**FR251: France and the World since 1945**

**Week 8: Pompidou and Giscard d’Estaing**

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| **Key questions:**   * Who was Georges Pompidou and what policies did he pursue in terms of foreign affairs? * To what extent was Pompidou a Gaullist? * What do we mean by Gaullism post-de Gaulle? * Who was Valéry Giscard d’Estaing and what policies did he pursue in terms of foreign affairs? * To what extent did Giscard break with the past? Or was his foreign policy simply a continuation of what had come before? |

**Introduction: Pompidou and Giscard d’Estaing—in the shadow of the General?**

* Georges Pompidou (President 1969-1974) was the obvious heir to de Gaulle: prime minister from 1962-1968, he remains the longest serving prime minister of the Fifth Republic (N.B. the length of a presidential term was decreased from a *septennat* to a *quinquennat* under Chirac with effect from 2002 meaning that no successive PM could match this record).
* Pompidou led de Gaulle’s government during solid times and more rocky periods (e.g. during the events of May 1968)
* Pompidou was a banker for Rothschild’s having also been a *lycée* teacher (he followed the well-trodden path from upper studies at Lycée Louis-le-Grand to the *École normale supérieure* to teaching at the prestigious Lycée Henri IV). He was initially appointed by de Gaulle to manage the foundation set up to support sufferers of Down’s Syndrome in honour of de Gaulle’s daughter before being ushered into politics
* Pompidou did not serve as a *député* and was the first PM not to be a member of the National Assembly
* Generally argued to be ‘Gaullist’ through support of the General and enforcement of his policies at cabinet; strongly pro-de Gaulle before 1968 BUT fell out during events of May 1968
* Pompidou followed many of the same policies as de Gaulle in foreign affairs (e.g. emphasis on *grandeur*) but more open to UK and USA while being less sympathetic to USSR
* Giscard d’Estaing worked for Pompidou during his time as PM; became golden boy of centre-right BUT disassociated from Gaullist movement and set up centrist party
* Despite efforts to appear more humble and to connect better with voters, Giscard was unpopular; beaten by Mitterrand in 1981
* Although not a self-professed Gaullist, some of Giscard’s foreign policy reflected Gaullism (e.g. African relations) whereas European policy was more nuanced
* Shadow of de Gaulle lingered over both presidencies until Mitterrand’s election

**The Pompidou era: status-quo?**

* Pompidou was not a career politician in the typical Fourth Republic sense: he had gained work experience outside of politics and did not hold elected office before running for the presidency (much like Macron)
* Pompidou worked closely with de Gaulle until 1968, when he disagreed over treatment of students and workers and disliked de Gaulle’s sudden and unusual departure for Germany during the height of the crisis (Pompidou was not informed)
* As president, Pompidou implemented relatively small-scale economic reform at the start of his presidency, seeking to continue to make the most of the common market. By the end of his term, however, Pompidou had begun to modernise the economy in a major way: he commissioned work on the TGV network; the Ariane space programme and increased reliance on nuclear technology. Pompidou retained foreign affairs as a ‘domaine réservé’ and his style was still relatively distanced and statesmanlike, following de Gaulle’s example. However, he did not follow the same Bonapartist aspects of Gaullism such as regular referenda designed above all to strengthen his hand; not the same authoritarianism as de Gaulle (e.g. *some* relaxation of media control—though not much!).
* Pompidou was steadfastly conservative: he distrusted anything too radically to the centre or to the left (e.g. the efforts by his PM, Jacques Chaban-Delmas, to build a ‘new society’ based on a shake-up of taxes, greater welfare support etc.)

**Foreign affairs: USA; USSR; Europe; Africa**

*USA*

* Pompidou enjoyed good relations with the Republican Richard Nixon until Nixon’s removal from power. Pompidou was generally more Atlanticist than de Gaulle—he allowed French troops to collaborate more with US troops and with NATO, though France remained outside of the integral command structure. Commerce between France and the USA, along with tourism, was encouraged.

*USSR*

* Despite the maintenance of apparently friendly relations between Pompidou and the Soviet leaders (Khrushchev and Brezhnev), under Pompidou foreign policy towards the actual state of the USSR became more hostile, inspired by the invasion of Prague during the spring of 1968 and the crushing of the uprising.

*Developing world*

* Increasing focus on ‘Arab’ states—France sold mirage jets to Libya in 1970 having previously refused to sell the same jets to Israel under de Gaulle; the volume of Franco-Arab trade doubled in the five years between 1969 and 1974.
* Increased diplomatic relations between France and both Tunisia and Morocco (de Gaulle had ceased to work with either nation from 1964 and 1966 respectively)
* Funding for Africa: In 1971, Pompidou visited Mauritania, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Cameroon and Gabon with promise of increased funding (building on the *Fonds d’Aide à la Coopération* established under de Gaulle, which devoted funding to educational resources in particular). Jacques Foccart, who had been responsible for African affairs under de Gaulle, continued in the role until Pompidou’s death. From 1973, under Foccart’s influence, a major summit of French and Francophone African leaders was established as an annual event. Pompidou was also influenced by his friendship with the Senegalese poet and leader Léopold Sedar Senghor

*Europe*

* Pompidou remained committed to maintaining French interests in the European Economic Community (and he remained, like de Gaulle) opposed to supranational bodies, but wanted to create a Europe which could hold its own against the two superpowers of the USA and USSR
* Responsible for shifting France’s position on the enlargement of the EEC and inclusion of UK: resulted in referendum of member states which approved UK membership in 1973

*Overall*

Pompidou was broadly more pragmatic than de Gaulle and certainly less Anglophobic. However, aspects of de Gaulle’s foreign policy remained, e.g. policy towards Africa; closer links with developing world and distrust of supranational bodies.

**Giscard d’Estaing: man of the people?**

* Giscard d’Estaing elected following the 1973 oil crisis: prices for crude oil shot up as supply was disrupted. This marked the beginning of the end of the ‘trentes glorieuses’ of economic stability.
* Giscard was nevertheless keen to make his mark on the economy. Giscard was the first real ‘technocrat’ to become President and had prided himself on his economic stability during his role as Minister for the Economy during Pompidou’s presidency. Giscard made more of the TGV network, continued the work Pompidou had begun on nuclear power and sought to develop the Minitel, a precursor to the internet. Although Giscard initially worked with Jacques Chirac as his prime minister, the two became divided as Giscard sought to distance himself from the Gaullist party. Giscard then appointed Raymond Barre as PM who followed a rigid economic plan.
* Giscard formed his own independent centrist party as a vehicle to election: he therefore broke with the Gaullist movement that Pompidou had continued to lead. Giscard only just defeated Mitterrand in 1974 but sought to appear as a man of the people until deciding this was too informal and became too aloof. Giscard nevertheless succeeded in pushing through the Veil laws on abortion, making it legal for the first time in France and introducing the 1974 law which reduced the voting age to 18 for both men and women.

**Foreign affairs**

* Giscard retained the *domaine réservé* of foreign affairs BUT sought to work closer with France’s western allies: in 1975 he invited the leaders of the UK, USA, Italy, West Germany and Japan to a summit of the G6, which was then expanded to include Canada as the G7.

*NATO and defence*

* France continued with the development of the *force de frappe* but also continued greater cooperation with NATO; by the end of Giscard’s presidency, sales of French arms abroad amounted to 8.4 billion francs, while spending on defence under Giscard went up by 0.4% of France’s GDP. Generally speaking, the most significant arms contracts for France were with countries rich in crude oil (e.g. Saudi Arabia and Iraq).

*Europe*

* Largely driven by economic factors: Giscard helped to develop the European Monetary System in order to help French interests, while also placing illegal tariffs on the importing of Italian wine and British lamb in 1975
* Giscard fiercely opposed any budget rebate towards the UK (eventually approved during Thatcher’s term in office)
* Giscard was nonetheless in favour of regular meetings of the European council and on developing common European responses to the USSR’s invasion of Afghanistan and towards the Middle East. Later drafted European constitution (rejected in referendum in France in 2005 but later picked up as Lisbon treaty)
* Giscard was especially pro-German (Pompidou was generally seen as more of an Anglophile); in the words of *Le Figaro*, by 1979, Germany had gone from being ‘l’enemi héréditaire’ to ‘l’ami héréditaire’ in the eyes of the French
* Giscard enjoyed close personal relations with Helmut Schmidt—both men were former finance ministers and they met on 14 official occasions during Giscard’s presidency, with many more unofficial meetings and meetings between French and German delegations every 6 months. Ongoing school exchanges between France and Germany first developed by de Gaulle in the 1963 treaty between France and West Germany on cooperation
* Close industrial ties between France and Germany: e.g. Airbus; Ariane space project; nuclear energy. 20% of all French exports went to Germany during this period.

*Africa*

* Giscard followed a similar approach to de Gaulle towards Africa: he wished to end any instability in the region while also developing French interests; during Giscard’s presidency 260,000 French people were living and working in Africa and 20% of French exports went to Francophone Africa
* 0.76% of French GDP was sent as aid to Francophone Africa during Giscard’s presidency
* Some 14,000 French troops were stationed in Africa under Giscard with military interventions throughout his presidency, including to restore the deposed president of the Central African Republic, David Dacko, which proved controversial since this meant deposing in turn the leader of the CAR army, Jean-Bédel Bokassa, with whom Giscard had enjoyed a close personal friendship. Bokassa fled to France where he was granted asylum having offered as gifts two diamonds to Giscard, who never declared them.

*Developing world*

* Increasing links with Arab nations to benefit from crude oil: by 1981, 66% of France’s crude oil imports came from Saudi Arabia and Iraq while Giscard enjoyed close personal relations with the Shah of Iran.

*USA*

* As witnessed by the creation of the G6 and greater involvement with NATO, Giscard was broadly pro-USA though his real interests lay with African and German relations

*USSR*

* France was increasingly distant in its relations with the USSR: Giscard did not invite the USSR to take part in the G6 and his close relationship with Schmidt and West Germany essentially led Giscard to be colder with the USSR over partitioning of Germany

*Overall*

* Some elements of Gaullism remained (e.g. African policy in terms of aid etc.; relations with Germany; French interests in Gaullism) but overall foreign policy was increasingly based on pragmatic economic relations or personal links between Giscard and leaders

**Anticipating Mitterrand: a socialist experiment?**

* By 1981 Giscard’s popular image was one of aloofness and financial scandal (the Bokassa diamonds in particular). Mitterrand appeared to have a fresher perspective and promised to reboot the French economy through nationalisation and radical change through a Socialist experiment. Yet despite the rhetoric, much of Mitterrand’s foreign policy built on the foundations laid by de Gaulle, Pompidou and Giscard