

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

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by

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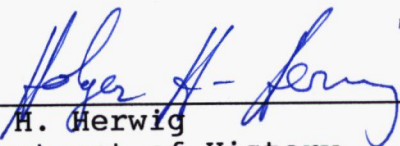


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ABSTRACT

This thesis undertakes to examine domestic political constraints on the foreign policy behaviour of France during the Mitterrand presidency. Adopting a regime approach, it focuses on the nature of political opposition to the central political leadership of the state and the impact such opposition exerted on the conduct of Franco-German relations. It examines Hagan's claim that higher levels of regime fragmentation and vulnerability tend to produce foreign policies characterized by ambiguity, controversy-avoidance and lack of independence. It focuses specifically on France's relations with Germany over the course of three consecutive regimes, during the period 1981-1993: majority Socialist government, cohabitation and minority government.

Contents

Approval Page	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	iv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER TWO: THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONTEXT	27
CHAPTER THREE: MAJORITY GOVERNMENT	55
CHAPTER FOUR: COHABITATION	98
CHAPTER FIVE: MINORITY GOVERNMENT	125
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION	147
BIBLIOGRAPHY	154

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The making of national decisions is not a problem for the efficiency expert, or of assembling different pieces of policy logically as if the product were an automobile. Policy faces inward as much as outward, seeking to reconcile conflicting goals, to adjust aspirations to available means, and to accomodate the different advocates of these competing goals and aspirations to one another. It is here that the essence of policy making seems to lie, in a process that is in its deepest sense political.

Roger Hilsman, former foreign relations adviser to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.¹

If the government attempted to take control of foreign policy, that would amount to a coup d'état."

President François Mitterrand.²

Does politics stop at the water's edge? How do domestic political factors influence foreign policy? More specifically, how do shifts within the central political

¹John P. Lovell, The Challenge of American Foreign Policy (New York: Macmillan, 1985), 24.

²Statement made by Mitterrand at a debate on the possibility of cohabitation, at Vercors, 10 July 1985. Quoted in Samy Cohen, La monarchie nucléaire: les coulisses de la politique étrangère sous la Ve République (Paris: Hachette, 1986), 20.

leadership of a country influence the style and substance of foreign policy? While it may appear obvious that few democratic governments are immune to domestic political constraints in the determination of external behaviour, contemporary France has generally been considered an exception to this phenomenon. Owing to a highly centralized political system and a tradition of presidential prerogative in the domaine réservé, the sectors of foreign and defence affairs, which has inherited since General Charles de Gaulle instituted the Fifth Republic, the formulation of French foreign policy has been perceived as the responsibility of the head of state alone. Consequently, analysts have typically paid scant attention to domestic political processes and conditions in their search for explanatory variables when considering French foreign policy outputs.

Yet it is also evident that the French polity has undergone several significant developments over the past decade, and that these developments could be expected to exert an impact on the formulation of government policies, including those in foreign and defence affairs. The election of Mitterrand and the Socialist majority in 1981 marked the first time during the Fifth Republic that the traditional opposition forces, the left, had come into power. This alternance was followed in 1986 by the unprecedented experience of cohabitation, or coexistence of opposing political tendencies within the executive, between a Socialist president and a right-wing prime minister and government. Finally, Mitterrand's reelection in 1988 was not followed, as expected, by the installation of a presidential majority in the National Assembly, but for the first time a president in the Fifth Republic had to contend with a minority government. In short, the Mitterrand presidency has witnessed at least three unprecedented permutations in the domestic political order, presenting the opportunity for a reassessment of the impact of domestic political factors on foreign policy. This study

contributes to a reevaluation of traditional approaches to the study of French foreign policy.

This study undertakes to explore the linkages between French domestic politics and external behaviour. One central issue which this thesis addresses is whether public and elite acceptance of the highly centralized nature of the foreign policy process leaves the central political leadership of France essentially free of domestic constraints, or if factors such as electoral, party, and coalition politics create pressures and act as constraining influences, even in the domaine réservé. The analysis which follows is based on a regime approach to the study of foreign policy. The guiding assumptions and theory of a regime approach are outlined below. The period of Mitterrand's presidency from 1981 until 1993 is divided into regime periods according to significant changes occurring within membership of the central political leadership of the state. The analysis then focuses on each regime period, identifying factors in the domestic political environment which may have contributed to regime fragmentation or vulnerability, and examining how the strength of the regime at that particular interval of time influenced the formulation of foreign and defence policy. The thesis focuses specifically on the management of Franco-German relations.

This chapter provides first a brief summary and critique of existing theory and research on the determinants of French foreign policy, which is found to be implicitly based on a model having significant inconsistencies. It then sets out a framework of analysis based on a regime approach to foreign policy, the theoretical basis and methodology of the research to be undertaken. Finally, the parameters of the case study to follow are established.

Literature Review

Analysis of French foreign policy during the Fourth

Republic focused primarily on the crucial role of domestic political factors in shaping external policy.³ The significance of domestic political factors as explanatory variables owed to the chronically weak political institutions and deep divisions in post-war French society, which resulted in the rapid turnover of cabinets and governments and a paralysis of state authority.. Policy making tended to revert by default to civil servants.⁴ According to critics of the regime, particularly General de Gaulle and his supporters, this lack of executive authority led to further social disruption, an increasingly politically rebellious army, trouble in the colonies, and the perceived loss of national independence in foreign affairs.⁵ The combination of internal weakness and inconsistent external policy is believed to have undermined the state and to have led ultimately to the fall of the regime.⁶

A thematic shift in the literature is encountered on passing to the Fifth Republic and the explicit use of domestic political factors declines noticeably as explanatory variables for French foreign policy. The impact of General de Gaulle on the institutional framework and political culture of the French Fifth Republic, where highly centralized control and presidential dominance of the domaine réservé is widely

³For example, see Alfred Grosser, La IVe Republique et sa politique extérieure (Paris: Armand Colin, 1961). See also Duncan MacRae, Jr., Parliament, Parties, and Society in France, 1946-1958 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967).

⁴Douglas E. Ashford, Policy and Politics in France: Living With Uncertainty (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 25.

⁵Vincent Wright, The Government and Politics of France, 2d ed., (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1983), 15-16.

⁶Guy de Carmoy, The Foreign Policies of France: 1944-1968, trans. Elaine P. Halperin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 465.

accepted, has been such that analytical attention has tended to focus on the levels of the individual policy maker and international systemic constraints. According to such a perspective, the French head of state alone determines the lines of French foreign policy, and it is his perceptions of France's geopolitical situation and requirements in the international system which lead him through a rational process of determining national goals and the policies which would best serve them.⁷

Although the French Fifth Republic has an open political system, it is often stated in the foreign policy literature that its foreign policy process is virtually immune to domestic political influences.⁸ The executive, and more precisely the president, is considered to have decisive control over the form and substance of French diplomacy, with a minimum of interference from bureaucratic, legislative, or societal groups. The very few recent examples of foreign policy studies which directly address French domestic political determinants tend to assess the impact of changes within the central political leadership on the formulation of foreign policy in a very limited period -- that is, during the period of cohabitation.⁹ Perhaps the sole examples of a

⁷Edward A. Kolodziej, French International Policy under de Gaulle and Pompidou: The Politics of Grandeur (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1974).

⁸Alan Ned Sabrosky, "France" in The Defense Policies of Nations, 2d ed., edited by Douglas J. Murray and Paul R. Viotti (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

⁹see Philippe G. Le Prestre, "The Lessons of Cohabitation," in French Security Policy in a Disarming World, ed. Philippe G. Le Prestre (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989) and Joe D. Hagan, "Regimes, Political Oppositions, and the Comparative Analysis of Foreign Policy," in New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy, ed. Charles F. Hermann, Charles W. Kegley, Jr., and James N. Rosenau (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

longitudinal approach to French foreign policy are the recent studies undertaken by Samy Cohen, whose analyses span the administrations of several presidents.¹⁰ The majority of analysts of French foreign policy have focused on the policy making style and substance of individual presidents.

During the Mitterrand presidency, much analytical attention has focused on the essentially "gaullien" principles underlying Mitterrand's foreign policy. In spite of some marked shifts in French domestic policies during his presidency, many assessments of Mitterrand's foreign policy record generally concur that an underlying continuity with preceding presidencies exists.¹¹ Changes have been perceived as largely cosmetic, involving shifts in style and tone rather than content. Stanley Hoffmann summarizes this perspective with his observation that any changes in France's external relations under Mitterrand have been underpinned by gaullien premises, thus constituting more a change in the means than the aims of French foreign policy. In short, foreign policy under Mitterrand is considered gaullist in form and content.¹²

A general theoretical approach known as the Unified Rational Actor (URA) model explicitly or implicitly informs most analyses of French foreign policy during the Fifth Republic. The model posits the state to be a "black box"

¹⁰Samy Cohen, Les Conseillers du Président: De Charles de Gaulle à Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980) and idem, La monarchie nucléaire.

¹¹"French Foreign and Defence Policies," in Strategic Survey: 1981-82 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1982), 61.

¹²Stanley Hoffmann, "Gaullism By Any Other Name," Foreign Policy 57 (Winter 1984-85): 38. See also Michael M. Harrison, "Foreign and Security Policy," in The French Socialists in Power, 1981-1986, ed. Patrick McCarthy (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 45.

responding to external stimuli through its foreign policy. The state chooses the most economic and efficient means of attaining its goals, or national interest, which are usually based on power considerations and are influenced by geostrategic factors.¹³ Some analysts perceive the fit between this theoretical model and French practice to be so close as to be "unparalleled in the Western world."¹⁴ The basis of this perception lies in the evolution of presidential dominance over the political system and the perceived existence of a stable consensus on defence and foreign affairs.

The 1958 Constitution produced in France what is widely acknowledged as the "purest" form of executive leadership in a modern democratic society.¹⁵ Encountering few, if any, formal constraints on his power in the formulation of foreign policy, the president is seen to be free from the play of bureaucratic interests which may act to circumscribe his counterparts in other Western countries.¹⁶ The French president has generally been viewed as unencumbered by competing political power centres in the government or bureaucracy, and thus able to create policy which directly reflects his assessment of the situation and the national interest. The concentration of policy making power in the French presidency thus produces a close schematic approximation to the single or unitary "rational actor"

¹³Roger Hilsman, The Politics of Policy Making in Defense and Foreign Affairs (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1987), 30-47.

¹⁴Sabrosky, 229.

¹⁵Ezra N. Suleiman, "Presidential Government in France," in Presidents and Prime Ministers, ed. Richard Rose and Ezra N. Suleiman (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1980), 94.

¹⁶Le Prestre, 16.

posited by the model. The relative absence of formal constraints on presidential power has led analysts to assume that the president personifies the French state, formulating policy purely on the basis of his conception of national interests, capabilities, and international constraints.

Reinforcing analytical attention on presidential dominance of French foreign policy is the record of General Charles de Gaulle's dramatic leadership style, his legacy of achievements for France, and the imprinting of foreign and defence policy with his stamp. De Gaulle's strong personal vision of the role France should play in the world, his careful development of the independent nuclear force, the force de frappe, and his success in reestablishing French prestige on the world stage have profoundly influenced French expectations regarding the style and substance of foreign policy throughout the Fifth Republic. Such has been de Gaulle's influence that his presidential successors have all been noted to employ gaullien rhetoric in political discourse, even while seeking support for policies which are decidedly not Gaullist.¹⁷

De Gaulle's style of political leadership and conceptions of presidential rule have directed analytical attention "almost exclusively towards the exercise of power from the presidential centre, rather than the expression and maintenance of the principles of republican authority in the making and implementation of policies."¹⁸ Thus the Gaullist experience has served to strengthen analytical preoccupation

¹⁷William Wallace, "Old states and new circumstances: The international predicament of Britain, France and Germany," in Foreign Policy Making in Western Europe - A Comparative Approach, ed. William Wallace and W.E. Paterson (Westmead, England: Saxon House, 1978), 52.

¹⁸John Gaffney, The French Left and the Fifth Republic: The Discourses of Communism and Socialism in Contemporary France (London: Macmillan Press, 1989), 4.

with presidential dominance, and hence with a URA approach to French foreign policy in general.

A second recurrent theme in contemporary literature on French foreign policy which has contributed to the popularity of the URA approach among analysts is the perceived existence of a French defence consensus. In the French foreign policy literature, consensus is an ambiguous concept, which at times has been used by various writers to refer to different phenomena. Typically, consensus appears to refer to a widespread agreement on the need to maintain an effective and independent nuclear deterrent. "All the major political parties and large sections of public opinion support the maintenance of a strong independent nuclear deterrent."¹⁹ Rather more subtly, it is also used to describe the desirability of maintaining gaullist principles as the basis of French foreign and defence policy, particularly regarding the role of nuclear weapons in French security. For example, it has been observed that the consensus "rests much less on the actual military value of French weapons in case of war than on a set of rather abstract and highly ambiguous principles which the French have been taught to see as deriving from the possession of the national deterrent."²⁰

Although the existence of consensus remains largely unchallenged in the literature, a precise meaning of consensus has yet to be advanced, and more rigorous development of the concept is required. For example, it is unclear the extent to which agreement exists, and among whom it exists -- whether the French general public or more precisely members of the political elite. As such does it constitute an element of

¹⁹Jonathan Marcus and Bruce George, "The Ambiguous Consensus: French Defence Policy under Mitterrand," The World Today, October 1983, 369.

²⁰Pierre Lellouche, "France and the Euromissiles: The Limits of Immunity," Foreign Affairs 62 (Winter 1983/84): 323.

French political culture, or part of the socialization of the political elite?

Nevertheless, the concept of consensus draws attention to the role of domestic political factors as potential constraints on foreign policy making. The concept of consensus implicitly assumes that there are limits to the activities which political actors can undertake in a policy domain without risking the loss of popular support or political office, or the onset of political fragmentation.²¹ However, the constraining factors are assumed to be benign insofar as the consensus holds and is respected by the political leadership. Unfortunately, most investigations of domestic political determinants of French foreign policy end here. While acknowledging that there may indeed be broad areas of agreement on certain features of the French state and its policies among many political elites and the general public, this thesis undertakes to establish that such a consensus does not preclude the existence of political opposition to the regime and/or its policies, and that foreign policy making is likely to be influenced by the existence of such opposition.

Closer examination of the themes of presidential dominance and defence consensus reveal phenomena which derive directly from the domestic political environment. Not surprisingly, the themes are mutually supportive: insofar as the president acts within the parameters set by the "consensus", his control over foreign and defence policy is near-absolute. This frame of reference, a URA approach underpinned by the twin themes of presidential dominance and consensus, has kept scholarly attention focused on presidential response to the structure and challenges posed by

²¹For example, see Wolfram F. Hanrieder, "Compatibility and Consensus: A Proposal for the Conceptual Linkage of External and Internal Dimensions of Foreign Policy," American Political Science Review LXI (December 1967): 977.

the international environment and has effectively marginalized domestic political factors from the purview of the French foreign policy analyst.

One result of this dual emphasis is a marked dichotomy in academic treatment of French public policy and foreign policy. One scholar has remarked that "in domestic affairs, the policy process is discussed frequently but the policies themselves are generally neglected, whereas in foreign affairs the policies are described and assessed ad nauseum but the policy process is seldom investigated."²² This is consistent with a "black box" view of the state in which policy is viewed largely as being conditioned by the state's external environment, due to the perceived insignificance of domestic political factors.

The prevailing emphasis on political leadership and external constraints within a URA frame of reference may help to explain the tendency to perceive continuity in Mitterrand's foreign policy. Assuming that the internal composition of a government is irrelevant to the formulation of foreign policy, proponents of such an approach emphasize the relatively constant geostrategic constraints and national capabilities which dictate a fairly narrow course open to a medium size European power with an independent nuclear force.²³

Analyses which invoke the URA approach view the nature of policy making as unproblematic. Public acceptance of the highly centralized nature of foreign policy making in France would seem to leave the presidency largely free of domestic constraints. For scholars who accept this view, the task is to understand the nature of external challenges and threats

²²J.E.S. Hayward, Governing France: The One and Indivisible Republic, 2d ed. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983), 242.

²³Marie-Claude Smouts, "The External Policy of François Mitterrand," International Affairs 59 (September 1983): 156.

confronting France rather than to examine the domestic context within which French foreign policy is made. Domestic influences on decision making are largely ignored, after the customary reference to consensus. However, closer consideration of the premises underlying this approach raise doubts whether such factors should indeed be discounted.

Presidential dominance is the fundamental premise underpinning the URA approach to French foreign policy. Insofar as formal structures are considered, this is largely supported. However, the concentration of formal powers in the office of the presidency is not necessarily to be equated with complete lack of constraints on the exercise of that power. The president is also a politician, a party leader and possibly a coalition leader. The requirements of fulfilling these concomitant roles are likely to have some effect on policy formulation. Constraints deriving from informal processes and mechanisms thus may operate, although these are more difficult to identify.

The concept of consensus further supports the focus on presidential dominance in the domaine réservé and the resultant emphasis on external constraints. Certain domestic political factors are implied by this concept to be potentially important, yet benign. However, the concept is even more questionable than presidential dominance in its analytical validity. While the concept has acquired much currency among the French public and analysts alike, it is used with considerable imprecision and ambiguity. This prevailing lack of rigour has the particular consequence in the academic realm of producing a sort of terminological shorthand, with "consensus" being constantly invoked but its precise meaning rarely, if ever, delineated. The term invariably appears in analyses of French foreign policy, yet what it refers to seems to vary from author to author. In effect, it appears to have become a substitute for analysis. This may account for a certain amount of incoherence appearing

in the literature dealing with French foreign policy, such as conflicting versions of the state of the "defence consensus"; whereas many analysts perceive its continued existence, others have questioned whether it still functions and suggest that the breakdown of consensus has begun.²⁴

This section surveyed the dominant themes and approaches found in the foreign policy literature on France. Examining the general pattern of analytical discourse has revealed that certain implicit guiding assumptions have been commonly employed, indicating how the subject has been "thought" or understood. In short, analysis of French foreign policy has tended to invoke concepts and terms which imply a domestic political focus, but these factors have rarely been explicitly addressed. The literature review suggests that explicit questions regarding the influence of domestic political factors tend not to be asked, and that the concept of consensus may constitute a systemic "blind spot", produced by formulaic or traditional analysis.

Analytical Framework

As used in the field of comparative foreign policy "regime" refers to the central political leadership of a country²⁵, or more specifically "that role or set of roles in

²⁴See in particular Jolyon Howorth's series of articles: "Defence and the Mitterrand Government," in Defence and Dissent in Contemporary France, ed. Jolyon Howorth and Patricia Chilton (London & Sydney: Croon Helm, and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), "Defence Policy under François Mitterrand: Atlanticism, Gaullism, or Nuclear Neutralism?" in Socialism, the State, and Public Policy in France, ed. Philip G. Cerny and Martin A. Schain (London: Frances Pinter, 1985), and "Defence Policy under Mitterrand Mark 2," in The Dividing Rhine, ed. John Trumbour .

²⁵In prior studies of French politics, the term "regime" has been used in two different ways: to demarcate periods of significant constitutional change (as in the Fourth and Fifth Republics); and to mark change in the holder of presidential

a national political system in which inheres the power to make authoritative policy decisions."²⁶ A regime analysis approach to foreign policy posits that domestic political factors which affect the internal strength of a regime, and its resilience in relation to other political actors in the wider polity as well as among the general public, will consequently exert a significant influence on its foreign policy outputs.

Regime change occurs most obviously when the effective head of state is changed. The head of state criterion, however, is not precise enough a measure since it ignores major changes in oppositions which could occur during the tenure of a single head of state. Regime change can also be said to occur at other junctures, as when there is a gain or loss of majority in the legislature; when a coalition government is formed or dismantled (and cabinet seats are redistributed) under the same head of state; and with the rise or demise of competing factions within the leader's party.²⁷

The regime approach enables us to identify three distinct changes in the nature of the French central political leadership over the past twelve years. The Mitterrand presidency was ushered in with the effective replacement of the head of state in 1981, with the election of Mitterrand and the subsequent election of a Socialist parliamentary majority in the French National Assembly. Regime change next occurred in 1986, when the Socialists lost their parliamentary majority and Mitterrand was forced to share power with the right-wing Premier Jacques Chirac and his centre-right coalition in the

office (the de Gaulle, Pompidou, and Giscard regimes).

²⁶Barbara G. Salmore and Stephen A. Salmore, "Political Regimes and Foreign Policy, in Why Nations Act, ed. Maurice A. East, Stephen A. Salmore and Charles F. Hermann (Beverly Hills and London: Sage, 1978), 110.

²⁷Hagan, 351.

legislature during cohabitation. Finally, a new political regime was established in 1988 with the reelection of Mitterrand to the presidency and with cohabitation giving way to minority government, which inhered until the Socialists suffered a resounding defeat in the general elections of April 1993. Endogenous to the regime, the dynamics and conditions of leadership struggles, coalition politics and other internal divisions within the central political leadership are viewed as weakening the regime's capacity to formulate and implement a clear and consistent foreign policy. Such endogenous political constraints have been conceptualized by Joe Hagan as the concept "regime fragmentation", defined as "the degree to which a government's central political leadership is fragmented by persisting, internal political divisions in the form of competing personalities, institutions or bureaucracies, factions, or competing parties or other such political groups."²⁸ Fragmentation within a regime varies according to the political arena in which the political divisions and oppositions occur: the cabinet, the legislature, and the leader's own party. Political constraints are assumed to become progressively stronger as one moves from intra-party opposition to the leadership, to the instances when the regime leadership must contend with opposition from legislative actors, to the scenario of highest fragmentation when the leadership itself is divided or split between rival groups.²⁹ These progressively fragmented regime examples are respectively exemplified in the French case by the experiences of majority Socialist government from 1981-86, minority government from 1988-93, and the intervening cohabitational experiment.

Domestic political factors which are exogenous to the

²⁸Ibid., 344.

²⁹Ibid, 344-45.

regime and which are also viewed as likely to impair the regime's control over foreign policy concern the decline in support for the regime from the wider polity, hence the imperatives of electoral politics for regime members.³⁰ "Regime vulnerability" refers to the strength of the regime as it relates to the wider political environment³¹ and the possibility that the top leadership will be replaced.³² Regime vulnerability is generally indicated by the frequency and type of regime change in a political system. "...[T]he persistent control of a regime by a single group or leader over an extended period of time is a good indicator of its ability to resist domestic oppositions."³³ A regime will experience more constraints if the political system has recently experienced frequent changes of relatively short-lived regimes. Such conditions denote a high degree of regime vulnerability to the broader setting, and would probably seriously constrain the leadership to the extent that it is likely to avoid controversial decisions and actions which would alienate politically important groups of supporters and therefore would help opposing political parties to achieve the removal of the governing regime from office.³⁴

The regime perspective suggests that the more politically fragmented and/or vulnerable a regime is, the more it will experience political constraints in the formulation of foreign policy, amounting in effect to "prohibitions on certain foreign policy options."³⁵ More cohesive regimes, such as

³⁰Salmore and Salmore, 104.

³¹Hagan, 346.

³²Salmore and Salmore, 110.

³³Hagan, 347.

³⁴Ibid., 346.

³⁵Ibid., 348.

those which are dominated by a single leader or group, will enjoy greater freedom of action in foreign policy decision making than the more fragmented ones, characterized by competing factions or groups. Stronger political constraints apply as internal divisions within the regime leadership increase and as political competition results in substantive policy splits.³⁶ Politically fragmented and vulnerable regimes will tend to act (develop policies) in ways which avoid engendering controversy within the regime and/or among political oppositions and in the wider political environment. Such a regime will "attempt to build a consensus among those political actors upon which it depends for the implementation of policy and/or its own continuation in office."³⁷ Fragmented regimes are likely to have more ambiguous foreign policies and contradictory behaviour, since the different component groups of the leadership will tend to make statements which reflect their own particular policy position.³⁸

The linkage between, on the one hand, internal political factors conceptualized as regime fragmentation and vulnerability, and on the other hand, foreign policy, is based on the assumption of rationality. Regime members, as political actors, have a rational interest in attracting and consolidating political support and power, for themselves as individuals and for the regime of which they are part.³⁹ The regime perspective also assumes that foreign policy is viewed by both the governing elites and their domestic support groups as "part of the activity upon which their staying in power is

³⁶Ibid., 346.

³⁷Ibid., 349.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Salmore and Salmore, 103.

judged."⁴⁰ Efforts to consolidate support or stem the loss of support from other political actors or the general public will therefore also extend to the spheres of foreign and defence policy making.

That assumption is not shared by all foreign policy analysts. Foreign policy has been viewed as a separate and special area of policy, one in which the issues deal more closely with the security, fundamental values, and ultimately, the survival of the state. Consequently, such analysts consider foreign policy too important to be subject to partisan debate, factional influences and domestic politics. Kenneth Waltz, for example, has noted that in democratic countries there is a generally accepted belief that "foreign policy ought to be insulated from the rough-and-tumble of domestic debate, that bipartisan policies should be sought by both government and opposition, that politics should stop at the water's edge; that continuity in foreign-policy, wherever possible, should be ensured even when governments change."⁴¹

However, it can be argued that those qualities which make foreign policy a unique policy area also enhance its value as a resource for domestic political actors; foreign policy may be a policy domain which has particular advantages in the quest to consolidate and expand domestic political support. Widely accepted as an area of responsibility for the political executive, foreign policy is harnessed to the language and symbolism of state sovereignty, nationhood and national purpose. The symbolic weight, prestige and legitimacy associated with foreign policy may be difficult to resist for senior policy makers, who do not operate in a vacuum -- that is, are not only actors within the international system, but also in the domestic political system. In short, states do

⁴⁰Ibid., 108.

⁴¹Kenneth Waltz, Foreign Policy and Democratic Politics. Quoted in William Wallace, 10.

not make policy; governments do. And foreign policy may constitute a powerful resource for actors in the domestic political context. Accordingly, a regime perspective asserts that the central political leadership will rationally adopt foreign policies which tend to reflect the underlying aim of maximizing political support both within the regime itself and at the level of broader society.

The effects of regime factors on foreign policy are indicated by the policy characteristics of specificity, commitment and style of diplomacy. Specificity refers to the clarity of policy statements and actions. Politically fragmented and vulnerable regimes will tend to have foreign policies which are characterized by ambiguity, due to their need to avoid provoking public criticism. Fragmented regimes moreover are likely to be contradictory and inconsistent in verbal statements concerning external relations, due to the divided nature of leadership and the tendency of different groups internal to the regime to make statements reflecting their own policy position. Secondly, politically constrained regimes will tend to be unable to make strong foreign policy commitments, primarily in the commitment of the nation's resources.⁴² Finally, style of diplomacy refers to the degree of autonomy maintained in a foreign policy, and includes such characteristics as independence, intensity, visibility, and conflict. The more politically constrained (fragmented and vulnerable) a regime, the more likely it is to engage in a style of diplomacy which is quiet, low intensity, with few initiatives and a preference for interdependent actions, as opposed to independent ones. This is due to "the imperative that highly constrained governments must avoid controversies that could disrupt tenuous public support and

⁴²Hagan, 349.

inter-factional or inter-group balances.⁴³

Research Question

Following from the theory and framework elaborated above, it is hypothesized that differences in regimes within France over the past twelve years are important in explaining patterns of foreign policy outputs. Differences between regimes in terms of levels of fragmentation and vulnerability are expected to predict certain qualities of foreign policy behaviour. The more fragmented and vulnerable the regime is, the more constrained it will be in the formulation of foreign policy, resulting in a more ambiguous, interdependent and uncommitted style of foreign policy.

A regime change which involved a major shift in the personnel or support bases of the regime would be expected to significantly affect the substance and process of French foreign policy. Accordingly, it is suggested that foreign policy during cohabitation would be characterized by greater ambiguity, lack of commitment and lack of independence of action than was exhibited during the preceding period of majority Socialist government. The period of minority government, from 1988 to 1993, however, would be expected to have demonstrated these qualities to a somewhat lesser degree. The period of majority government, when Mitterrand and the Socialist government maintained control over all the levers of state power, is expected to have experienced the least amount of fragmentation and therefore the highest degree of foreign policy consistency and consensus.

This thesis does not directly challenge the dominant paradigm in the French foreign policy literature, because it incorporates the rational calculus of the French political leadership. However, it recognizes that the French leadership

⁴³Ibid., 350.

in foreign policy making may not necessarily be represented by a single, unitary actor, the president, but may be the locus of multiple claims of authority. It also undertakes to explore the complex linkage between internal politics and foreign policy.

Methodology

The domestic political constraints elaborated here draw on the insights of comparative political analysis but are set within the context of the international system, thus reflecting the view that the study of foreign policy straddles the disciplines of comparative politics and international relations. A country's foreign policy process thus can be viewed as bridging the domestic political system and the international system. Accordingly, one scholar notes that foreign policy analysis requires "an acquaintance not only with the theory of both disciplines, but also with the contextual detail which relates the theories to the countries under study."⁴⁴

The theoretical approach used in this study borrows from perspectives found in the field of comparative foreign policy. A comparative approach is employed when the foreign policy behaviour of several countries is examined at a single, given time, or when one country's foreign policy is examined across an interval of time.⁴⁵ Comparisons of foreign policy, then, can be made cross-nationally or longitudinally. This longitudinal study examines the effect of regime change occurring within France over a period of twelve years during the Mitterrand presidency, and traces the effect of three

⁴⁴Wallace, "Old states," 52.

⁴⁵Charles F. Hermann and Maurice A. East, "Introduction," in Why Nations Act, ed. Maurice A. East, Stephen A. Salmore and Charles F. Hermann (Beverly Hills and London: Sage, 1978), 12.

consecutive and different regime types on foreign policy making.

Longitudinal comparison provides one means of identifying and explaining change or continuity in a country's external behaviour, and also can provide more detailed knowledge of those variables which may influence foreign policy by comparing them in differing contexts. One particular benefit of longitudinal comparison, then, is that it aids in determining the variable's parameters -- under what types of circumstances they are applicable -- and hence, contributes to foreign policy generalizing and theorizing.

A regimes perspective focuses on how differences in the structure of the central political leadership of a state affect foreign policy. In a longitudinal study, it addresses the changes of regime within a country. A regimes perspective "identifies features that vary from one government to another", such as freedom of action, which can be affected by factors influenced by a change of regime, such as degree of internal coherence and accountability to national constituencies.⁴⁶

The thesis limits its substantive foreign policy focus to the Franco-German security relationship. This choice of case study is suggested by several factors. The Soviet Union, the United States, and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) together comprised the countries of greatest significance to France in the given period of study. Of these partners, say many observers, Germany has long figured as France's most important external problem.⁴⁷ Moreover, the need for initiatives in this crucial policy area was clearly perceived, being singled out by Mitterrand in the campaign leading up to the 1981 elections as an area needing reform.

⁴⁶Ibid., 22.

⁴⁷Herbert Tint, French Foreign Policy since the Second World War (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1972), 3.

One assumption made by this study is that there is a discernable German policy which is formulated by the French leadership. This may be an artificial and academic category, whose substantive content is culled from various other areas of policy, such as nuclear policy, European policy, and even Franco-American relations. Nevertheless, on the grounds that a more specific focus of inquiry than "foreign policy" is needed, French external behaviour with respect to its German neighbour will be examined. Franco-German relations are sufficiently important and wide in scope to make the study relevant. Also, Germany is seen by many within France to be France's most important partner. It has long been noted that France's relationship with Germany has been the keystone of French foreign policy⁴⁸, indeed that for over a century "the problem of Germany" has constituted France's priority "in matters of both foreign affairs and defence."⁴⁹ Finally, it has been remarked by other observers that Mitterrand paid particular attention to two particular policy areas: defence and Europe. These domains over-lap, as demonstrated particularly well by the Franco-German relationship.⁵⁰

Additionally, it is clear that there is a need for more analysis of Franco-German relations which integrates the military, economic and political aspects of the relationship. Because most studies segregate these policy realms, there is insufficient appreciation of the interplay among these dimensions for both the French policy makers and the policy areas themselves. Moreover, treatments of the economic aspect

⁴⁸David G. Haglund, Alliance within the Alliance? Franco-German Military Cooperation and the European Pillar of Defense (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991), 74.

⁴⁹Dorothy Pickles, "The Political Imperatives and Dilemmas of French Defence Policies," West European Politics 1 (October 1978): 115.

⁵⁰Le Prestre, 21.

of bilateral relations are often prescriptive in tone and argument, inevitably affecting analysis of the interaction.

Such an approach challenges the traditional analytical distinction which has been drawn between "public" policy and foreign policy. As one scholar has pointed out, however, policy "sectors" are analytic constructs which may not conform to the reality of the problems politicians must deal with. Policy issues often simply do not respect analytic boundaries, and political scientists have been impelled to develop their "inter-sectoral" awareness.⁵¹ The distinction between the political and economic sectors, moreover, appears to be especially inappropriate and misleading in the case of France. The political and economic dimensions have long been linked in the general practice of French foreign policy by two interactive traditions: étatisme and grandeur. The étatiste (state socialism or state control) tradition is based on a longstanding awareness of French economic vulnerability and a "consequent commitment to promote economic strength through state efforts both at home and abroad."⁵² Thus it operates not only at the domestic level, seen in the historical predisposition toward state intervention in the economy, but it also involves the external level, invoking the use of foreign policy as an instrument to protect and promote national economic interests.⁵³

⁵¹Martin Harrop, "Introduction" in Power and Policy in Liberal Democracies, ed. Martin Harrop (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 14.

⁵²William Wallace, "Independence and Economic Interest: The Ambiguities of French Foreign Policy," in French Politics and Public Policy, ed. Philip G. Cerny and Martin A. Schain (London: Frances Pinter, 1980), 268.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 268-274.

Thesis Outline

This thesis examines the relationship between certain domestic political factors and French foreign policy towards West Germany over the course of twelve years of the Mitterrand presidency. It seeks to systematically examine the relevance of domestic constraints and incentives which act upon the central political leadership, as an explanation for French foreign policy decisions. Domestic politics are operationalized as regimes, with particular attention to the internal regime characteristics of fragmentation, and vulnerability. Having introduced the thesis question and set forth the theory and basic concepts essential for its further analysis, attention then turns in Chapter Two to the French domestic political context. By focusing specifically on the apex of state power in foreign policy making, the regime approach requires one to examine both the formal distribution of power among existing institutions and the informal rules of the political game.⁵⁴ These key components of the Fifth Republic's political system help to explain how political fragmentation and regime vulnerability arise and operate within the French political system. The role of specific factors such as institutional structure, the political party system, and impact of public opinion are critical to an understanding of the functioning of political regimes, providing incentives and constraints for political behaviour, and thereby may moderate or intensify the effects of regime fragmentation and vulnerability on foreign policy outputs.

The following three chapters address the three specific periods of distinct political regimes during the past twelve years and attempt to identify the influence of these factors on the process and substance of Franco-German security relations. Chapter Three focuses on the period of Socialist

⁵⁴Le Prestre, 18.

majority government (1981-1986). Chapter Four examines the period of cohabitation, 1986-88. Chapter Five surveys the experience of minority government until its ousting in 1993. The concluding chapter compares findings on these three regime periods and their impact upon French foreign policy under Mitterrand, assesses the explanatory value of the framework and theory, and draws out the implications for our understanding of the factors which constrain and shape French foreign policy.

CHAPTER 2

The Domestic Political Context

This chapter examines the nature and role of the central political leadership within the wider context of the French political system. Three components of the political system which provide regime actors with their power and limitations and which establish the rules of the political game are formal structures, the party system, and the political attitudes of elites and publics. The character of regimes, including the extent of fragmentation and vulnerability, are conditioned by such factors, providing the underlying incentives and constraints which condition the central political leadership in its quest to maximize support, particularly through the domain of foreign policy.

The chapter opens with a brief survey of the divisive and short-lived Fourth Republic because its perceived shortcomings strongly influenced the nature of the Fifth Republic. The remainder of the chapter specifies the three major components of the French political system which condition political regimes: the institutional framework, the political party system, and public and elite attitudes.

The Fourth Republic

French systems of government from the end of the ancien regime in 1789 until the end of the Second World War were consistently characterized by instability, weakness, and the

absence of political consensus on constitutional norms, and hence on the type of structural framework which was appropriate for France. Political and economic divisions produced an unrelenting succession of civil strife, revolution, war and economic crisis. The Fourth Republic (1944-1958) appeared yet again to confirm this pattern. Although by this point in its development France was undergoing dramatic change in its social and economic composition which would eventually result in a more homogenous, socially integrated and cohesive polity, the Fourth Republic was also burdened with the highly turbulent conditions prevailing in post-war France. The French social and political fabric of this period was under severe pressure from physical and material losses of the war, economic crisis, and the demoralizing wartime experiences of military defeat in 1940, German occupation, and Vichy collaboration. Further, France encountered difficult conditions in its international milieu, witnessing the loss of its great power status, the start of the Cold War, and the onset of the process of decolonization with the development of bitter wars in Indochina and Algeria.⁵⁵

The political system of the Fourth Republic was ill-equipped to deal with domestic and international crises. Its dominant feature, weak government, was a function of the party system and of parliament's power over the fate of government. As a parliamentary system, the premier and cabinet required the support of a coalition of groups called a "government majority" to stay in office. However, the sheer profusion of political parties during the Fourth Republic and their generally undisciplined parliamentary behaviour made durable governing coalitions difficult to achieve and even harder to

⁵⁵William G. Andrews, "The Impact of France on the Fifth Republic," in The Fifth Republic at Twenty, ed. William G. Andrews and Stanley Hoffmann (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1981), 1-10.

maintain. Coalition governments were extremely fragile and vulnerable to parliament. As a result governments were unable to stay in office or pass controversial legislation. The end result was governmental instability, with twenty cabinets being formed during the twelve year existence of the Fourth Republic. Faced with the perpetual threat of disintegrating parliamentary support, the successive governments of the Fourth Republic were effectively paralyzed in the exercise of state authority, including the realm of foreign policy.⁵⁶

The legitimacy of the regime was directly challenged in 1958 over the issue of Algerian independence. Originally called in to quell the revolt by Algerian rebels, the ultra-right officer corps of the French military became disillusioned by the instability, vacillation and incompetence of civilian political leadership in the conduct of the war. Resisting political direction from Paris, the officers fomented a settlers' insurrection, then threatened to invade France and bring down the government. In the face of military revolt and civil war, France's political leaders in desperation called on General Charles de Gaulle to resolve the crisis and restore order.⁵⁷

Political Resources: The Institutions of the Fifth Republic

The Fourth Republic collapsed because the executive was unable to take decisive action in the face of external crisis. In creating the institutions of the Fifth Republic, the primary drafters of the Constitution, General Charles de Gaulle and his close associate and later prime minister,

⁵⁶Rolf H. W. Theen and Frank L. Wilson, Comparative Politics: an Introduction to Six Countries (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1986), 121. See also MacRae.

⁵⁷Ian Derbyshire, Politics in France: From Giscard to Mitterrand. Chambers Political Spotlights Series (Cambridge, England: W & R Chambers Ltd., 1987), 4.

Michel Debré, responded to the previous governments' inability to act authoritatively. They undertook a major transformation of the political system to correct what they perceived as the fundamental flaw of the Fourth Republic: the chronic weakness of political institutions.⁵⁸ More specifically, they condemned the lack of a stable and authoritative executive in a system dominated by a divided parliament. De Gaulle assigned much of the blame to the political parties, which he saw as perpetuating the divisions already existing within the social fabric. The resultant paralysis of state authority was seen as leading inexorably to crisis in France's domestic and foreign relations. Moreover, de Gaulle perceived these divisions as posing a constant threat to national unity. Given the tenuous nature of the national fabric, further complicated by the highly individualistic nature of the French and what he perceived as their propensity to defy authority, de Gaulle reasoned that the only solution lay in a strong, centralized state. Effective executive authority would exist, headed by the president, and insulated from undue influence from parliament and interest groups.⁵⁹

While de Gaulle had strong opinions about how the Fifth Republic would look and function, he had to contend with other members of the political order in the drafting of the new rules. According to one interpretation, the 1958 Constitution was drafted by two groups of actors with essentially opposing political interests. On the one hand, de Gaulle and Debré advocated greatly strengthening executive authority against the influence of parliament and the parties. On the other hand, a small group of members of parliament did not want to

⁵⁸Michel Debré, "The Constitution of 1958: Its Raison d'Etre and How it Evolved," in The Fifth Republic at Twenty, ed. William G. Andrews and Stanley Hoffmann (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1981), 17.

⁵⁹Wright, 15-17.

see their powers diminished. The compromise solution created a hybrid system of government, incorporating elements from both the presidential and parliamentary political frameworks.⁶⁰ Parliamentary organization was indicated by the presence of a prime minister and his cabinet, the Council of Ministers, who are accountable to parliament and can be removed by a legislative vote of non-confidence. A presidential system was invoked by the requirement for an elected president who appoints the prime minister and commands an array of constitutional powers.

While the new constitution clearly strengthens the executive in relation to parliament, the formula originally agreed upon poorly defines the relationship between the president and prime minister, conferring equally important powers and responsibilities on each. The constitution is ambiguous about who ultimately governs France and as such it is open to different interpretations. According to the letter of the Constitution, France is ruled by a dyarchy, or bicephalous executive, consisting of the president on the one hand, and the prime minister and his cabinet on the other. Technically, power and responsibility for direction of government is shared in a dual executive.

Articles 5 through 19 of the Constitution set out the powers of the president. The president was elevated above his Fourth Republic role as mere figurehead, to an active and visible chief of state. Symbolically, he is the highest political figure in the country. He is granted prerogative powers by the Constitution, which may be invoked in times of national crisis. He has the ability to rule by decree in event of a national emergency; he has the capability to take whatever measures he deems necessary in case of grave threat to the institutions of the Republic, the independence of the French nation, the integrity of its territory, or the

⁶⁰Ibid., 24.

execution of its international engagements. Finally, he has the power to bypass parliament and submit a legislative proposal to the electorate as a referendum.⁶¹

The Constitution grants the president the authority to appoint the prime minister, and on the latter's recommendation, the ministers of the cabinet. The prime minister and cabinet are collectively known as the government. The president presides over the meetings of the Council of Ministers and sets the agenda of those meetings, thereby controlling the government agenda. Although the president cannot dismiss either the prime minister or government, since the government is responsible to parliament alone, the president can dissolve the National Assembly and call new legislative elections (although not twice within the same year), in an attempt to return a majority which supports the president.⁶²

The French president has a private staff of political and administrative advisers, composing a general secretariat and a military secretariat. As commander-in-chief of the armed forces, he presides over senior defence council meeting and committees, and retains ultimate control over the French nuclear strike force. As head of state, the president represents France at international summits and is responsible for signing treaties. The president has the power of appointment to key political and bureaucratic posts, including ambassadorships, providing him with the politically important role of "fountain-head of patronage."⁶³

⁶¹Roy C. Macridis, "Politics of France," in Modern Political Systems: Europe, 5th ed., ed. Roy C. Macridis (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1983), 105.

⁶²John Gaffney, "Presidentialism and the Fifth Republic," in The French Presidential Elections of 1988, ed. John Gaffney (Aldershot, England: Dartmouth, 1989), 5.

⁶³Wright, 28.

Finally, Article 5 of the Constitution designates the president as the arbitre, or arbiter, of the nation. The ambiguity of this term has led to differing interpretations. One interpretation is that it empowers the president to act as an "apolitical arbiter who stood aloof from the squabbles of political parties and interest groups in order to defend the national interest and the constitution."⁶⁴ The other interpretation, which is most frequently subscribed to, holds that the president "has an arbitrary right to take decisions in the name of the nation."⁶⁵

Whereas these provisions potentially translate into wide presidential powers, the Constitution of the Fifth Republic also grants the prime minister considerable powers. According to Articles 20 and 21, the prime minister directs the operation of the government, which determines and directs the policy of the nation. Foreign and defence policies, then, are not excluded from his purview. The prime minister is also specifically responsible for the nation's defence and the government for the armed forces. Although the prime minister may choose to resign, only the National Assembly can force him to do so. Because the prime minister and government are constitutionally responsible to parliament, the idea of parliamentary government is legally respected.

This balance of power formally established by the Constitution within the executive was initially viewed as unstable, and observers predicted the evolution of the system in one direction or the other. This evolution has generally occurred, as constitutional amendment and practice have led the Fifth Republic to take on a strongly presidentialist orientation. Although a fundamental ambiguity exists within the constitutional text as to who holds ultimate power in the

⁶⁴Frank Lee Wilson, French Political Parties Under the Fifth Republic (New York: Praeger, 1982), 72.

⁶⁵Gaffney, "Presidentialism and the Fifth Republic," 5.

Fifth Republic, in practice, the presidency has become the strongest and most influential political post in the political system of the Fifth Republic. Because government is constitutionally responsible to parliament, some observers maintain that the prime minister is technically the head of the executive.⁶⁶

However, beginning in 1959 when Prime Minister Michel Debré ceded de facto control over foreign policy to President de Gaulle, who appeared most capable of handling the Algerian crisis, French prime ministers have traditionally acquiesced to presidential dominance. Debré's willingness to defer to de Gaulle in the Fifth Republic's first and formative crisis, resulted in the de Gaulle's effectively assuming leadership of government, especially over foreign and defence policy. With Algerian independence in 1962, the primary rationale for allowing de Gaulle to dominate government passed. That year he set out to complete the institutional reforms of 1958, submitting to referendum a constitutional amendment allowing direct presidential election through universal suffrage. In the subsequent confrontation with parliament, de Gaulle exercised his presidential prerogative and dissolved the National Assembly. The public not only came out in favour of the reform, but also gave de Gaulle a presidential majority in the National Assembly.⁶⁷

Through Gaullist precedent and the practice of his presidential successors, the Fifth Republic became progressively more presidentialist, as prime ministers came

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Howard Machin, "Introduction," in Developments in French Politics, ed. Peter A. Hall, Jack Hayward and Howard Machin, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 5.

increasingly to yield to presidential preeminence.⁶⁸ Governmental majorities in the National Assembly, moreover, traditionally came to perceive themselves as supporting the president, rather than the prime minister, despite formal governmental responsibility to parliament. This has been credited to the president's "near-mystical relation to the nation"⁶⁹, a phenomenon to which we will return in the following section. Presidential dominance of government is also attributable to the tradition of coincident majorities at presidential and parliamentary elections. The break in this tradition first occurred in 1986, with the advent of a parliamentary majority which was politically hostile to President Mitterrand, and the installation of the Chirac government. The period 1986-88 revealed the considerable limitations of the presidency on government activity, when the president was reduced "to his role as prescribed by the letter of the 1958 Constitution."⁷⁰ Thus it is when political circumstances are favourable for the president, that is, when he controls a presidential majority in parliament, that he enjoys primacy over government.

In actual terms, the president of France is one of the most powerful executives in western democracies. The presidency has unparalleled influence on the political life of France, indeed, has become the key organizing concept of French political activity. Moreover, elected for a seven year term, he is somewhat less subject to the demands of a perpetual electoral campaign which preoccupy and constrain his

⁶⁸Samy Cohen, "Le processus de décision en politique extérieure: L'équivoque française," in Les politiques étrangères de la France et de la Grande-Bretagne depuis 1945, ed. Françoise de la Serre, Jacques Leruez and Helen Wallace (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques & BERG, 1990), 262.

⁶⁹Gaffney, "Presidentialism and the Fifth Republic," 6.

⁷⁰Ibid., 4.

American counterpart. For these reasons some observers refer to France as having an "imperial presidency"⁷¹ or "republican monarch"⁷².

This acceptance of presidential supremacy in the French political system generally and the field of foreign policy more specifically, by the French political class and general public, deserves closer examination. Why was the dominance of the presidency over all other political actors accepted even after the passing of de Gaulle's charismatic and paternal leadership?

Regime Legitimacy and Grandeur

Philip Cerny argues that de Gaulle hoped to vest in the office of president more than the symbolism of chief of state or the authority of a political executive. Striving to overcome the chronic instability of the modern French political system, he sought a national consensus on the legitimacy of the institutions of the Fifth Republic. The keystone to structural consensus would be the image of the role that the president would play in the new system; the president would symbolize the national interest in the minds and hearts of the French people. The issue of consensus-building, or defining and specifying certain rules of the political and governmental game which would come to be accepted by most of the major groups and parties which participate in French politics, operated to link the realms of domestic and foreign affairs. De Gaulle undertook to link foreign policy, which is traditionally associated with the national interest rather than group or individual interest, with the new structure of authority vested in the presidency.

⁷¹Suleiman, 103-104.

⁷²"Outdoing the White House," The Economist, 27 January 1979.

The president could act as a "symbol of the whole" -- that is, as spokesman and guardian of the national interest in both the domestic and international spheres. Thus Cerny maintains that de Gaulle hoped to "create a psychological association of national identity with authority, giving that authority profound 'legitimacy'." ⁷³

The task of linking the presidency with regime legitimacy was served especially by means of a constitutional amendment. According to the 1958 Constitution, the president was to be indirectly elected by an electoral college composed of local and national officials. In 1962 de Gaulle held a successful referendum to establish direct presidential election by universal suffrage. While this constitutional amendment did not alter the formal powers allocated by the 1958 text, it has had profound implications for the character of the political system of the Fifth Republic. The reform greatly enhanced the political stature of the president and endowed the presidency with the legitimacy of a popular vote.

Because the president can claim his mandate comes directly from the French people he can claim at least as much legitimacy as députés in the National Assembly, and therefore as much as the government, whose ministers are selected from the parliamentary body.⁷⁴ In fact, as the only French official who can claim a national constituency, popular election enables the president to claim he represents the

⁷³Philip G. Cerny, The Politics of Grandeur: Ideological aspects of de Gaulle's foreign policy (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1980), ix-x.

⁷⁴Upon being appointed as minister, officials must resign from their seat in the National Assembly. This requirement further enhances presidential power, making government ministers beholden to the president for their rise in political status, and reliant on the president for the furtherance of their political careers.

nation as a whole.⁷⁵ It thus establishes the "supreme 'legitimacy' of the president over all other political actors".⁷⁶

It has been suggested that de Gaulle sought to endow the French presidency with legitimacy in part due to the direction France was pursuing in its defence policy. As of 1959, France sought to become a nuclear power and anticipated basing its defence on nuclear deterrence. De Gaulle viewed deterrence as relying ultimately on the credibility of that authority, the French president, who would unleash French nuclear forces if confronted with a threat. "This credibility assumes that the chief of state has legitimacy in his own right, independent of the legitimacy of institutions. He therefore had to have the support of universal suffrage."⁷⁷

More generally, Cerny has suggested that the acquisition of an independent nuclear force was one, essentially symbolic, element in de Gaulle's foreign policy of grandeur.⁷⁸ Grandeur functioned as an "operative ideal"⁷⁹, fundamentally ideological in character, which to him was instrumental in fostering a sense of national consciousness and collective belonging among the French people, transcending traditional domestic political fragmentation, and creating a consensus around the new institutions of a strong state in a stable political system.⁸⁰ That is, de Gaulle's foreign policy of grandeur ultimately served the domestic purpose of creating a sense of internal unity and common purpose. Hence de Gaulle

⁷⁵Theen and Wilson, 142.

⁷⁶Gaffney, "Presidentialism and the Fifth Republic," 6.

⁷⁷Debré, 18-19.

⁷⁸Cerny, The Politics of Grandeur, 125.

⁷⁹Ibid., 6.

⁸⁰Ibid., 4.

harnessed the energy of foreign policy symbolism for the domestic plane through its legitimizing effects for presidential authority. He also harnessed the energy of foreign policy proper as an instrument or mechanism for consensus-building. The policy of grandeur in the presidential domaine réservé thus has been developed as "part of the cement holding the various forces in the political system together."⁸¹

While the Constitution, as shown by the experience of cohabitation, places considerable limitations on presidential power and thus supports a parliamentary reading, in practice the Fifth Republic has known all but two years of presidentialism. Whether or not one accepts Cerny's argument regarding the linkage of regime legitimacy with presidential authority, and the implicit link between regime consensus and foreign policy consensus, the 1962 constitutional reform making the president the only nationally elected official in France has fundamentally influenced perceptions of presidential legitimacy as being above that of all other political actors, thereby reinforcing de facto presidential dominance of the political process.

Most telling, the presidency has become the ultimate political prize in French electoral politics. Considered the most prestigious office by the political elite and public alike, the presidency has retained its influence and political power even after the experience of cohabitation. The gradual présidentialisme of the Fifth Republic can be more clearly understood by examining the nature and evolution of the party system in France.

Changing the method of presidential election has meant that the presidential candidate must also be a powerful political leader. Thus the 1962 reform has in effect discounted the interpretation of the president's

⁸¹Ibid., 256.

constitutional role as a neutral arbiter. In order to secure a national majority, the presidential candidate must assemble a broadly based political party or coalition of parties. As the principal political leader in such a system, the president is also necessarily partisan. Once ensconced in office, the president feels compelled to fulfil his campaign promises. Moreover, this is expected by the French public, who view the presidential election as the most important electoral contest and as the one that will determine the character of the government. The president is therefore compelled to direct and control the policy making process.⁸²

The significance of France's institutional framework for foreign policy is found both in terms of structure and symbolism. Certain constitutional ambiguities contain the potential to engender conflict over policy making within the executive and thereby affect French capabilities to make collective decisions.⁸³ Under more typical circumstances, the president is the undisputed head of the executive and source of foreign policy. At such times there is an implicit link which has been cultivated since de Gaulle between the concepts of regime legitimacy, political consensus, and presidential office. Moreover, presidential supremacy in foreign policy has come to be identified with grandeur, which in turn is linked with regime legitimacy. Examination of the party system provides another, less symbolic but more political basis for the growing presidentialism of the Fifth Republic; how the presidency has become the de facto dominant political institution and the effects this development has produced on the main political parties within the party system in France.

⁸²Theen and Wilson, 142.

⁸³Ashford, 6.

The Political Party System

The party system is of fundamental importance to an understanding of the workings of the French political system. More generally, party systems have been viewed as the key to political stability.⁸⁴ The French party system underwent a transformation in the Fifth Republic which has contributed to a stability of regime which is unparalleled in contemporary French history. As will be shown, patterns of interaction among parties, in addition to the inner workings and behaviour of the parties themselves, have responded to the institutional changes to the French political system wrought by the 1958 Constitution and 1962 amendment.

The new electoral system led the French party system towards structural simplification and bipolarization. The system moved away from extreme party pluralism, reducing the number of electorally significant parties to four: the Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste), the French Communist Party (Parti Communiste Française), the Gaullists (Rassemblement pour la République or RPR) and the Giscardians, a coalition of smaller parties known as UDF (Union pour la Démocratie Française). The presidential nature of political competition in the Fifth Republic created the impetus among parties to form strategic alliances and electoral coalitions. The four main parties became associated in two coherent and durable rival alliances of left and right. The dynamics of French electoral politics dictate a bipolar pattern. Most significantly for this study, presidentialism drove the Socialist Party to become a presidential party and forced it to pursue a coalition strategy with the Communist Party to attain power. The party system, then, poses a particular set of constraints for the parties, not least for the Socialists and their leader, François Mitterrand.

⁸⁴Wilson, French Political Parties Under the Fifth Republic, 265.

Two specific institutional changes -- a new electoral system and direct election of the president -- in addition to the impact of de Gaulle on the party system, created new political imperatives for the parties as well as structural bipolarity, the division of electoral opinion into two camps, right and left. In 1958 the electoral system of the Fourth Republic, proportional representation, was replaced by a system of scrutin d'arrondissement (majoritaire) à deux tours wherein a candidate is elected when he or she receives an absolute majority of the vote. If no candidate attains a majority, a second ballot is held within a narrower electoral field, among only those candidates having received 12.5 per cent or more of the vote. This system acts as a tripwire for small parties and has resulted in a strong tendency towards "straight fights" or two-way contests at the second ballot. This system tends to produce the effect whereby "the voter chooses at the first ballot and eliminates at the second".⁸⁵ In other words, voters engage in tactical voting at the second ballot, specifically ganging up against candidates from parties at the extremes. Such parties must form alliances with more moderate parties in order to get representation in the National Assembly. Tolerating multipartism at the first ballot, the system then encourages inter-party alliances and bipolarization at the second ballot.⁸⁶

By the 1960s, virtually all second ballot electoral contests were right-left. The extension of bipolarization nationally was largely due to the influence of de Gaulle, who created in support of himself a very wide-ranging electoral

⁸⁵David Scott Bell and Byron Criddle, The French Socialist Party: The Emergence of a Party of Government, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 22.

⁸⁶Byron Criddle, "France: Parties in a Presidentialist System," in Political Parties: Electoral Change and Structural Response, ed. Alan Ware (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 141.

coalition from the centre-right through to some of the left. The emergence of the Gaullist party as a highly disciplined parliamentary majority provided support for the de Gaulle Presidency. The response evoked by the Gaullist coalition from those political forces outside it was to encourage those parties to adopt an alliance strategy. Electoral coalitions between the Socialists and Communists resulted. These parties were "constrained to form alliances in order to survive what would otherwise be an electoral rout in most constituencies."⁸⁷

The other institutional change which crystallized the bipolar nature of electoral competition in the Fifth Republic was the introduction of the direct election of the president. The second ballot of the presidential election would in effect be confined to the two front runners. In the presidential election a successful candidate would have to aggregate around 16 million votes, which was beyond the capabilities of any single party. Most parties could maintain an independent course, and very likely be eliminated at the second ballot, or they could form an alliance with other parties. The presidential election necessitated presidential alliances.

Certain parties were particularly threatened by the implications of direct presidential election, and faced the likelihood of marginalization. The Communist Party was electorally hurt by its ideological character, any presidential candidates it might field remaining essentially unelectable. Any hope of exercising power in a government thus required it to act as the junior partner in a coalition backing a Socialist presidential candidate.⁸⁸

The introduction of direct election of the president legitimated presidential authority and dominance and

⁸⁷Ibid., 142.

⁸⁸Ibid., 143. Also Bell and Criddle, 27.

"presidentialized" the regime; the race for presidential office became the overriding objective of political parties, structuring the nature of political competition in France. In the sphere of electoral politics, the reform served to subordinate legislative elections to presidential elections. The overriding concern in legislative elections became the need to elect a parliamentary majority to support the president -- the creation of a presidential majority.⁸⁹

Three out of today's four major political parties were created or refashioned around that purpose. Parties have become presidentialist parties, with the primary objective of propelling their leaders into the presidency. Party leaders must now credibly appear to be potential presidents, and must conduct their parties as such, in a highly personal and "oligarchical" manner. This did not pose any significant problems for most parties on the right. However, the Socialist Party encountered additional constraints deriving from its unique internal structure of numerous competitive factions, the value it places on a pluralistic party to reflect a like society, and a tradition of internal party democracy.⁹⁰

The existence of competitive sub-party groups with distinct identities and broad agendas in the Socialist Party⁹¹ is relevant to this discussion of the domestic political system because of the impact such groups have exerted on the party's internal life as well as its interaction with other political parties. The factions, or more properly, les tendances, have been vigorous in the new Socialist Party since its inception in 1971. The factions

⁸⁹Criddle, 142.

⁹⁰Ibid., 144.

⁹¹David Hanley, Keeping Left? CERES and the French Socialist Party (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 6-7.

have proven to be something of a double-edged sword in the evolution of the party. On the one hand, they contributed to the evolution of the party into a party of government, by drawing attention to the rich diversity of views and forward-looking ideas and policies. The existence of multiple factions gave the party elasticity and a correspondingly broad appeal across all sectors of French society.⁹² On the other hand, the factions also proved to be divisive and a source of confusion and compromise in the formulation of official party positions, given their sometimes significant policy differences.

François Mitterrand successfully established his leadership over the party, and the factions themselves subscribed to the presidential formula, "each becoming essentially bases inside the party for rival présidentiabiles", or presidential candidates.⁹³ Presidentialism has thus extended to the sub-party groups of the Socialist Party. This is not to discount the role of ideology in some groups; however, in the context of a political system which has become progressively more presidentially focused, factional self-identity and cohesion has tended to be pursued through conflict with rival factions for leadership.⁹⁴

The progressive rise of the presidential imperative in the political and electoral system of the Fifth Republic has arguably resulted in the erosion of ideology for the Socialist leader, and for the party more generally.⁹⁵ Constrained within a bipolar structure, the Socialist Party has had to conduct its quest for presidential office by forming electoral coalitions with the Communist Party. Nevertheless, the

⁹²Ibid., 1-2.

⁹³Criddle, 144.

⁹⁴Hanley, Keeping Left?, 11.

⁹⁵Ibid., 255.

influence of the Communist Party on Mitterrand's electoral programme was also a function of the electoral popularity of the Communist Party until the mid-1980s. Thus Mitterrand's 1981 electoral programme, 110 Propositions, reflected a concern for his ally's preoccupations but also a presidentialist concern for maintaining a broad-based appeal and the allegiance of moderates of the party and attracting undecided centre voters. In terms of governing France, the political desirability of a parliamentary majority which supported the president generally tended to send Socialist Party factional divisions underground: differences remained among the various sub-party groups, but were muted in the interest of indicating solidarity behind Mitterrand. The fates of competing factional visions and preferences are hinted at by which policies were decided upon, implemented, or reversed. Again, the political fortunes of the Communist Party affected the respective influence of certain factions, in particular that of the Marxist faction, Centre d'Etudes, de Recherche et d'Education Socialiste (CERES). The relative proximity of the CERES faction to the Communists on various issues served CERES well in the initial stages of government, but as public opinion grew increasingly hostile towards the Communist Party, CERES suffered proportionally.⁹⁶ Mitterrand's bid for re-election in 1988 revealed an even more moderating influence, as Mitterrand and the Socialist Party clearly made an opening towards the French political centre. This trend was undoubtedly facilitated by the severe electoral decline of the Communist Party by 1986.

The preceding discussion suggests that, for the Socialist Party, the electoral system imposes rather special constraints, interacting with its internal structure. The internal influence of factions is determined in part by the wider environment, particularly the behaviour and fortunes of

⁹⁶Ibid., 259.

the Communist Party. The steady decline in popularity of the Communist Party most importantly has enabled a Socialist shift towards the centre in recent years.

Public Opinion and Political Culture

Public opinion as a factor in the foreign policy process concerns the nature and extent of interaction between political elites, particularly the regime or central political leadership, and masses on issues of international politics. While it may most obviously address the degree of public support for a specific leader and his or her policies, we maintain that in France it more significantly concerns the broader issue of the legitimacy and support for the political system of the Fifth Republic as a whole. The existence of a French inter-party defence consensus implies a linkage between attitudes of political elites on foreign policy and public expectations of regime legitimacy. Hoffmann contends that this gaullist foreign policy consensus depends on the context for its precise substance.⁹⁷ The fluidity of the concept leads us to identify how institutions and elite coalition-building processes have combined to create a force which serves to moderate the effects of regime fragmentation and vulnerability on foreign policy.

The role of public opinion on French foreign policy making has traditionally been considered to be negligible. French policy makers, particularly the president, have been viewed as virtually unconstrained in foreign and defence issues because, as in most Western democracies, French voters have been found to not base their electoral choices on such issues. In that sense, French public opinion can be said to reflect the "Almond-Lippmann consensus" which has evolved in public opinion research, fielding broad agreement on three

⁹⁷Stanley Hoffmann, Decline or Renewal? France Since the 1930s (New York: Viking, 1974), 217.

observations about public opinion: it is volatile and therefore is an insufficient basis for a stable and effective foreign policy; it lacks structure and coherence; and it is essentially impotent, exerting little if any influence on foreign policy.⁹⁸

Nevertheless, it is significant that a consistently high percentage of the French public continues to support the nuclear consensus. In 1977, 39 per cent of French questioned disagreed with the statement that "the French nuclear striking force is indispensable", compared to 27 per cent in 1981, and 26 per cent in 1988.⁹⁹

In that sense, this discussion is perhaps more correctly considered one of political culture. Political culture refers to the attitudes underpinning the institutional structure and stability of a political system. It utilizes a multifaceted approach, drawing on the historical experiences of the nation and its cultural specificities, to assess the nature of the link between citizens and their polity. It addresses the issue of regime allegiance; the extent of political polarization or conversely, the degree of system consensus.¹⁰⁰ Such themes provoke questions about how allegiance is nurtured, the role of myths and language in the development of consensus, and the factors accounting for reorientation of political perceptions.

The linkage which is posited by Cerny to exist between the gaullist foreign policy of independence and grandeur and the legitimacy of the institutions of the Fifth Republic more

⁹⁸Ole R. Holsti, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus," International Studies Quarterly 36 (1992), 441-445.

⁹⁹Jérôme Cazes, "L'opinion publique française et les questions internationales," in Politique Etrangère (4/1989), 730.

¹⁰⁰Eva Kolinsky and John Gaffney, "Introduction," in Political Culture in France and Germany, ed. Eva Kolinsky and John Gaffney (London: Routledge, 1991), 1-2.

obviously operates at the level of political culture. The prevalence of gaullist rhetoric in public discourse points to the fundamental impact de Gaulle has exerted on popular conceptions of the defence and foreign policy issue areas, as on political culture more generally. The parameters established by gaullism are also indicated by the incessant invoking of "consensus" in analyses of French foreign and defence policy. To the extent that the perceptions and self-perceptions of French policy makers as well as the French public have been shaped by the Gaullist legacy, analysts cannot discount it as a vital component of the domestic political setting in contemporary France.

If Cerny's analysis holds, French public opinion has been successfully manipulated with regard both to foreign policy and issues of legitimacy. By tying presidential leadership to the main themes of a gaullist foreign policy, France's political elite has harnessed the emotional quality of national sovereignty implied by independence to the legitimacy of state institutions of the Fifth Republic. In effect, public opinion supporting a gaullist approach to foreign policy formulation has matured over time and through the mechanism of inter-party consensus into a political culture.

The gaullist legacy also extends to the language in which French foreign policy is discussed. De Gaulle's perspective, it has been argued, has become the accepted doctrine on foreign policy in France.¹⁰¹ Although restating and reemphasizing traditional themes, the gaullist formulation seems to have acquired the legitimacy that establishes it as the standard against which the foreign policies of his successors are measured. This is in part due to the preeminence of the Gaullist party in the governing coalition until 1978 and its close adherence to its former leader's

¹⁰¹Wallace, "Independence and Economic Interest," 272.

conception of the state and foreign policy.¹⁰² As such, French political parties and presidents have become adept at employing gaullist rhetoric with its emphasis on national independence, even when actual policy departs quite markedly from what de Gaulle would have endorsed.¹⁰³ Political and public discourse is thus centered around the gaullist perspective of foreign policy, although this may have little to do with actual government activities.

This argument would seem to explain the apparent contradiction posed on the one hand by the low level of public interest in foreign policy issues during election campaigns and the minute degree of influence exercised by public opinion on specific foreign policy issues in modern France, for example, the decisions to acquire an independent nuclear force in the 1950s and to leave NATO's integrated military structure in the 1960s, which lacked mass consensus, and on the other hand by the much-touted defence consensus.

The inter-party defence consensus, we have noted above, centers on the continuing need for France to maintain an independent nuclear deterrent. This deterrent serves to ensure that the foreign policy goals of grandeur and indépendance can be pursued by French policy makers. The deterrent is viewed as the "essential precondition for France's maintaining its national independence."¹⁰⁴ The consensus among the French political class is revealed by several indicators. First, the annual defence budget is remarkable for its relative lack of controversy and ideological and political debate, particularly in comparison

¹⁰²Ibid., 274.

¹⁰³Ibid., 272-274.

¹⁰⁴Henri Mendras and Alistair Cole, Social Change in Modern France: Towards a Cultural Anthropology of the Fifth Republic (Cambridge and Paris: Cambridge University Press and Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1991), 55.

to the budgets for education and agriculture. There has been general agreement among the parties that requirements to serve in the national armed forces will continue. The Rainbow Warrior affair of 1985 and the absence of controversy in the French public revealed a consensus on the need to retain a nuclear capability even if the continuation of nuclear tests were to bring France into disputes with other states, specifically those in the Pacific region where French nuclear tests are conducted. Finally, the anti-nuclear movement has had very little success in France. The failure of the anti-nuclear movement to mobilize French popular support has been attributed to the linkage actively promoted by the French Communist Party during the 1950s between anti-nuclear pacifism and an anti-national pro-Sovietism.¹⁰⁵

Thomas Risse-Kappen has suggested that the impact of mass public opinion on elite decisions in foreign and security policy of a liberal democracy tends to depend more on the political institutions, domestic structure and elite coalition-building processes of the country than on the specific issue or pattern of attitudes.¹⁰⁶ Public opinion can directly influence foreign policy decisions by changing policy goals, priorities and means. Importantly, direct influence is also achieved "by winning symbolic concessions in the sense of changed rhetoric rather than policy reforms."¹⁰⁷ Indirect influence on foreign policy may result when public opinion and the activities of public interest groups "lead to changes and/or realignments within or between political

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 55.

¹⁰⁶Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Public Opinion, Domestic Structure, and Foreign Policy in Liberal Democracies," in World Politics 43 (July 1991), 479-480.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 483.

organizations such as parties."¹⁰⁸ He also notes that the interaction between mass attitudes and elite attitudes may be an important factor accounting for the impact on policy decisions.

The French Fifth Republic appears finally to be moving towards a less conflictual form of politics; there is a growing consensus among the major political forces about the basic parameters of politics, as indicated by the preponderance of major parties advocating moderate reforms.¹⁰⁹ The virtual disappearance of anti-systemic parties means that system consensus, in the broader sense pertaining to the institutions of the Fifth Republic, has been achieved. The role of de Gaulle in the development of regime consensus has been central. Through the institutional forms he created and the patterns of behaviour he fostered as president of the Fifth Republic, a fundamental legitimacy has come to be attached to the office and its constitutional framework.

Conclusion

De Gaulle's Constitution was a specific attempt to reshape long-established features and practices in the French political landscape through institutional change. The 1958 Constitution corrected the perceived shortcomings of the Fourth Republic by increasing the powers of the executive, especially the president, decreasing the area of competence of the legislature and limiting its power over the executive. Finally, it established an electoral system which encouraged the formation of party coalitions, a response to the divided and pluralistic party system which effectively immobilized the preceding regime. The 1962 constitutional reform, which

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 482-483.

¹⁰⁹Kolinsky and Gaffney, 3.

established direct popular election of the president, was the decisive factor which led the system to evolve in a presidential direction. The institutional framework of the Fifth Republic encouraged evolution of the French party system, producing an essentially stable bipolar system, promoting electoral alliances between parties.

The success of the Fifth Republic is shown by the acceptance of its institutional framework by all major political parties in France, including the Socialist Party. As France's seventeenth constitution since 1789, it appears to have finally won general acceptance and political legitimacy: a consensus on the structural political framework now exists. Moreover, it has allowed for governmental stability and the exercise of effective executive authority while respecting democratic principles and maintaining democratic controls -- an independent legislature and free elections. The pattern of French politics has stabilized and "normalized", as demonstrated particularly by the experiences of alternance and cohabitation. This success in effecting such "constitutional engineering" demonstrates that "political institutions can shape and even radically transform established political attitudes and behaviour."¹¹⁰

At the institutional level, the Fifth Republic has been well served by the very ambiguity of the 1958 Constitution, which has enabled the political system to adapt to changing circumstances.¹¹¹ This became evident during the experience of cohabitation, which, instead of triggering a constitutional crisis, served ultimately to emphasize the stability of the regime. Equally crucial to regime stability has been the evolution of the parties and the bipolar party system in general, underpinned by the acceptance of presidentialism in

¹¹⁰Theen and Wilson, 138.

¹¹¹Machin, 6.

political culture as the central organizing concept of French political life.

The policy impact of these internal systemic factors on the phenomena of fragmentation and vulnerability are potentially very problematic as a result of the constitutional ambiguity which divides governmental from presidential power. This potential is moderated to a large extent, however, by the presidential aspirations of parties, and hence, political actors at the apex of French politics.

Regime vulnerability, or the strength of the regime as it relates to the wider political environment, deals not only with popularity of incumbents, but with the longer-term expectations that the French public has of its central political leadership in the formulation of foreign policy, and the norms which that leadership feels compelled to follow. Specifically, we argue that the regime is constrained by the linking which has occurred in public and elite attitudes of regime legitimacy with a presidentialist foreign policy of indépendance and grandeur. In such a context, frequency of regime change may be less significant an indicator of regime vulnerability than the factor of foreign policy change between regimes which challenges this traditional basis of French foreign policy.

CHAPTER 3

Majority Government

On 10 May 1981 François Mitterrand narrowly defeated incumbent candidate Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in the second round of the presidential elections by winning 51.76 per cent of the vote, becoming the first Socialist president of the French Fifth Republic. Exercising presidential prerogative, Mitterrand immediately dissolved the right-wing controlled National Assembly which had been elected in 1978. In the June parliamentary elections which followed, Mitterrand's Socialist Party, in a leftist electoral alliance with the French Communist Party, won a clear overall majority. Mitterrand subsequently appointed a government under the premiership of Socialist Pierre Mauroy.

The Socialists' victory was all the more dramatic for being unexpected; very few political observers, including members of the left itself, had expected a Mitterrand victory. After twenty years in French politics and two previous unsuccessful tries at the presidency, Mitterrand was viewed somewhat as the "perpetual loser", or more kindly, "president-in-waiting". More significantly, the French left had been shut out of government leadership since the inception of the Fifth Republic in 1958. Twenty-three years of right-wing rule seemed to confirm the long-term pattern of French politics since 1789, characterized by the extremely few, short-lived

left-wing governments it had produced.¹¹² The advent of Mitterrand and the Socialists to the highest decision making apparatus of the French state thus marked a significant juncture in French politics. While some observers, particularly those on the right, considered the left victory a political crisis, analysts tended to view the shift as signifying the "normalization" of French politics and the legitimacy of the institutions of the Fifth Republic; after 23 years of right-wing rule, France had ostensibly become stable enough domestically to support the alternation (l'alternance) of government power between right and left majorities.¹¹³

From a comparative perspective with other advanced industrial states, the French leftward shift of 1981 was atypical of the trend amongst the major Western liberal democracies, which in the post-1974 period had swung firmly to the right ideologically, intellectually and politically and towards neo-liberal economic policies.¹¹⁴ In the domestic polity and economy the Socialist program was one promoting radical and decisive transformation; throughout his campaign, Mitterrand had emphasized the Socialist ambition of a rupture, or breaking, with capitalism.

Several of France's western allies were concerned about the impact of a Socialist president and government on French foreign and defence policies. The Socialists entered office with the ideological legacy of 25 years in opposition and

¹¹²Bell and Criddle, 1.

¹¹³For a pre-1981 analysis which supports the view that the transfer of power from government to opposition constitutes the ultimate test of the legitimacy of a democratic political system's institutions, see John Frears, "Legitimacy, Democracy and Consensus: a Presidential Analysis," West European Politics 1 (October 1978): 11-23.

¹¹⁴George Ross, "Introduction," in The Mitterrand Experiment: Continuity and Change in Modern France, ed. George Ross, Stanley Hoffman and Sylvia Malzacher (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1987), 4.

almost 20 years of pursuing political coalition with the Communist Party. It was unknown what degree of influence the Communist Party would wield in a coalition government with the Socialists. Moreover, due to inter-factional battles occurring within the Socialist Party after 1978 and a challenge by "right-wing" factional leader and rival presidential candidate, Michel Rocard, to Mitterrand and his leftward leaning strategy¹¹⁵, Mitterrand had been forced to align with Jean-Pierre Chevènement's Marxist faction, the Centre d'Etudes, des Recherches et de l'Education Socialistes (CERES).¹¹⁶ The successful retention by Mitterrand of control of the party at the 1979 Metz Congress left CERES in a central position within the party. Drafting of the "Socialist project", the intended guidelines for the Socialists' présidentiable, or presidential candidate, in the forthcoming 1981 elections, fell to CERES. As a consequence, a radical-sounding economic program advocating a "break with capitalism" was produced.¹¹⁷ The resulting document was also strongly anti-Atlanticist in its section on defence issues, espousing what analysts have termed "nuclear neutralism", whereby France retains its independent nuclear capability but resists inclusion in the Atlantic Alliance and supports the ultimate dissolution of both blocs.¹¹⁸

In January 1981 Mitterrand drew up his own electoral platform, contained in the booklet 110 Propositions.

¹¹⁵George Ross and Jane Jenson, "Crisis and France's 'Third Way'," Studies in Political Economy 11 (Summer 1983): 81.

¹¹⁶Howorth, "Atlanticism, Gaullism or 'Nuclear Neutralism'?" 110.

¹¹⁷Peter Holmes, "Broken Dreams: Economic Policy in Mitterrand's France," in Sonia Mazey and Michael Newman, eds., Mitterrand's France (London: Croon Helm, 1987), 36-37.

¹¹⁸Projet socialiste pour la France des années 1980 (Paris: Parti Socialiste: 1980), 346-350.

Reference to defence issues was broad and calculated to cause minimal offence to any group within the left. Vague reference was made to Mitterrand's objective to renegotiate certain, but unspecified, aspects of the Atlantic Alliance, to avoid nuclear proliferation, to promote European disarmament, and to build two new nuclear-armed submarines.¹¹⁹ Although Mitterrand indicated support for NATO's decision on Intermediate Range Nuclear Force (INF) deployment as early as July 1980, and criticized Giscard throughout the spring 1981 campaign for the president's refusal to take sides publicly on the issue of Soviet SS-20s, Mitterrand otherwise sought to keep defence issues off the electoral agenda.¹²⁰

Mitterrand focused instead on Giscard's foreign policies, strongly criticizing Giscard's apparent Ostpolitik of courting good relations with the Soviet leadership even in the aftermath of the invasion of Afghanistan and the Korean Airlines incident. While this may have reassured domestic and international critics to some extent, Mitterrand also rebuked the emergence of French over-reliance on cooperation with West Germany in the context of the European Community (EC). The implicit devaluation of the Franco-German partnership in Community affairs boded ill for both the bilateral relationship and for the future of European integration.¹²¹

In addition to Mitterrand's relatively moderate critique, the CERES faction within the Socialist Party offered more radical foreign policy criticisms before the elections and advocated a fully neutral France which would act as an arbiter

¹¹⁹Howorth, "Atlanticism, Gaullism or 'Nuclear Neutralism?'" 110.

¹²⁰Lellouche, "France and the Euromissiles," 327.

¹²¹Gabriel Robin, La Diplomatie de Mitterrand - ou le triomphe des apparences, 1981-1985 (Les-Loges-en-Josas, France: Editions de la Bièvre, 1985), 69.

between the superpowers.¹²² It was unknown what degree of influence such factions would wield on the formulation of government positions and policy: although by 1981 the role of the president had become clearly dominant in the political system of the French Fifth Republic, the left in French politics had long maintained an anti-presidentialist stance and supported a more "republican" polity. Mitterrand himself had voted against the 1958 Constitution and criticized its vesting of excessive power in the presidency in his 1964 book Le Coup d'état permanent, which was re-issued in 1984. Such criticism was reiterated in Mitterrand's condemnation of the "monarchist drift" of French politics under Giscard. The Socialist Party's slogan proclaiming its intent to "change the way we live" thus appeared to target not only French society, but also the nature of power and power-sharing within the French state.¹²³ To the extent that this could affect the nature of party-president relations, presidential control over foreign policy was in question.

The Regime and Political Opposition

The period of majority Socialist government from 1981-86 appears, at least initially, to have been characterized by little regime fragmentation, as Mitterrand successfully employed the institutions and governing traditions of the Fifth Republic to consolidate presidential power. Upon his election, Mitterrand sought immediately to reinforce and stabilize presidential leadership by acquiring the backing of a loyal parliamentary majority through the dissolving of the

¹²²Howorth, "Atlanticism, Gaullism or 'Nuclear Neutralism'?" 110-111.

¹²³Olivier Duhamel, "The Fifth Republic under Francois Mitterrand," in The Mitterrand Experiment: Continuity and Change in Modern France, ed. George Ross, Stanley Hoffmann and Sylvia Malzacher (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1987), 140-41.

National Assembly and calling new legislative elections. The Socialist majority which was returned was elected on presidential coat-tails and therefore owed its political existence to Mitterrand, who henceforth exercised great authority and leverage over it.¹²⁴ In this way, presidential supremacy was further extended into the presidential party. The Socialist Party during much of this period constituted a "dominant, but dominated party"¹²⁵, forming the parliamentary majority but following Mitterrand's initiative on policy issues.

The Socialist Party, nevertheless, appears to have been a source of some influence on Mitterrand's program during the first two years of his mandate through its opportunities for direct policy input. Party leaders had frequent access to Mitterrand in weekly breakfast or dinner meetings at the Elysée, the presidential residence, for the first year. And for the first two years of Socialist government, party membership became the fundamental criterion for appointments to the top levels of the French administrative structure, including the president's staff at the Elysée, ministerial cabinets, the civil service, nationalized industries, and state-controlled banks, financial institutions and media. The return to professionalism as the basis for non-governmental appointments did not occur until mid-way through the Socialist government's mandate.¹²⁶

The factional nature of the Socialist Party also influenced policy under the majority government in the initial two years. Economic policy and the program of reforms was the

¹²⁴Philip G. Cerny, "Democratic Socialism and the Tests of Power: The Mitterrand Presidency Eighteen Months On," West European Politics 6 (July 1983): 202.

¹²⁵Alistair Cole, "The Presidential Party and the Fifth Republic," West European Politics 16 (April 1993): 55.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, 58-59.

focus of intense inter-factional disputes during the first years of the Mitterrand septennat, or seven year term. This period when rival factions within the Socialist Party struggled to determine the policy agenda of the new government has been termed the "war of the two roses".¹²⁷ As discussed below, its outcome had significant implications for both economic policy and European integration. Yet again, the influence of these internal sources of opposition to the governing regime was limited. The structure of the Socialist Party would subsequently be altered in an effort to suppress the internal factions and to unite the party behind government policy.¹²⁸

However, the impact of intra-party disputes was to some extent limited by the problems encountered by the other major political party of the left, the French Communist Party. The eroding electoral base and internal disarray of the Communist Party rendered it less effective and less able to exploit its proximity to centres of power in order to sway policy making.¹²⁹ After the June parliamentary elections, the Socialist Party itself carried a sufficient majority in the National Assembly to technically enable Mitterrand to create a purely Socialist government. Nevertheless, Mitterrand named four Communist Party members as ministers in the Mauroy government, albeit with relatively minor portfolios.

In the broader context of left politics, Mitterrand had sought to capture the votes of Communist Party supporters. By including Communists in the governing coalition he achieved this while effectively co-opting the party without giving the Communist Party much influence in the policy making process.

¹²⁷See Michael Sutton, "France and the Maastricht design, The World Today, January 1993, 4. See also Philippe Bauchard, La guerre des deux roses: du rêve à la réalité (Paris, 1986).

¹²⁸Cerny, "Democratic Socialism," 202.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, 205.

Although the Communist Party had formally broken the electoral alliance with the Socialists, the latter felt constrained to chase the Communist vote, given the nature of the electoral system described in Chapter Two, and the possibility of attracting most of the left vote on the second ballot. Therefore, although the Communist Party suffered a significant decline in the 1981 elections, it indirectly exercised influence over the domestic program of the incoming government. Although the Communist Party had lost over a third of its voters between 1978 and the 1981 elections¹³⁰ it could conceivably again be an important political force and future ally of the Socialists in the bipolarized system of the Fifth Republic. Moreover, since it still controlled France's largest trade union and commanded 15 per cent of the vote, the Communist Party could prove crucial to the implementation of the domestic economic reforms which the Socialists were to undertake.¹³¹

Communist inclusion in the new government sent political messages to both domestic and international audiences. With this gesture Mitterrand acknowledged the alliance of the left, asserted the new government's left identity, and made a largely symbolic gesture of left-wing unity. Communist participation in the government broadened the political base of support for the program of reforms to be undertaken, or at the least, was calculated to dampen Communist criticism of government initiatives in the interest of maintaining left-wing solidarity.

Internationally, Mitterrand's inclusion of Communist

¹³⁰Frank L. Wilson, "Socialism in France," Parliamentary Affairs 38 (Spring 1985): 169.

¹³¹Peter A. Hall, "Socialism in One Country: Mitterrand and the Struggle to Define a New Economic Policy for France," in Socialism, the State, and Public Policy in France, ed. Philip G. Cerny and Martin A. Schain (London: Frances Pinter, 1985), 83.

members in the new leftist government threw out a direct challenge to heavy-handed American efforts to exert pressure on its ally. The Reagan administration was pointedly hostile to the prospect of Communist Party members in the French government and sent a warning by diplomatic memorandum to the Elysée immediately following the legislative elections that the conduct of United States relations with France would necessarily be affected in such a situation.¹³² Reagan's message was perceived as a direct echo of the Kissinger doctrine of 1976, which opposed Communist participation in the governments of the United States' allies.¹³³ In turn, by proceeding with the coalition government, Mitterrand's reaction underlined the continuing gaullist concern for French political independence.

It is ironic that American fears should have centered on the putative influence of the Communist members, given the political deterioration of the Communists' position and the fact that their involvement in the Socialist-dominated government was unenthusiastic and motivated more out of fear of causing further electoral defections from the Communist Party than out of a sense of left-wing loyalty. According to one analyst, "party leaders and activists deeply resented the Socialist victory, feared its long-term consequences for the Communist Party and hoped privately for its failure."¹³⁴ Nevertheless, Mitterrand's coalition gambit paid off and the Communist Party in its public pronouncements appeared supportive of Mitterrand and the government in the early phase

¹³²David A. L. Levy, "Foreign Policy: Business as Usual?" in Mitterrand's France, ed. Sonia Mazey and Michael Newman (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 168.

¹³³Neville Waites, "Defence Policy: The Historical Context," in Defence and Dissent in Contemporary France, ed. Jolyon Howorth and Patricia Chilton (London & Sydney: Croom Helm. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), 41.

¹³⁴Wilson, "Socialism in France," 169.

of reforms in order not to appear disloyal to the idea of left-wing government. The French Communist Party was in fact undergoing an internal crisis which effectively paralyzed its leadership even after the Communists formally left the left-wing government following the 1984 European elections, since what remained of its electoral support also continued to support the left-wing government.¹³⁵

Regime fragmentation was therefore relatively low during the period of majority Socialist government, but not completely absent. Although Mitterrand did appear to be more influenced by Socialist Party members and factions in the early period of the regime than in the later years, it is clear that he still maintained effective executive control and oversight over the legislature, and that he was predominant within the executive. Moreover, his coalition strategy with the Communist Party bought an initial period of relative peace, muzzling discordant Communist voices which also had an interest in salvaging what remained of their deteriorated electoral support. After the 1983 turn-around in economic policy Mitterrand consolidated his control over the decision making process and moved to substantially limit the influence of party on government and the administration.

Regime vulnerability did not become a factor in the Socialist government's political calculus until 1984. The seven-year presidential term guaranteed Mitterrand's place at the helm of the French state. Given the magnitude of the 1981 Socialist victory, Mitterrand was also assured of maintaining full control over the levers of government power at least until 1986, when the next parliamentary elections were to be held. However, it will be argued that perceptions of increasing regime vulnerability developed following a series of Socialist defeats in local elections and the fall-out resulting from the failed economic reforms, and that this

¹³⁵Ibid., 170.

sense of regime vulnerability would contribute to significant changes in the direction of French policy.

Given the conditions of limited regime fragmentation and low vulnerability, one would expect that the foreign policy outputs of the Mitterrand government would reflect Hagan's findings, and that Franco-German relations during this period would demonstrate a fair degree of clarity, consistency and independence.

Socialist Economic Policy

The primary objective of implementing domestic economic reforms, it may be argued, constituted the fundamental determinant of the tenor of bilateral relations in the initial period of Socialist government. While Franco-German defence relations were directly influenced by Mitterrand's support of the deployment of American Ground Launched Cruise Missiles (GLCM) and Pershing II missiles, bilateral relations were perhaps more deeply conditioned by the priority accorded by the French regime to its domestic economic program. Indeed, one interpretation of French support of INF is that it bought time for the Socialist economic reforms both domestically and internationally. A brief account of the Socialist policy initiatives in the economic sector will follow. It is maintained that, given the prevailing conditions of economic interdependence within the European context, the experience of the Socialists in the first two years of government operated to underline the benefits of bilateral cooperation and coordination in economic and European Community affairs.

As stated in the 1972 Common Programme and restated in Mitterrand's election manifesto, the Socialists sought the transformation of the capitalist economy. The political environment in which the Socialists found themselves in June 1981 was conducive to pursuing such reform: widespread discontent in the French electorate with Giscard's economic

performance largely accounted for the Mitterrand victory. The sweeping victory of the Socialist Party in the parliamentary elections confirmed Mitterrand's predominance; by winning a substantial majority, the Socialists could finally implement their programme, aided by the fact that the right, out of government for the first time in the Fifth Republic, was divided and in turmoil.

Upon taking office, Mitterrand and the Socialist government immediately instituted a Socialist domestic program with the fundamental objective of eliminating unemployment. Based on the principle of economic justice through the redistribution of resources, French policy measures included an expanded public sector and a greater government role in industry and finances through the nationalization of key firms in these sectors. Mitterrand specifically aimed to revitalize the French economy by recapturing control over the domestic market, a particular concern for West Germany.¹³⁶

The domestic economic reforms, although moderate in magnitude, evoked considerable negative opinion among France's economic partners. Mitterrand's France was essentially pursuing an expansionist economic policy while both of its major European partners were pursuing policies of market-driven austerity; where Paris fought unemployment, Bonn and London fought inflation.¹³⁷ The French return to Keynesianism marked a divergence from the German monetarist economic and financial strategy. Such a move had significant implications for Franco-German cooperation and European integration, since the European Monetary System is predicated upon the convergence of member states' economic and financial policies

¹³⁶Samuel F. Wells, Jr., "Mitterrand's International Policies," Washington Quarterly 11 (Summer 1983), 60.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, 59-61.

for its proper functioning.¹³⁸ The clear pursuit of a Socialist economic policy in France that went against the general European, and more specifically German, example, posed a threat to existing and future collaboration, suggesting immobilism if Europe's principal partners maintained conflicting economic policies.

The Socialist economic reforms however proved quickly to induce caution on the part of the Mauroy government. The election of the Socialist majority immediately provoked a flight of capital from Paris to other Western financial centres. Investment declined in France, and the declining value of the franc forced two devaluations. The first devaluation of 4 October 1981 was necessary to stop the drain on reserves and to stimulate exports, according to French Finance Minister Jacques Delors; it was viewed by many as a German sacrifice, necessitating a 5.5 per cent revaluation of the deutschmark.¹³⁹ The 12 June 1982 revaluation was preceded by tough negotiations between the French and Germans, and brought stiffer conditions, with the Germans insisting that the French take anti-inflationary measures. A temporary halt to reforms was announced in mid-1982 as the government introduced austerity measures. By the beginning of 1983, the French government was engaged in a very public Cabinet debate over the direction of French economic policy, between those who advocated further austerity measures, including Finance Minister Delors and the moderate Michel Rocard, and those further to the left, notably the Industry Minister and CERES faction leader, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, who demanded that France withdraw from the European Monetary System and pursue

¹³⁸R. Foremesyn, "Europeanisation and the Pursuit of National Interests," in Continuity and Change in France, ed. Vincent Wright (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 239.

¹³⁹*Ibid.*

an independent economic course.¹⁴⁰

Several factors contributed to a permanent reversal or U-turn in the Socialists' economic policy. The unexpected world recession in 1982 and the continuing crisis of confidence among investors combined to create pressures for abandoning the expansionist policy. The political vulnerability of the Socialist government soon became apparent. Municipal elections on 6 and 13 March 1983 constituted the first major test of the popularity of the Mitterrand government since the 1981 elections. Both the Socialists and the Communists saw significant losses at the local level, placing political pressure on the government.¹⁴¹ As the first nation-wide vote since the Socialist landslide victory two years earlier, the dramatic scale of the swing away from the left could only be interpreted as widespread dissatisfaction with the performance of the left in government, especially with the economic program.¹⁴² Moreover, the anti-inflationary measures which temporarily replaced the policy of reflation in June 1982 were beginning to show slow but steady results in French economic performance.¹⁴³

Economic conditions were problematic for the new government. The Socialists inherited a difficult economic situation marked by the deterioration of the profitability and competitiveness of French industry, stagnating levels of investment and growth, and rising levels of the trade deficit,

¹⁴⁰Wells, 61.

¹⁴¹"Kohl's Turn to Help Mitterrand?" The Economist, 19 March 1983, 75.

¹⁴²"The Echo Across the Rhine," The Economist, 12 March 1983, 38-39.

¹⁴³"Kohl's Turn to Help Mitterrand?" The Economist, 19 March 1983, 75-76.

unemployment and inflation.¹⁴⁴ With French production closely integrated into the world economy, France faced external constraints arising from economic interdependence, particularly in the areas of trade, energy and monetary affairs.

Mitterrand's economic dilemma directly touched the nerve of Franco-German economic and monetary cooperation, with matters coming to a head at the 20-21 March 1983 meeting of finance ministers in Brussels to reshuffle the European Monetary System. France wanted West Germany to make the major currency change and revalue the deutsche mark in the EMS. However, the German currency was also under pressure in the exchange markets, having reached its ceiling in the EMS structure. Consequently, the West Germans demanded that France devalue sharply as a corrective measure. France took a hard-line negotiating stance, threatening to withdraw from the EMS, float its currency and raise national trade barriers. Coming under heavy pressure at the meeting from the other ministers, the Germans finally yielded and revalued the mark by 5.5 per cent, allowing France to make a largely technical adjustment of -2.5 per cent. France in return agreed to introduce a deflationary program.¹⁴⁵

The government decision was indicated on 21 March 1983, when the new West German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl and a high-level delegation of ministers came to meet their counterparts in Paris and "reached broad agreement for expanded economic and security cooperation including French commitments for a third devaluation of the franc within a general realignment of the EMS, continued membership within the EMS and an expanded

¹⁴⁴Peter A. Hall, "The Evolution of Economic Policy under Mitterrand," in The Mitterrand Experiment, ed. George Ross, Stanley Hoffmann and Sylvia Malzacher (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1987), 54.

¹⁴⁵"Once again, the Rhine divides," The Economist, 26 March 1983, 29-30.

program of economic rigour."¹⁴⁶ The role of West Germany in the French decision cannot be underestimated. The context of the decision indicates the importance of both the bilateral and Community relations to France. While French interdependence with West Germany in monetary affairs through the mechanism of the EMS was clear, France proved it was willing to play hardball, at the extreme threatening withdrawal. Although not phrased in terms of a choice between an autonomous, Socialist France and an economically integrated Europe, Mitterrand's policy of further austerity is said to have been significantly influenced by considerations of European politics and Franco-German relations.¹⁴⁷

The March 1983 decision by President Mitterrand to keep the franc in the EMS and to start pursuing economic policies supportive of that decision, proved to be the turning point in the "war of the roses" between rival Socialist factions over priorities for France and Europe.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, the relative decline of the Communist party throughout this period removed an additional and, some argue, decisive constraint, which enabled Mitterrand to align himself within the party with the positions of the more moderate Socialists. Henceforth, economic decision-making became influenced by politicians such as Rocard and Delors, who were "convinced of the virtues of conservative economic policies and firm in their belief that France must work within Europe to achieve its economic goals."¹⁴⁹

The new austerity program built on the measures

¹⁴⁶Wells, 62.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Sutton, 4.

¹⁴⁹Andrew Moravcsik, "Negotiating the Single European Act," The New European Community - Decisionmaking and Institutional Change, ed. Robert Keohane and Stanley Hoffmann (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1991), 51.

introduced in 1982. The government was strongly criticized by the left-wing of the Socialist Party, which denounced the deviation from Socialist principles. By May 1984, Mitterrand's popularity was the lowest of any president of the Fifth Republic. He nevertheless continued with the austerity measures and by the end of 1984, the austerity program appeared to be showing steady, if unremarkable, results as inflation and the trade deficit decreased.¹⁵⁰

To summarize, Mitterrand and the Socialist government made economic reform their priority during the first two years of their mandate. We have found it relevant to include economic policy in the discussion of foreign policy of the Socialist government because economic objectives conditioned the tenor of bilateral relations. Socialist economic policy was the product and focus of inter-factional struggle, reflecting which faction dominated the Socialist Party at the time. Mitterrand appeared to have been significantly influenced by leftist factional interests until the economic U-turn. Regime fragmentation existed within the Mauroy government between leftist and moderate Socialist ministers. In addition to the external constraints and pressures on the franc, one significant factor which contributed to the reversal in Socialist economic policy was the recognition of increasing regime vulnerability following the defection of popular support from the Socialist Party in the local elections of 1983.

France's relations with Germany reflected the economic priority, and the attendant delay on foreign policy initiatives by the Socialist government. The course of the French economic reforms of 1981-82 and the subsequent pressures on the government to alter policy underline the existence of bilateral economic interdependence in trade and monetary issues. The relationship was strained particularly by

¹⁵⁰Wells, 62.

the program of Socialist reforms pursued in 1981-82. This period of Socialist policy represents the attempt by the French government to formulate its internal economic policy in isolation from the policies of its major trade partners. As such, it revealed in part the unrealistic expectation of national control over a process that is increasingly affected by actors and events that are beyond the direct control of the national government. It also revealed the political imperatives created by party and coalition politics which constrained the Socialists to pursue that economic policy, which indirectly influenced the conduct of Franco-German relations.

European Affairs

In his electoral campaign Mitterrand criticized incumbent President Giscard d'Estaing for having developed too close a bilateral relationship with West Germany within the context of the European Community. Once in office, Mitterrand reaffirmed his commitment to the Community and the importance of the "European dimension" to France, but indicated that a shift in the French approach to Community matters would occur. The new approach would be more multilateral (or communautaire) and egalitarian in moving towards its other European partners, and deemphasizing the Franco-German "axis", thus dispelling the image of an exclusive and privileged relationship which the idea of axis implied.

Mitterrand's approach to Europe contrasted pointedly with that of his predecessor, Giscard d'Estaing. Giscard's excellent rapport with Chancellor Helmut Schmidt underpinned a dynamic bilateral relationship, with close personal consultation between Giscard and Schmidt frequently resulting in a joint position being presented to EC meetings as a fait

accompli.¹⁵¹ The history of contemporary Franco-German relations is marked by the tradition of such "grands couples", including Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer, and General de Gaulle and Adenauer.¹⁵² However, the possibility of a positive interpersonal dynamic appeared to be ruled out early as a factor in Socialist France's relations with the Federal Republic, by negative comments made by Schmidt and other German government officials about the implications of a possible Socialist victory in France.¹⁵³

By rejecting any implicit notion of a Franco-German axis or directoire in the Community, Mitterrand distanced himself from both Giscard's European policy and the personalization of bilateral relations in the Giscard-Schmidt couple, pre-empting unfavourable comparisons with his predecessor. This led logically to the expectation of France developing closer links with Britain, which had been side-lined to a certain extent by the close cooperation between France and West Germany on European matters which had prevailed for much of the past decade.¹⁵⁴ Mitterrand's shift was not well received by those Europeanists who perceived the Franco-German relationship as the predominant ligne de force in the Community, and who saw

¹⁵¹The Economist, 26 March 1983, 30

¹⁵²Henri Menudier, "Valéry Giscard d'Estaing et les relations Franco-Allemandes (1974-1981)" in La politique extérieure de Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, ed. Samy Cohen and Marie-Claude Smouts (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1985), 67.

¹⁵³Schmidt, for example, earlier spoke of Mitterrand as being primarily a politician knowing nothing of economic matters. See Pierre Favier and Michel Martin-Roland, La Décennie Mitterrand, Vol. 1 (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1990), 227.

¹⁵⁴William E. Paterson, "Britain, France, West Germany and the Development of the European community," in Politics in Western Europe Today: Perspectives, Policies and Problems since 1980, ed., D. W. Urwin and W. E. Paterson (London: Longman, 1990), 187.

any progress in integration as contingent on bilateral agreement on principle and coordination in policy. Indeed, deemphasizing the bilateral relationship within the EC ran counter to the logic which had seemingly driven European integration until that point. Moreover, the prevailing mood of "Euroclerosis" in the early 1980s combined with the traditional British lack of enthusiasm for, if not intransigence on, European integration led to a generally poor prognosis for the future of the Community.

A linkage between the domains of economic policy and European integration has long been recognized by the Socialist Party, with fundamental disagreement existing among the factions as to whether involvement with the EC was desirable in itself for France and whether it helped or hindered the cause of French socialism. In short, they wondered if the construction of socialism would be compatible with the process of integration. At the 1973 Bagnolet Convention, the Socialist Party leadership had struck a compromise position between those Socialists who were committed Europeanists, mostly moderate and "right-wing" Socialists, and those Socialists further to the left, like CERES, tending towards a gaullist distrust of the Community and its possible implications for the socialist vision. The compromise stated support for "the building of a Europe on the march toward socialism", a dubiously vague statement which was subsequently invoked by proponents of either side.¹⁵⁵

It would seem that Mitterrand in 1981 sought another form of compromise on European questions. Mitterrand's cabinet included former EC Commissioner Claude Cheysson as Foreign Minister and André Chandernagor as Minister for European Affairs, but also several members known for their dislike of

¹⁵⁵Jacques Huntzinger, "The French Socialist Party and Western Relations," in The Foreign Policies of West European Socialist Parties, ed. Werner J. Feld (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978), 77-78.

integration: de Gaulle's former minister Michel Jobert, Jean-Pierre Chevènement of CERES and the three Communist Party ministers.¹⁵⁶ The balanced composition of the cabinet was reflected in a European policy that was moderately Socialist. Mitterrand stressed the need for the Community to develop a stronger social and cultural role, and called in October 1981 for the creation of a European "social space" (un espace social européen). With this he sought to address the social and economic problem of high unemployment in the European framework through a Community-wide policy of reflation. This proposal was greeted with polite indifference from his German and British counterparts in the Community, and was never discussed at Council, although smaller members viewed the proposals sympathetically.¹⁵⁷

By October the French position had hardened somewhat: French concessions regarding Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform and the EC budget "would have to be offset by British and German willingness to support reflation in Europe."¹⁵⁸ French hopes of fostering closer Franco-British links floundered eventually in the face of Thatcher's intransigence on a rebate and CAP reform. Moreover, Mitterrand's plan for reflation within a European social area involved long-term measures which were politically feasible for him to pursue given his term of seven years and his governing majority remaining in power for five years, but such a scope of action was unparalleled among the political executives of other European capitals. The first two years of Mitterrand's European policy thus amounted to some Socialist gestures and a move towards diversifying French ties within the Community,

¹⁵⁶Kevin Featherstone, Socialist Parties and European Integration (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 126.

¹⁵⁷Formesyn, 238.

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

but with very little actually accomplished.

Thus although most members of the French Socialist Party were essentially pro-European, actual European affairs received very little attention during the first few years of the Mitterrand presidency. For the reasons cited above, namely party and coalition politics, the overriding Socialist priority was domestic economic reform. These reforms impinged on bilateral relations insofar as economic interdependence through the linking of the French and German currencies through the European Monetary System made the continuation of French domestic reforms contingent on the support of Bonn and the Bundesbank.

To the extent that there was little sympathy for Mitterrand's proposals for a European policy of reflation, it made little sense for him to support strengthening of European Community institutions. By maintaining the status quo in which the Luxembourg Compromise ensured unanimity decision-making in Council, Mitterrand could pursue his domestic economic reforms despite opposition by his partners. If, on the other hand, there had been considerable support for his plans, this early period might have witnessed more active French attempts to stimulate federalist progress in the Community and a move towards majority voting in the Council. While Mitterrand did not have the strong ideological stance of his presidential predecessors which viewed steps towards supranationalism as anathema, there were insufficient incentives to engage him in that direction.¹⁵⁹

In terms of disintegrating the Franco-German axis, Mitterrand was clearly unsuccessful and the realization of bilateral interdependence and common positions on Community issues actually led to closer links with Germany. Closer bilateral relations were also partly a function of Mitterrand's failed attempt to cultivate closer ties with

¹⁵⁹Ibid., 241.

Britain. Thatcher's insistence on a budgetary rebate and reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) directly contrasted with the preferences of France, the member state which benefited most from the CAP. France and West Germany found themselves in agreement on this issue. By late 1981 the Community was paralyzed by a double impasse, in which Paris and Bonn refused to set a ceiling on Community agricultural expenditures and London refused to accept the principle of a reduction in its annual rebate. By the time of the bilateral summit of November 1981, Franco-British differences were portrayed as contending interpretations of the Community between Thatcher and Mitterrand. Where Thatcher saw the EC as a vast free trade zone and supported a minimum of community policies, Mitterrand saw European integration progressing in all policy areas - economic, cultural and security. The persistent efforts of the British government to block the annual setting of agricultural prices until agreement was reached on budgetary reform and the amount of the British rebate were finally overcome by a compromise adopted in the Council by qualified majority in May 1982, overriding the British veto. Franco-British relations were particularly strained by this point. Mitterrand's strategy in the face of British intransigence was to play on Franco-German cohesion, whereas Thatcher attempted to divide the pairing.¹⁶⁰

After the decision of the French government on 21 March 1983 to remain in the EMS and realign its economic policy, there was a marked change in Mitterrand's European approach. Two months following his decision to remain within the EMS, the European Council met in Stuttgart to attempt to resolve the problem of Britain's contribution. With Chancellor Helmut Kohl attempting to forestall rupture, Mitterrand finally compromised and settled on the sum of 750 million ECU, on the condition that various other problems be addressed, such as

¹⁶⁰Favier and Martin-Roland, 366-67.

increasing the Community's own resources.

The shift in the Socialist government's economic thinking is reported to have involved the realization on the part of Mitterrand of the constraints which operate on France by virtue of economic interdependence.¹⁶¹ The party which had come into power in 1981 promising transformation of the nature of French society was by 1983 acknowledging the constraints on its policy making power even in the domestic realm, and reverting to older formulas.

The French Presidency of the Council of Ministers

During the first half of 1984, France held the presidency of the European Council. Mitterrand announced a major diplomatic initiative for the relaunching of Europe. Tactical political considerations may certainly have played some part in Mitterrand's Europeanism, as the elections to the European Parliament were to take place that March. Nevertheless, Mitterrand was very active in his capacity as President of the Council, playing a decisive role in the settling of the British agricultural and budget disputes.¹⁶² A British rebate was agreed upon at the Fontainebleau summit in late June. Also, much progress was made towards enlargement of the EC with eventual membership of Spain and Portugal. French negotiators became much more supportive of measures to liberalize the internal market, and Mitterrand's rhetoric became decidedly more federalist.¹⁶³ What accounted for this Europeanist turn in Mitterrand and the shift whereby the

¹⁶¹John R. Frears, "France," in Policies and Politics in Western Europe, ed. F.F. Ridley (London: Croon Helm, 1984), 53.

¹⁶²Moravcsik, 51.

¹⁶³Philippe Moreau-Defarges, "'J'ai fait un rêve...': le président François Mitterrand, artisan de l'union européenne," Politique Etrangère 50 (Autumn 1985), 359-75.

Community came to be seen as a cornerstone of Socialist foreign policy?

One analyst, David Levy, traces the shift to events in 1983. First, it became increasingly apparent to French policy makers that successful diplomacy often relied on coordinated policies, and the EC provided one valuable forum for coordination. Secondly French domestic economic vulnerability propelled her towards the EC, and specifically towards continued coordination with West German policy makers. Apparently this was particularly driven home to the French by the third devaluation occurring in the EMS in March 1983. Thirdly, transatlantic tensions brought on by Reagan's economic and trade policies drove Europe closer together. Particularly damaging for US-Europe relations were the imposition of sanctions against countries selling technology to the Soviet Union for the gas pipeline, and the US action against European steel imports. Finally, Paris came to the conclusion that Community affairs were important to it.¹⁶⁴

The debate which took place within the French regime over whether to remain in the European Monetary System "was treated as synonymous with the debate over abandoning other spheres of cooperation in Europe, including participation in the Common Market."¹⁶⁵ In short, the Socialist revival of interest in EC affairs was based on the French realization of "the extent to which their own diplomatic and economic efforts depended on those of their partners in the EC."¹⁶⁶

Mitterrand's close friend Roland Dumas was appointed Minister of European Affairs in December 1983, and for the six month presidency of the European Council Mitterrand played an active role in European affairs, holding 30 bilateral meetings

¹⁶⁴Levy, 179-180.

¹⁶⁵Wells, 69.

¹⁶⁶Levy, 179.

with other leaders. The deadlock over the budget was successfully broken during Mitterrand's term. French interest in Community affairs continued after the French presidency ended, and Dumas was promoted to Minister for External Relations. The two major French initiatives on the European dimension were the ESPRIT and Eureka projects.

The evolution of Mitterrand's European policy cannot be viewed as following Gaullist lines. For de Gaulle, the nation-state was the fundamental locale of political legitimacy. Supranational structures, particularly a European one, could eventually develop but only after the gradual establishment of a common cultural identity among the Europeans. In the 1960s, de Gaulle perceived the continuing absence of that common consciousness. The establishment of "integrationist" structures was tolerated on condition that they not encroach on national sovereignty. Nevertheless, de Gaulle was a firm believer in maintenance of an international balance of power. Convergence of national objectives and cooperation in policies were seen increasingly as elements in the contemporary balance of power. Cooperation lay behind his proposals for the reform of NATO in 1958, the Fouchet Plan for European political cooperation in 1962, and the Franco-German Treaty of 1963.¹⁶⁷ In that sense, the perception that the US and Japan were increasingly dominant in the international economic system could justify the argument that only by banding together in the Community could Europe compete. By throwing French support behind integrationist efforts, Mitterrand was arguably helping to maintain an equilibrium, and avoiding economic and political dominance by one or two powers.¹⁶⁸

Mitterrand's initiatives through 1984-85 were

¹⁶⁷Cerny, The Politics of Grandeur, 50.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., 47-50.

instrumental in the process leading to the signing of the Single European Act (SEA) in 1985. In the negotiations for a British rebate, Mitterrand raised the possibility in May 1984 of a Europe à géométrie variable, that is, of variable geometry. This was to be a two-tier Europe which would effectively isolate Britain and deny her a voice in the new arrangements if a budgetary agreement were not reached. This implicit threat of exclusion spurred a more conciliatory British negotiating stance, and a figure for the rebate was finally agreed upon at the Fontainebleau Summit in June 1984.¹⁶⁹

EUREKA

France also pursued European technological cooperation during this period. France feared that the American focus on the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and developing ballistic defences would create sanctuaries out of the superpowers' territories, stripping the French nuclear deterrent of its effectiveness and increasing the likelihood of regional power conflicts being limited to Europe. In addition to using diplomatic channels to discourage the deployment of ballistic defence systems, France proposed the coordination and cooperation of European technological efforts under the rubric of the EUREKA (acronym for European Research Coordination Agency) program in early 1985, in order to prevent Europe from being left out of technical innovation.¹⁷⁰

In spite of this series of initiatives in developing the Franco-German partnership, cooperative ventures began to stagnate in 1985 due to two primary factors. First was the

¹⁶⁹Moravcsik, 56-57.

¹⁷⁰Peter Schmidt, "The WEU - A Union Without Perspective?" Aussenpolitik, English Edition 37 (1986): 393.

internal political situation in France, in which the slide in popularity of the ruling Socialists indicated the loss of majority government in the upcoming legislative elections. The prospect of electoral defeat stifled any further grand initiatives on the part of Paris. Second, SDI was beginning to prove divisive to the Franco-German relationship, particularly after Washington sent a diplomatic note to its European allies in the WEU in the spring of 1985, warning them against coordinating on SDI outside the framework of NATO.¹⁷¹

Foreign Policy and the Exercise of Power

The new Socialist government in 1981 professed to undertake an ambitious programme of internal reforms and the creation of a distinctly Socialist diplomacy and foreign policy. The Quai d'Orsay was immediately redesignated "Ministry of External Relations" and this move was perceived as symbolic of the Socialist effort to imprint all policy areas with their stamp. Both domestic policy and foreign policy were considered within the realm of public policy, and hence equally subject to the preferences and priorities of the new majority. Claude Cheysson, the new Minister of External Affairs, articulated the Socialist desire to project its political approach onto the entire spectrum of public policy when he stated that "There is no foreign policy, there is the policy of France. It finds expression abroad, just as it finds expression in France."¹⁷²

¹⁷¹Nicole Gnesotto, "Le dialogue franco-allemand depuis 1954: patience et longueur de temps," in Le couple franco-allemand et la défense de l'Europe, ed. Karl Kaiser and Pierre Lellouche (Paris: Institute française des relations internationales, 1986), 29.

¹⁷² As quoted in Smouts, "The external policy of François Mitterran," 155.

The NATO Dual Track Decision

The Soviet Union's deployment of highly accurate SS-20 missiles targeted on Western Europe created a perceived disadvantage for NATO at this level, raising fears of the decoupling of American strategic weapons from Europe. NATO leaders agreed in 1979 to pursue both disarmament and rearmament: if the USSR did not agree to withdraw its SS-20s, the US would counter them by deploying Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs) in Europe by 1983. NATO's strategy of flexible response was already under pressure from the chronic deficiencies in its conventional capabilities, leading to greater reliance on nuclear deterrence.¹⁷³ This made the strategy of flexible response simultaneously more dangerous (early recourse to nuclear weapons) and less credible. The deployment of US INF was intended to strengthen the link between tactical and strategic nuclear weapons, upon which a credible threat of escalation depended.¹⁷⁴

The tenor of Franco-German relations was immediately influenced by President Mitterrand's commitment to support the NATO dual track decision. On 8 July 1981 Mitterrand made his first official statement in support of installation of the American Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) in Europe: "If I condemn neutralism, it is because I believe that peace is linked to the balance of forces in the world. The deployment of the Soviet SS-20s and Backfires breaks this balance in Europe. I do not accept it and I agree that it is necessary to increase our armed strength in order to restore the balance." Further, Mitterrand urged the resolution of the Geneva discussions on the missiles with what he called the 'zero option': "There must be neither SS-20s nor Pershing

¹⁷³John Baylis, "NATO strategy: the case for a new strategic concept," International Affairs 64 (Winter 1987/8): 44-45.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 47.

IIs."¹⁷⁵

NATO's two-track decision, however, triggered a vociferous public debate and protest movement in Western Europe. Public opinion in West Germany was significantly affected and French policy makers viewed the growing anti-nuclear and pacifist sentiment as an essentially neutralist trend. This had serious implications for French security policy, which was based since the end of the Second World War on the idea of a glacis, or buffer zone, provided by West German territory. More immediately, it appeared that the West German Socialist party was moving towards a non-nuclear stance, and if reelected, would not proceed with the implementation of the NATO decision.

On 20 January 1983 Mitterrand spoke before the West German Bundestag, strongly urging the Germans to stand behind the NATO two-track decision to deploy Pershing IIs and GLCMs on German territory.¹⁷⁶ Mitterrand's speech rebuked his Socialist counterparts in the SPD, which looked as if it would renege on the agreement to deploy US INF on West German territory if re-elected. Coming shortly before the West German parliamentary elections, the focus of which was the INF decision, Mitterrand's support for the position of Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats is considered to have helped swing the election results in the right's favour.¹⁷⁷ It earned the wrath of German Socialists, who considered Mitterrand's actions a betrayal of the socialist cause.¹⁷⁸

The support of President Mitterrand and the Socialist

¹⁷⁵See Mitterrand's interview published in the German magazine Stern, 08 July 1981. Translation provided in Smouts, "The External Policy of François Mitterrand," 158.

¹⁷⁶Le Monde, 22 January 1983.

¹⁷⁷Ernst Weisenfeld, "François Mitterrand: l'action extérieure," in Politique Etrangère 51 (Spring 1986): 132.

¹⁷⁸Haglund, Alliance Within the Alliance, 78.

government for INF encountered virtually no resistance from the French general public. This appearance of a societal consensus favouring NATO deployment of Pershing II and GLCMs in Europe was the consequence of several factors. First, Mitterrand's position on the INF issue reflected a dramatic shift in the perceptions of the Soviet Union among the French political elite and general public opinion. Public opinion polls revealed that by the 1980s the Soviet Union was viewed increasingly as threatening French and Western security following a series of events which included the invasion of Afghanistan, imposition of martial law in Poland, and the Korean Airlines incident.¹⁷⁹

Second, there was no French "peace movement" analagous to those existing in West Germany, the Netherlands or Britain, and therefore virtually no organized opposition to the planned deployment. The inability of the peace movement to establish itself in France during the 1980s has been traced to the particular strategy adopted by the French Communist Party since 1979 in the context of increasing suspicions of Soviet motives described above. By dominating the major French peace group, "Le mouvement de la Paix", and by closely echoing the statements of the Soviet leadership on the NATO deployment, the French Communists in effect discredited the peace movement in France.¹⁸⁰

Third, the nature of French nuclear doctrine and strategy precluded in France the sorts of doubts that France's allies were experiencing regarding the nuclear war-fighting implications of highly accurate counterforce weapons such as the Pershing II missiles. Based on the gaullist doctrine of la dissuasion du faible au fort, or deterrence by the weak of the strong, French deterrence strategy was essentially one of

¹⁷⁹Lellouche, "France and the Euromissiles," 321.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., 320.

massive retaliation based on the independent French nuclear striking force.¹⁸¹

Fourth, as outlined above, Mitterrand effectively employed the institutions of the Fifth Republic to reinforce executive supremacy over the legislature, and presidential dominance over the foreign and defence policy making sectors. The Socialist majority which was returned in the June 1981 elections owed its political existence directly to Mitterrand. Party discipline ensured that Mitterrand's decisions were supported in the legislature, and that parliamentary debate on defence issues was kept to a minimum.¹⁸²

Nevertheless, divisions on French nuclear and defence policy existed within the Socialist Party and the new government. Indeed, the consensus which apparently existed on INF deployment as well as French possession of the independent nuclear striking force, concealed fundamental divisions just below the surface in the French political class on the uses of French nuclear weapons. One grouping or pole subscribes to the view that French foreign policy is properly one of complete independence and neutrality between the two superpowers and their blocs, and that French nuclear forces are the key to French independence. The Communists, CERES and some far-right Gaullists fell into this camp¹⁸³, termed "nuclear neutralism" by Jolyon Howorth.¹⁸⁴ At the other pole were those who took a decidedly "Atlanticist" perspective and who advocated close political and integrated military relations between France and its allies in the Alliance. According to Howorth, however, the heritage of Gaullism served

¹⁸¹Ibid., 322.

¹⁸²Ibid.

¹⁸³Ibid., 324.

¹⁸⁴Howorth, "Atlanticism, Gaullism or 'Nuclear Neutralism'," 123.

in the 1970s and early 1980s to make this a politically unviable position in French politics, as was demonstrated by Giscard's hasty retreat from the principle of enlarged sanctuary and its implied extension of the French nuclear deterrent to its European allies.¹⁸⁵

The more politically acceptable position falls somewhere between the poles on the political spectrum, and advocates French participation in some form of a European defence system. Several factions within the Socialist Party, including President Mitterrand, Prime Minister Mauroy and Defence Minister Charles Hernu, support the idea of "a European project as part of a broader 'Atlantic' defence system."¹⁸⁶ Other centre-right political forces fell into this camp, including the Gaullist Rally for the Republic under Jacques Chirac.¹⁸⁷

The suppression of the divisions existing within the Socialist Party on French security policy and the pro-INF line adopted by Mitterrand more generally can also be traced to the domestic agenda pursued by Mitterrand and the Socialist government during the first two years of their mandate. The economic reforms which were to be undertaken constituted a priority for much of the Socialist Party. That fears were widespread concerning the potential impact of Socialist economic policy became immediately apparent when the election of the Socialist majority in the National Assembly in June 1981 triggered widespread selling of the franc and the flight of capital from Paris to other Western financial centres.

In addition, the reaction of the Reagan administration had been immediate and hostile to the prospect of Communist participation in a French government following the May-June

¹⁸⁵Ibid., 123.

¹⁸⁶Ibid.

¹⁸⁷Lellouche, "France and the Euromissiles," 324.

1981 elections. After the elections, the Reagan administration immediately sent a memorandum to the Elysée warning that Communist inclusion would necessarily influence the conduct of American relations with France.¹⁸⁸ Upon Mitterrand's appointment of the Communist ministers, Reagan cancelled a secret agreement which had been concluded between Presidents Giscard and Carter in 1978, according to which the US would provide France with the supercomputers necessary for the arming of the sixth French nuclear submarine, l'Inflexible, in exchange for increased French cooperation with NATO.¹⁸⁹ Reagan's action emphasized French limitations in terms of both military capabilities (including supercomputers and also satellite technology) and diplomatic scope of action. Therefore, it is likely that Mitterrand perceived that French reassurances of French solidarity with the United States and the Alliance could preclude undue pressure or deliberate sabotage of French economic reforms on the part of the United States or Germany.¹⁹⁰

According to one analyst, Mitterrand heeded Reagan's warning and immediately embarked on a mission to convince the Americans of his pro-Atlanticist leanings and immunity to Communist influence.¹⁹¹ Didier Motchane, leader of the CERES faction, has stated that "the tenor of socialist diplomacy in the early months was conditioned to a very large extent by the necessity 'not to enter into head-on collision with the Americans' and by the 'need to buy a certain amount of peace

¹⁸⁸Levy, 168. Also Waites, "Defence Policy under Socialist Management," 205.

¹⁸⁹Manchester Guardian, 5 February 1985.

¹⁹⁰Howorth, "Atlanticism, Gaullism or 'Nuclear Neutralism'," 113.

¹⁹¹Waites, "Defence Policy under Socialist Management," 205-6.

from the right-wing'." ¹⁹² The Socialist priority was its domestic economic programme, which was already being challenged by extreme pressure on the franc in the world money markets. The Socialist government thus found itself dependent on the good will of its major economic partners, who were also its closest allies, to relieve pressure on the franc. In the context of growing international tension and crisis, Mitterrand would have to follow a prudent course in defence policy if his economic objectives were to be realized. Indeed, as indicated by Reagan's action, the potential for US sabotage of Socialist France's economic or military programmes clearly existed.

The French decision to back the implementation of the NATO dual track decision involved risks, since it raised the possibility of Soviet demands that the French strategic force de dissuasion be considered along with the superpower arsenals in the Geneva arms control negotiations. This occurred by 1983, when Soviet leader Yuri Andropov suggested as a solution to the stalled INF talks that NATO not deploy the Pershing II and Cruise missiles in exchange for Soviet drawing down of its INF to the aggregate total of British and French missiles. The proposal triggered significant criticism of Mitterrand within France, first from Giscard and his supporters, who saw Mitterrand's vigorous support of INF deployment as leading inevitably to French inclusion in the Geneva talks. ¹⁹³ And increasingly criticism arose within the governing majority from the Communist Party ¹⁹⁴, who demanded French participation in the INF talks (although they also insisted that the French deterrent not be reduced), and from

¹⁹²Howorth, "Atlanticism, Gaullism or 'Nuclear Neutralism'," 125-6.

¹⁹³Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, "Une occasion historique pour l'Europe", Le Monde, 19 February 1983.

¹⁹⁴Le Monde, 02 June 1983.

Atlanticists in the Socialist Party who voiced concern that French refusal to join the talks would lead to superpower impasse.¹⁹⁵

Communist criticism was intensified by the outcome of the Williamsburg economic summit in May 1983, a joint communique on Western security which indicated greater flexibility concerning the "zero option", the American starting position in Geneva. The Communists however actually perceived a hardening of the Western position, given the communique's statement regarding the indivisibility of the member countries' security. By that summer the facade of solidarity had slipped from the face of the presidential majority as the CERES faction began to openly criticize the government for its pro-Atlanticist leanings.¹⁹⁶

The Franco-German Defence Relationship

Franco-German Commission on Defence and Security

The re-launching of the Franco-German dialogue commenced with the bilateral summit of 25 February 1982 in Paris. In reaction to the deployment of Soviet SS-20s, France and Germany embarked on a process of rapprochement which evolved into institutionalized cooperation. The Paris summit produced a joint declaration for bilateral cooperation on security issues. The proposed first heads of state meeting was combined with a regular bilateral summit meeting on 21-22 October 1982 between Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand, and resulted in the establishment of a joint Franco-German Commission on Defence and Security. The commission was to be a high level gathering of civilian and military

¹⁹⁵Jolyon Howorth, "Consensus of Silence: the French Socialist party and Defence Policy under François Mitterrand," International Affairs 60 (Autumn 1984): 592.

¹⁹⁶Le Monde, 31 May 1983.

administrators, which would meet several times yearly to discuss common security issues, and to supervise the work of three working groups on armaments, military cooperation, and politico-strategic affairs.¹⁹⁷ According to one former member of the French Ministry of Defence, the commission was instrumental in transmitting political attitudes of each government to their partner's bureaucracy, developing an understanding of the constraints operative on each partner, and the establishment of an unprecedented degree of trust at all levels.¹⁹⁸ The 1982 meeting was significant in that it signalled the beginning of a process of intensified Franco-German dialogue on defence and security, which progressively has resulted in cooperative measures.

Reactivation of the WEU

Reactivation of the West European Union was originally a French initiative, driven by French concerns about the decreasing credibility of the American nuclear guarantee to Europe during the crisis over NATO's dual track decision, and the perception that the rise of the peace movement in West Germany was moving it toward a neutralist and pacifist position. Reactivation was officially accomplished in October 1984 at the Rome meeting marking the 30th anniversary of the amended Treaty of Brussels. The same French Defence Ministry official credits the mechanism of the Commission with fostering mutual understanding among ministers and commission members of the desirability of the reactivation of the WEU as a European forum on defence matters.¹⁹⁹ It is significant to

¹⁹⁷Gnesotto, "Le dialogue franco-allemand," 25.

¹⁹⁸André Adrets (pseudonym), "Franco-German Relations and the Nuclear Factor in a Divided Europe," in French Security Policy, ed. Robbin Laird, 107.

¹⁹⁹Ibid., 108.

note that French interest in developing the WEU was tactical, and was greatly diminished once the crisis surrounding NATO's double track decision was resolved.²⁰⁰

Rapid Action Force

The 1984-88 military programming law included the decision to centralize command of Hadès missiles, a sensitive point in Franco-German relations. It also authorized the reorganization of ground forces to form a highly mobile rapid action force (force d'action rapide or FAR), which was not tied to nuclear weapons.²⁰¹ The FAR was perceived as a symbol of French commitment to come to the defence of West Germany.

A major target of CERES criticism was the Socialists' military white paper, the loi de programmation militaire 1984-1988. The bill reasserted the priority of strategic nuclear deterrence for France but its centrepiece was the proposed massive restructuring of the land army, involving the creation of a force d'action rapide, or rapid action force (FAR). The strategic functions of the force are rather vague; the government stressed that the rapid deployment force would not be automatically engaged in the event of European hostilities and was essentially a war-prevention force, as opposed to a war-fighting force. With the decision to deploy the FAR falling directly under the political authority of the president, such a decision "would symbolize the determination of the state to go to the ultimate extreme if hostilities do not cease immediately."²⁰²

Although this enunciation of the theory behind the FAR

²⁰⁰Schmidt, "The WEU," 392.

²⁰¹Gnesotto, "Le dialogue franco-allemand," 26.

²⁰²Howorth, "Atlanticism, Gaullism or 'Nuclear Neutralism'," 122.

linked it to the strategic deterrent, the FAR appeared to certain French observers to be easily adaptable to the controversial changes in NATO doctrine occurring in September 1982. The Rogers doctrine, announced by General Bernard Rogers (SACEUR), proposed increasing conventional defences in Europe in order to raise the nuclear threshold. It also proposed abandoning the defensive posture which NATO had long embraced and adopting an offensive strategy based on carrying the war early into Warsaw Pact territory through a combination of conventional, chemical and nuclear weapons, as necessary. This was seen by many in France as a war-fighting strategy for NATO, which was in line with the new American strategy of the Air-Land Battle.²⁰³ The new strategy would require conventional modernization which would enable rapid deployment of forces. In such a context, the proposed FAR suggested to critics French reintegration into NATO.

Charles Hernu criticized both aspects of the new American approach and accused the US of attempting to withdraw the nuclear umbrella from Europe.²⁰⁴ However, he also acknowledged that since the French FAR would be dependent on NATO logistical and ground support, its deployment would require the agreement of the SACEUR.²⁰⁵ Further comments by Hernu concerning the FAR's detachment from the strategic arsenal and ultimate usability in a forward battle²⁰⁶ appeared to confirm the assignment of responsibility to FAR for stopping Soviet Operational Manoeuvre Groups (OMGs) inside German territory.²⁰⁷

²⁰³Ibid., 119.

²⁰⁴Le Monde, 2 December 1982.

²⁰⁵Le Monde, 24 June 1983.

²⁰⁶Charles Hernu, "Equilibre, dissuasion, volonté," in Défense Nationale, December 1983, 16.

²⁰⁷Howorth, "Consensus of Silence," 595.

This perceived conversion of French conventional forces to a complementary status with NATO doctrine elicited strong criticism from the Communist Party and even General Lucien Poirier, one of the deacons of French nuclear doctrine.²⁰⁸ The Mitterrand Presidency maintained in its rhetoric the emphasis on "global deterrence" and the corollary focus on war prevention. However the creation of FAR and its operational inclusion in NATO battle plans seemed to invalidate the Socialist government's claim that French strategy was distinct from NATO's flexible response strategy, and therefore could not be included in arms control negotiations.

Proposal for a Euroarmy

On 28 June 1984 former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt proposed in the Bundestag an economic and military initiative aimed at "reinforcing the weight of Europe in the world."²⁰⁹ Schmidt proposed the merger of German and French conventional forces and upgrading of German and French reserves to produce 30 divisions which, he maintained, would enable the US to reduce its conventional troop presence in Europe and would strengthen the European pillar in the Atlantic alliance. In exchange for the extension of the French deterrent to include its neighbour, Germany would finance most conventional improvements.²¹⁰ In spite of Mitterrandist rhetoric emphasizing the common destiny of France and Germany within Europe and the need for bilateral defence solidarity, French political reaction to this initiative was minimal, a result,

²⁰⁸Howorth, "Atlanticism, Gaullism or 'Nuclear Neutralism'," 122.

²⁰⁹"Trente divisions françaises et allemandes devraient suffire à la défense de l'Europe," Le Monde, 30 June 1984, 3.

²¹⁰Robert Grant, "French Defense Policy and European Security," in French Security Policy, ed. Robbin F. Laird (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1986), 19.

according to one analyst, of the constraints imposed by a foreign policy approach that was cautious and consistently independence-oriented.²¹¹

Promise to Consult

At the 27-28 February 1986 Franco-German summit meeting, Mitterrand made his last major foreign policy statement before the elections which would replace the Socialist government. The statement signalled a subtle shift in French security policy, and was viewed by West Germany as a significant development in the course of the Franco-German relationship. President Mitterrand indicated that "Dans les limites qu'impose l'extrême rapidité de telles décisions, le président de la République se déclare disposé à consulter le chancelier de la République fédérale de l'Allemagne, sur l'emploi éventuel des armes préstratégiques françaises sur le territoire allemand. Il rappelle qu'en cette matière la décision ne peut être partagée."²¹²

Coming shortly before the legislative elections in France, the statement was heralded as the beginning of a shift in French defence policy. In promising to consult the Chancellor of the FRG before the use of French prestrategic (short range) nuclear weapons on German territory in a crisis situation, Mitterrand was making a concession to the sensitivities of his main European ally, at the risk of reducing the perception of French independence to some degree.

Conclusion

During the period of the Socialist majority in the legislature, it would be expected, according to a regime perspective, that presidential control and direction of

²¹¹Haglund, Alliance Within the Alliance, 67-68.

²¹²Le Monde, 1 March 1986, 1.

foreign policy would be affected by the divisions within the regime arising from competing internal factions and the Communist Party, whose inclusion in government lasted until 1984. Following this period, Mitterrand encountered few internal constraints on foreign policy, which consequently tended to be coherent and unambiguous.

France's relations with Germany were initially determined by the priority accorded the French Socialist economic program - a result of factional struggle within the government. Proving infeasible, Mitterrand's initial policy of economic reforms was reversed. The U-turn in economic policy coincided with the crisis generated by NATO's dual track decision in response to the deployment of Soviet SS-20s in Europe. A new approach to France's relationship with FRG emerged, focusing on renewed Atlanticism and an intensification of Franco-German security cooperation. The French shift was indicated by Mitterrand's speech at the West German Bundestag, the establishment of the Franco-German Security Commission, the decision to relaunch the WEU, and the establishment of EUREKA.

In spite of the marked increase in efforts towards its neighbour, France was constrained by the foreign policy imperative of independence, and by the need to maintain the domestic consensus on security issues. Thus in spite of having considerable regime coherence throughout most of the period of Socialist government, the Socialist foreign policy was nonetheless constrained by domestic political factors.

The keystone of the Socialist programme in 1981 was its policy of domestic economic restructuring. This was the primary determinant of the tenor of bilateral relations in the initial period of Socialist government, given the prevailing conditions of economic interdependence within the European context. Socialist economic policy, particularly in the first two years of government, was the product of party and coalition politics -- the interaction of factional influences and Communist demands. The first Mitterrand presidency

witnessed an increase in Franco-German military cooperation following the revised government agenda in 1982-3. Economically, Mitterrand discovered in 1983 that France could not survive as "an island of socialist policy in a sea of West European capitalism."²¹³ Henceforth, the view that prevailed in government held that strengthening France could only be achieved by strengthening Europe, and achieving that goal was contingent on Franco-German cooperation. A number of initiatives were undertaken to further bilateral cooperation, but were slowed as the pending legislative elections approached.

The effects of regime fragmentation were evident in the struggle within the Socialist ranks to determine government policy. Although this factional jostling did not produce foreign policy incoherence in terms of contradictory impulses in the pursuit of Franco-German relations, it accounted for the relative marginalization of Europe and the FRG in French foreign policy through the priority accorded economic objectives in the first two years of government. Political fragmentation thus had an indirect effect on foreign policy during the period of majority government.

In terms of regime vulnerability, the Socialist government faced few constraints on its policy making activities upon entering office. The landslide victory of 1981 provided a wide political margin of manoeuvre for the regime, enabling it to perceive having received a mandate to undertake sweeping economic reforms. However, as early as 1983 the popularity of Socialist policy and government began to decline, and as the general elections of 1986 approached, governmental initiatives became increasingly constrained.

²¹³Julius W. Friend, The Linchpin: French-German Relations, 1950-1990 (New York: Praeger, 1991), xx.

CHAPTER 4

Cohabitation

On 16 March 1986 the French centre-right coalition regained a parliamentary majority in the legislative elections. The conservative victory was slim, however, and the narrow outcome of the election enabled Mitterrand to remain as president. Had the UDF-RPR victory been overwhelming, Mitterrand would likely have been pressured to abide by the formula "se soumettre ou se démettre" and either submit to prime ministerial preferences or resign from office.²¹⁴ A cohabitational experiment was underway, and President Mitterrand subsequently appointed the leader of the dominant right-wing party, the RPR, and mayor of Paris, Jacques Chirac, as prime minister of a government of the right.

With the onset of cohabitation, the political rules of the game changed as the dual executive became composed of two individuals from rival political groupings. Although both Mitterrand ("La Constitution, rien que la Constitution, toute la Constitution") and Chirac ("...nous respectons les règles de la démocratie et de la Constitution") promised adherence to the rules set out by the Constitution²¹⁵, the constitutional text provides a poor guide to executive behaviour during

²¹⁴Richard Woyke, "France's Dual Elections in 1988," Aussenpolitik, English Edition 39 (Winter, 1988): 325.

²¹⁵Le Monde, 21 July 1986.

cohabitation as it shares overlapping powers within the dual executive.

The period of cohabitation produced a highly fragmented regime, as the central political leadership was characterized by a struggle for preeminence as both Mitterrand and Chirac attempted to maximize the authority of their respective positions in a political system whose Constitution establishes a dyarchy at the apex but is ambiguous about who is ultimately responsible for foreign and defence policy. Powers are divided between, on the one hand, the president who is commander-in-chief of the armed forces (article 15), guarantor of national independence and territorial integrity (article 5), responsible for negotiating and ratifying treaties (article 52), and on the other hand the prime minister, who is responsible for national defence (article 21) and government, which determines the policy of the nation and controls the armed forces (article 20).

From 1958 until 1986, the president and the legislative majority had politically coincided; those parties or coalitions which supported the president also held a majority in the National Assembly. De facto presidential dominance existed due to the acquiescence of supportive parliamentary majorities and the traditional subordination of the prime minister and his government to the presidency. These factors also accounted for the considerably greater freedom of the president vis-a-vis the parliament regarding foreign and defence policy than most of his foreign counterparts.²¹⁶

Cohabitation tested the extent to which the president could effectively operate and direct foreign policy while

²¹⁶Michael Clarke and Samy Cohen, "La formulation de la politique extérieure," in Les politiques étrangères de la France et de la Grande-Bretagne depuis 1945, ed. Françoise de la Serre, Jacques Leruez and Helen Wallace (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques and BERG, 1990), 262.

lacking majority support in the legislature. Mitterrand sent an early message to the next government in a television speech in early March, stating "I would rather resign my position than relinquish the responsibilities of my position. I will not be a second-rate president."²¹⁷ And with the onset of cohabitation, certain conventions were acknowledged by the dual executive which made it appear that the co-existence might be harmonious: every week the president would meet with premier before the Council of Ministers, and would comment as he saw fit -- in practice, on those items concerning international relations.²¹⁸ Symbolically important, as chief of state it was the president whose finger would remain on the trigger of the French nuclear deterrent.²¹⁹ Despite the quiet start of cohabitation, the following two years were marked by an executive struggle for hegemony in international affairs. Confronting a prime minister determined to play an important role in foreign and defence policy, and lacking the support of a parliamentary majority, Mitterrand was forced to cede some of his authority in that domain, indicating the "fragilité" of presidential powers.²²⁰

However, that struggle within the executive would seem to have been limited by the presidential ambitions harboured by Chirac and by the weight of French public opinion, which overwhelmingly supported the co-existence of a president and prime minister from rival political groupings until the

²¹⁷Le Monde, 15 October 1986, 8

²¹⁸Jean-Bernard Raimond, Le Quai d'Orsay à l'Epreuve de la Cohabitation (Paris: Flammarion, 1989), 52.

²¹⁹Samy Cohen, "Deux années de cohabitation en politique étrangère," Le Monde, 30 March 1988, 10.

²²⁰Clarke and Cohen, 272.

expected presidential elections of 1988.²²¹ The constraint of public opinion affected both members of the executive, and both sought to convince public opinion of the constitutional legitimacy of their respective claims to control foreign and defence policy.²²² Moreover, the cohabitationist experiment was immensely popular with the public. Results of polls repeatedly confirmed to observers that "the voters would punish whoever was seen as precipitating a rupture."²²³ Thus, Mitterrand and Chirac both confronted and accepted that the French public did not want to see cohabitation end before its time was up in 1988, with the likelihood that the leader who provoked a premature ending would be subject to severe electoral censure - what has been termed "Balladur's theorem" about the executive struggle under cohabitation: "whoever draws first is dead."²²⁴

The influence of public opinion as a determinant of executive behaviour, however, depended fundamentally on the presidentialization of politics -- namely the fact that the primary objective of political competition in the Fifth Republic has become the drive to attain presidential office.²²⁵ His presidentialist ambitions served to make Chirac sensitive to public expectations regarding

²²¹Jérôme Jaffré, "La ferveur cohabitationniste," Le Monde, 29 May 1986, 7. See also Gérard Grunberg, "Cohabitation et opinion publique," Esprit, 1988 (3-4), 50-53.

²²²Cohen, "La politique étrangère entre l'Elysée et Matignon," 488.

²²³Jonathan Marcus, "France's Year of Dualism," The World Today, May 1987, 81.

²²⁴"Celui qui dégaine meurt." Jean V. Poulard, "The French Double Executive and the Experience of Cohabitation," in Political Science Quarterly 105 (Summer 1990): 263.

²²⁵Byron Criddle, "France: Legitimacy Attained," in Opposition in Western Europe, ed. Eva Kolinsky (London & Sydney: Croon Helm, 1987), 122-129.

cohabitation, and thus limited his conflict with Mitterrand on key issues, particularly foreign and defence policy. Insofar as Chirac viewed the premiership as the springboard to the presidency, he was compelled during cohabitation to prove he could provide effective government without overly challenging presidential powers and paralysing government. The presidential ambitions of Chirac tempered his efforts to make questions of international relations a joint area of influence.²²⁶ Consequently, as both men had their eyes on the 1988 presidential election and were compelled to get along and avoid the risk of incurring electoral unpopularity, the traditional domain of presidential concern, foreign and defence policy, was the focus of a hegemonic struggle but was prevented from degenerating to the point of subjecting the fabric of the French polity to severe strains.

The Struggle for Hegemony

Chirac sought to challenge presidential authority in foreign and defence policy on a number of levels and with varied means. First, he actively sought to play a diplomatic role and force his way into the "perimètre sacré", the presidential sector of foreign and defence policy. Beginning with the May 1986 summit of industrialized nations in Tokyo, France would henceforth be represented at major international gatherings by both the president and the prime minister.²²⁷ It has been argued elsewhere that one of Chirac's objectives was to establish for himself an international stature and presence which would benefit him in a future campaign for the

²²⁶Jean Gicquel, "De la cohabitation," Pouvoirs 49 (1989): 75.

²²⁷For an account of the Tokyo meeting, see Raimond, 46-49.

presidency.²²⁸ Chirac's diplomatic offensive focused fundamentally on the symbolic importance attached to representing France abroad. Regardless of motive, the effect of the dual representation would compromise the efficiency of the Quai d'Orsay, and more specifically, the work of the foreign minister. At meetings where it was customary to have the head of state accompanied by the foreign minister, Chirac displaced the latter, Jean-Bernard Raimond, or on the rare occasion, appeared as part of a diplomatic troika.²²⁹

According to Raimond, the consequences of being sidelined by the struggle within the dual executive at international summits or consultations varied according to the nature of the meeting. Bilateral meetings generally posed no problem, typically consisting of talks which usually did not produce either communiqués or decisions.²³⁰ However, multilateral meetings such as the European Council presented the minister with the serious conundrum of being responsible for the preparation of French positions and implementation of European Council decisions, but being unable to participate in its meetings.²³¹

As Chirac sought more of a diplomatic role than his prime ministerial predecessors, a sort of "double diplomacy" ensued. At times, this amounted to little more than the foreign minister having to accompany the president on an official visit, followed shortly by a second official visit by the prime minister, and one which often involved seeing the same officials.²³² Occasionally, however, significant

²²⁸Cohen, "Deux années de cohabitation," 10.

²²⁹For example, see Le Monde, 7-8 December 1986, 4.

²³⁰Raimond, 45.

²³¹Ibid., 50.

²³²Ibid., 51-52.

differences between presidential and prime ministerial outlooks resulted in more than organizational inefficiency. As will be argued below, such instances of substantive double diplomacy created foreign policy incoherence.

At times, executive rivalry compromised the credibility of France's international relations. In particular, Chirac's attempts to foster a close relationship with West Germany's Chancellor Kohl proved clumsy and ultimately failed. After a visit by Kohl to the Elysée, a member of Chirac's staff declared that "Kohl had gone to the wrong address." Kohl, however, was accustomed to dealing with Mitterrand, had already developed a beneficial dialogue with him, and was basing his relations with France on the 1965 Elysée Treaty that specifies the highest level of diplomatic relations between the two countries is to occur between the chancellor and the president of the republic.²³³ It is unclear whether it was Chirac's attempt at diplomatic preeminence which proved counter-productive and angered the Germans, or the personal dynamic which accounted for the reported poor relations between Jacques Chirac and Helmut Kohl.²³⁴

Secondly, Chirac sought to marginalize presidential participation in the foreign policy process by relocating the locus of foreign policy decision making and coordination to Matignon. He began by assembling around him a group of advisers well-versed in international affairs, a group which was generally viewed as rivalling that of the president in numbers and expertise.²³⁵ Chirac's offensive against the domaine réservé turned next to the information level, where officials at Matignon undertook to gradually control and reduce the flow of information and diplomatic messages to the

²³³Poulard, 261.

²³⁴Le Prestre, 30.

²³⁵"Meet Mr. Mitterrac," The Economist, 3 May 1986, 57-8.

president's office at the Elysée. Two members of Chirac's government, Minister of Defence André Giraud and Foreign Minister Jean-Bernard Raimond, participated in the selecting out of information destined for the Elysée, demonstrating their loyalty to Chirac rather than the president. Combined with Chirac's diplomatic activities, managing and restricting the flow of diplomatic information was aimed at progressively shifting the attention of foreign governments towards the prime minister's office.²³⁶ Furthermore, presidential advisers were denied the ability to call meetings and direct the foreign policy administration, and as a consequence of this redistribution of tasks, the office of the president's day-to-day management of foreign policy was much reduced.²³⁷

Thirdly, Chirac challenged presidential authority in defining the substantive content of French foreign and defence policy on several key issues. An examination of the international events affecting Franco-German relations during this period will focus on four main areas: the debate over French strategic doctrine, French responses to the INF Treaty, French reaction to SDI, and Franco-German security cooperation.

Strategic Doctrine

In one of the most serious disagreements, Chirac challenged Mitterrand on the interpretation of French tactical nuclear forces (TNF) posture and doctrine, implying redefinition of some of France's security relations. President Mitterrand consistently upheld the position that French TNF are essentially political weapons, meant to deliver the ultimate warning shot indicating French resolve to resist

²³⁶Samy Cohen, "Deux années de cohabitation," 10.

²³⁷Samy Cohen, "La diplomatie du duo et du duel," Le Monde, 30 March 1988, 1, 10. Also idem, "La politique étrangère entre l'Elysée et Matignon," 490-491.

and resort to massive retaliation with strategic weapons if an aggressor did not cease threatening France's vital interests. That is, the function of French TNF is considered to be exclusively deterrent. The shift in terminology to "prestrategic" for such weapons, which Mitterrand's former Minister of Defence, Charles Hernu, had adopted in 1984, was meant to underline the tight coupling of short-range and long-range nuclear forces in French doctrine and deterrence strategy. Short-range, or tactical, nuclear weapons have consistently been emphasized in French strategy to be linked directly and inexorably to the strategic force de dissuasion. Any suggestion of a shift towards battle-field use for French TNF, as advanced briefly under President Giscard d'Estaing, had been recanted under internal pressure to return to the "gaullist" orthodoxy.

French TNF had long been a sensitive issue to the Federal Republic. Given the ranges of French TNF such as the Pluton (120 km) and logistical problems involved in moving French TNF as far East as possible, any French launching of its TNF would necessarily fall on West German territory. This situation reinforced the perception that French nuclear forces had a primarily national deterrent value, rather than a NATO role. The FRG thus perceived that it played the role of glacis for France, constituting a "buffer zone from which France could fire TNF if the Soviet army threatened French borders."²³⁸

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the Socialist government under Mitterrand sought to improve its relations with the Federal Republic, in particular with regard to TNF. The Socialist government specifically sought to significantly increase the ranges of both the ground and air-launched components of its TNF. Consequently, a modernization program

²³⁸Robert Grant, "French Tactical Nuclear Weapons," in The Future of Deterrence: NATO Nuclear Forces After INF, ed. Robbin F. Laird and Betsy A. Jacobs (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1989), 79.

involving the replacement of the Pluton by the Hadès missile, having a range of 350 km (as opposed to 120 km), was planned for the early 1990s. Modernization of the airborne component involved the planned replacement of the Jaguar and Mirage III by the Mirage 2000N, armed with a new short-range air-to-surface missile, the ASMP.²³⁹ Tactical nuclear forces were re-named "préstratégique", or prestrategic weapons, to underline their linkage to the strategic forces. While undertaking these technical modifications, Mitterrand did not change French doctrine. Rather, it was implied that given the greatly enhanced capability, flexibility and range of French TNF, the tight coupling between prestrategic and strategic nuclear forces in French doctrine, and the broadening of France's definition of its vital interests, the modernization represented a modest initial step in extending deterrence to Germany.²⁴⁰ This was reiterated in February 1986 when President Mitterrand indicated France would consult with FRG on tactical nuclear weapons use.

During 1986, Chirac began to challenge the strictly deterrent role assigned to TNF by Mitterrand and made statements which suggested that he favoured a more flexible and diversified role for France's tactical nuclear weapons. In a speech given on 12 September 1986 at IHEDN (l'Institut des hautes études de défense nationale),²⁴¹ Chirac implied that he supported a battlefield application for France's pre-strategic weapons. Chirac even suggested that French strategic doctrine had already shifted to reflect this new application.²⁴²

²³⁹Ibid., 80-81.

²⁴⁰Ibid, 83.

²⁴¹Marcus, "France's Year of Dualism," 83. See also Le Monde, 13, 26, 27 September 1986.

²⁴²Howorth, "Defence Policy under Mitterrand Mark 2," 90.

Mitterrand publicly rebuked his Prime Minister in a speech to the 11th Airborne Division at Caylus on 13 October 1986, which underlined the inseparable nature of tactical or préstratégique nuclear weapons, such as the Hadés missile, from the French strategy of nuclear deterrence.²⁴³ He insisted that France's tactical nuclear weapons retained their role in providing an ultimate warning to an aggressor before the strategic retaliatory response, and thus remained tightly coupled to the strategic deterrent. Referring also to the debate brewing between André Giraud's Ministry of Defence and the Finance Ministry over the means of the forthcoming loi de programmation militaire (1987-1991), Mitterrand further asserted that, as chief of state and chief of armies, his presidential office constitutionally empowered him to act as arbiter when the government was unable to arrive at a common programme. More subtly, he sent the warning to Chirac that his budgetary and defence procurement decisions (referring to a very controversial plan of the UDF-RPR government to develop a new mobile missile system rather than harden the missile sites on the Plateau d'Albion or modernize the nuclear submarine force) had implications for French strategy, and in the domain of defence policy presidential arbitrage would prevail.²⁴⁴

At this point Chirac appeared to back away from further confrontation with Mitterrand on the definition of French doctrine, refraining from further public pronouncements on French TNF and strategy.²⁴⁵ His subsequent comments on TNF echoed the orthodox "gaullist" position that French TNF served a deterrent purpose, and government spokesmen emphasized that

²⁴³"C'est la stratégie de dissuasion qui est mise en jeu dès lors que la force préstratégique intervient." Quoted in Le Monde, 15 October 1986, 8.

²⁴⁴Le Monde, 15 October 1986.

²⁴⁵Marcus, "France's Year of Dualism," 83.

there was no disagreement between the president and prime minister on defence policy.²⁴⁶

Chirac's behaviour in the domain of the French strategy of deterrence is representative of the more general pattern of executive struggle during cohabitation. While attempting to establish himself as a leader with presidential potential, Chirac had to take care not to substantially weaken the authority of the presidential post to which he aspired. Perhaps more importantly, it was perceived that a public disagreement on defence policy within the political class could not be allowed to spread to the broader national consensus and risk provoking a political crisis. Given these restrictions, it was sufficient to challenge Mitterrand on some important issues, enough to indicate Chirac had his own views and provoke a response, but not enough to provoke a political crisis, a backlash of public opinion, or severely compromise France's position in the international environment. After all, Chirac would have the opportunity to implement his foreign and defence policy preferences if he were elected to the presidency in May 1988.

Consequently, the period of cohabitation became characterized by a pattern consisting of a rather moderate challenge by Chirac on selected presidential policy preferences, followed by Mitterrand's refutation, and Chirac eventually falling into line. Frequent assertions that no differences in points of view existed served to evoke the existence of consensus to the public. As the May 1988 elections drew closer, however, implicit and explicit criticisms of each camp again appeared in public rhetoric.²⁴⁷

The hiatus from the subtle struggle over foreign and

²⁴⁶Grant, "French Tactical Nuclear Weapons," 86.

²⁴⁷Pascal Boniface, "France", L'Année Stratégique: 1990 (Paris: Institut de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques, 1990), 13.

defence policy ended six months later, with the appearance of disagreement within the Chirac government over Gorbachev's proposed zero option for the elimination of Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) in Europe (see below). However, the defence debate between president and prime minister was not abandoned, and by December 1987, had actively resumed.

Chirac's final attempt to define his own position on French strategy occurred in a speech given to the IHEDN in December 1987.²⁴⁸ His strategic positions were placed in the context of Franco-German reconcilliation, and suggested that France was prepared to extend nuclear deterrence to her West German ally, that in the event of aggression against the FRG French support would be immediate and unreserved, and that French prestrategic nuclear weapons would participate in the forward battle in Europe. Germany was no longer a glacis, a buffer zone in the defence of France.²⁴⁹ Chirac's statements were considered as amounting to the acceptance of a flexible response strategy for France.

The German reaction was mixed. Bonn welcomed Chirac's declaration that French response in the event of aggression against the FRG would be "immediate and without reservation", but was equally disturbed by the potential role assigned by Chirac to French shorter-range nuclear weapons. The West German government consequently maintained that it would refer to the promise made by Mitterrand in February of 1987 that

²⁴⁸The full text of Chirac's speech on 12 December 1987 is reprinted in La Politique de Défense de la France - Textes et Documents, ed. Dominique Davide (Paris: Fondation pour les Etudes de Défense Nationale, 1989), 296-303. See also Le Monde, 15 December 1987.

²⁴⁹Le Monde, 15 December 1987. "Who could doubt that in the event where the Federal Republic of Germany becomes the target of aggression, France's involvement would be immediate and without reservation? There cannot be a battle of Germany and a battle of France ... France does not consider the territory of its neighbours as a 'buffer zone' or security shield." See Davide, Textes et Documents, 301.

Bonn would be consulted by France before the use of its short-range nuclear forces.²⁵⁰

Mitterrand immediately responded to Chirac's pronouncements by reiterating his own positions on disarmament, principles of French nuclear deterrence, and the boundaries of Franco-German security cooperation. He refuted Chirac's doctrinal shift toward battlefield use of tactical nuclear weapons by strongly emphasizing the role of France's prestrategic systems as the final warning in a posture based on the indivisibility of deterrence: "There are no grounds for delivering the final warning onto German territory ... the final warning will be aimed at whoever threatens France."²⁵¹ This statement implied that the final warning message would be sent by the French long-range nuclear forces. Further, Mitterrand stressed that only NATO (the US) could provide the Federal Republic with extended deterrence.²⁵² Moreover, Mitterrand emphasized that he alone as president could determine when France's vital interests were threatened, underlining both presidential control of the nuclear arsenal and the defining of French strategy, in the face of Chirac's assertion that the French defence of its neighbour would be immediate and without reservation.²⁵³ Finally, Mitterrand acknowledged limits on the extent of Franco-German security cooperation in maintaining that the French decision to employ

²⁵⁰Le Monde, 16 December 1987, 3.

²⁵¹Mitterrand's interview in Nouvel Observateur is reviewed in Le Monde, 19 December 1987, 5.

²⁵²"C'est à l'alliance atlantique que se pose la question de la couverture nucléaire de l'Allemagne." Le Monde, 19 December 1987, 5.

²⁵³Jolyon Howorth, "French defence: disarmament and deterrence," The World Today, 105.

its nuclear forces could not be shared.²⁵⁴ In summary, Mitterrand refuted Jacques Chirac's drift towards flexible response, stating categorically, "There is no flexible response for France. That is also the opinion of the prime minister."²⁵⁵

The 1987-1991 defence planning bill drafted by Chirac's centrist-conservative government was endorsed by Mitterrand as "realistic, coherent, and reasonable," and was passed with the approval of the opposition Socialists in the National Assembly in 1987. Following the period of cohabitation, when asked why they endorsed the conservatives' defence bill, Rocard would respond that "a negative vote by the Socialist Party would have been interpreted by the opposition at the time, as disagreement on the French doctrine of deterrence."²⁵⁶

INF Treaty

A second area of executive confrontation over defining France's foreign and defence posture occurred in response to Mikhail Gorbachev's disarmament proposal on 28 February 1987 to eliminate all US and Soviet intermediate range nuclear forces (INF) from Europe - the "zero option". In contrast to the positive reactions to the proposal emanating from Bonn and Washington, the Quai d'Orsay immediately issued on 1 March a communiqué which was highly negative and guarded in tone. The statement stressed that the zero option would leave Europe "terribly exposed" and conveyed strong reservations on the

²⁵⁴Mitterrand stated that French-German cooperation in security matters "...ne pourra pas aller jusqu'au partage de la décision et de l'emploi de la force nucléaire. Tout le reste peut être partagé." Le Monde, 19 December 1987, 5.

²⁵⁵see Jean Daniel's interview of Mitterrand in Nouvel Observateur, 18-24 December 1987, 38-42. As quoted in Jolyon Howorth, "French defence: disarmament and deterrence," 106.

²⁵⁶Posner, 130-131.

part of France, and implied that France would oppose the denuclearization of Western Europe while there persisted a significant imbalance of conventional forces and chemical weapons in Europe to the advantage of the Warsaw Pact.²⁵⁷

Foreign Minister Jean-Bernard Raimond, however, had drafted the statement without consulting either President Mitterrand or Prime Minister Chirac. At the weekly Council of Ministers meeting on 4 March, it became evident that deep divisions existed not only between the president and the right-wing government but actually within the government itself on this issue. In a long and solemn speech to the Council, Mitterrand stated that he found the tone of the communique to be "too negative" and scolded the ministry and the government for not consulting with him before issuing the statement.²⁵⁸ Contrary to the disapproval of the zero option implied in the Quai d'Orsay's statement, Mitterrand asserted his "genuine interest" in the zero option, which "conforms to French interests" and insisted that a unity of European views on the issue was necessary.²⁵⁹

The centrist-conservative majority government, however, was itself lacking a unity of views on the issue. Minister of Defence André Giraud, reflecting the view of many members of his party, the UDF (Union pour la Démocratie Française) and many on the right, was widely reported as having denounced the proposal.²⁶⁰ In the Council of Ministers meeting, Giraud

²⁵⁷Bernard Brigouleix, "Les Embarras de Paris", Le Monde, 03 March 1987.

²⁵⁸Jacques Amalric, "L'affaire des euromissiles divise la majorité," Le Monde, 6 March 1987, 1, 5.

²⁵⁹Bernard Guetta, "Euromissiles: M. Mitterrand juge nécessaire l'unité de vues' des Européens," Le Monde, 5 March 1987, 1, 32.

²⁶⁰For similar views by UDF members, see Alain Peyrefitte, "Un parfum de Yalta," in Le Figaro, 9 December 1987, and the quotes in Walter Schütze, "Les prises de position des hommes

denounced Gorbachev's proposal as a "bluff" and allegedly compared it to the 1938 Munich agreement, declaring that acceptance of the Soviet offer would amount to a kind of nuclear Munich for Europe.²⁶¹

Chirac, however, was benignly supportive of Mitterrand's position at Council meeting, and according to one account, the prime minister murmured "He is right, he is right," throughout the president's speech.²⁶² Following the meeting, the government spokesman reaffirmed the convergence of views within the executive, since Chirac was "in complete agreement" with the president on this matter.²⁶³

The division within the ranks of the ruling majority was not allowed to continue in public for long, and within days Chirac forced his government to fall into line. On 6 March, Minister of Defence Giraud affirmed that his position on the zero option was "perfectly in agreement with that of the prime minister;" Giraud moreover refused to confirm having spoken of a "European Munich".²⁶⁴ The apparently forced consensus in Chirac's government was not, however, indicative of the trend among the French political class, which continued to register reactions ranging from scepticism to outright

politiques français sur les négociations relatives à l'élimination des armes nucléaires de portée intermédiaire en Europe," Politique Etrangère 52 (Summer 1987): 464-465.

²⁶¹Amalric, "L'affaire des euromissiles divise la majorité," Le Monde, 6 March 1987, 1.

²⁶²Jean-Yves L'homeau, "La Cohabitation: A la recherche de l'équilibre," Le Monde, 19 March 1987, 10.

²⁶³Le Monde, 5 March 1987, 32.

²⁶⁴"M. Giraud affirme son accord avec M. Chirac," Le Monde, 8-9 March 1987, 3.

hostility and paranoia.²⁶⁵ The debate was to continue, albeit in a more covert fashion, and continued to produce the occasional government statement which was critical of the INF agreement.²⁶⁶ Going against the position of his own party and defence minister, Chirac initially chose to not challenge Mitterrand on this issue.

Opponents of the zero option focused on the argument that it would leave the Soviet Union with a massive superiority in short-range nuclear systems. Gorbachev's subsequent proposal to extend the zero option on INF to short-range systems became known as the "double zero option", and was backed up with a unilateral decision to halt Soviet manufacturing of chemical weapons, and by new proposals on conventional arms reductions (5-13 April 1987).

Jacques Chirac actively attempted to foster opposition to the proposal amongst his European allies and the superpowers. Travelling in quick succession to Washington, London, Bonn and Moscow, Chirac was increasingly critical of first the zero option and then the double zero option, and attempted to present his government's "concerns, worries and concrete suggestions" regarding Gorbachev's proposals to his hosts.²⁶⁷ Yet he was ultimately unable to prevent West German approval of the agreement in May.²⁶⁸ The proposal which was eventually accepted and signed in December 1987, the "double zero option", agreed to eliminate both INF and shorter-range

²⁶⁵For a range of views among the French political class in the emerging debate on the INF Treaty, see Schütze, 461-473.

²⁶⁶See, for example, "'Le nucléaire intermédiaire est essentiel à la défense de l'Europe', déclare M. André Giraud," Le Monde, 17 October 1987 and "Les avances de M. Giraud à une Europe orpheline," Le Monde, 20 October 1987.

²⁶⁷See for example Le Monde, 29-30 March 1987, 3.

²⁶⁸Howorth, "French Defence: Disarmament and Deterrence," 103.

missiles from Europe.

The French political class was rent by the Gorbachev proposals. The emergent debate produced two significant developments for the future of French foreign and defence policy. First, it shattered the idea of a "gaullist" defence consensus, and indicated that France would have to fundamentally rethink the roles of conventional and nuclear weapons in its security policy. Second, it led to a new French approach to European cooperation, one which emphasized greater European cooperation on defence and security policy.²⁶⁹

Europe (SDI)

In his investiture speech as Premier before the Parliament on 9 April 1986, Jacques Chirac stated that technological developments which produced means of defence using space did not threaten the principles of French nuclear deterrence. Chirac's statement clearly challenged President Mitterrand's position on SDI, maintained for the previous three years, that a space defence system would compromise French independence and security, and the French state would not participate in the project. On 23 May 1986, Chirac publicly criticized the president's position on SDI as too negative, and stated that it would be unthinkable that France not participate in the SDI project, which he considered "a fundamental development, irreversible and justified".²⁷⁰ In what constituted his first public statement during cohabitation which openly challenged his new prime minister

²⁶⁹Howorth, "Consensus and Mythology: Security Alternatives of Post-Gaullist France," France in World Politics, ed. Robert Aldrich and John Connel, (London: Routledge, 1989), 25.

²⁷⁰"Une leçon de gaullisme," Le Monde, 29 May 1986, 1. Quote from "M. Mitterrand réaffirme son opposition à l'IDS," Le Monde, 28 May 1986, 40.

and aimed to mark the boundaries of presidential territory, Mitterrand responded on 27 May before the military school Saint-Cyr. Employing clearly gaullist rhetoric, he stated that France for the past quarter of a century had had a strategic doctrine resting on an independent nuclear deterrent, and that France would not become involved with mechanisms over which it lacked the freedom to decide, and which might therefore pose the risk of dragging France into a conflict in which it had no choice.²⁷¹

Dominique Moïsi comments that cohabitation led to confusion regarding France's official reaction to SDI. Over the following two years, Mitterrand's and Chirac's differences were "largely exaggerated for domestic political purposes". Whereas the president focused on the strategic implications of SDI for France and thus had a negative position on it, Chirac focused on the technical benefits which France could capture, and consequently viewed it in a relatively positive manner.²⁷² Having criticized Mitterrand's opposition to French participation in US SDI and floating the idea of a European version, the Right once in government made no further attempt to follow it through upon encountering Mitterrand's refusal.²⁷³

Franco-German Security Cooperation

Although he regularly maintained that there were no foreign policy differences between his government and the

²⁷¹Jacques Isnard, "M. Mitterrand réaffirme que la France ne doit pas s'insérer dans un dispositif de défense limitant sa liberté d'action," Le Monde, 29 May 1986, 10.

²⁷²Dominique Moïsi, "French Foreign Policy: The Challenge of Adaptation," Foreign Affairs 67 (Fall 1988): 154.

²⁷³Howorth, "Defense Policy under Mitterrand Mark 2," 90.

president²⁷⁴, Jacques Chirac throughout 1987 attempted to carve out a distinctive position on Franco-German relations. This was a particularly difficult focus for his aspirations, however, since the Franco-German rapprochement was widely seen as purely the product of Mitterrand's initiatives during the period of Socialist government. French public opinion by this time showed strong support for this trend, with 74 per cent of respondents in an April 1987 poll supporting automatic French support for Germany in the event of hostilities.²⁷⁵

Chirac proposed before the West European Union assembly on 2 December 1986 that the WEU develop a charter on European security. The parliamentary assembly of the WEU undertook to compose the charter, which was adopted on 27 October 1987. The charter took the form of a solemn declaration presenting a platform on European interests in security matters, and contained directives for the organization of a collective defence of Europe.²⁷⁶

Although Franco-German cooperation had grown throughout the 1980s, French gestures such as the establishment of the Franco-German defense commission in October 1982 and the creation of FAR in the spring of 1983 were seen by the Germans as largely symbolic gestures. More impressive to the Germans was the September 1987 joint military exercise "Moineau Hardi" (or "Bold Sparrow"), involving the Second German Army and 20,000 members of FAR.

The joint exercise was followed on 24 September 1987 by Mitterrand's announcement that he and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl had decided to establish a Franco-German defence council, involving ministerial-level bilateral meetings -- a

²⁷⁴For example, Le Monde, 8 July 1987.

²⁷⁵Howorth, "Defence Policy under Mitterrand Mark 2," 94.

²⁷⁶Erwin Guldner, "Le Traité de l'Elysée et la coopération franco-allemande en matière de défense," Stratégique, 1/89, 145-146.

significant step up from the level of the 1982 defence commission. The protocol to the 1963 Elysée Treaty establishing the Franco-German Security and Defence Council was signed on 22 January 1988, and ratified on 1 December 1988. The defence council consists of heads of government and state as well as the foreign and defence ministers. The significance of the council lies in the fact that it provides a consultative framework for bilateral discussions toward common conceptions in security and defence policy -- that is, it provides a common conceptual approach to security.²⁷⁷

Chirac's attempts to move into the Mitterrandist domain of Franco-German relations were embarrassingly awkward and unsuccessful. When Mitterrand upstaged his prime minister at the "Bold Sparrow" joint military exercise to announce the establishment of the bilateral defence council, Chirac responded by minimizing its significance as an essentially "symbolic measure", and suggesting the whole idea was rather premature. Kohl repudiated Chirac shortly after when he revealed that Chirac had been consulted on the decision to form the council and had given the idea his complete approval.²⁷⁸

The Limits of Prime Ministerial Influence in Foreign Policy

The period of cohabitation saw a definite shift in power over foreign and defence policy from the president to the prime minister, as the traditional hierarchical subordination of the latter and his government was no longer observed as it was prior to 1986. Both members of the executive were able to take initiatives in foreign and defence policy issues, and Chirac managed to gain the upper hand and assume policy

²⁷⁷Peter Schmidt, "The Franco-German Defence and Security Council," Aussenpolitik, English Edition 40 (Winter 1989): 360, 367.

²⁷⁸Howorth, "Defence Policy under Mitterrand Mark 2," 104.

direction over a number of issue areas.²⁷⁹

Chirac's efforts to steer French foreign policy, however, were limited by a number of factors. These included the continuing loyalty of well-placed individuals dealing with European affairs and defence policy to the president, thus enabling Mitterrand to overcome, to some extent, the systematized syphoning of diplomatic information away from the Elysée. Further, the governments and diplomatic personnel of France's most important allies recognized the continuing need to include President Mitterrand in issues dealing with French foreign policy. The West German government openly preferred dealing with Mitterrand rather than Chirac on foreign policy issues.²⁸⁰ Mitterrand thus managed to maintain an important margin of influence in foreign and defence affairs.

Mitterrand adroitly played the game demanded in cohabitation, in which he had a partner-adversary relationship with Chirac: in order to discredit one's partner and avoid discrediting oneself, it was necessary to pursue a strategy of "self-demarcation". Mitterrand retreated to the "Olympian heights" of his role as head of state and guardian of the national interest.²⁸¹ By abstaining from the direct management of domestic policy during cohabitation, Mitterrand was able to disassociate himself from the policies adopted by the right-wing government and hold himself above the fray of politics. Mitterrand sought to reaffirm the importance of the presidency in the political system, and used the lever of the

²⁷⁹These were especially areas such as Third world assistance, daily management of community affairs, and internal security. See Cohen, "La politique étrangère entre l'Elysée et Matignon," 491.

²⁸⁰Samy Cohen, "Deux années de cohabitation en politique étrangère," 15.

²⁸¹Mark Kesselman, "France," in European Politics in Transition, 3d ed, edited by Mark Kesselman, et. al (Lexington Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1992), 199.

presidential prerogative in foreign and defence policy to achieve this, primarily in matters of protocol and the nuclear deterrent.²⁸²

The symbolically important issue of whose finger remained on the nuclear trigger during the period of cohabitation may have had a determining effect on the continuing presidential prerogative in elaborating French strategic doctrine and hence guiding defence policy. As Commander-in-Chief of the French armed forces, Mitterrand retained control over the decision to launch the nuclear arsenal; as such, it would be irrational to grant him this power without the accompanying right to determine French nuclear doctrine. "It was nonsensical to recognize the president's authority to unleash a nuclear apocalypse while questioning his right to formulate doctrine and make procurement decisions."²⁸³

Although Chirac made early attempts to establish his own policy preferences in defence policy, his subsequent low profile and/or tacit agreement with the Mitterrandist position on the issues of the "double zero option", TNF modernization, and SDI served to limit his influence in the domain of defence policy. Mitterrand's statements on the French strategy of dissuasion and related issues were taken as the official French position.²⁸⁴ The role of public opinion in Chirac's decision to yield to presidential dominance in major areas of foreign and defence policy appears to be highly significant. Mitterrand enjoyed a consistently high level of popularity throughout cohabitation, and continued presidential control over the nuclear deterrent was also firmly anchored by public

²⁸²Poulard, 258.

²⁸³Samy Cohen, "Deux années de cohabitation en politique étrangère," 15.

²⁸⁴Ibid., 15.

opinion.²⁸⁵ Consequently, in issues concerning the nuclear deterrent, Chirac could pursue a confrontation with the president, but faced the risk of engendering a political crisis, given the latter's insistence on maintaining control and the legitimacy accorded that control by the public. The alternative, backing down, apparently was politically more palatable for Chirac.

Also of considerable significance is the priority assigned to defence and foreign policy issues by the RPR-UDF coalition during cohabitation. According to Samy Cohen, the coalition government had economic and social issues at the top of its agenda. In particular, it realized that it had a very limited amount of time in which to show that it could demonstrate its capability to improve the economic situation.²⁸⁶ Consequently, while Chirac attempted to appear in a diplomatic role and make advances in struggles with the president over substantive policy issues, upon encountering strong presidential resistance he tended to retreat from confrontation. Consequently, in foreign and defence affairs Chirac tended to cede more territory than Mitterrand.

Conclusion

Mitterrand confirmed the existence of strong differences over foreign and defence policy between himself and Jacques Chirac during the two years of cohabitation, in his Lettre à tous les Français of 1988. In it he commended Chirac for ceding to Mitterrand's preferences out of concern "for the unity of our foreign policy and respect for the

²⁸⁵Cohen, "La politique étrangère entre l'Elysée et Matignon," 495.

²⁸⁶Ibid.

constitution."²⁸⁷ In particular, he confirmed the division within the executive on the desired French response to Gorbachev's INF proposal of February 1987. Whereas Mitterrand supported the "double zero" agreement signed in December 1987, Chirac and his government rejected it. Their disagreement reflected a broader division in the French political class in the late-1980s over a range of French security issues, focused on the question of whether or not to trust Gorbachev.²⁸⁸

The political context of cohabitation created a certain tendency among the opposing political camps within the French leadership to "preempt the foreign policy debate and present the other party with a fait accompli."²⁸⁹ This demonstrated that cohabitation, to the extent that it provoked a struggle for power between the two main actors within the political leadership, tended towards policy incoherence as executive accountability was contentious and a focus of competition and contradictory statements. Samy Cohen has argued that cohabitation led to the stifling of diplomatic initiatives, since most efforts of the respective presidentialist and prime ministerial teams were focused on maintaining or disrupting the flow of information on foreign policy issues and on projecting a dominant image.²⁹⁰

It is possible to identify a division of labour which in effect evolved within the executive during the two year experiment. Chirac dominated the domestic affairs of the polity, while Mitterrand established "the dominant, though not

²⁸⁷As quoted in Jolyon Howorth, "Defence Policy under Mitterrand Mark 2," 79.

²⁸⁸Howorth, "Defence Policy under Mitterrand Mark 2," 79.

²⁸⁹Le Prestre, 26.

²⁹⁰see Cohen, "Deux années de cohabitation en politique étrangère," 15.

unchallenged, voice in foreign and defence matters."²⁹¹

The final outcome of the executive struggle, however, was to reaffirm the legitimacy and stability of the institutions of the Fifth Republic even while it produced some incoherence and inefficiency in French foreign policy. The experience of cohabitation demonstrated that the constitutional framework was sufficiently stable to permit even a divided executive at the heart of the French political system.²⁹²

²⁹¹Marcus, "France's Year of Dualism," 81.

²⁹²Kesselman, 204.

CHAPTER 5

Minority Government

The second round of France's direct presidential election occurred on 8 May 1988, and François Mitterrand was re-elected, receiving 54 per cent of the vote compared to Jacques Chirac's 46 per cent. Exercising his presidential prerogative, as he had in 1981, Mitterrand dissolved the National Assembly on 14 May and called for new parliamentary elections to be held on 5 and 12 June 1988. To the surprise of many observers, these elections did not result in an absolute majority for the Socialists. The Socialist Party and its electoral ally, the MRG, together achieved 276 seats in the National Assembly, below the required 289 needed for an absolute majority. Although the total left vote (including communists) would put the total at 303 seats, Mitterrand's strategy of making an opening to centre voters during the dual elections made an alliance between the Socialist Party and the French Communist Party politically unviable. Mitterrand would be politically unable to retreat to a leftist formation after courting the centre, and alienating the Communist Party.²⁹³

The results of the parliamentary elections were interpreted by many analysts to mean that the French electorate did not desire to return to an all-powerful presidency, by preventing a return to the classical electoral formula of the Fifth Republic, in which the presidential

²⁹³Woyke, 330-333.

majority coincides with the parliamentary majority. The elections denied Mitterrand a majority Socialist government, implying qualified support for the Socialist program. The election results strengthened Mitterrand's position relative to the Socialist Party; had an absolute Socialist majority been returned, Mitterrand would have been more constrained to follow a Socialist line, as occurred from 1981-83 when factional influences within the Socialist Party induced Mitterrand to pursue a reflationary policy.²⁹⁴

The period of minority government reinstated Mitterrand with a considerable extent of control over the levers of government. His reassertion of presidential dominance over foreign and defence policy was not initially challenged by the minority Socialist government. However, as the events of 1989-90 resulting in the end of the Cold War unfolded, and the principles of gaullist nuclear deterrence doctrine and foreign policy were shown to be invalid, the French political class became less willing to maintain the artificial public consensus on defence issues. Fragmentation within the government became increasingly evident until the April 1993 elections which removed the Socialist government from power.

Presidential Control of Foreign and Defence Policy

Immediately following the presidential elections of May 1988, there was not only a return to a unified decision making system in foreign and defence policy, but a definite strengthening of presidential power evident even in comparison to the period of majority Socialist government from 1981-86. According to one analyst, Mitterrand's preeminence was at the highest point of his presidency.²⁹⁵ The role of the prime

²⁹⁴Ibid., 334.

²⁹⁵Cohen, "La politique étrangère entre l'Elysée et Matignon," 498.

minister in foreign and military affairs was effectively minimized, returned to its pre-cohabitationist status. The prime minister no longer attended any summit meetings, and played a supportive role to the Head of State, who again in practice became solely responsible for the defining of French foreign and defence policy.²⁹⁶ Nor did the prime minister (Michel Rocard until 1991, followed by Edith Cresson, then Pierre Bérégovoy) aspire to usurp presidential control of that domain. According to Samy Cohen, arguably France's foremost expert on the executive, the organizational circuiting of information from Elysée to Matignon was corrected and restored to its previous, pre-cohabitation condition, leaving the president and his advisers once again the recipients of all important diplomatic messages and information. Virtually every important French initiative in foreign and military affairs from May 1988 until late 1992 emanated directly from Mitterrand, reaffirming that the president once again exercised uncontested control over the domaine réservé.²⁹⁷

The danger in this situation was that there lacked a sufficient counter-weight in the governmental and administrative structure to presidential dominance in foreign and military policy. The opposition had never before been so weak and divided, and presidential dominance over advisers and government ministers in terms of policy initiatives was the most marked since May 1981.²⁹⁸

However, with the fundamental changes to the European security environment wrought by the collapse of communism and German unification, a discordant chorus of official and non-governmental voices disputing the direction of France's future foreign and security policies began to emerge. As will be

²⁹⁶Ibid.

²⁹⁷Ibid., 499-500.

²⁹⁸Ibid., 502.

argued in this chapter, the sea changes in the European security environment which spurred Mitterrand in his second septennat to pursue an aggressive policy of tying Germany ever more firmly to Western Europe, and France, produced a wide-ranging debate in France on the future of French security and defence policy. This debate, which had its origins in the period of cohabitation but was contained out of fear of provoking a national crisis, reemerged and became the focus of the full spectrum of political forces in France. Whereas Mitterrand controlled the policy levers and was able to undertake French initiatives towards the goal of European political integration and security cooperation, the domestic debate and threatened defence consensus served to produce ambiguities in his policies. The contradictory impulses of maintaining French independence and pursuing greater European cooperation limited the effectiveness of his initiatives, and ultimately circumscribed the French role in a critical period shaping the emerging post-Cold War European order.

Fundamental Changes in European Environment

Shortly after his reelection, Mitterrand was confronted by two developments in the international security environment which fundamentally challenged the principles on which French foreign and defence policy had rested since the establishment of the Fifth Republic. These events, the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe, culminating in the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and the unification of Germany, heralded the end of East-West confrontation in Europe. As of 1989, a pressing need arose for the reevaluation of French foreign policy, security requirements, and strategic options in this new environment. The fundamental question concerned the role that France could play in any future cooperative European structures.

The changes of 1989-90 culminating in the end of the Cold

War and East-West confrontation in Europe opened up new possibilities for France in the subsequent attempts to define a new European security order. "The unravelling of European political systems in 1989 did not give birth to the idea of strong French leadership in a new security order, but it did elevate the possibility to a qualitatively new level."²⁹⁹ Whereas Germany is in the spotlight in the new European environment, it is less likely than France to undertake to exert policy leadership in the new environment, for a number of reasons. By virtue of its demographic size and economic strength, the German role in any future framework is assured. However, on account of its past, Germany is constrained in taking a leading role in future European military security arrangements. By 1990, France had realized that it had an opportunity to take the lead in such initiatives, in reshaping the European order.

How the French would define their security requirements and future defence posture in the new environment would reflect both external and domestic political factors. France's defence plans for the 1990s in particular showed whether French leaders have been able to overcome the constraints imposed by the gaullist defence model which dominated French defence planning over the past 30 years.

The legacy of General de Gaulle, who sought to provide France with an independent nuclear deterrent which would ensure its rank as a major power and foster a consensus around the legitimacy of the institutions of the Fifth Republic, was the creation of a perceived defence consensus which became a symbol for a broader national consensus. Said to extend across the political spectrum, the defence consensus "is the outer shell of a deeper consensus within the society on what

²⁹⁹Posen, 4.

France stands for at home and abroad".³⁰⁰ Thus in developing a security policy consistent with the new conditions in the international environment, French political elites have had to determine if they "are willing to put at risk a defence consensus which has contributed to the political and social cohesion of the nation."³⁰¹ The danger of not undertaking the reassessment is the continued application of a defence model which has lost its effectiveness in the new international environment.

Perhaps most importantly with regard to its relations with Germany has been the extent to which the defence consensus affects French will and ability to create a security policy for the 1990s with a strong European dimension. Mitterrand developed during this period a French policy which supported the further development of a West European security identity through the development of common foreign and security policies among European Community and West European Union partners. This is based on the idea that there is no contradiction between developing bilateral and multilateral military ties among the European members of the Atlantic Alliance, and strengthening NATO.

The Collapse of Communism and German Unification

The Cold War security structure came to an end in 1989 with the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe and the unification of Germany. These two factors gave shape to the new European security landscape confronting France. French policy makers became concerned, first, that given the continued existence of a major Eastern military power possessing nuclear weapons, the absence of a large American

³⁰⁰Diego A. Ruiz Palmer, French Strategic Options in the 1990s, Adelphi Paper 260, Summer 1991 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1991), 16.

³⁰¹Ibid., 17.

military presence in Europe might find Europe unable to constitute an effective counter-weight to a future Soviet or Russian threat. Consequently, it would be in France's interest to pursue a policy of balancing, with its NATO allies, Russian military power. At the same time, it would be in its interests to encourage the peaceful development of democratic structures in the states of Central and Eastern Europe.³⁰²

Second, French leaders became increasingly worried about their declining ability to influence a unified Germany, one which would prove increasingly powerful in the European economic and political environment. With the dissipation of the conventional and tactical threat to Germany, Germany's relationship with its allies will undergo change. In particular, the reduced threat to German security may invoke less need for reassurances from its allies, and consequently, fewer demands on France to accommodate German security concerns in its defence planning. This would have the added effect of reducing the political value of French initiatives in security issues directed at Germany. Moreover, filling the economic vacuum in Central and Eastern Europe caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the retrenchment of military power to Russia, Germany is viewed as a future regional powerhouse. French policy began to focus on getting united Germany firmly committed to political union within the European Community, as the only means of enabling further integration.³⁰³

From mid-1989, French diplomacy took on an increasingly intransigent tone, maintaining that the prospect of German unification was far in the future and undertaking actions which appeared to want to slow down the process of

³⁰²Ibid., 20.

³⁰³Ibid, 22-23.

unification. On 3 November 1989, President Mitterrand stated in Bonn that "Given the speed at which things are moving, I would not be surprised if within the next ten years we will have a new European order."³⁰⁴ Six days later, the Berlin Wall fell, and the ten year process that Mitterrand had foreseen leading up to eventual German unification would prove to be completed within ten months. Not consulted by Chancellor Kohl, who presented a ten-point plan on rapid unification on 28 November 1989, Mitterrand's dismay at the prospect of imminent German unification was evident. His trip to Kiev to meet with Gorbachev on 6 December was the occasion for a statement that any thought of a redrawing of European borders was both premature and destabilizing. Further, Paris declared that the American demand that German unification take place within NATO rendered it impossible, and that American ambitions were actually to prevent unification. Thus did late 1989 through early 1990 constitute the lowest point in Franco-German relations.³⁰⁵

Following the East German elections in March 1990 and the resounding victory of the Christian Democratic Union, who favoured immediate unification with West Germany, Mitterrand's policies underwent a significant shift. From suspicion, denial and confusion, the French position became one advocating much more intensive efforts to accelerate European cooperation and strengthen the European Community. It is evident that this policy was aimed at binding unified Germany to Western Europe, and in particular, to France. In terms of European policy, that translated into pursuing a "deepened"

³⁰⁴Quoted in Claire Tréan, "La France et le nouvel ordre européen," Politique Etrangère 56 (Spring 1991): 82.

³⁰⁵Ibid., 83.

Community of the Twelve.³⁰⁶ European integration offered a means of further controlling a unified and stronger Germany, in a European context where the dissipation of the military threat from the East rendered France's nuclear arsenal into a less significant diplomatic atout (ace).

French Initiatives

Before the momentous changes of 1989-90, Mitterrand had already been pursuing a program of increased European cooperation or integration. During 1988-9, France's emphasis in this process was on regaining a measure of control over its monetary policy, and indirectly, over financial decisions taken in Frankfurt.³⁰⁷ French input, by way of Finance Minister Edouard Balladur, into the Delors Committee's Report on Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) of April 1989 was significant in shaping the final form of the report. Specifically, the French proposals called for the creation of a European Central Bank (ECB) and a common or parallel currency. With the establishment of the ECB, the intention was that interest rates would no longer be set by a national bank, that is, the Bundesbank, or be anchored by the deutschemark as is presently the case, but by the ECB and thus indirectly by the European Community's Council of Ministers. In short, Mitterrand's efforts constituted a "refusal of a pan-EC D-Mark zone"³⁰⁸, challenging the influence of the Bundesbank over interest rates and thus over the economic policies of the European states. Approved by the European Council in June 1989, the Delors Report was subsequently

³⁰⁶Stanley Hoffmann, "Dilemmes et stratégies de la France dans la nouvelle Europe (1989-1991), Politique Etrangère 57 (Winter 1992): 881.

³⁰⁷Anthony Harley, "Maastricht's problematical future," The World Today, October 1992, 180.

³⁰⁸Sutton, 6.

stalled in the face of British opposition and had to await the onset of the French presidency of the European Council in December 1989. At that point, President Mitterrand established that the EMU Inter-Governmental Conference would take place in December 1990.³⁰⁹

By the spring of 1990, French policy reflected the impact of the changes occurring in Central and Eastern Europe, and the French leader's intellectual acceptance of German unification. In the interest of counterbalancing a united (and stronger) Germany within Europe, French diplomacy henceforth focused on European integration.³¹⁰ Mitterrand's diplomacy was to undertake an active process of bilateral initiatives aimed at accelerating European integration, a process that would culminate in the Treaty of Maastricht. The French attitude towards West European security cooperation moreover had undergone a significant shift: relying on the momentum towards the 'single market' in 1993, France anticipated that the integration process could provide the impetus necessary to pursue the considerably more ambitious goal of political union. France thus began to champion the idea of developing a common foreign and security policy within the European Community.³¹¹

There occurred an apparent harmonization in French and German attitudes towards fostering a security dimension to the process of European political union. A joint initiative by President Mitterrand and Chancellor Helmut Kohl on 19 April 1990 proposed the holding of an Inter-Governmental Conference on political union in parallel with the EMU. Declaring that the time had come to accelerate European political union, the

³⁰⁹Ibid., 5.

³¹⁰Daniel Vernet, "The dilemma of French foreign policy," International Affairs, November 1992, 658.

³¹¹Ruiz Palmer, French Security Options, 47.

agenda of the meeting would address "the definition and implementation of a common foreign and security policy." It was the first official statement establishing the EC members' commitment to developing common positions on foreign and security policy.³¹²

Then, on 6 December 1990, a week prior to the Inter-Governmental Conference, Mitterrand and Kohl established in a joint letter their common position on European political union, and set out what was to become the agenda of the discussions on political union. They proposed a substantial "deepening and enlargement of the competencies of the European Council", which would include responsibility for establishing the guidelines for "a common foreign and security policy". They also proposed the creation of an "organic link" ("une relation organique claire") between the WEU and the European political union process, specifically, the eventual incorporation of the WEU into EPU.³¹³

In spite of the efforts France and Germany had taken in helping to reactivate the WEU throughout the 1980s (initially in 1984, then with crafting of the "Platform on European Security Interests" in 1987), by 1990 the WEU had reached a plateau in its development as a forum for discussion and consultation on European security issues. This perception of the WEU was to change, however, with the fundamental changes in the European security environment, the renewed French interest in binding Germany to itself and to Western Europe, and the fresh experience of the Gulf War, in which the WEU proved a useful forum for consultation and coordination.

In October 1991, a few months before the Maastricht

³¹²"MM. Kohl et Mitterrand relancent l'Europe politique," Le Monde, 20 April 1990, 1.

³¹³Claire Tréan, "MM. Kohl et Mitterrand relancent en commun la dynamique européenne," Le Monde, 9-10 December 1990, 1.

summit, President Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl again undertook a joint initiative. Their joint letter to other EC heads of government presented a draft proposal of provisions covering security and defence. Their draft was the inspiration for two formal declarations by WEU member states which were eventually appended to the Maastricht Treaty. These declarations supported the development of the WEU as the "defence component of the European Union and as the means to strengthen the European pillar of the Atlantic Alliance."³¹⁴

The Maastricht Treaty on European Union represents a concerted effort by Mitterrand to achieve the recovery of French power over its monetary policy, and to assert a French vision of the evolution of the future European security order, the fundamental tenet of which is to counterbalance Germany economically, diplomatically, and militarily within Europe.³¹⁵ The Treaty underlines the authority of heads of government (or state, in the French case), and establishes that it is the European Council which will define the guidelines and principles of a common foreign and security policy. France enjoys a natural advantage in the European Council by virtue of its highly centralized system of government. "Any French president, on account of the enormous personal power enshrined in the presidential office under the Constitution of the Fifth Republic and also the length of its term(s), may aspire to have an exceptional say in establishing the guidelines for the 'common foreign and security policy'."³¹⁶

The Franco-German initiatives on European political union were symbolically important, indicating that both countries remained committed to their partnership in Europe following

³¹⁴Sutton, 6.

³¹⁵Vernet, 658.

³¹⁶Sutton, 6.

German unification. However, the Maastricht route, of endowing the European Council with competencies to determine a common foreign and security policy, highlighted the contradiction which exists between the traditional French foreign policy objective of national independence and the cooperative approach embodied by the process of political union. Furthermore, Maastricht reflected the internal debate which France had begun to undergo regarding its relationship with NATO, and more generally, its role in the future European security order; while the Treaty advanced a means of bringing France back into West European defence arrangements through the designation of the WEU as the European Community's defence arm, it simultaneously invoked the WEU as the European pillar of NATO.

France and NATO

Mitterrand's emphasis throughout 1990-91 on intensifying the process of Franco-German integration and European political union began to progressively run into obstacles and opposition, both internally and from external actors. France's relations with the United States were particularly troublesome. As described above, much French effort became focused on defining a new role for the WEU and a defence dimension in the Maastricht Treaty for the political union of the EC countries. France in particular became the champion of a defence and security role defined for European political union. The French position towards NATO however remained ambivalent, which, when combined with vaguely defined initiatives, created enormous strains in Franco-American relations.

Mitterrand's France continued to refuse considering military reintegration into NATO and consequently was absent from forums deliberating NATO restructuring decisions. In May and June 1990, NATO members' foreign and defence ministers met

to reshape the Alliance to fit the new international security environment. The outcome of the meetings was the agreement to reorganize NATO ground forces into multinational corps, including a special Rapid Reaction Corps. Not being a part of NATO's integrated military structure, France did not participate in the Brussels meeting of defence ministers.

In Copenhagen on 6 June, the NATO foreign ministers met to piece together NATO's future agenda. Mitterrand and Foreign Minister Roland Dumas protested at Copenhagen the creation of the multinational force, and stated that French troops would not take part in the units. Mitterrand was strongly opposed to the multilateral corps and NATO cross-stationing agreements, considering them as lacking political and military merit.³¹⁷ Nevertheless, at Copenhagen France exerted leverage during this crucial period in the redefining of the European order. The NATO communiqué issued from Copenhagen constituted a compromise between French and American perspectives. French influence was revealed by the recognition given by NATO to EC efforts to define a European defence identity, in the statement that "the creation of a European identity in security and defence will underline the preparedness of the Europeans to take a greater share of responsibility for their security and will help to reinforce transatlantic solidarity."³¹⁸ The French, in turn, agreed with the statement on NATO'S core security functions in the new Europe.. France sought to ensure that NATO would not block progress on European political integration, one of whose aims is to develop common foreign and security policies. The communiqué also recognized the role of the CSCE in East-West

³¹⁷David S. Yost, "France and West European defence identity," Survival 33 (July/August 1991): 328-9.

³¹⁸see statement issued by the North Atlantic Council meeting in Ministerial Session in Copenhagen on 6 and 7 June 1991.

relations. The meetings indicated that the issue of a future European defence identity was still moot, since French participation in any such order or structure would be vital.³¹⁹

While attending the NATO summit in London, Mitterrand made the surprise announcement at a press conference on 6 July 1990 that "logic dictates that the French army presently based in Germany shall return home" - France would withdraw all of its forces from Germany by 1994 except the French forces composing the Franco-German brigade.³²⁰ The French statement was surprising on two counts. First, the decision was taken with no consultation occurring in the Franco-German defence and security council, the natural venue for an issue of this nature. Secondly, the unilateral French decision contradicted the message that Mitterrand had delivered to George Bush a few months previously in Florida, and consequently conveyed policy incoherence. In April, Mitterrand had underlined the importance of maintaining the cohesion of the Alliance, and thus, the presence of American troops in Europe.³²¹

The French decision was extremely unpopular among allied governments, who generally viewed it as complicating the retention of other Allied forces in Germany, including American forces. The European governments were agreed on the importance for European security of maintaining "a substantial (albeit reduced) number of US forces in Europe, in Germany and the Benelux countries...to balance residual Russian military capabilities and to maintain a strong European-American alliance."³²²

³¹⁹Posen, 3-4.

³²⁰"La logique voudra que l'armée française stationnée en Allemagne regagne son pays," Le Monde, 8-9 July 1990, 5.

³²¹Tréan, "La France et le nouvel ordre européen," 85-86.

³²²Yost, 330.

US-France relations deteriorated through 1992 over the issue of Eurocorps and the perceived threat it posed to NATO, and, more broadly, the concept of a European defence identity which the US perceived as a French effort to break up NATO and drive the US out of Europe.³²³ French initiatives antagonized American concerns mainly through their ambiguity and perceived harmfulness to the Alliance. French official ambiguity and the internal obstacles which increasingly arose toward Mitterrand's policy of European integration may both be traced to the traditional French imperative of maintaining independence in foreign and defence policy. The principle of maintaining French independence of action in foreign affairs contradicts the cooperation and coordination implied by a common European defence and security policy. Thus internal contradictions in Mitterrand's policy came increasingly to the fore. The gaullist imperative of independence also led to official French ambivalence about any fundamental change in Alliance relations and prevented clear statements on the relationship of the European defence identity to NATO. The resulting tensions with the US and NATO stimulated debate among France's political elites and resulted in an increasingly fragmented and divided position vis-a-vis its allies, which further fed internal debate.

The most difficult issue in France's relations with the US arose with respect to the Eurocorps. In October 1991 at their Lille summit, Mitterrand and Kohl devised the idea of creating a Franco-German European corps, the Eurocorps, which was the supposed "embryo" of a European army.³²⁴ Detailed

³²³Roger Cohen, U.S.-French Relations Turn Icy After Cold War," New York Times, 02 July 1992, 10, and Flora Lewis, "Tedious: French and Americans," International Herald Tribune, 24 July 1992.

³²⁴William T. Johnsen and Thomas-Durell Young, "Franco-German Security Accommodation: Agreeing to Disagree," Strategic Review, Winter 1993, 9.

discussion on creation of the corps would take place at the following May summit. Externally, US and NATO opposition to the concept of the Eurocorps mounted, as the US perceived that France was attempting to undermine NATO.

Ambiguity led to friction between France and the US, which did not cease until the details of Eurocorps were fleshed out. On 22 April 1991, the US sent what has become known as the Bartholomew Memorandum³²⁵ to its European allies warning them against initiatives toward creation of a European defence establishment that might weaken and undermine NATO. According to Le Monde, it was the third time in several months that Washington had warned the European Community about possible implications of security cooperation outside the NATO framework.³²⁶

The French efforts to promote a post-Cold War system which would be more Europeanized than the NATO American-dominated one of the past forty years, and one which would hinge on the Franco-German couple, resulted in the May 1992 decision of President Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl to create a Franco-German "Eurocorps", conceived as the core for a future European army. In spite of reassurances from Bonn that the 35, 000 strong corps would come under NATO command in the event of a threat to the Alliance, and under the command of the WEU outside of the NATO area³²⁷, the relationship of the Eurocorps to the Atlantic Alliance remained ambiguous. French opposition to "double-hatting" -- assigning military units to two different commands, able to respond to either as the need

³²⁵Steven Philip Kramer, "The French Question," Washington Quarterly 14 (Autumn 1991): 86.

³²⁶"Nouvel avertissement des Etats-Unis aux Douze à propos de la défense européenne," Le Monde, 2 May 1991, 5.

³²⁷See Christopher Bellamy, "New corps no threat to NATO says Rühe," The Independent, 15 May 1992 and Michael Evans, "Franco-German force will be operational by 1995, Bonn says," The Times, 15 May 1992.

arises -- for both German and French contingents in the Eurocorps threw the availability of the corps to NATO command into question.³²⁸ The role of French troops in the new corps was not immediately defined by Paris, nor was its strategic relationship to NATO defined. That is, it was not mentioned if the forces assigned to the Eurocorps would participate in NATO operations. Germany also had not indicated if it wanted to see this corps deployed outside the European region.³²⁹

The official American reaction was swift and negative. Immediately following the Mitterrand-Kohl summit at La Rochelle on 21 May where the Eurocorps was announced, the American ambassador to NATO, William Taft, stated that in pursuing efforts to establish a common defence, the European Community members were weakening their own security because they were weakening NATO. The Americans further requested that the EC "suspend its pursuit of common defence projects until such time that France returns to the integrated military command structure of the Atlantic Alliance."³³⁰

The French Debate

Parallel with the rise in Franco-American tensions, there arose within France an increasingly vocal opposition to the security policies of Mitterrand. It is significant that opposition arose within the Socialist minority government early in 1991, with the resignation of the Defence Minister, Jean-Pierre Chevènement at the end of January.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and resulting French participation in the Gulf War had a significant impact on

³²⁸Joseph Fitchett, "Paris and Bonn to Form the Nucleus of a 'Euro-Corps,'" International Herald Tribune, 19 May 1992.

³²⁹Pierre Lellouche, "France in Search of Security," Foreign Affairs 72 (Spring 1993): 125.

³³⁰Nicole Kern, "L'impératif de défense européenne," Le Figaro, 22 May 1992.

French domestic politics. French participation in the war was opposed by several important actors and groups in the French political class. The most obvious opponent was Chevènement, Mitterrand's Minister of Defence, who ultimately resigned from his ministerial post in protest to French policy. Chevènement criticized French participation in the Gulf War not only on the grounds that it harmed France's relations with Arab and Muslim countries, but that it constituted a de facto, "mental" reintegration into NATO.³³¹ Chevènement's resignation reflected the growing debate which was beginning to divide the French political class on the more general issue of the future of French security policy.³³² Subsequent to his resignation from government, Chevènement launched a growing number of public attacks on Mitterrand's policy, which appeared domestically to be shifting from its gaullist premises.

Early in 1992, President Mitterrand indicated that a serious reappraisal of French policy was underway with his declaration on 10 January: "Is it possible to conceptualize a European nuclear doctrine? This question will very quickly become one of the major issues in the construction of a common European defence."³³³ His rhetorical statement suggested that the European Community might have to start considering a nuclear doctrine for Europe. This statement was more significant for its internal implications regarding the French defence consensus than the possibility of Franco-British nuclear coordination, which was received with polite

³³¹Jacques Isnard, "M. Chevènement dénonce les 'dérives' de la stratégie française," Le Monde, 23 April 1991, 15.

³³²Jacques Isnard, "Des accents gaullistes," Le Monde, 23 April 1991, 15.

³³³Jacques Amalric, "Un tabou écorné," Le Monde, 12-13 January 1992, 1.

indifference by London.³³⁴ It was the first occasion since he became president in 1981 that Mitterrand openly questioned the future of the French doctrine of the independent nuclear deterrent, which is incompatible with the concept of a common European defence. Mitterrand's statement invoked the issue of a transition from a national to a European doctrine of nuclear deterrence. It also indicated a breaking of the gaullist taboo on the French independent nuclear force de frappe in French political discourse.

In late September 1992, a conference on international strategy hosted by the French Defence Ministry revealed more divisions within the French political class on the future of French defence policy. Prime Minister Pierre Bérégovoy reiterated President Mitterrand's January call for Franco-British talks on a European deterrence doctrine. While Bérégovoy reaffirmed that France remained "totally faithful" to NATO, he added that the Alliance should continue to play a major role but should also adapt itself to the new situation.³³⁵

Defence Minister Pierre Joxe, however, made several remarks which were interpreted as "petits pas" towards NATO. Joxe suggested that France "must be present in the various decision making or discussion bodies, where the management of present crises is being organized and where our future security is being planned."³³⁶ His remarks were widely construed as meaning France should play a greater role in political and military decision making in a reformed NATO, and to some even suggested eventual military reintegration. It was also perceived that Joxe was responding to the continuing

³³⁴Peter Jenkins, "Feu la doctrine nucléaire gaulliste," Le Monde, 4 February 1992.

³³⁵"France Proposes Talks on European Atomic Deterrent," Reuter, 1 October 1992.

³³⁶"Joxe in a box," The Economist, 3 October 1992.

controversy over the link between the Eurocorps and the Alliance and offered a French rapprochement with the US and NATO. The prospect of full French participation in NATO's military committee as means of a French rapprochement with NATO however was subsequently refuted by the Elysée.³³⁷ A masked struggle appeared to ensue in the corridors between these different institutional actors.³³⁸ The French defence debate is still strongly influenced by the perceived need to respect Gaullist sacred cows, namely the French withdrawal from NATO.³³⁹

It seems likely that the increasingly fragmented positions of the French leadership reflected the incongruities of a position whereby the mounting obstacles to Maastricht cast doubt on the progress of a European defence identity, apparent shifts away from gaullist principles indicated new directions in foreign and defence relations with Allies, all against the backdrop of worsening Franco-American relations. The obstacles included a political backlash evidenced by the Danish rejection of the Treaty, the slim margin of the French yes vote in the referendum, and British opposition to the Treaty.³⁴⁰ In short, the political class within France became increasingly divided on Mitterrand's policy of pushing European integration while alienating France further from the US and NATO.

Conclusion

The period of minority Socialist government ended in April 1993 with the overwhelming defeat of the Socialist Party

³³⁷Ibid.

³³⁸Pierre Lellouche, "Défense: Divisions Franco-Américaines," Le Point, 10 October 1992, 3.

³³⁹Vernet, 661.

³⁴⁰Johnsen and Young, 10.

and a repetition of cohabitation. French foreign policy from 1988 until 1993 was marked initially by considerable freedom on the part of President Mitterrand to determine the agenda of government and pursue foreign policy initiatives. By the end of the Socialist government's mandate, open divisions within the regime were obvious. It is unclear at this moment whether the dissent was factionally motivated. It appears more likely, however, that as external events overtook traditional gaullist principles of foreign policy independence, a debate within the political class took form. Given the differing political circumstances from the period of cohabitation -- the widely expected routing of the Socialist Party in April 1993 -- there was little reason to expect regime dissent to be contained. In fact, in view of the forthcoming presidential elections in 1995 (unless Mitterrand resigns, which is unlikely), actors within the Socialist government regime who have presidential ambitions may have been motivated to emphasize their distinct stance on defence.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

The regime approach has enabled us to examine the impact of varying constellations of power occurring within the central political leadership in France on the process and substance of foreign and defence policy. We found it necessary, however, to elaborate further in Chapter II those characteristics of the domestic political system which provide regime members with political resources, and condition the interaction of actors both within the French political class and among the wider French public.

The political system of the Fifth Republic is remarkable in that the formal executive relationship has a fundamental and unresolved tension between presidential and prime ministerial powers and responsibilities in the domains of foreign and defence policy. Tradition has given preeminence to the president, and developments in the political "rules of the game" until the experience of cohabitation reinforced presidential dominance. The growth of presidentialism, presidential office as the focus of political and electoral activity, was particularly encouraged by the 1962 constitutional amendment establishing direct elections for presidential office. Cerny's argument, that de Gaulle deliberately fostered a link between legitimacy accorded to the presidency and institutions of the Fifth Republic, and a foreign policy of grandeur and indépendance, underlines the distinctive political culture pertaining in France. It also

contributes to our understanding of why the concept of a consensus on foreign and defence affairs has so consistently been invoked by political actors and analysts alike.

Our analysis has viewed the Mitterrand presidency as a succession of three distinct regimes. According to the regime framework proposed by Hagan, the period of majority government should have demonstrated the highest degree of regime strength and cohesion. The primary focus of political opposition to the regime occurred within the governing party itself, as rival factions struggled to determine the Socialist government's agenda in domestic economic policy.

The factionalized nature of the Socialist party indirectly influenced the conduct of foreign policy in two distinct ways during this period. First, due to the priority Mitterrand placed for the first two years of government on implementing radical economic reforms and commencing the break with capitalism, foreign affairs did not receive much presidential guidance or initiative. Combined with Mitterrand's initial distaste for the Franco-German axis which had flourished in Community affairs under Giscard, the net effect on Franco-German relations during the first year was a stifling of initiative and cooperation. While Mitterrand did strongly support the NATO decision to deploy INF, part of his motivations were tactical: forestalling American sabotage of his economic reforms as well as domestic criticism on both external and internal Socialist policies by members of the right-wing.

Secondly, as the Socialist reforms faltered through 1982-3, it became increasingly obvious through successive currency revaluations that France relied on the cooperation of its German partner in the European Monetary System. The struggle between the factions advocating different economic programs was echoed in competing visions of European integration and the role of France in that process. The steady electoral decline of both the Communist Party and the Socialists enabled

the moderate factions within the Socialist Party to gain ground. In 1983 when the moderate factions prevailed and the economic austerity measures were expanded into a full U-turn towards a conservative economic policy, there was also a corresponding shift in the French regime's approach to Community affairs.

France's defence relations with the Federal Republic reveal a rather more tenuous relationship between French domestic political factors and policy. Insofar as the priority of the new government was to pursue its economic reforms, Mitterrand perceived the potential of the United States to sabotage his reforms, hence an effort was made to not overtly antagonize the Americans in the realm of defence. Firm French support for the NATO dual-track decision confirmed France's status as a loyal ally, in spite of the presence of a few Communist ministers with relatively minor portfolios in its government.

The regime fragmentation variable is clearly relevant to the period of Socialist majority government. The consequences of intra-party opposition to the regime leadership were greater than was predicted by Hagan, due to the particular nature of the Socialist Party and its history of institutionalized factions. Fragmentation resulted in a continuous struggle to control the agenda of the government. It also provided policy alternatives when the original policy choices ran aground. In that case, regime "fragmentation", or more specifically in this case, the diverse composition of the Socialist Party, would seem to have had a positive effect on French foreign and defence policy making in Franco-German relations.

Regime vulnerability became increasingly relevant to the Socialist government as their popularity declined and the general elections of 1986 drew nearer. Although the declining electoral fortunes of the Socialists may have had a dampening effect on the regime's policy initiatives generally, the fact

that foreign and defence initiatives came under presidential purview, and the fact that Mitterrand was safely ensconced in presidential office until 1988, served to limit the effects of regime vulnerability in the foreign policy domain in the final year or so of Socialist government.

The onset of cohabitation in 1986 marked the beginning of a period of unprecedented division between the actors in the French dyarchy. Political fragmentation was high, as the Socialist president was forced to coexist with a prime minister and government from the centre-right. Chirac's attacks on presidential authority occurred on several levels. The organizational rerouting of diplomatic information away from the president's office, combined with reassignment of tasks within the government led to the loss of much presidential control over the day-to-day management of foreign and defence policy. The attempt of Chirac to assume a diplomatic role also detracted from presidential authority, to some extent. However, Chirac's attempt to determine the lines of foreign and defence policy were significantly limited by his own presidential ambitions, policy ambivalence, and the centre-right's slim margin of majority in the National Assembly. While this did not prevent him from challenging Mitterrand's position on a number of significant issues which directly affected France's relations with Germany, including nuclear doctrine, arms control and SDI, Chirac's dual concerns for not overly weakening the presidential office and not provoking a domestic political crisis through either an executive show-down or through fundamentally questioning the defence consensus served to contain conflict over policy preferences.

Political fragmentation was therefore present, but limited and contained by the central political actors. This containment included the division which flared briefly between the prime minister and his defence minister on the issue of Gorbachev's zero option. The importance of the

presidentialization of politics on political parties and individuals in the political system of the French Fifth Republic cannot be overstated. During the cohabitation of 1986-88 it acted as a potent constraint within the regime on the actions of potential contenders for presidential office. And the office itself, as the ultimate political plum in the French political system, had the distinct advantage of enabling its holder to retreat from the generally successful attacks on his authority by removing himself from the pell-mell of politics and retiring temporarily to the olympian heights of head of state.

It must also be noted, however, that while presidentialist ambitions served a constraining role on executive conflict, the role of public opinion in this process of containment was also crucial. Repeated polls demonstrating firm public support for the continued existence of the cohabitation "experiment" emphasized the common political interest of both Mitterrand and Chirac in limiting the extent of executive disharmony.

Political vulnerability was thus highly relevant in influencing the actions of regime members during cohabitation. Under threat of severe electoral censure should either the president or the prime minister provoke a premature end to cohabitation, both were forced to coexist and allow the business of government to proceed.

The reelection of Mitterrand to the presidency and the subsequent election of a minority Socialist government in 1988 constituted the final regime period under consideration. The effects of regime on the formulation of foreign and defence policy are more difficult to ascertain during this period, due to the sea changes in the international environment which have led to the complete revision of the post-Cold war order. Fragmentation of the regime was not apparent during the first two years following Mitterrand's reelection. The minority government accepted the reimposition of presidential control

over the foreign and defence making processes. Indeed, presidential control over the agenda of government was even stronger than it had been in 1981 with the election of a majority Socialist government. Political vulnerability was also not likely to be a constraining factor for Mitterrand in that period, who had received a renewed mandate for another seven years.

The collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe and the unification of Germany in 1989-90 overturned the conditions on which French foreign and defence policy since de Gaulle had been based. The defence consensus, which had already become subject to question during the period of cohabitation but was artificially maintained for political reasons, began to unravel. Mitterrand's concentration on building a European defence identity highlighted the ambiguities and contradictions invoked by the gaullist rhetoric and principles to both France's allies and its political class. As the long-held tenets of gaullist foreign and defence policy became increasingly incoherent in the prevailing conditions, the French political regime became openly divided on future definitions of French foreign and security policy objectives and means. By the time that the Socialist government was defeated in the April 1993 general elections, French ministers were openly challenging presidential preferences. Regime fragmentation arose in response to the overtaking of French foreign and defence policy by events. It may also be argued that, given the indications that the defeat was promising to be a resounding one, members of the Socialist government lacked the incentive for keeping conflicts from spilling into the public space.

In conclusion, the regime approach appears to be a useful means of understanding the impact of certain domestic political factors on foreign and defence policy making. It is particularly useful in explaining how and why presidential control of the domaine réservé may fluctuate as a consequence

of political conflict within the regime itself. The effects of regime vulnerability and fragmentation, however, are conditioned by those characteristics of the political system which imbue the central political actors with their political resources and motivations. A regime approach is one response to a field of inquiry which has oversimplified the nature of foreign policy determinants in the French case.

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