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CRISES OF COMMEMORATION: COLD WAR, DECOLONIZATION AND THE BUNGLED 1954 D-DAY COMMEMORATION

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Abstract—In 1954, international dignitaries and veterans joined the commemoration of the Allied landings on the beaches of Normandy, though not everything went according to plan. For the French organizers, chief among them Gaullist deputy Raymond Triboulet, the event was intended to communicate a unifying, pro-Allied message amid a turbulent political climate. By June 1954, France had recently suffered a decisive defeat at Dien Bien Phu and was politically gripped by the divisive prospect of a European Defence Community. In debates over these crises, war memories surfaced and France's experience of the Occupation and Liberation enflamed passions. For many who attended the Normandy ceremony in 1954, the missteps of organizers created tension and upset, endangering Allied participation in the Paris Liberation ceremonies to follow. This moment of disjuncture illuminates how currents of memory, international diplomacy, decolonization and broader Cold War tensions all intersected and influenced each other on the Normandy beaches.

Over a wet weekend in northern France, a host of international dignitaries solemnly gathered, only to be offended and annoyed by the missteps of a regional politician. Meanwhile, the French edged closer to decolonization in Indochina, and European cooperation stalled over coordinated defence. The 1954 commemoration of the D-Day landings in Normandy was an international event presided over by René Coty, newly inaugurated as president of the Republic, and it bore all the hallmarks of a prestigious diplomatic engagement with France's war memory. Yet this commemoration was perhaps chiefly notable for its disfunction, and both the British and the American delegations expressed extreme displeasure at the amateurish way in which the ceremony

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was organized.[1] Indeed, both ambassadors prepared reports airing their grievances, while trying to assuage the ire of invited guests.

When talking about commemoration we tend to discuss topics like memory, heritage and symbolism. Yet we don't often talk about ceremonies that go wrong. This article will first discuss the commemorative context of the 1954 Normandy commemorations, exploring the moment's significance in regional, national and international narratives of French war memory. The use of the phrase 'memory culture' throughout invokes Pierre Nora's discussion of 'a splintered system, made up of disparate commemorative languages, that assumes a different relationship to the past, more elective than imperative, open, flexible, alive, and continually being reworked'.[2] In unpacking the political and diplomatic context of the ceremony, its Cold War context and links to the end of empire predominate. It took on new importance in the wake of Dien Bien Phu and amid discussion of the European Defence Community (EDC), when British and American diplomats were acutely and actively interested in both France's domestic politics and its commitment to erstwhile allies. Finally, it will be shown how the organizational failings of the Normandy commemoration exposed some of the strains of future European cooperation. The bungled commemoration did not itself damage inter-Allied relations yet it allowed outward expressions of underlying differences. Exploring the missteps of this ill-fated 10th anniversary of the D-Day landings helps reframe the ceremony, no longer a fixed marker of memory culture, nor a short-term platform of international diplomacy, but a symbolic moment in which diverse waves of memory crashed upon the Normandy beaches.

I

In 1954, the French government was celebrating an important double anniversary, and a triple one in its Franco-British relations. As President René Coty remarked: '[it is] 50 years since the foundation of the Entente Cordiale, 40 years since the first British soldiers fought at the side of their comrades in France, and 10 years to a day since the immense naval and air fleet had left the ports and bases of Britain to shatter the German fortress'.[3] This memory had important implications for national narratives, Franco-British cooperation and the personal histories of everyone involved. The Normandy landings were Metropolitan France's 'first Liberation', to be followed by the landings in Provence that ushered in a more active role for the French in the process of liberating France's villages, towns and cities.[4] The liberation of Paris between 19 and 25 August completed this process, despite the battles which continued to rage on France's eastern border. De Gaulle's entry into Paris was then a

[1] G. Andréani, E. Carey and M. Tannous, 'Les commémorations du 6 Juin 1944 et la politique étrangère française entre diplomatie et cinéma', *Annuaire français de relations internationales*, 16 (2015), 289–311 at 290.

[2] P. Nora (ed.), *Les Lieux de memoire*, 3 vols (Paris, 1984–92), 983–5.

[3] 'D-Day memories', *The Times*, 7 June 1954, 6.

[4] H. Footitt, *War and Liberation in France: Living with the Liberators* (Basingstoke, 2004), 95.

considered reassertion of the primacy of the state and the restitution of French political authority.[5] The Gaullist story of resistance thus prioritized Paris as the symbol of the General's 'patriotic legitimacy', which as Pieter Lagrou explains, 'assimilated the Nation and the Resistance into a symbolic discourse that was at the same time heroic, emblematic, abstract and elitist'.[6]

The context of the decennial commemoration was significant in terms of the broader social memory of the war. It lived on in the experience of most adults, traumatic and unresolved. Liberation commemorations had not yet taken on the ritualized status of carnival, as Alain Brossat argues, and the 1954 commemoration fell at the end of the period Henry Rousso dubbed 'unfinished mourning'.[7] Official work to historicize the Occupation continued under the aegis of the Comité d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale, who focused their work on 'the Resistance, the role of the Germans, and the deportations'.[8] The memory trials, as they would come to be known, were still in their infancy, and the French courts remained characterized by the caution of the legal purges. Vichy Police Chief René Bousquet's trial in 1949 had ended with a lenient sentence which confounded the press.[9] The 1949 trial of the Nazi ambassador to Paris, Otto Abetz, also provoked complaint, with the sentence of twenty years' hard labour failing to satisfy those, such as the newspaper *L'Humanité*, who had called for the death penalty.[10] This leniency became symbolic of the alternating rhythms of Rousso's 'Vichy syndrome', as France moved towards repressing the memory of the Occupation and ending the purges with a round of amnesty laws in 1951 and 1953.[11] As a symbol of shifting sands, the first national day dedicated to the memory of deportees took place on the last Sunday of April 1954.[12] By 1954, the first commemoration of the Normandy landings in which the state had played an active role, an eclectic landscape of

[5] C. de Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre*, vol. 2: *l'unité 1942–1944* (Paris, 1956), 289–322. This transfer of power was far from certain at the time. A. Kaspi, *La Libération de la France, juin 1944–janvier 1946* (Paris, 1995), 160.

[6] P. Lagrou, 'Victims of genocide and national memory: Belgium, France and the Netherlands 1945–1965', *P&P*, 154 (1997), 181–222 at 201. P. Buton, 'Occupation, liberation, purges: the changing landscape of French memory', in *The Uncertain Foundation: France at the Liberation, 1944–47*, ed. A. Knapp (Basingstoke, 2007), 234–49.

[7] A. Brossat, *Libération, fête folle. 6 juin 44–8 mai 1945: mythes et rites, ou le grand théâtre des passions populaires* (Paris, 1994); H. Rousso and E. Conan, *Vichy: An Ever Present Past* (Lebanon, NH, 1998), 6–10; H. Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944* (Cambridge, MA, 1994), 22–4.

[8] R. J. Golsan, *Vichy's Afterlife: History and Counter History in Postwar France* (Lincoln, NE, 2000), 10; 'Comité d'histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale', *Bulletin des bibliothèques de France*, 3 (1957), 224–5. For more on the process by which this process of historicization took place, and on the emerging historiography of resistance and liberation, A. Steinlight, 'The liberation of paper: destruction, salvaging, and the remaking of the republican state', *Fr Hist Studs*, 40 (2017), 291–318; L. Douzou, *La Résistance française: une histoire périlleuse* (Paris, 2005).

[9] Golsan, *Vichy's Afterlife*, 30–1.

[10] N. Atkin, 'France's little Nuremberg: the trial of Otto Abetz', in *The Liberation of France: Image and Event*, ed. H. R. Kedward and N. Wood (Oxford, 1995), 197–208 at 205.

[11] Rousso and Conan, *Vichy*, 6–10; R. Gildea, *Fighters in the Shadows: A New History of the French Resistance* (London, 2015), 448–9.

[12] M.-O. Baruch, 'Présents d'une commémoration: la Quatrième République face au dixième anniversaire de la Libération', in *Pourquoi résister? Résister pour quoi faire?*, ed. B. Garnier, J. Leleu, J. Quellien and A. Simonin (Caen, 2006), 171.

war memory had developed owing to the lack of a consolidated official narrative, and the state had ceded ground to the memorial work of veterans' associations and regional organizations.[13] The diverse political loyalties of resisters and their engagement in politics thereafter prevented any ready reconciliation of personal with collective memories (which remained dominated by the Gaullist and communist accounts), especially while live political issues like the EDC sustained and created political divisions.[14] In his opening radio broadcast for the year's celebrations President René Coty aimed for an apolitical tone that stressed national sacrifice and heroism over any reference to specific actors.[15] Both in word and deed, the grand absence remained General de Gaulle. His self-imposed political exile continued, and he avoided participation in state-led commemorations, seeking 'to deny any "resistance related" legitimacy to the Fourth Republic'.[16] With this lack of official coherence among political elites, it is perhaps no surprise that Gérard Namer highlights the coexistence of different memories of victory among the French people: 'the victory of De Gaulle, the victory of the communist Rol-Tanguy, the victory of Leclerc's tanks, the victory of the Allies'.[17]

School history textbooks framed a national narrative for children and illustrated an early shift from personal to collective memories of the war. Concentration camps and deportations were little covered, and acknowledgement of the war's racial violence would only come later in the 1960s.[18] Yet the Normandy landings were prominently depicted in primary school history textbooks of the Fourth Republic. Older students naturally received more detail, and two textbooks published in 1952 for eleven-year-old students focused on the process of the Liberation: first the rallying of the French, then the defeat of enemy forces on other fronts, and then Liberation when, 'on 6 June 1944, Americans, British, Canadians and French led by Generals Eisenhower and Montgomery landed on Norman beaches and breached the Atlantic wall'.[19] *Histoire de France*, first released in 1949 and then updated in 1957, was aimed at seven- to eight-year-old primary school students and offered the takeaway lessons that: '1. France, occupied by the Germans, organised the resistance. 2. She was liberated after the Allied landings in Normandy.'[20] Here, Gaullist narratives survived alongside an acknowledgement of international efforts, yet

[13] O. Wieviorka, *Divided Memory: French Recollections of World War II from the Liberation to the Present* (Stanford, CA, 2012), 81–2.

[14] Ibid., 82–3, 86–7. P. Buton, 'La CED, l'affaire Dreyfus de la Quatrième République?', *Vingtième siècle*, 84 (2004), 43–59 at 55–6.

[15] Baruch, 'Présents d'une commémoration', 165–6.

[16] S. Hazareesingh, *In the Shadow of the General* (Oxford, 2012), 74.

[17] G. Namer, *Batailles pour la mémoire: la commémoration en France de 1945 à nos jours* (Paris, 1983), 167.

[18] Buton, 'Occupation, liberation, purges', 240. Also B. Lécureur, *Enseigner le nazisme et la Shoah: une étude comparée des manuels scolaires en Europe* (Göttingen, 2012), 51.

[19] R. Ozouf and L. Leterrier, *Histoire de France cours moyen et cours supérieur* (Paris, 1952), 241–2, 244–5; E. Audrin, M. Dechappe and L. Dechappe, *Histoire: de l'antiquité à la France d'aujourd'hui* (Paris, 1952), 276–7.

[20] E. Personne, M. Ballot and G. Marc, *Histoire de France cours élémentaire 1ere et 2eme années* (Paris, 1957), 91.

the clearest signal of its Fourth Republic context lay in its instruction for young students to 'recount a local episode from the Liberation'.[21] For Normans, perhaps the most striking framing could be found in an illustrated textbook for very young children. *Images d'histoire* depicts American troops disembarking from transports during the Normandy landings, bearing the key lesson: 'A new world war started in 1939. France was occupied by the Germans. But in 1944, a powerful Allied army landed in Normandy and liberated our country.'[22] This international focus is closely followed by the local effects of that story, depicting Caen being rebuilt as a wider symbol of national reconstruction.[23]

Commemoration was influenced by the need for cultural and political rebuilding as well as material reconstruction in the years following the war.[24] The emergence of the D-Day beaches as a site of 'enhanced symbolic meaning' took place in concert with the memory culture of France's wartime allies.[25] The American State Department noted these challenges:

> Among Frenchmen, these anniversaries will inevitably tend to revive bitter memories of repeated German aggressions against France over the past 100 years, and specifically of the Nazi occupation of France in World War II. There will be an inevitable tendency among French spokesmen at these ceremonies to dwell on the unhappy past, and to say little or nothing about overcoming the difficulties of the present in order to ensure a happier future.[26]

Likewise, in Britain, *The Times* described the tensions of the 1954 commemoration:

> One school of opinion has struggled hard, and is still struggling, to wipe away all scars of military occupation and liberation, and is today bored and even repelled by D-Day memories. A second and possibly smaller school is at work in just the opposite way; it is resolved to keep the memories green.[27]

The war had exacted a heavy toll, especially in its final phases, when 19,890 French civilians had died during the Normandy invasion.[28] For many Norman French, therefore, D-Day was a bloody and destructive invasion that left a

[21] Ibid., 91.
[22] R. Ozouf and L. Leterrier, *Images d'histoire cours élémentaire 1ere année* (Paris, 1952), 59.
[23] Ibid., 60.
[24] On the way in which the Liberation was framed in post-war France, Kelly, *The Cultural and Intellectual Rebuilding of France*, 33–58; H. Footitt, *War and Liberation in France: Living with the liberators* (Basingstoke, 2004); J.-F. Muracciole, *La Libération de Paris* (Paris, 2013); Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*; S. Suleiman, *Crises of Memory and the Second World War* (Cambridge, MA, 2008).
[25] B. Gordon, *War Tourism: Second World War France from Defeat and Occupation to the Creation of Heritage* (Ithaca, NY, 2018), 146.
[26] T[he] N[ational] A[rchives, Kew] FO 371/112815 State Department Policy Guidance Paper (from British Embassy, Washington), 22 May 1954.
[27] 'Ten years after', *The Times*, 5 June 1954, 7.
[28] M. L. Roberts, *D-Day through French Eyes: Normandy 1944* (Chicago, 2014).

mark on its communities and its landscape.[29] Allied bombing 'peaked in the three months after D-Day', with significant civilian casualties and widespread devastation.[30] Programmes of regional reconstruction had been badly hit by 'the financial demands […] on the national exchequer' of France's attempts to retain its empire.[31] This meant, as Olivier Wieviorka has outlined, that national commemorations tended to look to the symbolic coastline rather than the battered Norman interior.[32] A significant push to memorialize the landings came from Allied veterans. For Americans, in the early 1950s, D-Day increasingly served as a symbol of America's 'good war', while the construction of the American Cemetery at St Laurent in 1946 created a significant memorial site.[33] It also drew French crowds looking to commemorate Allied sacrifice and for some Norman communities demonstrated a model to 'achieve […] regional reconstruction'.[34] Recognizing that 'American tourists made their first contact with France' through Norman commemoration, deputy for Calvados, Raymond Triboulet, was involved in the creation of a 'three day touring itinerary called the "Liberation Circuit"' designed to attract valuable war tourism focusing on the beaches.[35]

Triboulet, the organizer of the 1954 D-Day commemoration, was an ardent Gaullist who had been active in Ceux de la Résistance and went on to help mediate tense wartime discussions among de Gaulle, Churchill and Roosevelt. He organized a reception for de Gaulle in Bayeux on 14 June 1944 and was subsequently made the first Gaullist *sous-préfet* of liberated France.[36] A year later, Triboulet organized an anniversary visit by de Gaulle and founded the

[29] K. Lemay, 'Gratitude, trauma, and repression', in *D-Day in History and Memory: The Normandy Landings in International Remembrance and Commemoration*, ed. M. Dolski, S. Edwards and J. Buckley (Denton, TX, 2014), 159–88 at 159–60.

[30] L. Dodd and A. Knapp, 'How many Frenchmen did you kill? British bombing policy towards France (1940–1945)', *Fr Hist*, 22 (2008), 469–92 at 484–6. Also M. Boivin and B. Garnier, *Les Cictimes civiles de la Manche* (Caen, 1994); P. Buton, *La Joie douloureuse: la libération de la France* (Brussels, 2004), 43, 209, 245; S. Kitson, 'Criminals or liberators? French public opinion and the Allied bombing of France, 1940–1945', in *Bombing, States and Peoples in Western Europe, 1940–1945*, ed. C. Baldoli, A. Knapp and R. Overy (London, 2011), 279–97 at 290; Lemay, 'Gratitude, trauma, and repression', 167–75.

[31] H. Clout, 'Beyond the landings: the reconstruction of lower Normandy after June 1944', *J Hist Geo*, 32 (2006), 127–48 at 143; H. Clout, 'Reconstruction in the Manche Département after the Normandy landings', *Mod & Con Fr*, 16 (2008), 3–21 at 16–17.

[32] O. Wieviorka, *Normandy: The landings to the liberation of Paris* (Cambridge MA, 2008), 9.

[33] M. Dolski, *D-Day Remembered: The Normandy Landings in American Collective Memory* (Knoxville, TN, 2016), 39; G. White, 'Is Paris burning? Touring America's "good war" in France', *Hist & Mem*, 27 (2015), 74–103.

[34] Dolski, *D-Day Remembered*, 37–58; S. Edwards, *Allies in Memory: World War II and the Politics of Transatlantic Commemoration in Europe, c. 1941–2001* (Cambridge, 2015), 83, 96–7, 100.

[35] JO Débats, Séance du 5 July 1949, 4210; B. Gordon, 'French Cultural Tourism and the Vichy Problem', in *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and North America*, ed. S. Baranowski and E. Furlough (Ann Arbor, 2001), 239–72 at 250; White, 'Is Paris burning?', 84.

[36] R. Triboulet, *Un Gaulliste de la IV^e^* (Paris, 1985), 13. For a description of the visit to Bayeux: J. Jackson, *A Certain Idea of France: The Life of Charles de Gaulle* (London, 2019), 316–20.

committee to organize the annual D-Day commemoration.[37] The committee, created on 22 May 1945, organized its first commemoration that year. '600 Allied servicemen, diplomats and thousands of French citizens took part', congregating around a wooden cross erected at the British Mulberry harbour, the floating constructions which had facilitated the D-Day landings.[38] As noted by Zoë Rose Buonaiuto, this early commemoration meant 'operating around a disaster zone', with extra preliminary mine-sweeping to ensure safety.[39] On the beaches of Normandy, Triboulet led a Gaullist restaging of the wartime narrative (minus de Gaulle himself), emphasizing French bravery under fire while also stressing the importance of Allied cooperation, much like the schoolbooks of the age. In this, Triboulet—as a proud Gaullist and Norman—became a 'broker of Franco-Allied diplomacy' and showed how different regional, national and international narratives of war could interact.[40] In the Assembly, Triboulet presented a law which designated the Mulberry harbours as sites of national significance and marked 6 June firmly in the national calendar.[41] The British Mulberry (which had been colloquially dubbed 'Port Winston') remained a protected site, though the American Mulberry had been wrecked by a storm almost immediately after D-Day.[42] The Americans granted salvage rights to the French state, generating 180 million francs between 1949 and 1955 for Triboulet's D-Day Commemoration Committee.[43] Monuments and markers were established on the landing sites, as well as the D-Day museum at Arromanches, positioned to represent the point at which 'British troops landing at Gold Beach met American troops landing at Omaha Beach'. The museum's grand opening took place on the 10th anniversary of the landings in 1954, representing an enduring act of state-sanctioned memory-making.[44]

Some 25,000 people attended the 1954 ceremonies, and unlike invited Allied servicemen, Triboulet recalled a successful commemoration which demonstrated national cohesion and a commitment to France's allies.[45] Despite a distinct Norman narrative and 'different postwar memory', owing to the wartime devastation of the region, major commemorations offered an opportunity to reconcile regional, national or international memories. The *Manchester Guardian* reported an interview before the ceremonies with

[37] De Gaulle would also return in 1952, ready to trumpet the importance of national defence in reference to the Liberation and denounce anyone who would delegate defence through schemes like the EDC plan. A[rchives]] N[ationales] AG/5(1)/1425 'Discours prononcé à Bayeux à l'occasion de la cérémonie commémorant sa visite, le 14 juin 1944, à la première ville française libérée, le 14 juin 1954'.

[38] M. Worthington, N. Thiesen and G. Bird, 'The D-Day commemoration committee and its contribution to commemoration', in *Managing and Interpreting D-Day's Sites of Memory: Guardians of Remembrance*, ed. G. Bird, S. Claxton and K. Reeves (London, 2016), 19–32.

[39] Z. R. Buonaiuto, 'Corpses, cemeteries, commemoration: Normandy from the liberation to the 1960s' (PhD thesis, Princeton University, 2018), 83.

[40] Ibid., 85.

[41] JO Débats, Séance du 11 Feb. 1947, 286.

[42] TNA PREM 11/671 Letter from M. Triboulet to Winston Churchill, 26 Mar. 1954.

[43] Lemay, 'Gratitude, trauma, and repression', 162.

[44] Edwards, *Allies in Memory*, 103.

[45] Buonaiuto, 'Corpses, cemeteries, commemoration', 101–3.

the village carpenter of Asnelles-sur-Mer who vividly recalled 'the stupidity of all Germans, the superior cunning of all Norman peasants (this last you readily believe), and the "gentillesse" of all Allied soldiers'.[46] On the beaches of Normandy, the military narrative of Allied victory met the primacy of the Gaullist national narrative, tinged by the heavy losses experienced by Norman civilians. In this moment when unfinished mourning met the repression of memory, and with the Fourth Republic having been slow in 'laying the foundation of a national memory', international commemorations could illuminate unsettled narratives.[47]

II

Commemorating the 10th anniversary of D-Day recalled the importance of joint Allied endeavours in the defeat of Nazism, though it also spoke clearly to the contemporary contexts of Cold War, European integration and decolonization. In this blend of commemoration and contemporary drama, France repeatedly served as both player and stage for the tensions of memory. General Montgomery, both a veteran of the conflict and then head of the Western Union Defence forces, offered a hawkish tribute to Franco-British solidarity at the 1949 commemoration, stating 'I would regard it as one of the greatest honours to die in battle fighting in France.'[48] In 1951, Eisenhower presided over the Normandy commemoration, and the *Washington Post* played up the Cold War significance of his speech, declaring 'Ike returns to D-Day beaches, tells Reds: remember Hitler'.[49] In 1952, there were similar concerns during the Korean War, when US General Matthew Ridgway offered comments on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Soviet Union from the Normandy beaches. Pointing to his own experience in the landings, he warned the Russians: 'we will gather the strength we have pledged to one another and set it before our people and our lands as a protective shield until reason backed by strength halts further aggression'.[50] This was a symbolic place to make such pronouncements, and it raised hackles in the British parliament, where Labour MP Desmond Donnelly sought to silence de Gaulle 'wherever Great Britain has collective responsibility'. Others worried the context made it 'very difficult to draw a distinction between political and military pronouncements'.[51] In Paris, Ridgeway, who had recently taken command of NATO forces, was given 'the welcome he deserved' when he faced protests from communists accusing him of using chemical weapons in Korea.[52] Communist deputy from Pas-de-Calais

[46] G. Mansell, 'D-Day ten years after: on the Normandy beaches', *Manchester Guardian*, 5 June 1954, 4.
[47] Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 87, 94–5.
[48] '"An honour to die in France": Lord Montgomery's pledge', *Manchester Guardian*, 6 June 1949, 5.
[49] Edwards, *Allies in Memory*, 112; Buonaiuto, 'Corpses, cemeteries, commemoration', 175–6.
[50] K. Delaney, 'The many meanings of D-Day', *Euro J Am Studs*, 7 (2012), <http://ejas.revues.org/9544>.
[51] House of Commons Debates, 17 June 1952, vol. 502, cc986–7.
[52] 'Communists busy over Ridgway: Paris demonstrations', *Manchester Guardian*, 24 May 1952, 7; 'La manifestation communiste prévue pour demain est interdite par le préfet de police', *Le Monde*, 28 May 1952; '"Le peuple de Paris a répondu comme il convenait" déclare M. de Saivre',

Jeannette Prin declared his 'hands red with the blood of Korean children'.[53] Yet, the socialist deputy from La Manche, René Schmitt made direct reference to D-Day while cautioning the Assembly in its condemnation of former allies:

> You have stated, madame Prin, that the people of France have welcomed General Ridgway as he deserved. If you had attended the celebration of the Liberation six days ago at Sainte-Mère Eglise and at Sainte-Marie-du-Mont, you would have seen the true people of France, who have held on to their memories of him and their gratitude. (Applause from the left, the centre, the right and extreme right.)[54]

The platform of the Normandy beaches could amplify these memories and frame them as messages addressed to a contemporary context. International diplomacy in France thus had to be pursued sensitively, and the American Embassy, for example, set out priorities to be adopted by officials engaging in commemorations: to encourage a strong France, to promote French participation in European Integration (including the EDC and Coal and Steel Community) and to try and foster rapprochement between Germany and France.[55]

It was significant, therefore, that as well as a year of multiple anniversaries, 1954 was also a year of crisis. The EDC crisis ran parallel to the 10th D-Day anniversary, as did the denouement of the Indochinese War. The year began with a four-power meeting on Germany and Austria held in Berlin, and the future of German rearmament dominated the international diplomatic scene.[56] French reluctance to ratify the EDC stemmed in part from their commitment of forces in Indochina and from understandable hesitancy around German rearmament. The EDC had, for French officials, represented an opportunity to keep Germany tied to the West but deny it a presence within NATO (and thus an independent army), though this opportunity divided the political class. Raymond Aron called it 'probably the greatest political and ideological quarrel that France had known since the Dreyfus Affair'.[57] For the Americans, the EDC represented a means 'to tame difficult European behaviour', ensuring a Franco-German partnership at the heart of Europe.[58] British officials likewise took seriously American threats of an 'agonizing reappraisal' in their commitment to European defence should the French fail to ratify the EDC, 'which alarmed the British more than it energized the French'.[59] The commitment of

Le Monde, 29 May 1952. Also R. Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley, CA, 1993), 48–50.

[53] JO Débats, Séance du 12 June 1952, 2861.

[54] JO Débats, Séance du 12 June 1952, 2862.

[55] TNA FO 371/112815 State Department Policy Guidance Paper (from British Embassy, Washington), 22 May 1954.

[56] A. Siegfried (ed.), *L'Année politique 1954* (Paris, 1955), 299–310.

[57] R. Aron, 'Esquisse historique d'une grande querelle idéologique', in *La Querelle de la CED: essais d'analyse sociologique*, ed. R. Aron and D. Lerner (Paris, 1956), 3–19 at 9.

[58] R. Dietl, 'Une deception amoureuse: Great Britain, the continent and European nuclear cooperation, 1953–57', *Cold War Hist*, 3 (2002), 29–66 at 32.

[59] K. Ruane, 'Anthony Eden, British diplomacy and the origins of the Geneva conference of 1954', *Hist J*, 37 (1994), 153–72 at 167.

French troops to colonial conflicts meant that a rearmed Germany would predominate in Europe and debates around the EDC were thus refracted through the lens of the Indochinese War. As Martin Thomas argues, the legacy of the 'rapidity of defeat [in the Second World War], the shame of occupation and collaboration, and the reliance on US economic support induced an unquestioning faith in imperial possessions as one of the few remaining markers of French global power'.[60] The Navarre Plan of 1953 was a French attempt to turn the tide in Indochina and secure continuing American support (both financial and potentially military) by pursuing a more aggressive martial strategy while committing themselves to imperial reform.[61] General Navarre's strategy eventually left some 12,000 troops isolated in the French fortifications at Dien Bien Phu. Facing mounting costs, a lack of public support and a poor military outlook, the Laniel government agreed to discuss the Indochinese question at an East–West summit in Geneva in April 1954.[62] British diplomatic manoeuvring accelerated, with Anthony Eden working to find a path between 'Communist obstinacy, French prevarication and American hostility'. At the end of that path, he hoped, lay a peaceful settlement which might avoid the internationalization of the conflict and speed agreement of the EDC.[63] President Eisenhower wrote powerfully to Churchill on 4 April 1954, placing the negotiations in the context of the last war, warning of a need for concerted action to avoid the 'years of "stark tragedy and desperate peril" that followed the failure of democracies to unite in time to thwart Hitler, Hirohito and Mussolini'.[64] The USA loomed large in French political discourse on Indochina, stoking unease at the accommodation of American interests and policy priorities in exchange for military and economic support. Right-wing deputy and former resister Georges Loustaunau-Lacau accused Laniel's government of seeing things 'through Pentagon eyes which distort the proportion of events … We are not in America. We are not American. We are only France and the French Union.'[65]

Back in Normandy, at an April 1954 ceremony to award the Légion d'honneur to Alexandre Renaud, mayor of Sainte-Mère-Église, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Maurice Schumann made the connection between the Second World War and Indochina explicit, blending different wartime narratives. Schumann, a founding member of the Mouvement Républicain Populaire, had walked alongside de Gaulle when Triboulet had arranged his visit to Bayeux on 14 June 1944. For former resisters like him, party politics tested competing loyalties to Gaullism and to European cooperation.[66] Recalling his own role as a

[60] M. Thomas, 'French imperial reconstruction and the development of the Indochina War: 1945–1950', in *The First Vietnam War: Colonial Conflict and Cold War Crisis*, ed. M. Atwood Lawrence and F. Logevall (Cambridge, MA, 2007), 130–51 at 132.

[61] G. Herring and R. Immerman, 'Eisenhower, Dulles, and Dienbienphu: "the day we didn't go to war" revisited', *J Am Hist*, 71 (1984), 343–63 at 344–5.

[62] Ibid., 345.

[63] Ruane, 'Anthony Eden, British diplomacy', 154.

[64] K. Ruane and M. Jones, *Anthony Eden, Anglo-American Relations and the 1954 Indochina Crisis* (London, 2019), 107.

[65] JO Débats, Séance du 13 May 1954, 2378.

[66] Jackson, *A Certain Idea of France*, 389, 1103.

combatant in the Liberation, Schumann said: 'The soldiers of Dien-Bien-Phu deserve to have France fix her eyes on them just as, ten years ago, her eyes were fixed upon us.'[67] The press, however, preferred the language of the Great War, likening it instead to Verdun.[68] While the full suite of anniversaries were certainly in play, the wrangling over British and American support of the French at Geneva was predicated around settlements and ceasefires with an eye on Soviet and Chinese forces, not on memories of 1904, 1914 or 1944. Anticipated American air support was not forthcoming, and on 7 May the French garrison at Dien Bien-Phu was overrun by General Giáp's Viet-Minh troops.[69] Two days before the D-Day commemoration began, General Navarre was relieved of duty and the war in Indochina was as good as over. Memories of the Second World War abounded in reaction, especially in a National Assembly which was still well stocked with former resisters. Socialist deputy Alain Savary criticized the clashing dates: 'Mesdames, messieurs, on the 8th May, France, confused, on the same day had to celebrate the anniversary of the victory of the Liberation and mourn the loss of Dien Bien-Phu.'[70] Laniel's government lurched towards collapse and dissenting voices in the Assembly grew. Colonial crisis and war memory again met head on when state celebrations of VE day in Paris took place amid heightened security and crowds of protestors clashed with police along the Champs-Élysées.[71] De Gaulle chose this moment to visit the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and despite cries of 'De Gaulle to power', opted to bide his time.[72]

This was a fractious climate for the negotiation of the EDC, a key policy priority for both Britain and the United States despite waning French enthusiasm. Even as battle raged, Laniel had surmised that defeat at Dien Bien Phu would have 'a profound effect on EDC, probably destroying [the] possibility of [a] favourable French action [in support of the EDC]'.[73] In Paris, Britain's new ambassador Gladwyn Jebb lamented that the EDC could have been sold to the French Assembly if the Americans had intervened in Indochina.[74] The lack of support for the EDC among the army was made clear when General Juin, marshal of France, denounced it unless 'French predominance was guaranteed by both words and deeds'.[75] Jebb channelled the French public's response: 'Was

[67] 'M. Maurice Schumann associe les combattants de Dien-Bien-Phu au souvenir du débarquement de 1944', *Le Monde*, 21 Apr. 1954.

[68] M. Bodin, *La France et ses soldats, Indochine, 1945–1954* (Paris, 1996), 158.

[69] M. A. Lawrence and F. Logevall, 'Introduction', in *The First Vietnam War*, ed. Lawrence and Logevall, 1–15 at 13.

[70] JO Débats, Séance du 13 May 1954, 2374.

[71] R. Wakeman, *The Heroic City: Paris—1945–1958* (Chicago, 2009), 128–9.

[72] F. Turpin, 'Printemps 1954: échec de Gaulle: un retour au pouvoir manqué', *Revue historique*, 303 (2001), 913–27 at 918–19; Jackson, *A Certain Idea of France*, 431–2.

[73] Quoted in S. A. Goldberg, 'Reversal of policy: the departments of state and defense, and the arming of the Federal Republic of Germany, 1946–1955' (PhD thesis, University of Maryland, 2012), 273; I. Wall, *The United States and the Making of Postwar France* (Cambridge, 2009), 263–75.

[74] TNA FCO 73/258 Gladwyn Jebb memo, 14 May 1954.

[75] V. Gavin, 'Power through Europe? The case of the European Defence Community in France (1950–1954)', *Fr Hist*, 23 (2009), 69–87 at 82–3.

it for this, they would argue, that they fought World War II?'[76] He surmised that French 'opposition to the EDC was likely to remain implacable despite any political advantages which could be presented, or diplomatic pressures applied by the US and UK'. The project, he felt, would be killed off between the swords of the Gaullists and the communists, the former to protect French sovereignty and the latter to prevent German rearmament.[77] Amid political crisis, with debates infused by the memory culture of the war and once again under the shadow of de Gaulle, commemorations resonated nationally and internationally. Shortly after attending the D-Day commemoration, Jebb wrote to London that he felt France was still 'suffering from a severe neurosis fundamentally caused by their recent 4 year long occupation by the Germans'.[78] In the heightened Cold War context of the 1954 commemoration, the memory of wartime alliances remained a volatile topic in the French political mainstream. Among allies, it invoked success in a 'good war' (for Britain and America at least), yet also emphasized a perceived diminution of French and British status against the post-war American colossus.[79] *Le Monde*'s director Hubert Beuve-Méry took the anniversaries as a moment to ponder France's political situation. 'What remains', he asked in contemplative tone, 'of that dawn of 6 June 1944 where everything really seemed possible?' Lamenting post-war divisions at home and abroad, he continued:

> The disagreements between comrades-in-arms, both internally and internationally, left only bitterness for those who believed that these dangerous games were over. We would like to believe that yesterday's foe, despite the appearance that he has learned from history, is now the champion of a 'little Europe', itself dependent on a distant continent and this civilization of money from which we no longer want to suffer the psychological effects.[80]

The suite of remembrance which marked ten years since the Liberation had the potential to inform diplomatic opinion, and to influence both how the French nation reconciled its war memories and how Anglo-American diplomatic opinion weighed France's reconstruction.

III

It was therefore significant that the 1954 D-Day commemoration ceremony garnered such criticism from British and American delegates, with ensuing diplomatic difficulties. Triboulet had written in his invitation to President Coty, who was making his first visit to his native region since assuming the presidency: 'I can say with all truth that no anniversary event will have the same

[76] TNA FCO 73/258 Gladwyn Jebb memo, 14 May 1954.
[77] TNA FCO 73/258, 28 Apr. 1954.
[78] TNA FCO 73/258, 16 June 1954, 7.
[79] White, 'Is Paris burning?', 74.
[80] Quoted in Baruch, 'Présents d'une commémoration', 179.

importance with regard to the Allies … I am convinced nothing can better mark the amity of France for its allies than the commemoration of D-Day under your presence.'[81] By the time of the ceremony, however, Triboulet was unpopular with both the British and the Americans. The Americans described him as 'extremely ambitious and voluble, an ardent de Gaullist, pro-British and pro-Canadian'.[82] For Triboulet, the most important guest would be Churchill himself, and he petitioned the then prime minister in 1947, 1950, 1951, 1952 and 1953, before receiving a firm refusal for the 1954 ceremony.[83] Oliver Harvey, the British ambassador to France, described him as 'a rather tiresome RPF [Rassemblement du Peuple Français] deputy, often a thorn in the side of the Government' and noted 'Triboulet is a rather tiresome and pertinacious person who, whilst doing all he can to maintain the memories of the landings, is also largely thinking of the interests of Triboulet himself.'[84] Gladwyn Jebb, Harvey's successor as ambassador, saw a man who was 'charming but singularly inefficient'.[85]

The first day of the 1954 commemoration on 5 June was designed to honour British and Canadian participation in the landings, and the second to honour the Americans. Diplomatic protocol seemed to be largely ignored, as Triboulet relegated high-ranking American officers behind local French officials, and a two-star general sat behind a clutch of local people in the *Te Deum* at Bayeux Cathedral. Later, the American ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge was bundled into a Chevrolet as he cast envious eyes at the limousines laid on for other dignitaries.[86] Those limousines clogged up the roads, and Cabot Lodge arrived at the museum too late to be admitted. Instead, he waited in his car until the speeches were finished and President Coty had completed his tour. Gladwyn Jebb spoke at the museum, offering a personal message from Churchill which noted his hope that it would come to 'symbolize the lasting friendship which unites, in peacetime as in times of war, the French and British peoples'.[87] Churchillian sentiment aside, Jebb did point out he was poorly heard 'owing to the impetuous action of M. Triboulet […] in shutting the door of the museum after about forty people had rushed in'. The British delegation remained trapped outside, though inside was not much better 'since M. Triboulet had forgotten the microphone'.[88]

[81] Quoted in Buonaiuto, 'Corpses, cemeteries, commemoration', 101–2.

[82] [The US] N[ational] A[archives and] R[ecords] A[dministration] Cherbourg Despatch 25, 6 June 1954, 851.424/6-1154 Box 4994, Central Decimal Files 1950–54, Record Group 59.

[83] TNA PREM 11/671 M. Triboulet to Winston Churchill, 26 Mar. 1954, 27 March 1952 and 5 July 1951. M. Joly to Winston Churchill, 10 May 1948; Memo from Evelyn Shuckburgh (principal private secretary [PPS] to Anthony Eden) to David Pitblado (PPS to the prime minister), 7 Apr. 1954. Although Churchill had suffered a stroke in June 1953, his notes to his PPS show that he did consider travelling with his wife by frigate from Portsmouth to the Arromanches ceremony in 1954, before finally refusing because of time constraints.

[84] TNA PREM 11/671 Oliver Harvey to Jock Colville, 10 April 1952; 3 Apr. 1952.

[85] TNA FO 371/112819 Gladwyn Jebb report on Arromanches ceremonies, 11 June 1954.

[86] NARA Cherbourg Despatch 25, 6 June 1954.

[87] Quoted in S. Edwards, 'The beginning of the end: D-Day in British memory', in *D-Day in History and Memory*, ed. Dolski, Edwards and Buckley, 85–130 at 94.

[88] TNA FO 371/112819 Gladwyn Jebb report on Arromanches ceremonies, 11 June 1954.

At La Brèche de Colleville-Montgomery, President Coty met veterans of the Kiefer Commando units (the Frenchmen who had fought during Operation Overlord) before the cortege carried on to the beach at Hermanville. There, speeches were delivered in the pouring rain, and there was consternation that those not of the president's cortege had no protection from the weather.[89] British officials had planned to have two Royal Navy frigates steam slowly past the beaches, and twenty-four Meteor aircraft leave RAF Tangmere to fly over Arromanches.[90] Because of the misty weather, however, it was 'difficult for those on shore to distinguish the naval craft anchored some distance offshore' and the fly-past was cancelled.[91] On the plus side, Gladwyn Jebb was delighted with President Coty's address: 'Rarely can such a tribute to Great Britain have been uttered by a French statesman.'[92] Indeed, Coty made generous reference to wartime Allied support in his speech, offering a 'national homage to British tenacity' that acknowledged the contribution of Commonwealth troops while providing recognition of 'the great republic of the United States'.[93] Prime Minister Joseph Laniel—another Norman—gave a speech which was decidedly less popular. Jebb described it as indifferent, but noted that a 'reference to France having had to fight "entirely alone" in 1940 was not altogether appreciated by some members of the audience'.[94] The American delegation, too, found fault in Laniel: 'In the official speeches the share of the French resistance movement and French Army was given exaggerated importance—often overlooking the actual results obtained by the troops of an American general who was present.'[95] Laniel's speech built upon a heritage of Gaullist negation of the Allied contribution, as inaugurated by de Gaulle from the Hôtel de Ville in newly liberated Paris on 25 August 1944.[96] To echo this in the presence of some of the Allied generals who had led the advance into Normandy, however, only accentuated the discordance between different national narratives. The American consul offered to host the American delegation at his own residence the next night 'to offset bad impressions received'. Cabot Lodge, it was felt, 'was not receiving the consideration and respect that should be due him as the President's special representative'. Beyond that, it was reported that the Army Chief of Staff General 'Lightning Joe' Collins was overheard by the consul to have 'spoke[n] very sharply to Triboulet concerning French hospitality towards the American military officials'.[97]

Triboulet's tone duly changed on the second day and Cabot Lodge was 'given consideration next to [the] French President'.[98] American General Leonard

[89] NARA Cherbourg Despatch 25, 6 June 1954.
[90] TNA FO 371/112819 'Draft press release on tenth anniversary of D-Day', 31 May 1954.
[91] TNA FO 371/112819 Gladwyn Jebb report on Arromanches ceremonies, 11 June 1954.
[92] TNA FO 371/112819, 11 June 1954.
[93] TNA FO 371/112819 'Discours prononcé par M. le Président de la République le 5 juin 1954 à Hermanville'.
[94] TNA FO 371/112819 Gladwyn Jebb report on Arromanches ceremonies, 11 June 1954.
[95] NARA Cherbourg Despatch 25, 6 June 1954.
[96] Wieviorka, *Divided Memory*, 11–12.
[97] NARA Cherbourg Despatch 25, 6 June 1954.
[98] NARA Cherbourg Despatch 25, 6 June 1954.

Gerow carried with him a bronze 'flaming Torch of Freedom as a symbol of friendship between France and the United States'.[99] This had been presented to him personally by President Coty to be lit at the ceremony and taken to Cherbourg later in the day.[100] The weather had improved, and this meant that troops of all represented nations paraded and the planned fly-past proceeded.[101] Eisenhower's speech, read by Cabot Lodge, focused not on American contributions, but instead prioritized the role of French and British generals.[102] Yet, despite the solemnity of the ceremony in the US Military Cemetery of Saint Laurent, more organizational trouble was apparent. At the official banquet, things were delayed by having only one small cloakroom, and 'towards end of meat course it [was] announced that timetable will not permit that meal be finished and that guests should proceed to Utah beach as quickly as possible'.[103] Traffic beset the cortege again, and transport, on the whole, was deemed 'woefully inadequate'.[104] The 'muddles' and missteps of the Norman organizers left a bad taste in the mouths of France's allies.[105] American reports spoke of 'disparaging and critical remarks made by high-ranking officers of the United States Army and Navy'.[106]

The presence of senior British and American armed forces personnel inevitably led to scrutiny of French troops. This read, at least in part, as a broader assessment of French reliability, especially after Dien Bien Phu and set against EDC reticence. These played into 'the relatively fresh memory of the surrender', amplifying anglophone stereotypes around French military weakness.[107] British military attaché Brigadier Geoffrey Macnab, for example, deemed French marching in the Bastille Day parades of 1954 as 'more than ordinarily bad', judging the French to have 'enormous dependence … on American equipment and armament'.[108] This was not an idle criticism, and in the fraught inter-Allied climate following the Geneva conference, commemorations had telling contexts and consequences, and perceptions of disfunction could heighten diplomatic

[99] 'Report to the National Security Council, 18/08/1954', in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954*, vol. 2, part 2, ed. D. J. Lawler and E. R. Mahan (Washington, 2010), doc. 366. For more on the political wrangling that surrounded American sponsorship of the EDC, K. Ruane, *The Rise and Fall of the European Defence Community: Anglo-American Relations and the Crises of European Defence, 1950–55* (New York, 2000).

[100] 'M, Cabot Lodge représentera les États-Unis', *Le Monde*, 5 June 1954. 'Clipping from a Petersburg paper: Ike gives torch for Normandy beach ceremony', n.d. *c.*1954, Gerow Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archive; H. Cabot Lodge, *As it Was: An Inside View of Politics and Power in the '50s and '60s* (New York, 1976), 193.

[101] TNA FO 371/112819 Gladwyn Jebb report on Arromanches ceremonies, 11 June 1954.

[102] Dwight D. Eisenhower, 'Statement by the president on the 10th anniversary of the landing in Normandy', *The American Presidency Project*, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/232111>.

[103] NARA RG59/302021 Cherbourg Despatch #25, 6 Nov. 1954, 5.

[104] TNA FO 371/112819 Gladwyn Jebb report on Arromanches ceremonies, 11 June 1954.

[105] TNA FO 371/112819 R. W. Selby (Foreign Office) to R. C. Kent (Air Ministry), 2 July 1954.

[106] NARA Cherbourg Despatch 25, 6 June 1954.

[107] P. Jackson, 'Post-war politics and the historiography of French strategy and diplomacy before the Second World War', *Hist Compass*, 4 (2006), 870–905 at 875–7. Also R. Carswell, *The Fall of France in the Second World War: History and Memory* (Basingstoke, 2019).

[108] TNA FO 371/109455 Brigadier G. MacNab, 'Annual military parade held on 14 July 1954', n.d.

tensions and concerns. Foreign Office notes accompanying MacNab's report record Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick (who had been political advisor to Eisenhower during the war, and high commissioner in Germany) describing MacNab's negative assessment as 'not surprising to me'.[109] Having American generals remonstrating with Triboulet at the Normandy ceremony also rankled, and these same generals met the US president in the weeks after the D-Day ceremony—General Gerow, for example, dined with Eisenhower and Churchill on 24 June 1954, speaking about Cold War threats and the importance of Anglo-American relations, with no recorded attention afforded to the French.[110] Reflecting an active effort to keep up their own appearances and pressing anxiety about being perceived the lesser partner in the special relationship, 'The Foreign Office point out, that it is most desirable that, on an occasion with which the Army is so closely and importantly linked, the British contribution should not fall short of that of the Americans.'[111] The performance of prestige in moments of commemoration could serve as allegories for the broader political climate, reflecting concerns within the machinery of state about one's own national trajectory. Duncan Sandys at the Service Ministry, who himself had dined with Churchill and his daughter Diana as recently as a month before, expressed 'the feeling that the Americans are stealing all the thunder. As we on the whole had a major part in the actual landings for once our contribution might be kept in its proper proportion.'[112] British naval and air attachés in Paris also 'stressed the importance of UK representation, both in respect of men and equipment, being as good as that of the Americans'.[113] Amid a turbulent political climate, appearing diminished since wartime was not a tolerable option (for either Britain or France).

With the fraught diplomatic situation, the missteps of the Arromanches commemoration suddenly gained greater significance, and disfunction was read as continued unreliability at best, or disrespect at worst. In Britain, consolation letters had to be sent to senior military officers in the hope that they wouldn't refuse future invitations. The Air Ministry noted the commemoration's organization 'was far from satisfactory, and in consequence, we have been exposed to considerable embarrassment'. Indeed, as feared, they stated that 'if a similar occasion arises in the future, unless we can be assured that the administration is reasonably efficient, we will find some difficulty in arranging for representation'.[114] In the wake of the D-Day debacle, R. W. Selby in the Foreign Office felt compelled to reiterate that Britain would certainly not play a part in ceremonies around the Liberation of Paris and hoped that future annual commemorations would 'lose some of their momentum. They began to die out and were officially discouraged about 12 years

[109] TNA FO 371/109455 Minutes on military attaché's report, 17 Aug. 1954.

[110] General Leonard Gerow, 'Notes from dinner on 24 June 1954', Gerow Papers, Virginia Military Institute Archive.

[111] TNA FO 371/112815 J. M. Parkin to W. G. Angle (Treasury), 1 May 1954.

[112] TNA FO 371/112819 Draft memo from Nutting, 10 May 1945; J. Young, 'Churchill's bid for peace with Moscow, 1954', *Hist*, 73 (1988), 425–48.

[113] TNA FO 371/112815 Minutes of meeting to discuss tenth anniversary of D-Day celebrations, 14 May 1954.

[114] TNA FO 371/112819 R. C. Kent (Air Ministry) to I. F. S. Vincent (Foreign Office), 19 June 1954.

after World War I and something similar will presumably happen after World War II.'[115] Despite the British focus on Normandy, the Americans cannily surmised that 'the major ceremonies will probably focus on the liberation of Paris'.[116] This was an interesting recognition of the clashing narratives described by Hilary Footitt, in which Anglo-American narratives of the Liberation typically focused on Normandy and accorded the French a passive role, whereas for the French the Liberation remained 'a fundamentally French-centred series of events'.[117]

The defeat in Indochina and the fall of Laniel's government in June raised the political temperature around the run of commemorations. Efforts by the incoming Prime Minister Pierre Mendès-France to modify the EDC treaty led to frantic politicking, as Britain and the USA sought to promote their preferred solution of French adhesion to European collective defence.[118] Tellingly, after taking office on 18 June and contacting de Gaulle in his first official message, Mendès-France offered a direct echo of the First World War and President Clemenceau in his opening address; yet, instead of war, he announced 'I wage peace.'[119] Mendès-France was as committed to finding peace in Indochina as he had been set against the EDC, and only months later Jebb would report rumours of secret deals agreed by the French prime minister to scupper the EDC in return for an 'acceptable settlement on Indochina'.[120] Against this political backdrop and following in the wake of the bungled D-Day commemoration, the British Embassy in Paris wrote to the Foreign Office. Jebb pleaded for some involvement in the Paris Liberation celebrations in August to help curry favour in advance of the EDC vote in the Assembly and show Britain both a reliable ally and credible interlocutor in the post-war world. The embassy noted 'contemporary history in France has it that Paris was liberated solely by French troops and the Americans are being careful not to spoil this myth'.[121] The reaction of the War Office was 'immediate and adverse', and the French desire to commemorate was described as 'really rather tiresome'. Requests that Britain should now play a part in the Paris ceremonies were, memos stated, displaying 'optimism on a rather brazen scale', given that many of the personnel likely to be in attendance had been 'nettled' by the shambles in Normandy.[122] Against this background of resentment, Gladwyn Jebb wrote a 'confidential

[115] TNA FO 371/112819 R. W. Selby (Foreign Office) memo, 29 June 1954.

[116] TNA FO 371/112815 State Department Policy Guidance Paper (from British Embassy, Washington), 22 May 1954.

[117] Footitt, *War and Liberation in France*, 2.

[118] R. Pastor-Castro, 'The Quai d'Orsay and the European Defence Community crisis of 1954', *Hist*, 91 (2006), 386–400.

[119] Baruch, 'Présents d'une commémoration', 167.

[120] Ruane and Jones, *Anthony Eden, Anglo-American Relations*, 227.

[121] TNA FO 371/112819 British Embassy, Paris to Foreign Office, 2 July 1954.

[122] TNA FO 371/112819 R. W. Selby (Foreign Office) memo, 9 July 1954; Foreign Office to British Embassy, Paris, 10 July 1954. Amid this, the Royal Navy agreed to play a part in the anniversary of the Provence landings (especially given 300 of the 800 landing vessels had been British), which were to be smaller in scale. TNA FO 371/112819 Letter from D. P. Reilly to E. C. Bateman, 22 July 1954. Dulles sanctioned American participation, but requested specific information in light of 'poor organization [of] Normandy ceremonies'. NARA Memo from Dulles to American Embassy Paris, 1 July 1954, 851.424/424–7514 Box 4994, Central Decimal Files 1950–54, Record Group 59.

and personal letter' in a bid to repair the rifts which had formed as a result of the messy Normandy commemoration.[123] Jebb wrote to Selwyn Lloyd in the Foreign Office, personally requesting his 'powerful help' in solving the problem.[124] The election of Pierre Mendès-France, he argued, gave a new impetus for Britain's need to define itself in French eyes, especially considering the proximity of the vote in the Assembly on the EDC.[125] Jebb warned:

> the moment will be a very bad one for us to be conspicuous by our absence from the celebrations of the liberation of Paris, particularly as there will be an American equivalent. I am sure that a good British contribution will pay a political dividend out of all proportion to the expense and inconvenience involved, while the absence of one will have the most depressing effect. Indeed, I do not know how I could explain it.[126]

Moreover, he made particularly clear that he thought that Britain 'should take every possible opportunity to drive home to the French that we are their Allies and that we do care about them and what they are doing'.[127] Lloyd rallied in response, writing to Secretary of State for War Anthony Head to relate Jebb's personal concerns and request that the Paris commemoration be made a priority: 'In the light of what Jebb says, it is fairly clear that from a purely political standpoint it is more important that we should be adequately represented at Paris than anywhere along the route actually followed by the British armies in 1944.'[128] The request then lingered for a few weeks as a result of 'War Office … grumbling', before being reluctantly enacted in respect of this high-level intervention.[129]

Meanwhile, high-level Franco-British diplomacy sought to find a route round the EDC crisis, and potentially to work around American interests. Mendès-France met Churchill privately to discuss options, and more broadly 'looked to the United Kingdom for help in finding a solution and in redefining the European project so that it was in line with French and British interests'.[130] Subsequently, the Brussels conference of 19–22 August marked the last gasp of the EDC, as Mendès-France tried to convince European leaders that the treaty still stood a chance in the Assembly, or at the very least that France remained committed to the idea of European defence.[131] In the midst of this crisis fell the 10th anniversary of the Liberation of Paris. Gladwyn Jebb's personal appeal

[123] TNA FO 371/112819 Draft letter from Selwyn Lloyd to Gladwyn Jebb, 7 Aug. 1954.
[124] TNA FO 371/112819 Gladwyn Jebb to Selwyn Lloyd, 10 July 1954.
[125] Wall, *The United States and the Making of Postwar France*, 275–96.
[126] TNA FO 371/112819 Gladwyn Jebb to Selwyn Lloyd, 10 July 1954.
[127] TNA FO 371/112819, 10 July 1954.
[128] TNA FO 371/112819 Selwyn Lloyd to Anthony Head, 30 July 1954.
[129] TNA FO 371/112819 Draft letter from Selwyn Lloyd to Gladwyn Jebb, 7 Aug. 1954.
[130] V. G. Munte, 'A new framework for Franco-German relations through European institutions, 1950 to 1954', in *A History of Franco-German Relations in Europe: From 'Hereditary Enemies' to Partners*, ed. C. Germond and H. Türk (New York, 2008), 165–75 at 171. TNA PREM 11/672. Conversations at Chartwell with M. Mendès France, 23 Aug. 1954.
[131] Gavin, 'Power through Europe?', 85; R. Dwan, 'Jean Monnet and the European Defence Community, 1950–54', *Cold War Hist*, 1 (2001), 141–60 at 154; Munte, 'A new framework for Franco-German relations', 171–2.

succeeded and British troops did, indeed, march along the Champs-Élysées alongside the Americans and the triumphant French.[132] Jebb's appeal to Lloyd, who in turn approached the secretary of state directly, ensured that the army did 'not let us down in the last resort'.[133] De Gaulle also released a statement on 26 August to mark the Liberation of Paris, in which he celebrated France's independence, praised the 'liberated fatherland', and denounced all attempts to diminish her sovereignty through a 'so-called European Defence Community'.[134] With de Gaulle's intervention, Gaullists in the Assembly were strengthened, and wartime echoes resonated even at the resolution of this acrimonious debate. On the eve of the EDC vote Raymond Triboulet himself warned against ratifying the 'rebirth of a new Wehrmacht', offering a reflection ten years after the war:

> The fact of being able to show the German people, ten years after the war of 1939–1945, German troops and French troops closely linked to the point that the French troops could be commanded by German officers, what a more exalting image for the German people the total effacement of the past and the resurrection of the German fatherland! […] Moreover, my dear colleagues, it is not by glorious survival, nor by diplomatic subterfuge, but because of our history, the effort of our fathers, and just recently the effort of General de Gaulle, of Free France, of the army of Africa, and of our fighters in Indochina that we have been left holding the best geographical and strategic assets for the defence of Europe and Africa.[135]

Within this context, reference to war memory by Triboulet, the 'leader of the rump of Gaullist députés in parliament' and also a key memory actor around the D-Day commemoration, advanced a moral narrative of the conflict that was replete with mythic symbols while serving as an openly Gaullist defence of sovereignty.[136] The immediate memorial context showed that while Triboulet was helping to shape regional and national narratives, his words, actions and indeed his missteps also affected international diplomacy.

Evidently, British troops marching in Paris after this commemorative quarrel were not a decisive stroke in the EDC debate. Yet, in Jebb's personal intervention we have a sense of how commemorations intersected with political crises. On the beaches of Normandy and the streets of Paris different regional, national and international narratives of the Liberation were still being negotiated in the shadow of decolonization, the EDC debates and the commemorative missteps of Triboulet. When the EDC treaty came to the Assembly five days after

[132] NARA Message of thanks from M. Lemay, President of Paris Municipal Council to President Eisenhower, 24 August 1954, 851.424/8-2454 Box 4994, Central Decimal Files 1950–54, Record Group 59; '10e Anniversaire de la Libération: Ordre du défilé du 26 août 1954', Comité National des deux anniversaires, author's personal collection.

[133] TNA FO 371/112819 Draft letter from Selwyn Lloyd to Gladwyn Jebb, 7 Aug. 1954.

[134] AN AG/5(1)/1427. Charles de Gaulle, 'Déclaration faite le 26 août 1954'.

[135] JO Débats, Séance du 28 Aug. 1954, 4393, 4396.

[136] Jackson, *A Certain Idea of France*, 545.

the Liberation parades, the Assembly voted 319 to 264 to reject any further consideration.[137] The American response was condemnatory, while the British had been hedging their bets.[138] The tenets of Franco-British cooperation held, as had Franco-American relations more broadly, and cooperation delivered a solution to the German question. As the commemorative calendar cleared in September, Anthony Eden hosted a nine-power conference in London, at which the Federal Republic of Germany was drawn first into the Western Union and NATO thereafter.[139] The German question was solved, for the moment, but the memory of the war promoted by Gaullists like Triboulet still loomed large, not least as General de Gaulle himself published the first volume of his memoirs only a month later. The memoir was well received in the press, helping establish the appearance of a national consensus around war memory (for perhaps a decade) after recent crises of memory, politics and diplomacy.[140]

The 1954 D-Day commemoration shows us how British, French and American officials valued and appraised the commemoration politically, and how they rationalized their participation both in the context of Cold War diplomatic relations and the solemn work of remembrance. As Gilles Vergnon notes, 'to commemorate is never anodyne'.[141] This was especially true with a new French president and a new British ambassador, and set against the backdrop of Dien Bien Phu and the EDC crisis. Triboulet's bungled commemoration of D-Day in 1954 shows how tensions in contemporary alliances could be focused through the lens of historic events and memory culture.

The ceremonial programme between the Normandy commemoration in June and the Paris Liberation in August would continue to offer significant moments of international diplomacy around major anniversaries.[142] Yet, for de Gaulle, Paris and the Liberation would always remain the centre of the French state's war memory. As president in 1959, the 15th anniversary of the landings, de Gaulle chose to avoid Normandy in favour of a celebration of resistance fighters in the Auvergne.[143] His repeated absences (notably in anniversary years like 1964 and 1969) drew comment from former allies, yet de Gaulle explicitly refused to mark '*their* landing' and sought to strengthen his narrative of national grandeur at the expense of international niceties.[144] When subsequent presidents did attend Normandy commemorations in anniversary years, their

[137] Dwan, 'Jean Monnet and the European Defence Community', 154.

[138] E. Fursdon, *The European Defence Community: A History* (London, 1980), 304–5.

[139] R. Pastor-Castro, 'René Massigli's mission to London, 1944–1954', *Dip & Statecraft*, 24 (2013), 539–58 at 553.

[140] C. Flood and H. Frey, 'Extreme right-wing reactions to Charles de Gaulle's *Memoir de Guerre:* scenes from the French civil war', *South Cen R*, 17 (2000), 72–83 at 75. For more on right-wing anti-Gaullism: J. Jackson, 'General de Gaulle and his enemies: antigaullism in France since 1940', *Trans Royal Hist Soc*, 9 (1999), 43–65.

[141] G. Vergnon, 'Au nom de la France: les discours des chefs d'état sur la résistance intérieure (1958–2007)', *Vingtième siècle*, 112 (2011), 139–52 at 139.

[142] K. Adler, 'Un mythe nécessaire et sacré? Responses to the 50th anniversaries of liberation', *Mod & Con Fr*, 3 (1995), 119–26.

[143] Andréani, Carey and Tannous, 'Les commémorations du 6 Juin 1944', 292.

[144] Lemay, 'Gratitude, trauma, and repression', 177; Andréani, Carey and Tannous, 'Les commémorations du 6 Juin 1944', 291–3; A. Peyrefitte, *C'était de Gaulle* (Paris, 2002), 674–9.

diplomatic potential was clear. President François Mitterrand invited President Ronald Reagan to speak in 1984, and in 2004 when Gerhard Schröder was the first German chancellor to participate, the D-Day beaches became stages for reconciling international narratives.[145] This was also the case at the 75th anniversary in 2019, when President Emmanuel Macron addressed Franco-American tensions in his speech made in the presence of President Donald Trump, highlighting the international dynamics of the 'promise of Normandy':

> America, dear President Trump, has never been so great as when it is fighting for the liberty of others; America has never been so great as when she is faithful to the universal values which its founders defended, as when two and a half centuries ago, France supported its independence.[146]

As in 1954, the importance of considering the D-Day commemoration from different perspectives to disentangle these contextual messages becomes clear.[147]

The Normandy ceremonies were never solely about regional or national memory culture, though neither were they devoted solely to international diplomacy. In 1954, Triboulet's missteps did not materially damage European co-operation, yet the responses to this patriotic Gaullist's blundering allowed an outward expression of existing and developing tensions. Currents of memory, international diplomacy, decolonization and broader Cold War tensions all intersected and came to influence the pageantry of remembrance. As a micro-historical window onto broader issues, the 1954 commemoration demonstrates the friction between different national and international narratives of the Second World War on a Cold War stage which raised the stakes of national self-presentation. It did so at a moment of profound tension, when French attempts to hold onto its empire jeopardized its leadership role in European affairs. Discussions of memory and of international diplomacy were conducted in the language of the Occupation and Liberation, and while relations between erstwhile wartime allies were shaped by contemporary concerns, they remained inflected by wartime memories.

[145] S. Barcellini, 'Diplomatie et commemoration: les commemorations du 6 juin 1984: une bataille de memoire', *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 186 (1997), 121–46; Andréani, Carey and Tannous, 'Les commémorations du 6 Juin 1944', 295–305; Vergnon, 'Au nom de la France', 139–52.

[146] Déclaration de M. Emmanuel Macron, Président de la République, en hommage aux combattants alliés du débarquement en Normandie, à Colleville-sur-Mer le 6 juin 2019, <https://www.vie-publique.fr/discours/268632-emmanuel-macron-06062019-debarquement-en-normandie>.

[147] In another example of D-Day's resonance in international affairs, President Trump subsequently appeared to sanction Turkish military action against Kurds in Syria, justifying inaction with the statement 'They [the Kurds] didn't help us in the Second World War. They didn't help us with Normandy, as an example.' 'Donald Trump: "Les Kurdes ne nous ont pas aidés en Normandie"', *Le Figaro*, 10 Oct. 2019.