to fade as time passes and new generations arrive into the political sphere, Macron continues to reinvest these ideas into current debates, and therefore preserves the national collective memory that exists. In responding to Marine le Pen's claims, he draws upon the sacrifice of soldiers who fought in the two world wars, reinforcing the memory of war in an attempt to promote the treaty as a guarantor of peace. This once again highlights how political leaders draw upon history in light of present interests, needs, and aspirations, employing collective memory as a tool to justify policy, and in this case, to quell the criticism that the Aachen Treaty has received.

Conclusion

The memory of war has held a significant place in French foreign policy discourse since the end of the Second World War, culminating in a national collective memory consisting of

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[63]Emmanuel Macron, "La Vérité (rien que la vérité) sur le traité franco-allemand d'Aix-la-Chapelle." January 21, 2019.https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2019/01/21/la-verite-rien-que-la-verite-sur-le-traite-franco-allemand-daix-la-chapelle

various narratives concerning France's past greatness and the Franco-German relationship. It is important to recognise how both leaders sustain the fundamental idea of French grandeur that remains at the foundation of the country's national identity. Both de Gaulle and Macron draw upon France's past glory to uphold the vision of France as an important global actor that wields significant influence on the world stage. De Gaulle's promotion of the resistance myth and Macron's repeated calls for France to re-establish its influence are emblematic of this vision and highlight the way in which the events of the past remain a central aspect of identity in the present. Although both leaders stress the importance of France's global status and influence, they each prescribe a different means of achieving this goal vis-a-vis European integration. While de Gaulle envisioned a French state completely independent of other actors, Macron focuses his attention specifically on independence from the U.S. Each leader calls attention to different aspects of the memory of war to support their opposing points of view. De Gaulle directed attention to the memory of the French resistance and self-liberation to underline the importance of sovereignty and reject supranationalism. On the other hand, Macron discusses the destruction and tragedy of war to justify his support for European supranational authority, arguing that this integration allows France to defend its values and interests, regain its rank in the world and therefore protects France's status and influence. Despite their differing attitudes towards European integration, we can identify continuity on the broader issue of France's place in the global order and the way in which both leaders use France's past as a tool to explain and justify their policy towards Europe.

While de Gaulle and Macron draw upon different strands of collective memory to present their arguments for and against supranationalism, the framing of Franco-German reconciliation

has remained consistent since de Gaulle's return to power in 1959. From the image of Germany as an aggressive actor that posed a threat to France and Europe to the image of Germany as a close partner that would help to guarantee peace, de Gaulle's change in his framing of the past represents a pivotal moment for French collective memory. The discursive and symbolic strategies pursued by de Gaulle allowed him to embed this narrative into the national memory of the Second World War, paving the way for the future of Franco-German relations. The numerous references to Franco-German reconciliation in Macron's speeches both before and after his election suggest that de Gaulle succeeded in embedding this narrative into the country's collective memory, highlighting the extent to which political leaders shape the national memory.

De Gaulle's use of history to support his arguments and policies shows the significance of memory-framing in the aftermath of the Second World War, while the evolution of his narrative presents the way in which collective memory can be reconstructed to align with present interests. Macron's speeches on foreign policy show that the memory of World War II remains prevalent in contemporary settings, exemplifying how France's past is often revisited to explain and justify policy decisions. Collective memory has continued to play a significant role in French foreign policy discourses as leaders continue to frame history around common reference points which help to reinforce conceptions of French national identity and encourage the public to support their policy towards Europe.

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