

PREFACE

Since the first annual meeting of the heads of state or government of the major industrial democracies was held in 1975, the seven-power summits have become an institution of consequence in international political and economic relations. Scholarly interest in the summits has so far only resulted in limited specialized literature on this subject. In particular, detailed studies of individual countries' participation in the summit process, and of the place occupied by the summit in these countries' overall foreign policy, have been unavailable.

This report is intended as a preliminary empirical study of the conduct of France's foreign policy in relation to the seven-power summits. As such, it does not give a detailed account of the annual general proceedings, nor does it purport to evaluate the summit as an institution.

As to the method of this study, the unavailability of internal government documents, as well as the rarity of scholarly literature, have made reliance on written French press reports necessary. The quality of this primary source is, of course, uneven.

The central reference has been Robert D. Putnam and Nicholas Bayne's Hanging Together - Cooperation and Conflict in the Seven-Power Summits.¹ Any factual information which can be found in this book and which has been confirmed elsewhere is presented here without reference to its source. Also, translation of quotes from the original French has often been necessary.

The summits being meetings of the leaders themselves, the focus of this study of one member state's participation is in large part an analysis of the positions taken by two successive French Presidents. Discussed also are the international as well as domestic political, economic and to some degree personal factors, including the role of other members of the national delegation, involved in the adoption of their leader's positions. Implicit in this approach is the premise that heads of state or of government are pursuing what they consider to be the national interest. This "realist" approach to international relations has, at minimum here, the advantage of providing a clear analytical framework for this empirical study.

In keeping with a leader - centred approach, this study of French participation in the summits from 1975 to 1987 is divided into three periods: the Presidency of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (1975-1980); the first five years of the Presidency of François Mitterrand (1981-1985), during which his power within the French political system was unchallenged; and the years of "co-habitation" (1986-1987), during which President Mitterrand shared power with his Prime Minister and political opponent Jacques Chirac.

Finally, actual accreditation and attendance at various press briefings, interviews, conferences and other contacts, contributed greatly to the section on France's participation in the 1988 Toronto Summit which concludes this paper.

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