

Asian Policy

Advancing an alternative to the 'China Card'



In late January of 1980, French President Giscard d'Estaing will visit India and will likely be the first foreign leader to meet with the expected winner of the early January elections, former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. This visit, and the meeting of these two world statesmen, is certain to have a significant impact not only on the French role in Asia but on the world.

France's relations with India, their third largest trading partner in the region after Japan and Korea, are a crucial part of an emergent French strategy which aims at constructing an alternative to the China-centered strategy of the Anglo-American axis. Though France has placed great importance on China, particularly since the days of de Gaulle's groundbreaking 1964 recognition of the Peking regime, it has also opposed the policy of playing China off against the Soviet Union and encouraging China's great power pretensions.

Under Giscard, this French approach has been demonstrated as recently as the October visit of Chinese Party Chairman Hua Guo-feng to France (and other countries in Western Europe) where he was received with a great display of ceremony, expressing French recognition of China's role, but with a cool response to Hua's call for a united front against the Soviet Union. Giscard's view, stated earlier, is clear:

French policy has always been to favor Chinese participation in different aspects of international life. In this way, France encouraged China to take its place in the U.N., on the Security Council ... and in all disarmament talks. But, at the same time, France was also implementing the policy of detente and the improvement of relations between the Soviet Union and France's Western partners. This will remain fundamental to our policy.

I think that, on the whole, everyone recognizes that the development of relations with China must be practiced in such a way as to not create tensions or risks in relations with the Soviet Union. In my opinion, one must be more explicit than that: we must indicate clearly that the establishment of new

relations must be conducted in such a way that it is not a destabilizing factor ... but compatible with the goal of detente and security.

France, India, and Indochina

This view has expressed itself in French relations with two of the key powers in Asia, the two who, along with the Far Eastern powers of Japan and Korea, are likely to determine the future of Asia—namely India and Vietnam. Regarding Indochina in general, there is a historic French link which, despite the French war with Indochina, has remained largely unbroken. In the case of Vietnam, it has in fact taken on new importance.

French relations with Vietnam, including trade ties which make France the largest Western economic partner of Vietnam, have been quietly growing of late. Several French concerns carrying on manufacturing operations in Vietnam, including a pharmaceutical plant, have continued operations under new agreements reached since the reunification of Vietnam, while Elf-Acquitaine is assisting Vietnamese oil exploration efforts in the South China Sea.

These agreements followed particularly the visit of Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong to Paris in late April, 1977. Extensive French credits were made available to Vietnam and agreements were reached on French construction of a steel mill by Creusot Loire in Vietnam, an agreement which has yet to be carried out from the Vietnamese side (reportedly because of Soviet pressure on Vietnam not to consummate the deal).

The best expression of French policy however has come in regards to the Kampuchean crisis. France has played a mediating role, initiating the U.N. meeting on relief aid for Kampuchea late this year and clearly distancing itself from the Anglo-American-Chinese bloc's policy of support for overthrown Cambodian leader Pol Pot. Despite the presence in Paris of Kampuchean pretender-to-power, Prince Sihanouk, the French have made it clear they will not tolerate renewed Chinese aggression against Vietnam and seek a peaceful solution to the Indochinese situation.

With India, the French role perhaps has the greatest potential. Giscard has the golden opportunity in January to demonstrate to what is sure to be a Western-wary Mrs. Gandhi the full extent of French support for Indian industrialization and modernization. The key area of cooperation is nuclear energy, which has already seen important French input into the development of India's nuclear energy program. The area of French input of greatest importance is the fast breeder program underway in India. Now an experimental program, the fast breeder is seen by Indian planners as the key to enabling them to utilize their large thorium reserves as fuel. Ne-

gotiations for further French assistance are ongoing, though plagued by disputes over the price of French-supplied enriched uranium. Giscard's visit should help consolidate these deals.

A strong and economically developing India, with close ties to France, would represent a powerful ally in the developing sector for France's broader plans for North-South relations within the framework of a fully functioning European Monetary System.

Franco-Japanese relations will be of paramount importance in this regard and in regard to France's policy toward China. Traditionally, these relations are not close although Japanese interest in France has increased over the past decade as the country looks to strengthen its ties to Europe.

France in Korea

The relationship between France and South Korea has been very strong since the military coup in May 1961 that brought General Park Chung-hee to power. Anxious to expand Korea's relations with Western powers other than the United States, Park sought out ties to both West Germany and France. Chancellor Adenauer and President de Gaulle were two of the first world leaders to extend diplomatic recognition to Park's government.

The tradition of French independence, as represented by de Gaulle, formed the basis for a close relation between the two countries, as it was the goal of Park Chung-hee's coup to strengthen Korea's independence and "self-reliance." Economic ties have become particularly important; Korea is the second largest importer of French products in all of Asia, with high-technology capital goods taking a large chunk of the total.

Most representative of the close relationship between the two countries was the agreement reached in 1973 for France to provide Korea with nuclear reprocessing technology. The deal was negotiated by Gaullist Prime Minister Jacques Chirac and Korea Prime Minister Kim Jong Pil. Kim, who was the chief architect of the 1961 coup, has often been described as a "Korean Gaullist," and was often used by late President Park Chung-hee for sensitive talks with both France and West Germany.

Following the announcement of the deal, the United States put tremendous pressure on Seoul to cancel the agreement, with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger playing a leading personal role in the affair. In 1976, the pressure succeeded and the Koreans did not gain access to the reprocessing technology. Nevertheless, overall cooperation on nuclear energy development has continued between the two countries.

—Peter Ennis

Inside France

The 'left' and the 'right' against the President



Lately, the Gaullist component of the coalition of parties that makes up the French government of President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing has been rejecting en bloc government-submitted legislation and blasting the President's foreign policy, particularly toward the developing sector.

Political analysts report that the Gaullist RPR Party is simply trying to distance itself from Giscard and his policies with an eye to running RPR Party leader Jacques Chirac in the 1981 presidential elections. While such reports have a grain of truth, the reality, as a cursory look at the London-based press or its allied Rothschild-owned French dailies like *Le Matin* or *Le Monde* shows, the City of London and the Washington, D.C. crowds are determined to use whatever means are available to prevent Giscard from extending the European Monetary System world-wide as he pledged to do during his Nov. 17 television appearance, and extending his term in office for another seven years.

London and Washington have deployed a classic "left versus right" operation against the President on the issues of national economy and foreign policy, including a de facto alliance between the Gaullist Party and the French Socialist Party.

In fact, while the Gaullists are taking a critical stand against the President's African policy and his management of the French economy, the left is charging that Giscard is an imperialist ruler who won't even listen to his own majority, much less the poor underdeveloped African nations.

The budget fight

This past week, Prime Minister Raymond Barre was forced to invoke Article 49 of the French Constitution. The issue was the adoption of the state budget submitted by the Giscard government to the National Assembly. Less than a third of the National Assembly voted for the budget—the "left" parties voted censure motions and the Gaullists abstained. By refusing to vote on a govern-