

UACES 39th Annual Conference

Angers, 3-5 September 2009

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Sarkozysm: New European - and Foreign Policy into Old French Bottles?

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UACES: Exchanging Ideas on Europe

Angers 3 – 5 September 2009

<p>Preliminary version - Not for quotation Comments are most welcome to uho@diis.dk</p>
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Abstract:

The paper argues that the ‘break with the past’, ‘a new European policy’ and a political change that the French president Sarkozy has announced will take place with him as president has only happened at the level of day – to – day policy. This argument rests on the assumption that European – and foreign policy is a question about ‘who we are as Frenchmen’. Foreign – and European policy is thus analyzed as a question of construction of identity and projection of the representation of national identity onto the European – and global scene. The premise of the analysis is thus that the nation –state is the most important level of the analysis from there to start in order to understand which kind of European concepts makes sense at the national scene. Change happens but it is difficult to bring about change, because change touches upon the ‘deep structure’ of the concept of the nation – state. The paper rests on conceptual and discursive analysis. Concepts that appear frequently in the discourses of de Gaulle, Mitterrand, Chirac and Sarkozy are analyzed in order to lay bare both stability and possible transformations of the concepts, how they enter the discourses on French European – and foreign policy and how they frame what can be said and what make sense at the national scene. Discursive recurrent concepts as ‘multipolarity’, ‘une Europe européenne’, ‘a certain idea of France’, ‘allied but not aligned with the US’ are analyzed in Sarkozy’s speeches and related to similar concepts in especially de Gaulle’s, Mitterrand’s and former president Chirac’s discourses in order to ‘measure’ whether there are ‘breaks’ that touch ‘the deep structure’. The paper then move on to analyze whether Sarkozy continues Charles de Gaulle’s concept of a Europe of the States or/and Francois Mitterrand’s state-like Europe.

Introduction:

Since the Gaullist Nicolas Sarkozy was elected French president 6 May 2007, there have been endless French debates amongst politicians, commentators and intellectuals whether and how Sarkozy is going to change French foreign - and European policy.

According to Sarkozy himself, he incarnates change. In his first speech as French President to the French Ambassadors’ conference 27 August 2007 Sarkozy announced that ‘*(t)he mark of a*

*statesman is to change the course of events, not simply to describe or explain them*¹. Thus, whether Sarkozy will be able to change the course of events, his intention is at any rate to reestablish strength, leadership, order and authority that have to emanate from a strong president.

During the electoral campaign Sarkozy often stated that he wanted ‘a break’ with the past’, ‘a quiet break’, ‘a political change’ and a ‘new European policy’. But with which part of the past does Sarkozy want to break and which kind of Europe does he want to promote? Does the Gaullist Sarkozy go for a break with the Gaullist heritage? If the break is about a break with Gaullist heritage, one has to ask what characterizes the Gaullist foreign - and European political heritage? Is there a ‘deep structure’ which guided Gaullist foreign – and European politics and with which Sarkozy wants to break? Or does he want to make a break with Mitterrand’s conceptualization of Europe? If so, how did Mitterrand conceptualize Europe? Did Mitterrand draw on a Gaullist heritage and a ‘deep structure’?

There is a deep structure and a heritage which however date from the French Revolution in 1789. The distinctive feature of this deep structure is the message of the French revolutionary political nation-state² to all mankind that in principle should follow the ‘universal political message’ (see chapter: the concept of French Nation – State and *Patrie*). As de Gaulle put it: “(o)ur actions are directed towards goals, which are coherent and which, because they are French, mirror the ambitions of mankind” (Quoted in Grosser 1984, 178 - 79).

De Gaulle’s famous opening sentence of his *Mémoires de Guerre*: “*Toute ma vie je me suis fait une certaine idée de la France*” (all my life I have held a certain concept of France) refers implicitly to French foreign - and European polity which is based upon retaining French ‘grandeur and gloire’ (greatness and honour) that stems from the French pride of having invented the political nation-state. The French political heritage – the deep French political structure - is thus an ambitious outlook on France’s European role and presence in the world. No matter whether a politician belongs to the right, the centre or the left, he or she cannot avoid engaging with this ‘deep structure’. It does not necessarily imply that a politician has to utter the words ‘gloire and grandeur’.

¹ Allocution de M. Nicolas Sarkozy, Président de la République à l’occasion de la conférence des ambassadeurs 27 août 2007.
http://www.elysee.fr/francais/intervention/2007/allocution_a_l_occasion_de_la_conference_des_ambassadeurs.79272.html

² In French, the term is ‘l’État - nation (state - nation) because it was the state that created the nation.

In fact Sarkozy does not use these words. But the existence of the ‘deep structure’ does imply that a politician cannot escape from representing the French nation – state as possessing something ‘extra’ in comparison to other European nation – states. This ‘extra’ brought Sarkozy to state in his speech to the Ambassadors August 2007: “(j)e me suis fait une très haute idée de la France et donc de son rôle dans le monde d’aujourd’hui” (I have held a high idea of France and consequently of its role in the world of today). This declaration falls in direct line with de Gaulle’s ‘certaine idée de la France’ and with all the other French presidents’ representation of France since de Gaulle.

It may be objected that Sarkozy’s statement is merely a rhetorical gesture which pays lip service to French political culture. However, words matter and utterances are framed by a specific production of meanings that makes sense at the national level. That does not mean that change cannot take place. External pressure – like the crumbling of the wall, the big enlargement in 2004, US unilateralism and the global financial crisis might put pressure on the deep structure. However, the deep structure consists of relatively stable basic codes – the concepts of state and nation - that are immensely difficult to change because to do so would break with a long history of political culture.

The Paper argues that the projection of identity is stable over time but that change of course is possible. However, changes follow certain ‘routes’ that make sense at the national level. The paper aims to investigate whether Sarkozy follows these ‘routes’ or whether he breaks them.

The paper starts from the assumption that foreign – and European policy is about ‘who we are as Frenchmen’. Foreign – and European policy is thus analyzed as a question of construction of identity and projection of the representation of national identity onto the European – and global scene. The premise of the analysis of the French EU - Presidency is thus that the nation-state is the most important level of analysis from where to start in order to understand which kind of European concepts make sense at the national scene.

This choice might be criticized by radical postmodernists and poststructuralist who argue that the state is not a unitary actor and that the Westphalian state is undermined by all kinds of overlapping identities, cooperation between societies - beyond the nation-state borders - and the emergence of several kinds of authorities like in the Middle Age (Ruggie, 1983). However, the assumption of the paper is that the *idea* of the nation - state still exists and that ‘Europe’ is a central component of ‘the

national we'. It is thus not possible to talk about the future of France without inclusion of Europe. In other words: the relationship between nation-state and Europe is an internal relation.

Still another criticism might be levelled against the fact that the paper does not deal with the impact of the EU on national policies and politics (Europeanization). A research agenda on the impact of the EU on domestic politics and whether this impact changes the deep structure of the political elite's discourses on French European – and foreign policy³ might be of high interest if one follows the researcher Claudio Radaelli's definition of Europeanization as "*a set of processes through which the European Union political, social and economic dynamics become part of the logic of domestic discourses, identities, political structures and public policies*" (Radaelli 2001, 110)⁴. However, the aim of this analysis is not to study how Europeanization impacts domestic institutional structure and ideas. The aim is to analyze the structures of production of meaning at the domestic level and how these meanings 'travel out' in Europe. This sounds like a deductive methodology and to a certain extent it is because the premise of the analysis is that some structure is given beforehand due to a long political culture that structures what can be said and done. However, the analyst tries to hold in check the deductive analysis by introducing inductive methodology when reading actual texts.

The analysis of the paper relies on discourse analytical strategy and conceptual analysis. This means that the analyst studies how the objects of investigation are constructed. Discourses do therefore not exist prior to the investigations of them. The analyst constructs them through the analytical choices and definitions made in order to identify them in the first place. That is to say that there does not exist a set of pre-given methodological rules, which dictates how discourses are to be investigated (Holm 1999, Malmvig 2002).

This methodology does not, however, exclude the assumption of the existence of a pre-given 'deep structure' that is characterized by two hundred years of debate on the conceptualization of the political nation-state. The analyst is looking for the manifestations of this structure. One can neither

³ The researchers Christian Lequesne (1993), H. Oberdorff (1994), and Robert Ladrech (1994) do research on the impact of European institutional and administrative procedures onto French national administrative culture. However, they have not analyzed in depth the European impact on 'the French deep structure of political culture'. Michel Mangenot has written about the institutional Europeanization of 'le Conseil d'État' (2005). Bastian Irondelle (2003) has in a brilliant article analyzed to which degree the impact of European integration has influenced the domestic military reform in France

⁴ The author of the paper has carried out an analysis of how the concept of the nation-state has left its mark on the French conceptualization of European institutions and how the development of European institutions have left a mark on French institutions (Holm, 1997)

observe the structure directly, nor verify them in any other way than by showing how they can be seen as actual manifestations of the possibilities contained in the deep structure. It is by digging into various sources of texts whether philosophical, literary or political, that the discourse analyst finds the pattern of meanings. This extensive reading makes it possible to trace down ‘the codes’ (nation – state) of the ‘deep structure’ and the relation between the elements of the ‘deep structure’. The next analytical step is to analyze how the codes of the deep structure relate to the European concepts. Finally the reading of actual texts on day – to day politics – in a inductive way – opens up for a discussion on whether and how the concepts of Europe and the concept of nation-state are under pressure because of both internal and external competing discourses and concepts. Thus, very much of the concrete textual work consists in tracing the development of some few key concepts, their transformations and not the least their constitutive relation to other concepts. Hence the analysis is closer to Begriffsgeschichte à la Koselleck than to post-structuralist discourse analysis (Holm 1999).

It is primarily Sarkozy’s speeches - especially his speeches to the French Ambassadors, to the European Parliament and speeches at the EU summit meetings – that are analyzed, because these speeches outline the conceptualizations of the French foreign – and European politics and their relationship to the ‘deep structure’. At the political level, focus will be on the French EU – presidency because the presidency was the first big event in Sarkozy’s political life as president and the first test with regard to Sarkozy’s political actions.

The analysis of especially Sarkozy’s speeches constitutes the initial stage of a book in which the author of this paper will expand the conceptual and discursive analysis into comprising all the French political parties and the intellectual elite who participate in the debates on the French EU - chairmanship. Only when doing that the analyst will be able to detect whether competing discourses to Sarkozy’s discourse exist. The assumption will be that these competing discourses all relate to the concepts of the deep structure. However, they might pick up new concepts of Europe which are in opposition to the dominant concepts of Europe. Nevertheless, the competing discourses on Europe have to make sense at the national level, if not they quickly be marginalized.

The remainder of this paper is structured in the following way: The first part will analyze ‘the deep structure’ i.e. the concepts of state-nation and also that of *patrie* (fatherland). The second part will

focus on de Gaulle's, Mitterrand's and Chirac's European concepts in relationship to 'the deep structure'. The third part will address the question about what Gaullisme is about and how Sarkozy relates to Gaullism. The fourth part analyzes Sarkozy's concept of 'rupture' (break) and whether the 'break' is a 'break' with Gaullism, 'Mitterrandism' and 'Chiraquism'. The fifth part will move on to analyze French EU-Presidency showing how Sarkozy balances between de Gaulle's concept of Europe a Europe of the States and Mitterrand's concept of a state-like Europe and how Sarkozy links the rapprochement to the US and the re-entry in NATO's military integrated structure to the European regional level and the global one. The paper concludes that 'breaks' take place but 'only' at the political level of day-to – day policy.

The Concept of French Nation - State and 'Patrie'

"Our foreign policy is a reflection of our national identity" (Sarkozy's speech to the French Ambassadors, 27 August 2007)

European policy is about 'who we are'. France projects – like all major powers – a vision of Europe as part of its vision of who it is and thereby where it is going. This vision 'thing' is rooted in the 'we feeling' which is represented in the concept of state-nation identity and in the French case also in the concept of 'patrie' (fatherland) (Holm 1999, 2002)⁵.

French policy is structured against the background of the invention of the sovereign state-nation in 1789 by the revolutionaries. The French revolutionaries invented the *political* nation. Political, in the sense that the French chose to join 'project France' on the basis of a voluntarily entered political contract. They subscribed as individual citizen to the contract with the state, which on its side guarantee equality and liberty. The French become national citizen *in* the state. Only the state can guarantee that the national contract comes alive. Therefore the nation *is* the state. The nation became a state and the state became the embodiment of the nation. As a result, the two concepts became totally fused.

At the political level this fusion of the state and the political nation results in an indivisible national sovereignty, a state–nation which is seen as a transformer of society by administrative centralization

⁵ This chapter and the following one are a very short resumé of the arguments of my PhD dissertation

and uniform education of individuals to ensure a uniform political concept of the citizen. The strong state was required to ensure that the large regional differences could not threaten the unity of the nation. Hence the state ‘roof’ had to cover the entire territory. The state should ensure that no particular interests disturb the comprehensive view of a nation consisting of political citizens.

The message of the fused state-nation from 1789 was that all mankind ought to follow the ‘universal French message’. Universal, because it was neither linked to a territory, or to time nor to a social category. The French state-nation is therefore represented as a carrier of a mission spreading its values globally and regionally and that is why the French nation – state is represented as exceptional (Holm 1999, Meunier 2000). As de Gaulle put it: “*Our acting is directed towards goals, which are coherent and which, because they are French, mirror the ambitions of mankind*” (Quoted in Grosser 1984, 93). This representation of French universalism requires an external dimension to the political state-nation that might be represented in European politics, African politics and global actions.

The fusion of the state and the political nation is the ideal concept which is highly abstract. But it is linked to the culturally defined concept of ‘fatherland’ (patrie) which is an emotional container. The concept of fatherland relates to the non-institutionalized affiliation of a particular group to a defined territory on the basis of common history, habits, language, culture and religion. The concept relates to a deep, trans-historical and organicist concept of a community. The concepts of the political nation and fatherland are bound together. The political nation is the core concept and fatherland the sub-concept thus keeping each other in check. The ‘earth’ is assured by the fatherland but is held in check by the political nation. The three concepts: state, nation and fatherland are thus bound in a marriage with firmly defined role.

The concepts of state, nation and fatherland are the basic codes that frame and constrain what can be said about what kind of European and global visions that make sense at the domestic French arena. No matter whether a politician belongs to the extreme right, the right or the left, he/she cannot avoid speaking about these elements. The various political parties conduct of course different foreign politics but they all share the same basic codes. They just relate to them in different ways.

Which Concepts of Europe?

One cannot imagine a French President who in public states: France does not need Europe. Europe does not need France⁶. This does not necessarily mean that the EU-project is seen as something positive. But in order to 'act French', the French political leaders have to be able to construct a vision for Europe. However, it is not all kind of European concepts or visions that make sense on the French political arena.

From 1983 until 1989 Mitterrand's discourse on a centralized State-like Europe, a kind of super-state-like Europe: *the more Europe the more France*, was dominant. The French turn to Europe in 1983 looked absolutely illogical in relation to de Gaulle's dogma of the independent, sovereign nation-state. From a superficial glance, France had stopped being typically French. However, what happened was that Western Europe was imagined on the basis of the French state model. The European concept was wrapped in the tricolor thereby constructing the European core, the EC, with as many state qualities as possible. In this new concept of Western Europe, the French state performed a leap up from the territorial level to the European level. It did not vanish. On the contrary, it was still the same French state, but it assumed an *extended*, European form. The Western European concept thereby became an enlarged, doubled French state possessing the same features as the French state. Mitterrand's term 'the more Europe, the more France' was therefore quite logical. Brussels was Paris and Paris was Brussels - seen from Paris. Brussels should do all that which France was not able to do any more alone. Or as Daniel Vernet, the foreign policy editor of *Le Monde*, phrased this relation between France and Europe: '*For France to remain France, it must become European*'⁷. Thus the EC had to become a 'Europe – puissance' (power – Europe) as France had been it before.

French policy is about state policy, about a powerful and welded-together actor with the aim of coining 'great projects' to structure consciousness, culture, economics and security policy. Thus, it is not surprising that the doubled French-Western European state concept is seen as a strong centre

⁶ There is a strong tendency in French political language not to distinguish between EU as an institutional framework and Europe as an idea of values and political geography.

⁷ D. Vernet (1998): "Les Européens s'interrogent sur leur action au Kosovo", *Le Monde*, 19 March.

of politics, radiating towards other centres (USA, Japan, China) and as a centre endowed with clear boundaries and lines of demarcation vis-à-vis other countries in order to maintain its role as an actor of high politics. The strong French President rules from a place where he is in control of French - European state affairs, from a place where defense identity, economic mobilization towards other centres, values of civilization and the recognition of status emanate.

Thanks to the concept of the political state-nation and the message of French civilization - the so-called 'mission civilisatrice' (civilizational mission) - to be spread to other countries, only France possesses the political will to construct Europe (Moïsi 1989). If this will is transferred to Brussels, then Brussels gets a French political heart beating for all of Europe. By providing the EU with its own values, France ensures that Europe is worth living for. These values are: human rights, the constitutional state, the political nation, and the enlightened active citizen, which France imparts to the EU. These values are something 'extra'. As a result of this transfer of French values, other countries can look to Europe for inspiration as it represents the universalism of the civilizational enlightenment. Civilization and politics become manifest in action turned outwards. An introvert centre solely occupied with everyday problems does not set an example to be imitated by other states-nations.

For the French political elite there was no inherent logical contradiction in elevating the French state to the European level, since France alone among the European states possesses the political will and 'to act is to exist', as Mitterrand wrote in 1986 (Mitterrand 1986, 92). The visibility of the state is embodied by means of an active diplomacy. This activism has to be used in order to guard the boundaries in order to prevent the 'barbarity' outside the core of civilization from spreading to the EU. The EU has to intervene outside its boundaries to create order in chaos. Therefore, 'out-of-area' operations at the European borders are not seen as an expression of imperialist politics but as civilizational acts which require military force in order to establish a clear-cut border between order and chaos. The military operations can become a problem in a military-technical sense and thereby result in problems such as dependence on US military means. But this does not change the vision of France/Europe to be a highly visible diplomatic and military actor. France is thus not at all a *Venus power* (Kagan 2004)⁸ shying away from using military means.

⁸ The metaphor of 'Venus' representing the European civilian power and 'Mars' the American military power is used by R. Kagan (2004): *Of paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, New York: Knopf.

The approval of Mitterrand's concept of Europe was due to the fact that the concept of an enlarged French state had the advantage of not containing the *concrete form* of policies. From the moment where Mitterrand was forced to concretize the institutional implications of a state-like French Europe, his discourse on Europe was challenged because the dynamic of transferring still more state-qualities to Europe threatened to imply the transfer of the nation to the European level because of the fusion of the state-nation. However, if the whole state-nation was elevated, the culturally-rooted concept of fatherland would remain the only element which was left on the French territory. The decoupling of fatherland from the political nation is a complete heresy to political thinking on the identity of the French state-nation. The consequence will be that France will no longer be a political entity but a culturally defined one which would, in turn, provoke a rupture with 200 years of political thinking.

Since 1989, Mitterrand's discourse about a state-like French Europe has been challenged by two other discourses on Europe. The first one is the concept of a Europe of the States that is shared by the extreme right, the communists, the extreme left and part of the Gaullists. They all claim the state back to the territory. An external relation between France and Europe is thus constructed. Europe is lying outside the nation - state. The French nation - state acts *out* in Europe. Thus a line of demarcation is constructed between the territorial borderline and Europe, which is considered an arena for French diplomatic manoeuvres. Former president Chirac was at the same time spokesman for a Mitterrand state-like Europe and for a Gaullist Europe: a Europe of the States, meaning a strong France in a strong Europe.

The second one is the discourse on a decentralized France in a decentralized federal Europe. In this discourse France has become a totally other France in a totally other Europe. The concept of decentralized France is characterized by its emphasis on the need for loosing the grip of the state over the territory by delegating political power to intermediate levels. A return to pre-revolutionary France (before 1789) France, where the regions get political power in a federal structure is a heresy to the political thinking of the state-nation. The centralized France does not exist any longer and the vision of a centralized Europe as an extension/doubling of France has disappeared in a loose federal structure. This discourse is marginalized because it breaks up two hundred years of French state-nation identity. The only French party who adheres to this concept is the Green party whose actual leader is Daniel Cohn-Bendit. In the European Parliament election, June 2009, the Green party

(*Europe Ecologie*) scored 16, 28 per cent of the vote and thus became France's second-biggest party in the European Parliament⁹. The PS won 16.48 per cent of the vote, claiming just 35.000 votes more than the *Europe Ecologie* list. It is still to be analyzed whether it was the Green party's green or federal profile that attracted the voters or both.

No matter which concept of Europe will prevail, the political elite emphasize the role of France as the European political subject par excellence, the only power capable of designing the political map of Europe. French political *grandeur* and the message about human rights are still this 'extra' which France offers to the world. No matter whether the political parties advocate a strong France *in* Europe or a state-like French Europe they all agree on the necessity of constructing 'l'Europe puissance' (power – Europe) that has to be visible on the regional and global arena (Coudurie, 1998; Védrine; 2000, Brenner, Parmentier 2002). The EU is thus defined by what it does. It is not a question about how many members participate in the actions, but the act itself.

The EU is required to function as 'une Europe multiplicateur' (a multiplier of French power)¹⁰. It has thus to be equipped with a defense capacity either by adding a common defense dimension to the EU, by pooling the military means or by ad hoc military coalitions. This is seen as a necessity because as Chirac has stated – just as de Gaulle did it: "*In endowing itself with a capacity for military action, (Europe) becomes a complete political actor*" (Chirac 2001). Diplomatic activism conducted either in shifting alliances or by the EU is what counts for the French political elite. Dominique de Villepin, former right wing Minister of Foreign Affairs (2002-2004), stated this several times both during the American led war against Iraq in 2003 and in general with regard to the role of France and the EU in the world. Sarkozy is in accordance with these conceptualization when stating that ' (t)o address the external threats we need three things: strong diplomacy, strong defence and a strong Europe' (Sarkozy 2009, 2)

A Europe of the States and a state-like Europe

⁹ With just under 28 per cent of the vote, Sarkozy's Gaullist party, UMP (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire), was the first presidential party to come out on top in EU elections since 1979.

¹⁰ The term 'démultiplicateur' has for example been coined by former right wing Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dominique de Villepin in his book *Un autre monde* (2004) by Chirac in his speech to the French Ambassadors 29 – 31 August 2005 and Sarkozy has often used this term for example in an interview with the Italian newspaper *La Stampa*, 24 February 2009.

Former Gaullist president Chirac declared several times that he wanted a strong Europe because he wanted a strong France. This sounds very Gaullist and he was also been dubbed ‘de Gaulle II’ (Petras, Morley 2000, 54). But in fact, Chirac was balancing between a Gaullist Europe of the States and a Mitterrand state-like Europe. This means that France either act out in Europe – Europe is represented as a scene on which France acts – or Europe is France and ‘the French Europe’ acts as an unified entity¹¹.

The balancing between the two concepts are materialized in the concept of flexible enhanced cooperation that can be interpreted both as an expression of the concept of a state-like Europe and that of a Europe of the States. The concept of flexibility opens up for a multi-centric EU that might be object to French policies of balance of power. On the other hand, flexibility is seen by France as a means to push for further state-like integration especially with regard to security.

Since mid-1990s France has responded to enlargement by promoting the concept of ‘strengthened circles’, ‘enhanced cooperation or ‘pioneer groups’ as Chirac coined the European avant-garde groups in his speech in the German ‘Reichstag’ June 2000.

Together with Germany, France proposed in November 2002 to launch structured cooperation in the field of security and defence. This initiative was backed up in April 2003 by ‘the gang of the four’: France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg that all proposed development of a European defence. The draft of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe took largely into consideration the Franco-German proposals. It incorporated the concept of structured cooperation between the EU-members which fulfill higher criteria and which have made more binding commitments to one another in this area with a view to the most demanding missions.

This Franco-German security duo was complemented by the Franco-British duo, because as former minister of foreign affairs Villepin stated October 2003: ‘*Without the UK, a security and defense EU will not work*’¹². This statement was pronounced after the Franco - British split in the war against Iraq. Villepin’s statement signaled attempt at repairing this split and at reestablishing the

¹¹ A ‘French Europe’ as an unified entity does not imply the question of instiutalization of the concept of a ‘French Europe. It is exactly a concept and not a policy.

¹² *Le Monde*, 13 October 2003.

spirit of St. Malo 1998 where the two countries agreed on working for a common European defense policy backed up by credible military means.

All these Franco-German and Franco-British initiatives made some commentators talk about the danger of the emergence of a *directoire* of the three European great nation - states, France, the UK, and Germany (Stark 2002). Even Metternich, the architect of the outcome of the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815), was used in order to warn against the return of the alliances of the past, of a Europe of the States. ‘Metternich–Europe’ was by some authors seen as a replacement of ‘the Monnet-Europe’ (Stark 2002).

The Europe of the States based upon the concept of strong France acting *out* in a (future) strong Europe together with other great European powers is balanced by the vision of a strong activist state-like EU that both prevents the return of the past and allots the EU with a structuring role inside the EU and beyond its borders. The European institutional initiatives taken by France, the UK and Germany can be seen through the state-like EU lenses too because the concept of a strong Europe materialized in a state-like Europe implies institutional reforms before enlargement in order not to dilute the core. If France/the EU does not come up with institutional reforms that strengthen the capacity of the EU to act, the French political elite fears the emergence of a diluted EU that will only be an Anglo-Saxon free trade space without any political power.

Gaullism: what is Gaullism?

“Politics are about willpower and about power of changing the course of things” (Nicolas Sarkozy: Ensemble 2007; 84)

The will to launch an endless series of concrete reforms and the dramatization of these reforms, both domestically in France and externally on the European and international scene – this is the essence of Sarkozy's political style. His will is to re-establish – like de Gaulle - strength, leadership, order and authority that ensure that France can once more become a strong nation - state that projects itself out into Europe and the world. The re-establishment of internal order by reform and presidential power is according to Sarkozy a pre-condition of French strength to act beyond the

borders. Thus acting is seen as the most important means to achieve these goals. “*To act is to exist*” as Mitterrand wrote 1986 in his book on foreign affairs (Mitterrand 1986, 92).

Dramatization serves the political aim of arousing the French and EU to action after a long period of political passivity under former president Jacques Chirac's last presidential period (2002-2007). Sarkozy tells the French that ‘*everywhere there is an urgent necessity for reforms*’¹³. Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, former socialist, former minister and founder of *Doctors without Borders*, started his job as minister by declaring that he considered his ministry to be the *Ministry for Urgent Action*¹⁴. According to Sarkozy and Kouchner quick action is necessary, because both the French nation – state, the EU and the global system is threatened by the financial crisis, terrorism and economic disorder. The words ‘*urgent necessity for reforms*’ mean that something has to be done very quickly because the survival of the French nation – state, the EU and the global system is at stake¹⁵. Sarkozy dramatizes in order to wake up the French. The one who can wake them up is of course Sarkozy. It is therefore no accident that he in nearly all his speeches says ‘je, moi’ (I, me) instead of ‘on, nous’ (one, we) (Calvet, Véronis 2008)¹⁶.

The Gaullist Sarkozy has made it clear that he will a change of France and a change of French European – and foreign policy. Both the inside and the outside of France – which are two sides of the same coin – has in Sarkozy’s view to be changed. The question is whether change is only a question of Sarkozy’s political style, about his permanent verbal and travelling activism, his relentless ‘mise en scene’ of himself and his constant talk about will to power. Or does Sarkozy

¹³ Voeux en direct de M. Nicolas Sarkozy, Président de la République. Lunid 31 décembre 2007. www.elysee.fr/download/?mode=press&filename=Voeux2007

¹⁴ ‘Bernard Kouchner veut servir le pays au ”ministère des urgences”’. www.challenges.fr/depeches/20070518.REU9892/?cofondateur&xtr=10

¹⁵ According to Ole Wæver and to Barry Buzan – to the so-called Copenhagen School – “A security issue is posited (by a securitizing actor) as a threat to the survival of some referent object (nation, state, the liberal international economic order, the rain forests), which is claimed to have a right to survive....The very act of labeling something a security issue - or a threat – transforms this issue and it is therefore in the political process of securitization that distinct security dynamics originate” (Buzan and Waever 2003, 71, Waever 1995)

¹⁶ The Gaullist concept of the President and his power is manifested in the presidential extensive powers with regard to the so-called ‘domaine réservé’ and in de Gaulle’s contempt for party policy which he considered as an expression of partisan interests whereas he as President was above partisan politics. To a certain extent, Sarkozy has broken the Gaullist conceptualization of ‘domaine réservé’. 27 July 2008, the combined membership of the French National Assembly and Senate approved a reform proposed by Sarkozy to the constitution of the Fifth Republic. One of the reforms concerned military actions abroad. It requires the government to obtain parliamentary approval for military action: “When the length of the intervention exceeds four months, the government submits its prolongation to the authorization of parliament”. No such limits existed previously.

inaugurate a new policy that changes the ‘deep structure’ of French European – and Foreign policy?¹⁷

When Sarkozy became President, commentators, politicians and intellectuals asked immediately¹⁸ whether Sarkozy’s talk about change signified change with Gaullism. Since de Gaulle’s death, every French politician has been on the hunt of ‘the spirit of Gaullism’. Every new Gaullist President - but also every centrist and socialist president – is measured by Gaullist standards. The discussions are heated because Gaullism as a concept and as specific policy is contested. Gaullism as a concept has a built-in ambiguity of meaning, which is the very sign of the concept of the concept.

The conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck who has a historicist and hermeneutic approach to the study of concepts has written that a concept must always maintain a measure of ambiguity in order to remain a concept (Koselleck 1995, 84). Koselleck stresses the ambiguity of and how this ambiguity can be captured by focusing on how oppositional concepts are constituted in semantic fields. Semantic fields¹⁹ are basically characterized by a community of meaning where a chain of concepts enter into a relation with one another. Hence, the meaning of the concept is constituted in the relationship between concept and counter-concept (Koselleck 1985, 160).

Due to the ambiguity of the concept it opens up for a ‘battlefield’ of production of meaning and interpretation. A concept attains, however, a partially fixation of meaning through its relation to other concepts and through the construction of sub-concepts that are used to define and stabilize the concept and the counter-concept. It is not only the relationship between the concept and the counter-concept that stabilizes partially the meaning of the concept. It is also the construction of the chain of sub-concepts to the concept, that attempts at stabilizing the concept. However, this chain of sub-concepts only makes sense in relationship to the chain of sub- counter concept. The order of the chain of sub- concept might change because of an external or internal event happens that puts

¹⁷ The French researcher Frédéric Charillon writes that in France analysts and commentators most often deduce political actions from the President’s style, whereas, abroad, the leader’s decisions are studied in the first instance and afterwards the presidential style is analyzed (Charillon 2009, 393)

¹⁸ See for example Vaïsse (2008), Maïla (2007), Lagro (2008)

¹⁹ ‘Discourse’ comes close to meaning of ‘semantic field’; it is thereby the ‘community of meaning, that the concept is inextricably linked with’ (Petersen, 2008)

pressure upon the order of both the concept and the counter concept and their respective chains of sub-concepts.

A chain of five sub-concepts is attached to the concept of Gaullism: 1) French national sovereignty – a certain idea of the French nation –state guaranteed by a centralist presidential system that gives the French President more powers than the President of the US; 2) French ‘grandeur and gloire’ (Greatness and honor); 3) ‘une Europe européenne; 4) multipolarity and 5) a tragic realist state-centric view on the nature of international relations (attached to the concept of French national sovereignty). “*States are cold monster*” (les États sont des monstres froids) as de Gaulle stated (quoted in Daguzan, 2002, 135).

The chain of counter-concepts to the five Gaullist sub-concepts is: 1 plus 2) a ‘banalized France’ - a France that is similar to other states – having lost its exceptionalism; 3) institutional integration (supra-national EU –institutions); 4) bipolarity or unipolarity and 5) a liberal world order²⁰.

The two chains of sub-concepts attempt at stabilizing the concept of Gaullism. The chain of the counter –concepts serves the purpose of defining what Gaullism is not about. The majority of the political parties subscribe to the Gaullist sub - concepts. At the level of concrete policy they do not agree. It is at that level where the battle of what Gaullism is about takes place.²¹

At the level of concrete policy heated political battles has taken place since the crumbling of the Wall in 1989 because of the EU-enlargements and Turkish (im)possible EU-membership and the quiet and slow rapprochement to NATO’s integrated military structure. The political debates are related to how de Gaulle conducted policy. According to the French internationally well known

²⁰ The new French party entitled *Debout la République* (DLR) and established in Mars 2009 by a Gaullist deputy Nicolas Dupont – Aignan, argues that Sarkozy has taken over the chain of counter – concept instead of sticking to the ‘true’ Gaullist concepts: cooperation with other European states and not integration. Instead, the new party proposes ‘une Europe de nations’. They think that they take over de Gaulle’s slogan. De Gaulle, however always pleaded ‘une Europe des États’ because it is only states that acts not nations. The party goes for suppression of the EU-Commission which is a supra-national institution. Sarkozy has betrayed the Gaullist ‘une certaine idée de la France’. Furthermore, he has made France enter the NATO’s military integrated structure. DLR got 1, 77 per cent at the European election in June 2009. See the party’s web-site. www.debout-la-republique.fr/presentation.html. 25 Mars 2009. Two other ‘sovereignist’ parties; Libertas and *Mouvement pour la France* are both against more integration. They even want to unravel the hitherto institutional set – up in order to safeguard the French national sovereignty. At the European elections they got about 7 percent. The two parties are being about to organize common regional campaign in 2010 with the Gaullist party UMP.

²¹ Another very heated debate is about the relationship between *la laïcité* and the position of religion (Islam) with regard to state, nation and society.

researcher Pierre Hassner, de Gaulle's policy is characterized by strategic simplicity, diplomatic flexibility and political ambiguity (Hassner, 1968).

The strategic simplicity is expressed in de Gaulle's vision of a multipolar world in which 'Europe européenne' has to be a big regional power and the US has to be on an equal footing with Europe (see pp. 25 – 25 – 27). The second and third definitions refer to the political means of reaching the goal of a multipolar world and thereby equality with the US and the then Soviet Union.

Many political means are at hand as for constructing a multipolar world and the means are not the same in a bipolar or a unipolar world. The goal of the construction of a multipolar world justifies the means. Therefore, 'political ambiguity' refers to political pragmatism that takes into account the power structure of the system. De Gaulle was foremost a pragmatic realist as the French researchers Justin Vaisse (Vaisse 2008, p. 5) and Denis Lacorne (2008) write. De Gaulle changed his policy according to the actual situation – as long as the changing policies did not touch the 'deep structure': French vision of herself as a 'grande nation' with a political message to the world.

Most of Sarkozy's critics accuse him of betraying de Gaulle's so-called anti-americanism, his so-called anti-Israel attitude and the withdrawal from NATO's integrated military structure. They criticize Sarkozy of the political means he uses. However, the critics confound tactics with strategy. Sarkozy has not changed the 'deep structure' neither the concepts of EU and the relationship between Europe and the world. According to Sarkozy, France has to remain 'a proud nation'. It is necessary to construct a multipolar world in which all regions are on equal footing – including the US - and therefore it is necessary to construct 'une Europe européenne. A president cannot avoid referring to these concepts because they are part and parcel of French foreign - and European identity. He can change the political means by taking quick decisions and by centralising furthermore the structure of decision of power, which Sarkozy is doing and therefore is criticized.

Sarkozysm; Break with the Past?

30 November 2006, former French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy announced his candidature for presidential election. In this context, Sarkozy declared in an interview: "*(i)n a world that moves rapidly how is it possible that one remains immovable. I want a quiet break (rupture tranquille)*".

This statement was a softening of his former statements about the necessity of a ‘break with the past’. Sarkozy added the adjective ‘quiet’ to this ‘break’ slogan in order not to alienate the conservative electorate. Furthermore, the concept ‘quiet break’ had the advantage of referring indirectly to the socialist candidate, Ségolène Royal’s slogan ‘the quiet force’ (*force tranquille*). Royal on her side referred to late socialist president Francois Mitterrand’s slogan ‘quiet force’ which he launched in 1981 during his presidential election campaign.

The concept ‘quiet break’ is an oxymoron. The concept can thus be subject to various interpretations due to the inherent contradiction between the subject and adjective. Many of Sarkozy speeches during his electoral campaign were marked by concepts and counter-concept, by oxymoron, by binarity and by juxtaposition of different historical personalities who represented different set of values. The use of oxymoron made it possible to remain vague as for what policy Sarkozy would conduct when/if he was elected president.

During the presidential election campaign, Sarkozy often referred to various aspects of French history in order to ensure the French that he was able to synthesize left-wing and right-wing heroes within his own person (Sarkozy 2007, 27–28). He represented himself as the person that could infuse France with hope of escaping from the political and economic morass that the country had suffered under Chirac. It was therefore no accident that Sarkozy presented himself at the tomb of de Gaulle at Colombey –les–deux Églises as a reincarnation of de Gaulle, who stopped the war in Algeria in 1962 and thus saved France from total chaos. According to Sarkozy, “*General de Gaulle was the symbol of hope. When everything had been lost, de Gaulle gave the French hope once more. I love France, and I will give the French hope*”²². By referring to de Gaulle he assured the Gaullist electorate that a ‘break’ was not a ‘break’ but a reconstruction of the heroic past incarnated in de Gaulle.

In February 2007, Sarkozy stated that ‘*France is a country of 2000 years of Christianity*’ (*Nous sommes les héritiers de deux mille ans de chrétienté*) (Quoted in Bertrand 2007, 39). This utterance is really a break with French republicanism that relegates Christianity to the private sphere and represents Catholicism as belonging to *l’Ancien Régime* and therefore has to be combated. In the same speech Sarkozy declared that France synthesizes *l’Ancien Régime* and the revolution in 1789,

²² Quoted from “Nicolas Sarkozy se place sous le patronage du général de Gaulle”, *Le Point*, 14 April, 2007

the Capetien State and the Republican state, patriotism and universalism (Bertrand, 39). He thus tried to fuse binary and incompatible values in order to overcome the battle of the so-called *two France* (the republican and the catholic France), which continues today in the form of discussion of the concept of republicanism and *laïcité*²³. By referring implicitly to the *two France* Sarkozy paid a tribute to the way de Gaulle interpreted the history of the construction of the French nation - state (Agulhon 2000 31–32) as both Republican, catholic and monarchal. However, Sarkozy's attempt at fusing the *two France* resulted in an outcry from many republicans who have constructed a line of demarcation between before the revolution and after revolution and between secularism and religion. Sarkozy was therefore represented as a traitor to the Republican heritage²⁴.

Since the presidential election May 2007, Sarkozy's speeches are no more marked by a lot of references to past historical figures. Presence and future are what count in his speeches. The actions, acts, and movements of the presence serve as markers for the future whereas the past do not in any significant way serve as an important reference. Sarkozy represents himself as the statesman of the presence and the future. He wants that '*France is leading the countries that create history and do not subordinate to history*'²⁵. The past is 'passé'!

The apparent lack of references to France's past makes Sarkozy appear to be the man for the break. However, the past catches up with him after all, when he emphasizes that France will create history, stay *primus inter pares* in EU and will be "*the soul of the new European renaissance needed by the world and bearer of the message of human rights*"²⁶. This statement is practically a replica of the former President Jacques Chirac's New Year speech 1999 to the French Diplomatic Corps. In this speech Chirac presented his European vision of the 21st century *that should be characterized by 'a new Renaissance grounded in its idea of individual liberty and humanism'*.²⁷

²³ This paper does not deal with the debate on *laïcité* (laicism) and religion (Islam). If so, the famous speech to the European Parliament 13 November 2007 in which he speaks of 'spiritual politics' and 'lay morality', and his declarations in the Roman basilica of St John Lateran (20 December 2007) in which he coined the term 'positive laicism' would have been very important documents. In the forthcoming book, one chapter will deal with Sarkozy's 'break' with regard to the position of the role of religion in society, in the nation –state and how the attempt at repositioning the religion has an impact on the French policy towards Turkey.

²⁴ The French internet is overloaded by reactions to what is represented as Sarkozy's betrayal to secularism and republicanism.

²⁵ Allocution de M. le Président de la République. XVI^{ième} conférence des ambassadeurs. Palais de l'Elysée – mercredi 27 août 2008 www.ambafr-pk.org/IMG/pdf/Con_amb_sarkozy/fr.pdf

²⁶ Intervention de M. le Président de la République. Conférence de presse. Palais de l'Elysée – mardi 8 janvier 2008. www.astrid-online.it/rassegna/10-01-2008/SARKOZY08_01_08pdf

²⁷ www.france.diplomatie.fr/index.html, 31 December 1999.

France in this view can still achieve something that other countries cannot: play a decisive political role in a EU because France has invented the universal human rights (1789). Sarkozy puts his hand in the pocket of French history in order to legitimize French 'exceptionalism' in the EU. The new history Sarkozy wants to create remains thus a child of revolutionary history of the past – not in its violent form but in the form of political liberalism. Like his predecessors, Sarkozy makes use of the 1789 revolution as a nodal point from where France's political culture radiates to Europe and the world.

In his speech to the French Ambassadors 28 August 2008, Sarkozy mentioned 'break' four times without use of oxymoron or fusion of binary constellations of terms: 1) The role that human rights play in foreign policy 2) change of hitherto French African policy 3) Europe and 4) the new relationship to the US and NATO.

The first break²⁸ it is not a break. Human rights as export of 'mission civilisatrice' have been an inherent part of French foreign policy since Mitterrand. However, at the same time this 'mission civilisatrice' has most often been subordinated to realist economic and geopolitical interests (Maïla 2007, 102). This is the case with regard to Sarkozy's foreign policy which still more is characterized by economic and geopolitical interests. Human rights come after these interests.

Le Monde journalist Daniel Vernet writes that Sarkozy's foreign policy is marked by schizophrenia because Sarkozy at the beginning of his presidency promised that human rights concern should play a very important role in international politics. However, these rights are still disappearing more and more from Sarkozy's international policy agenda (Vernet 2008)²⁹. This schizophrenia was however also Mitterrand's and Chirac's mark because of the 'clash' between traditional French realism in international politics and the 'mission civilisatrice'. Sarkozy's foreign policy is no exception from that rule – it goes for both the African - and the Arab policy³⁰.

²⁸ The paper does not deal with the second break which concerns African policy.

²⁹ Vernet, Daniel (2008): "La diplomatie schizophrène" in *Le Monde*, 13 mai. The French researcher Frédéric Charillon writes along the same lines however not using the word 'schizophrène' but the word 'pragmatisme actif' (Charillon 2009, 396).

³⁰ This paper does not deal with Sarkozy's Arab - and African policy.

Colonel Gaddafi's visit to France caused an immense outcry amongst intellectuals and politicians because of the complete lack of any presidential reference to the situation of human rights in Libya. Sarkozy's travel diplomacy in various Arab countries has neither much to do with promotion of human rights. The travelling is an expression of geopolitical - and geoeconomic interests. It is the realist Sarkozy that travels. Therefore Sarkozy's diplomacy towards Arab countries has been nicknamed 'Areva-diplomacy' or 'nuclear diplomacy' which refers to the huge French nuclear enterprise Areva.

Taking into account the criticism of conducting realist economic and geopolitical policy Sarkozy legitimizes in his New Year speech to the diplomatic corps January 2008 his priorities by referring to the need of conduct a diplomacy of dialogue and reconciliation: *"In this age of relative power, marked by rising attacks on the legitimacy of external intervention and a widening of religious, ethnic and social divides, France needs to engage in dialogue with everyone... Because we stand foursquare at the heart of our Western family, we are conducting these dialogues on the basis of values and principles"*³¹.

In this speech it is not said straight out with whom France and the EU have to reconcile. However, the reference to 'relative power' points to dialogue with the states and it is with the states one dialogues on human rights.

In Sarkozy's New Year speech January 2009, there are no explicit references to human rights. He talks about *(t)he world needs an independent, united, imaginative and strong Europe, which is the friend of the whole world in the sense of being ready to talk to the whole world*³².

The speech is ambiguous as for who represents 'the whole world'. In the speech, the wording 'the whole world' is linked to which kind of relationship the EU/France has to have with Ukraine and Russia as fair energy suppliers to Europe. This linkage points to the states, and *'Europe has to have a structural, strategic, long-term agreement with the Russians, and we have nothing to fear from Russia, which is a great country, with whom, moreover we share many cultures'*³³. This declaration

³¹ New Year greetings to the diplomatic corps – Speech by M. Nicolas Sarkozy President of the Republic, 18 January 2008. www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-sarkozy-s-New-Year,10186.html

³² New Year greeting to the diplomatic corps – Speech by M. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the Republic. 16 January 2009. www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-sarkozy-s-speech-to,14347.html

³³ See note 28.

sounds very alike de Gaulle's view on the former Soviet Union. De Gaulle made a distinction between the Russian state which is considered an ephemeral entity directed by interests and the nation (country) that incarnate historic and cultural eternal values. One could therefore negotiate with the authoritarian state without doing any harm to the nation. Like de Gaulle, Sarkozy has a realist view on Russia – and other big and important states.

During the Russian – Georgian conflict, 'balance' had top priority. Sarkozy explained before the European Parliament October 2008 that *Russia is an important partner for the EU and therefore it was necessary to find a solution – a cease – fire with Georgia*³⁴. However, Sarkozy represents 'soft realism' (Malmvig, Holm 2009) which appears in Sarkozy's wording: "(i)n the end Europe wins victory for the values of balance, democracy and respecting one's neighbours"³⁵. The chosen order of the chain of concept: *balance, democracy and respect* puts the three concepts on a par, but in a specific order where balance becomes the most important concept. Balance becomes a value in itself but 'softened' by putting democracy just after balance.

The third 'break' concerns the conceptualization of the EU. However, Sarkozy's EU-policy does not represent a 'break' – neither with de Gaulle's nor Chirac's nor Mitterrand's conceptualization of Europe (see pp. 27 – 37).

The fourth break is about 'French new relationship to the US and NATO'. Sarkozy legitimized the re-entry in a speech few weeks before the re-entry by referring to and agreeing with de Gaulle's definition of friends of allies in 1966, the year France withdrew from NATO's military integrated structure. On the occasion of the withdrawal, de Gaulle assured that France considered that "*NATO is the alliance of the free peoples of the West*" (Quoted by Sarkozy 2009, 6). At the time of de Gaulle, the concept of 'the West' referred to the ideological division between the West and the East. This is of course not the case actually. The counter – concept of 'the West' is 'the rest' i.e. 'the others', all those that are not free and therefore are subject to all kind of fanaticism especially to religious fanaticism (read: Islamism) which according to Sarkozy is the root cause of conflict³⁶.

³⁴ 'Sarkozy relance l'idée d'un gouvernement économique' in *AFP*, 21 October 2008. Speech before the European Parliament 21 October.

³⁵ See note 28.

³⁶ Sarkozy's speech to the European Parliament 13 November 2007. For Sarkozy - as for the former American Presidents president George W. Bush and now for Barak Obama the arc of crisis extends from the Middle East to Pakistan.

In his speech to the French Ambassadors 2008, Sarkozy placed France ‘within the Western family’³⁷. Hubert Védrine, former foreign minister under the socialist government of Lionel Jospin (1995–2002) and a very influential debater on foreign politics – has warned against Sarkozy’s Atlanticism. In an interview February 2008 to the French weekly *Marianne*, Védrine declared that ‘*In a great part of the right, and a small part of the left, there is a scent of a return to old – fashioned Atlanticism. There exists almost no Gaullism in the French right and certain people, on the left, want to liberate themselves from a foreign policy a la de Gaulle-Mitterrand-Chirac*’.

Védrine continues his warnings against ‘*French occidentalisation which would result in French subjection to the US and thereby prevent France from cultivating its traditional good relations with the Arab nation – states and from creating a multipolar system* (Védrine 2009)³⁸. In an article in *Le Monde*, Ségolène Royal, presidential candidate for the Socialist Party in 2007, attacked Sarkozy’s project of French re-entry in NATO-military integrated structure. She wrote that ‘*France sends a signal to return to the fold of the West*’. She would have preferred France to remain a ‘bridge’ between East and West and North and South because ‘*the world needs countries that play the role of mediator*³⁹. Opponents in Sarkozy’s UMP joined the debate. For example a UMP deputy, N. Dupont-Aignan, who since March 2009 has established his own party⁴⁰ entitled *Debout la France* (DLR) accused Sarkozy in *Le Monde* of being ‘*a part of the Right that is ferociously Atlanticist and profoundly alienated from the deep sentiments of the French people to whom Charles de Gaulle had rendered its dignity*’⁴¹.

Sarkozy opposed the vehement criticism of French re-entry in NATO in a speech March 2009 to a conference entitled: *France, European defence and NATO in the twenty-first century*. Sarkozy legitimized the re-entry in the following way: “‘*(If this choice (of re-integration in the integrated military command of NATO) is a break with the past, it isn’t so much as regards its substance, which is the result of a long maturation process. It’s as regards the method*”⁴².

³⁷ Discours de M. le Président de la République. XV! Conférence des ambassadeurs. Palais de l’Élysée – mercredi 27 août 2008

³⁸ “La ‘rupture’ de M. Sarkozy a cédé devant la réalité” in *Le Monde* 5 January 2009.

³⁹ *Le Monde* 17 February 2009

⁴⁰ The new party split from Sarkozy’s Gaullist party UMP. See note 20.

⁴¹ *Le Monde* 21 February 2009

⁴² Closing speech by Nicolas Sarkozy at the ‘conference on France, European defence and NATO in the twenty-first century’, 11 March 2009. www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-sarkozy-on-france.html.

This announcement turns Sarkozy's usual narrative of the necessity of 'break' upside down. In other speeches 'break' is represented as something totally new in relation to past policies. In this speech the presence and the future are represented as identical to the past. Presence and future are a prolongation of the past which has up to now been hidden to the public. At the political level, this linkage between past, presence and future serves the purpose of convincing the opposition to agree with the decision. Sarkozy thus states that he does not betray neither de Gaulle, nor Mitterrand or Chirac.

According to his speech Sarkozy is the only President that dares tell the truth: that France is deeply involved in NATO-operations and contributes economically and with military staff. Hence, the break is not a break with earlier policy but it is presented as a break with regard to telling the truth

In this speech and in several other speeches he underlines that the continuity with regard to the attitude to the US will continue: *"I am a friend of USA; but I want EU to have an independent defence, for if we are not able to defend ourselves, then we are not able to defend our independence"*⁴³. In line with de Gaulle, Sarkozy establishes a direct link between the US - and thereby in French thinking NATO to the necessity of the construction of 'une Europe européenne de défense indépendante'. Furthermore Sarkozy refers implicitly to Mitterrand's concept of a European defence. Mitterrand used the expression 'l'Europe de l'indépendance nationale'⁴⁴ that is conceptualized as an expansion of the national independent defence which is lifted up to the European level.

Sarkozy legitimizes the French re-entry in NATO's military integrated structure by linking French/European defence to this re-entry: *"If France shoulders all her responsibilities in NATO, Europe will have more influence in NATO. And so NATO will not be an exclusively US-dominated organization"*⁴⁵. The message is thus: the more France in NATO the more European defence identity. Furthermore this legitimization points to the relationship to the US – how France still has the right and possibility to keep up a certain distance to the US. In his speech to the Ambassadors 2007, Sarkozy declared that *"Although France is USA's ally, it is not automatically aligned behind*

⁴³ Sarkozy's speech to the Gaullist party UMP, 12 January (reference?)

⁴⁴ Mitterrand, Francois: "lettre à tous les Français" in *Le Monde*, 8 April, 1988.

⁴⁵ Opus. Cit.

*American foreign policy*⁴⁶. This statement is a directly taking over of de Gaulle's dictum (Bertrand 2004) which former minister of foreign affairs Hubert Védrine also used. As a concrete example of French political independence of the USA's decision Sarkozy pointed to the fact that both France and Germany had said no to the US's request to Georgia's and Ukraine's entry into NATO.

In spite of following both de Gaulle's and Mitterrand's 'routes' of representation of the relationship between France and Europe and France – NATO Sarkozy was not at all sure of the outcome of the debate on the re-entry in the National Assembly (the Congress). In his discourse on the re-entry, Sarkozy represented French defense independence as a myth because France is deeply involved in NATO. However, the myth still functions in parts of the Socialist, Gaullist and communist discourses. Therefore the French Council of Ministers authorized the Prime Minister, Francois Fillon, to make the vote of confidence on the whole French foreign policy 11 March 2009. The decision on the re-entry was thus wrapped into the whole French foreign policy. This meant that there was no possibility of going against the re-entry.

The concept of Relative Power and Multipolarity

According to the French researcher Justin Vaïsse, it is always tempting to distinguish between Gaullists (anti-Atlanticist) and Atlanticists when discussing the foreign – and European policy orientation of French leaders (Vaïsse 2008, 5). This constructed dichotomy originates in the deep national opposition to American dominance at the global level which is seen as leaving no space for a great power as France (Meunier 2006). De Gaulle underlined during his era (1958 -1969) the necessity of creating 'a third way' which meant a strong Europe and a strong France in Europe and in the world that could counterbalance the two superpowers - the USSR and the US. De Gaulle often used the term 'multipolarity' when describing his vision for a global system that was liberated from the dominance of the superpowers (Boniface 1998). It was not an ideological driven concept but a geopolitical concept that refers to distribution of power in the system.

Multipolarity has since the end of the Cold War been presented as the means to overcome American unilateralism (Meunier 2006). The concept has gone as a leitmotiv through especially Chirac's speeches on international politics. Sarkozy is no exception from this conceptualization of the

⁴⁶ Speech to the Ambassadors 2007. see note 24.

international system. In his first speech to the French Ambassadors, August 27, 2007, Sarkozy stated that the world had turned out to be multipolar – a concert of great powers. However, still according to Sarkozy, this concert has built- in a malign aspect – a tendency to ‘clash of power politics’. In order to avoid the development of a multipolar world of antagonism, Sarkozy pleaded in his speech a European Union as a global 21st century player that will be capable of contributing in a decisive way to the reconstruction of a more just and effective world order (Sarkozy 2007, 2008). This vision of the world system as composed by strong regional entities that can constrain especially the US’s unilateralism and actually also the new emergent economic powers like China, Brazil and India is a prolongation of de Gaulle’s, Mitterrand’s and Chirac’s vista on international politics. In Chirac’s words: “(m)y ambition is for the European Union gradually to assert itself as an active and powerful pole, on an equal footing with the United states in the world of the twenty-first century, which... will be a multipolar one” (Quoted in Menon, 2000, 130).

In his speech to the French Ambassadors August 2008 Sarkozy declared that the 21st century is characterized by being an age of *relative power* (*puissance relative*)⁴⁷. This concept was invented by Pierre Hassner. In an article from 2007 Hassner analyses the 21st century as a century where no state, no institution/organization will be able to impose its laws. It would be a system of ‘l’antagonisme incomplète et du partenariat imparfait’ (incomplete antagonism and imperfect partnership)⁴⁸. Hassner argues that the 21th century will neither be ‘a new American century’ nor a multipolar system – a concert of big powers as in the 19th century –nor the rule of multilateral institutions. Instead, the 21st century will be marked by heterogeneity which manifests itself in the powerlessness of the relative power (Hassner 2007).

Sarkozy interprets the content of Hassner’s article as a warning signal against fierce competition between powers and regions, attacks on the legitimacy of external intervention and a widening of religious, ethnic and social divides. In continuation of De Gaulle’s and Chirac’s concept of multipolarity as a remedy against superpowers dreams Sarkozy’s response to this fierce competition

⁴⁷ In his closing speech at the conference on “France, European Defence and NATO in the Twenty-First century”, Sarkozy referred once more to Hassner’s concept of ‘relative power’. This time, he did it in order to legitimize French re-entry in NATO’s integrated military structure by stating that ‘no State can on its own impose its point of view. And cooperation and solidarity are the cornerstones of its action’. *President Sarkozy Speech on France, European Defence and NATO*, 11 March 2009. <http://www.acronym.org.uk/docs/0903/doc03.htm>.

⁴⁸ Already in 1968, P. Hassner used the terms ‘incomplete antagonism’ and ‘imperfect partnership’ as for describing the future of Europe. He wrote: “(S)he (Europe) will be the ‘mixed’ – motive’ Europe of ‘imperfect partnership’ and ‘incomplete antagonism’, of overlapping groupings and cross-cutting alignments, of spectacular but inconsequential manoeuvres, of subterranean but essential evolution” (Hassner 1968, 24).

between relative powers continues to be the quest for the creation of strong multipolarity. This concept of multipolarity is attached to the concept of 'une Europe européenne' which is a precondition of the creation of a multipolar world.

This conceptualization of the relationship between Europe (the EU) and international politics has not changed since de Gaulle. The relationship is still based upon a realist concept of multipolarity. What has changed is the international system and thereby the political means to uphold 'a certain idea of France', French 'activism/exceptionalism', 'une Europe européenne', and 'multipolarity'. The more unstable the regional and global environment is the more politics are subject to change but the 'deep structure' remains. However, it might be objected that France is undergoing a painful transformation that might change hitherto relationship between state, nation and *patrie* and thereby also French European – and foreign policy. The question is of course whether the actual external crisis – especially the financial, economic and energy crisis changes the concept of Europe and the 'French deep structure'? Up to now, Sarkozy has clung to a mixture of de Gaulle's and Mitterrand's European concepts in attempting at 'pacifying' the effects of the crisis on French society and in Europe.

The French European Presidency: A Protective Europe is A State-like Europe

"I believe that a strong France cannot exist without Europe, just as a powerful Europe cannot exist without France... The European construction is France's absolute priority, because without Europe, France will not be able to provide an effective answer to the challenges of our time" (Sarkozy's speech to the French ambassadors, 27 August 2007).

"The European people are suffering from an identity crisis that is connected with globalization and the emphasis on markets. The word 'protectionism' should therefore not be forbidden" (Sarkozy to the European Parliament, 13 November 2007).

When Sarkozy was elected President, old Gaullists and the left wing believed that Sarkozy intended a neo-liberal EU, but ever since his presidential election campaign, Sarkozy has maintained that he wishes a EU that protects its citizens. The European programme of the French Presidency presented

clear evidence of this as its title was: *France's return to Europe and a protective Europe (l'Europe protection)*.

As French president, Sarkozy quickly understood that the French 'no' to the European constitutional agreement in 2005 had to be taken seriously. The majority of the French said no, because they believed that the treaty was too liberal, that it would promote the emigration of businesses with even greater unemployment as a result, and that foreign businesses would invade the European market. It is this concern that Sarkozy calculates with politically when he speaks of 'a protective Europe' that does not behave as 'a Trojan horse' (Sarkozy, *Ensemble* 2007, 94)

Sarkozy took a lot of initiatives on behalf of the EU in order to push forward a common policy towards the economic and financial crisis. He did what Mitterrand had stated: *To act is to exist*. He acted in prolongation of Mitterrand's state-like Europe. The concept of 'a protective Europe' lies in extension of the deceased President Mitterrand's idea of a strong Europe that can accomplish everything France no longer can.

On the presidential polling day Sarkozy stated that France was back in Europe. But which Europe and which France was he referring to? Sarkozy has often stated that he works for 'a new Europe' and a 'break' with the European policy of the past. At the same time, he also speaks about the necessity of a pragmatic European policy that prioritizes small concrete steps towards 'a Europe of results'. Thus Sarkozy uses an oxymoron 'a pragmatic break' which is an ambiguous concept. The concept 'pragmatism' refers to the way policy is carried out. Pragmatism is about which means to use in order to construct Europe as a powerful actor, whereas 'break' points to the conceptualization of Europe (see below).

Sarkozy is not the first French politician to use the word 'pragmatism' when talking about the further construction of the EU. Already in 1997, the then socialist minister of foreign affairs declared that 'France was now a pragmatic power' (Védrine 1997, 181). The French former minister of European affairs, the Gaullist Catherine Colonna expressed the same view in her speech to the French ambassadors 31 Augusts 2006. European pragmatism has been a key word in French political speeches since the end of 1990s, because the French political leaders did not know how to

come up with strategic visions after the Balkan wars and before the future big EU-enlargement⁴⁹. But talking about a ‘pragmatic break’ is a semantic break in comparison to earlier French political speeches. President Sarkozy’s ‘break’ connotes a new policy but when linked to the notion of pragmatism the ‘break’ refers to (small) reforms and to compromises thereby destabilizing and delegitimizing his use of ‘break’.

During the French EU – Presidency, fall 2008 Sarkozy made compromises and reforms. However, underneath the compromises and the reforms a specific conceptualization of Europe/the EU peeps out: A Mitterrand state - like Europe. The French EU –Presidency testifies to a state-like protective EU when it comes to economic, financial and industrial policy.

Sarkozy is completely in line with Mitterrand’s vision of a European economic government. When Mitterrand negotiated the Maastricht Treaty together with the then Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Mitterrand proposed establishing a European economic government that should define the general guidelines for EU's monetary and exchange policy and for the member states' financial policies. France had to give up this demand; but this did not prevent the French presidents from continuing their criticism of the Central Bank's monetary and exchange policy as well as the Growth and Stability Pact, which sets narrow limits for the Euro-countries' state deficits.

Sarkozy has followed the same track ever since he ran for presidential election (Lequesne, 2007). In a speech 2008 before the European Parliament Sarkozy proposed that ‘*(a)n economic government should work closely with the European Central Bank. The Bank should however maintain its independence but also be able to hold discussions with an economic government*’⁵⁰. At the various summit meetings on the financial crisis, Sarkozy pleaded for establishment of an economic government with its basis in the Euro-Group. However, in opposition to Mitterrand and Chirac, Sarkozy does not attack the independence of the European Central bank. But he do criticize - like Mitterrand and Chirac - its monetary policy.

⁴⁹ It is not only the French political leaders who talk about the necessity of ‘pragmatism’ an of a ‘EU of results’. For Example José Manuel Barroso also uses these terms because of the increasing EU-scepticism in all the EU-member states.

⁵⁰ www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT*IM-PRESS*2, 10 June 2008.

When speaking of the economic and financial crisis, Sarkozy refers to the necessity of the construction of a ‘protective Europe’ that has to be able to act at the global level in order to regulate the financial and economic disorder. In order to ‘socialize’ big emergent economic powers like China, Brazil, Mexico, India and South Africa – the French EU-presidency called the G20 to rally together November 2008 in Washington. At that meeting, G20 agreed on the four principles that should guide the response to the crisis: The need for enhanced coordination and cooperation, the rejection of protectionist measures, the strengthening of regulatory systems in financial markets and global governance. Sarkozy stated at the meeting that the intention of the meeting was that the emergent powers should participate in a fair international system of competition (Sarkozy 2008)⁵¹.

Sarkozy has been criticized by European liberal governments for pushing for a French – coloured protective Europe. He legitimizes his concept of a ‘protective Europe’ by stating that the adjective ‘protective’ does not connote ‘protectionism’. According to Sarkozy ‘protective’ connotes ‘reciprocity’ from its foreign partners (Sarkozy 2007)⁵². *“I am for free trade....(But)I want reciprocity and clarity. Europe must open up, yes, but the others must too, at the same time and under the same conditions*⁵³. ‘Reciprocity’ means that all countries must be on equal footing in global competition; *therefore, demands must be made of non-European enterprises that want to enter the European market, with regard to the environment and energy security, as well as wages and health conditions. If this does not happen the EU-member states will be exposed to unfair competition* (Sarkozy Ensemble 2007, 85).

EU shall therefore save failing enterprises and invest in big industry. This can only happen if EU has a common European industrial policy that especially invests in huge enterprises that produce infrastructure (*les champions*) a sector in which France has great expertise. In October 2008 – in the midst of the financial crisis – Sarkozy emphasized that it was EU's duty to support production of ships, cars, planes and trains; otherwise, *Europeans would wake up one day and discover that European enterprises had been sold to non-European capital* (Sarkozy 2008)^{54 55}.

⁵¹ Speech at the G20 meeting 15 November 2008

⁵² Point de presse de M. Sarkozy (en anglais) le 23 mai 2007 à la Commission européenne. www.rpfrance.eu/spip.php?article683. Brussels, 23 Mai 2007.

⁵³ Point de Presse de M. Sarkozy (en anglais) le 23 mai 2007 à la commission européenne. www.

⁵⁴ Discours du Président de la République devant le Parlement européen, 18 octobre 2008. www.elysee.fr/docements/index.php?lang=fr&mode=view&cat_id=7&press_id=1951.

⁵⁵ Norman Bowen writes that Sarkozy’s Europeanwide industrial planning looks very much like a kind of Euro-Gaullism (2007, 8). The author of this paper disagrees unless Bowen refers to de Gaulle’s vision of France as a ‘grande

Sarkozy's argumentation for protecting agriculture follows the same logic as his defence for protecting European/French industry. Large agricultural countries outside EU must follow the same rules as European agriculture. They must meet the conditions for food security and improved environment. Sarkozy has stated that it *cannot be tolerated that farmers suffer environmental and social dumping, and tax and exchange dumping; a limit must therefore be set for 'dumping' of food products. This limit shall be set through WTO negotiations. We demand reciprocity and balance in the discussions at the WTO*⁵⁶

With regard to the financial crisis which was one of the dramatic issues during the French presidency, Sarkozy compared already in 2007 the global financial speculators with predators that prevent healthy production of consumer goods (Sarkozy *Ensemble* 2007, 94). Sarkozy's representation of the speculators as predators allows of a dehumanisation of the speculators towards who the EU has to react firmly in order to humanize the predators animals (Sarkozy, opus.cit. 87). The representation of the speculators as predators turns the crisis into a question of security because something extraordinary has to be done in order to 'pacify' the predators. It becomes a question of survival of the EU. The means to pacify – according to Sarkozy - is strong state- like EU intervention. The strong state-like acting of the EU become the essence of Sarkozy's European vision .

The idea of political and economic state intervention is grounded in the French political culture that is marked by a strong state-policy that shall ensure that no particular interest disturbs the nation – state. This goes also for Sarkozy's conceptualization of the EU regardless whether he wishes less state on the national state's territory. One might even say that the lesser 'state – roof' on the national territory the more state intervention at the EU-level in order to compensate for reduction of the national state. EU shall thus multiply over the economic and political power that France lacks. Hence, the Mitterrand wording *the more Europe the more France* applies also to Sarkozy's European vision with regard to economics, industry and finance.

nation' that projects her vision onto the European scene. However, de Gaulle's vision of French economic modernization was linked to the national level not to the European one.

⁵⁶ *The future of agriculture – Speech by M. Nicolas Sarkozy, president of the Republic (excerpts)* Daumeray, 19 February 2009. www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-Sarkozy-s-speech-on-The.html

A State-like EU has to have Borders

It is a commonly known secret that France has not been a warm supporter of EEC/EU expansions. If expansion cannot be avoided, it should only happen after the empowering of the EU that ensures the EU as a visible and active actor. However, suddenly in autumn 2007, Sarkozy announced that France would no longer oppose expansion that included the Balkan countries. Jean-Pierre Jouyet, the then minister of European Affairs, declared in January 2008 that *'(t)he Sarkozy government had ditched its longstanding scepticism about enlargement and now saw a bigger EU as a stronger force in the world. And therefore would push for the eventual integration of the Balkan countries, including Serbia'*⁵⁷.

This announcement was apparently a 'break' with Mitterrand's state-like Europe. It goes against the conceptualization of a core of power that is not to be easily accessible to other nation – states. Other countries cannot sneak in through the back door, economically or politically. Access to the club is only granted if the power of the centre is not at risk of being blurred. The EU thus forms a core with clearly drawn frontiers and lines of demarcation in order to sustain its role as a high-profile actor.

Sarkozy's 'break' with former policy was made possible because of the Lisbon Treaty that ensures stronger executive power. But the Lisbon Treaty has been shelved until the Irish vote October 2009. If it is going once more to be an Irish no to the Lisbon Treaty, Sarkozy opposes further enlargement: *"If we stick to Nice, it's the Europe of the 27. If we want enlargement – I do -, we need new institutions before enlarging. It's Lisbon and enlargement... It is matter of consistency, honesty and logic. So when it comes to Croatia, we have to continue the negotiations"*^{58,59}. The 'break' is not a break with the past. It is a continuation of the conceptualization of a core-power to which new countries only can be added if the core is strengthened beforehand.

A border has to be created to Turkey, which Sarkozy, and with him a large percentage of the French population, do not recognize as European. However, Sarkozy had to make a compromise when he

⁵⁷ "France to press for EU enlargement – Europe Minister Jouyet", *AFP* 8 January 2008. Jouyet, Jean – Francois (2008): *L'europe élargie est une chance*. 5 janvier. www.jpjouyet.eu/?post/2008/01/05/LEurope-elargie-est-une-chance

⁵⁸ Speech by M. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the Republic, before the European Parliament, 10 July 2008. www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-Sarkozy-addresses,10892.html?var_recherc...

⁵⁹ Conférence de presse de M. Nicolas Sarkozy Président de la République lors du Conseil européen de Bruxelles, 20 juin 2008. www.elysee.fr/download/?mode=press&filename=conference_de_presse_ouverture20.06pdf.

became president. He agreed to continue EU negotiations with Turkey and 27 June 2008 the French Congress (the National Assembly and the Senate) voted to soften a constitutional requirement to hold a popular vote before a new country can enter the EU⁶⁰. An amendment was added to the French Constitution just before just before the referendum on the Constitutional Treaty in May 2005. The amendment of 2005 stipulated that a referendum had to be held prior to a country's EU accession if the country represents more than 5% of the overall EU population. The new 2008 amendment of the 2005 amendment requires an endorsement by referendum of any European proposals to accept new countries into the European Union. However, the president can propose a waiver of this provision. Thus, the solution of the 'Turkish problem' is up to the French president to decide according to the political situation in EU/Europe and internally in France.

Even if Sarkozy made a compromise with regard to French attitude to Turkey before the French EU-presidency, he pushed through that EU should establish a so-called 'reflection group' that should make a proposal for EU's future borders and how to develop EU institutions; however, also in this case, Sarkozy had to make a compromise. No one wanted the reflection group to consider the above-mentioned issues. Instead, its mandate was to discuss all possible issues, such as climate, terror, immigration, and international criminality, as well as a European social and economic model. The group was established at the EU- summit meeting in October 2008.

The question about the entry of Turkey has provoked a heated discussion about where Europe ends and what kind of European message France communicates in relations to its concepts of nation – state and *patrie*. In principle, the idea of the political nation does not operate with borders defined by religious, cultural or ethnic criteria. That is to say, Turkey should not be excluded from being a member of the European club because of its Muslim identity. It has a 'vocation européenne' as de Gaulle put it when Turkey first sought membership in 1962. Chirac – in line with de Gaulle – several times referred to Turkey's 'European vocation'. But opposition – especially on the right - forced Chirac into an ambivalent position. *The National front* on the extreme right and the conservative *Movement for France* but also a big part of the Gaullist party UMP argued against the entry of a big Muslim country.

⁶⁰ The constitutional requirement was stipulated few months before the referendum

Sarkozy uses also cultural and religious argumentation in order to keep Turkey outside the EU. Sarkozy writes in his book *Testimony*: “(e)ntry of a country, whose 98% land is outside European continent, who will be the most populous country of the Union in the coming 20 years, and moreover whose culture mainly carries several aspects of Islam into the EU, will create an overall transformation within the EU, thus will weaken the initial idea of the founding fathers of the EU in terms of a political union eventually leading to a chaos” (quoted in Lagro 2008, 72). Sarkozy’s use of cultural and religious exclusion criterion is thus legitimized by reference to the necessity of saving the EU as a political project. ‘Saving’ Europe from being a cultural and Muslim entity allows for using the Right’s and extreme Right’s cultural and religious arguments..

The use of religion and culture as a mechanism of exclusion points to the importance of the concept of *patrie*. In the discourse of the extreme right and in parts of the right, the concept of *patrie* is decoupled from the concept of the political nation –state when it comes to Turkish (non)membership⁶¹. The concept of the political nation disappears to the benefit of *patrie*, which is emotionally related to the past, the memory, cultural roots and heritage. The concept of *patrie* thus comes close to that of an ethnic/religious definition as opposed to the definition of the nation as a political choice. This is a heresy to the political thinking of the French nation – state. It is a heresy that becomes still more ‘normal’ the more Islam is represented as a threat to France/Europe/the EU. This turning upside down the relationship between the concept of nation – state and *patrie* is a ‘break’. It is not Sarkozy that has introduced this ‘break’. It has since mid – 1990s come slowly to the political fore where it competes with the ‘normal’ relation between the concept of the political nation – state and *patrie* where *patrie* is hold at check by the concept of the political nation – state.

A Europe of the States?

“Il faut toujours une alliance de revers. Les rois de France ont fait alliance avec le Grand Turc contre le Saint Empire romain germanique. Ils ont fait alliance avec la Pologne contre la Prusse...Moi, j’ai fait alliance avec la Russie pour la renforcer en face de l’Allemagne. Et

⁶¹ Since 1998 France has tried to elaborate a solution of Turkish entry ambition. In order to keep Turkey half in and half out, France launched the idea of ‘the European conference’ where all the potential members of the EEU could train themselves in becoming EU-members. This idea was rejected by Turkey. In 2004 the French government declared that turkey should be treated as a privileged a partner like the states of North Africa and the other countries of the southern Mediterranean. Turkey also rejected that idea. The last French proposal was to include Turkey in Sarkozy’s project of a *Mediterranean Union*.

aujourd'hui je fais l'alliance avec la Chine pour la renforcer face à la Russie" (de Gaulle quoted by Jean Daniel 2004).

The concept of a state-like Europe competes in Sarkozy's speeches with a Europe of the States. The latter concept is linked to the vision of the strong states' 'playing in concert' at the regional and the global level. Sarkozy nailed this vision fast in his speech to the French ambassadors on 27 August 2008, when he stated, *"France should be the avant-garde in the European project, just as France should remain a power that plays a role on the world scene"*.

France as an avant-garde state – nation is an inherent feature of the vision of herself. It is a permanent goal in French European and foreign policy. However it makes a difference whether this concept of avant-garde is linked to a concept of Europe of the States or to a state-like Europe. The concept of Europe of the States operates with a concept of Europe that lies outside the French nation – state. Under this, France acts in Europe by drawing a line of demarcation between the territorial borderline and Europe. At the political level, Europe is considered an arena for French diplomatic manoeuvres characterized by shifting alliances. This policy of alliances marked de Gaulle's his concept of Europe of the States.

Especially small and new EU member states fear the Gaullist European conceptualization and this fear was visible when Sarkozy came to power in 2007. In the capitals the political leaders asked whether Sarkozy's vision was the Gaullist concept of a Europe of the States. They put this question because Sarkozy's European visions pointed to the construction of a *directoire* of the big EU - member states – a Metternich – Europe where the big powers decide amongst themselves how to construct the future of Europe.

Before his French presidency Sarkozy stated in an interview with four famous intellectuals that *'the Franco-German axis is not strong enough to re-launch the European vision. Sarkozy therefore suggested that 'the axis should be expanded to comprise the EU, Italy, Benelux, Spain and Poland. - -These countries constitute about 75% of the European population. They make up a big and therefore important group, and France has to be aware that coordination and cooperation between the big countries shall be a model for other EU-member states'* (Brückner, Glücksmann, Prazan, Reza 2006). The same year, in a speech to the think-tank *Les amis de l'Europe*, Sarkozy laboured

this statement by explaining that his suggestion was caused by the fear of the New EU-member states of a Franco-German *directoire* (Sarkozy, 2006)⁶². Sarkozy said on the same occasion that *‘the EU has to be based on a new and more flexible model. Ad-hoc groups of member states (those who are most affected by particular issues) should hold informal meetings to prepare for debates on Europe’s major decision such as illegal immigration, the Middle East crisis and terrorism’*. It was an ambiguous message because who Sarkozy did not clarify who should be the members of an ad – hoc group. Is it an ad – hoc, pragmatic co-operation to integrate more closely in a particular policy area – in ‘a coalition of the willing’? (Král 2008) that excludes the ‘unwilling’ and thereby creates a multi-speed EU where ‘the coalition of the willing’ constitutes in reality the ‘core-Europe’. Or is it a means to strengthen the whole EU-structure?

In his speech to the European Parliament July 2008 – just few weeks after the beginning of the French EU and in relation to the importance of the Irish no to the Constitutional Treaty – Sarkozy warned against a ‘multi – speed Europe: *“(i)t is a need to bring everybody on the board of the European family. A multi – speed Europe is only the last resort*’⁶³. In his speeches on the institutional framework of the EU Sarkozy replaces the concept of a multi –speed Europe with a flexible Europe and with a EU of ad – hoc pragmatic groups. The concept of a multi - speed Europe connotes to weak and strong states – the weak states being not able to follow the speed of the strong ones. The question of temporality and type of state define the concept, whereas these definitions are silenced in the concept of a flexible Europe. Being linked to the concept a EU of ad – hoc pragmatic groups, Sarkozy avoids speaking of institutionalization of the flexible and pragmatic EU. The advantage – seen from a French political point of view – is that this concept balances between a concept of Europe of the states and a state-like Europe. On the one hand it might be interpreted as a loose structure that allows for the willing states to take initiatives. On the other hand it might be interpreted as the will of some states to press forward EU-integration in some important areas.

⁶² Speech by Sarkozy 8 September 2006. Bibliothèque Sovay. Brussels. Organized by *Les amis de l’Europe* and *La Fondation Robert Schuman*

⁶³ *Thursday plenary: Sarkozy sets out priorities for French EU – Presidency*. 10 July 2008. www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?language=EN&type=IM=PRESS&ref...

The concept of pragmatic ad – hoc EU turns easily into a concept of a concert of the big European states. Just after the EU-summit in December 2008, Sarkozy declared that ‘*it is up to the big countries to take initiatives. They have no more rights than other EU-countries but they have more responsibility*’⁶⁴. In a speech to a conference entitled *Nouveau monde, nouveau capitalisme* (a new world, a new capitalism) Sarkozy stated that ‘*he expected great things from the so-called old Europe and that with Italy, Spain, the UK and of course Germany he would carry on talks about the future of the EU*’⁶⁵.

A concert of the big states that connotes the Gaullist concept of a Europe of the States creates fear amongst the EU member states because of the big states’ will to power at the expense of other member – states’ vision of Europe and themselves as specific nation – states.

The will to big power design marked Sarkozy’s launch of the idea of a *Mediterranean Union* comprising the southern European countries and the southern Mediterranean countries⁶⁶. Sarkozy presented the Mediterranean Union as a ‘*grand design for civilization*’ (Sarkozy, 2008)⁶⁷. Thereby he linked up to the French vision of being a big civilizational power that takes initiative in the name of her ‘exceptionalism’.

The idea was not well received in Europe, because it excluded the EU as an actor. It was considered to be an expression of typical French unilateralism. Angela Merkel signalled thumbs down, and in March 2008, France had to accept the German demand that a *Mediterranean Union* should be a joint European project that was not separated from the Barcelona process that had been initiated in 1995 between EU, Arab countries in the southern Mediterranean, and Israel. The *Mediterranean Union* was thus rechristened as the *Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean*.

The Gaullist concept that represents a strong France acting in a strong Europe is on Sarkozy’s political table. The question is whether the need of a state – like Europe that takes over many of the

⁶⁴ “UE: sarkozy consacre les grands” in *Libération* 17 2008.

⁶⁵ Discours de M. le Président de la République. Colloque “Nouveau monde, nouveau capitalisme”. Paris – École militaire – Jeudi 8 janvier 2009.

⁶⁶ Sarkozy suggested that Turkey should participate in the *Mediterranean Union*.

⁶⁷ *New Years greetings to the diplomatic corps – speech by M. Nicolas Sarkozy President of the Republic*, 18 January 2008. www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-Sarkozy-s-New-Year,10186html.

hitherto French policies is stronger than the Gaullist concept. They compete for the time being just like they did during Chirac's presidencies.

Conclusion

Whatever we don't do in 2009 will be even harder to do in 2010. Until the day when there will have been so many ordeals, so much suffering, so much unhappiness, that there will no longer be any room for manoeuvre on the table. This is the reality. It is the first break with the past that I am hoping for. For us at last to understand that we no longer have time on the climate, on peace or on understanding and dialogue between the different regions of the world we represent (Sarkozy 16 January 2009)⁶⁸.

All over in the EU member states the state bells ring. They play the song: the state is back. Some years ago, it was religion that was represented as coming back. But neither state nor religion has been absent. They have been silenced by a neo-liberal and secularist discourse. However, the question is how much state is back and at which level economics, finance, climate and conflicts is to be dealt with?

During the French EU-Presidency Sarkozy dealt with the regional and the global level and at the same time he tried to 'sell' the French concept of a state-like Europe to the other EU – members. When this concept was not 'marketable' he had a fall back option: Europe of the States. He constantly balanced between these two concepts which did not point to any break with the past. In the contrary. They pointed to de Gaulle and to Mitterrand. Thus, Sarkozy's European and foreign concepts followed certain routes that hitherto have made sense at the French political scene. At the level of daily policy he changed and changed again. He dramatized the crisis and acted quickly, but this activism and dramatization did not touch upon the 'deep structure' of French European – and foreign policy.

In his speech to the French Ambassadors 28 August 2008 Sarkozy pleaded for four 'breaks' in French European – and foreign policy. As this analysis indicates, none of them were breaks. In his New Year greeting to the diplomatic corps 16 January 2009 Sarkozy only operated with one

⁶⁸ *New Year greeting to the diplomatic corps – Speech by M. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the Republic.*
www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-Sarkozy-s-speech-to,14347.html 2009

‘break’: break with paralysis of action⁶⁹. It is thus the action itself that is represented as a break with the past. Hence, Sarkozy – just like when he became French president – refers to the presence and to the future without the past. But the past will certainly catch him up again. It will be difficult to cast new European concepts because of the French political culture. If the Lisbon Treaty is going to be approved by the Irish, October 2009, France will be institutionally committed to such an extent that it might be the Mitterrand concept of a doubling of France's power on the EU level that will be the dominant in France. Or, a completely new discourse on French relation to Europe might peep out because of increasing decentralisation of France and increasing putting into question the unity of the nation- state. Hence a strong French state and state- like Europe is maybe going to be balanced by a decentralized France in a still more decentralized Europe where power does not any longer radiate from the Brussels centre. If this happens, a real break will be fulfilled that touches ‘the deep structure’ of the concept of the French nation – state and thereby its conceptualization of the relationship between France and Europe/the EU. This concept exists at the political level in the discourse of the French Green party. However, it is not visible in the discourse of the other French political parties at the time being. The call for more state on the national territory and the call for a state – like Europe that compensates for lack of state power is still the concept that dominates the French political scene. However it is challenged by the concept of a pragmatic ad – hoc Europe which might evolve into a concert of big states that undermines the discourse of a state-like Europe. If this happens the small – and the new EU-members will try to form alliances against the big European states and a malign balance of power will start inside the EU.

⁶⁹ See note 62.

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