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Xavier Fraudet, *France's Security Independence: Originality and Constraints in Europe 1981-1995*. Bern, Peter Lang 2006. \$54.95 U.S. (pb). U.S. ISBN 978-0-8204-8377-1.

Review by Jolyon Howorth, Yale University.

The literature on François Mitterrand's fourteen-year Presidency is extremely abundant. Several hundred titles have appeared since the death of the only man to have completed two full seven-year terms as France's head of state. Xavier Fraudet's unapologetic historical account adds to the volume, without adding greatly to the analytical overview. Steeped in immense reading and, in general, extremely well-informed, the book amounts to a careful and painstaking rehearsal of some of the key moments in Mitterrand's record as chief architect of foreign and defence policy. To the extent to which there is a central thesis, it is that, ever since Louis XIV and especially the French Revolution, there has been a basic consensus in France on foreign and security policy, based on the cultural exceptionalism whereby, over the course of a turbulent history, "French people learnt that they are vulnerable and have to put down their differences to face their survival" (p. 16). Some might question the reality of this in light of the Paris Commune, the Popular Front and the events of 1940-1944. After World War Two, Fraudet argues, the consensus emerged around the notion that European integration held the key to the perpetuation of that crucial cultural consensus on foreign and security policy. While de Gaulle was, in this reading, a great architect of contemporary Europe, François Mitterrand developed European policy to a veritable art form, without basically shifting the Gaullist consensus on French exceptionalism.

This thesis is expounded through four substantial and well-documented chapters dealing, respectively, with Mitterrand's European commitment (the author uses the French term *engagement*), particularly through the Franco-German relationship; his approaches to the key security challenges of the 1980s and to a new relationship with NATO after 1989; his attempts to create a form of European security identity via the Western European Union (WEU); and his approach to German unification and Eastern enlargement. These chapters are historically rather than analytically structured, at times amounting to an almost day-by-day account of developments. As such, they will be of some value to graduate students searching under every conceivable stone for yet more evidence on which to build new theses. However, they do not really add anything new to the mass of literature already in existence. Indeed, they often tend to skate round existing scholarly controversies without really engaging with the key literature. Thus, the discussion of Chirac's cohabitation with Mitterrand between 1986 and 1988 (pp. 95-104) is couched in terms of lack of basic disagreement on key strategic issues--on which there is little academic dispute--rather than addressing the still ongoing controversy over the respective constitutional powers of the President and the Prime Minister in a situation where a power struggle is ongoing. The discussion of Mitterrand's complex relationship with NATO in the early years after the Cold War fails to come to grips with the key difference between Washington and Paris: the respective future prerogatives of a revamped Alliance and an embryonic European defence identity within a new world order. That difference still lurks at the heart of President Sarkozy's as yet unarticulated difference with the USA over the future course of NATO. Similarly, Fraudet, in discussing Mitterrand's attitude towards German unification, only connects by inference (and at that without clarity) with the still smouldering dispute within the French academy over whether the President attempted to apply the brake to unification or whether he embraced and promoted it. [1]

Much has happened since Mitterrand's disappearance from the scene. In particular, the European security model he favoured—largely because it appeared to be the only one available—based as it was on the Western European Union, has been totally overtaken by the “Saint-Malo process” which gave rise, after 1998, to the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and the disintegration of the WEU. The reason the ESDP replaced the European Security and Defence Initiative (ESDI) was that, manifestly, the latter (Mitterrand's chosen course) simply did not work. One should also note that Mitterrand remained until his dying day convinced that there were political and strategic dangers involved in re-integration of French forces into the NATO command. It required a Gaullist Prime Minister (Balladur) in 1993 and President (Chirac) in 1995 to grasp the nettle of a seriously new relationship with NATO. The fact that the 1995-1997 honeymoon ended in tears has not prevented another Gaullist, Nicolas Sarkozy, from making another attempt. Fraudet is not to be faulted for having confined himself to the Mitterrand years. However, these years are likely to appear to future historians as something of a strange hiatus between the Cold War and the post-Cold War (or even the post-post-Cold War). American unipolarity and *hyperpuissance* has been seriously damaged in the twenty-first century. Europe has come into its own as a new form of security actor and NATO is currently bogged down in a conflict in Afghanistan of which François Mitterrand would simply not have been able to conceive.

Fraudet's study, while informed by reference to a very considerable (albeit incomplete) literature on Mitterrand, is, at times, far too dependent on sources whose authenticity has been seriously questioned by more thoughtful historians. At times, entire pages (160-168) are taken almost verbatim from Jacques Attali's *Verbatim*, with no attempt to ask how reliable that source might be, and with little real attempt to correlate Attali's assertions with the findings of professional historians. The narrative is marred linguistically by the use of what can only be described as a form of French/universal English which, quite often, makes the meaning of a sentence incomprehensible (thus: “Politically, it is true that Germany has a stronger weight than France. But as far as Germany did it, as it was the case, on an authentic democratic basis, it is difficult to make any contest” [p. 240]). It is not clear whether the book was originally written in English or was translated directly from a French manuscript.

The book's central thesis, that “Europe offers to France the possibility of influence at a significant scale without being obliged to give up or deny what she is” (p. 243), while no doubt remaining valid for the Mitterrand years, has been subjected to increased empirical questioning by historical forces, including ever-greater enlargement to the East and the failure of the 2005 referendum. Mitterrand was, in his day, the master of French foreign and security policy. Fraudet offers us an in-depth glimpse of some of the key moments of his two *septennats*. It would have been helpful—particularly since the book was published in the enormously different context of 2006—had the author attempted to situate the period in a much wider framework.

#### NOTES

[1] Respectively, Samy Cohen; Frédéric Bozo. See Samy Cohen, *Mitterrand et la sortie de la guerre froide* (Paris: PUF, 1998) and Frédéric Bozo, *Mitterrand, la fin de la guerre froide et l'unification allemande. De Yalta à Maastricht* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2005).

Jolyon Howorth  
Yale University  
[jolyon.howorth@yale.edu](mailto:jolyon.howorth@yale.edu)