

FRANCE AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: AN UNEASY RELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to identify France's cumbersome relationship with the European integration from the beginning to present. The emphasis in the study is on France's role in the European integration process, the meanings, as well as the impacts of this process on French domestic politics. Although France has taken an active role in the European integration process, it is argued in the article that she had to keep a fragile balance between further integration and national sovereignty. French understandings of Turkey's possible adhesion to the EU are firmly related with the complex relationship of France with the European construction, and the traditional concerns with keeping such a fragile balance.

Keywords: *European Integration, France, Europeanization of French politics*

ÖZET

Bu çalışma başlangıcından günümüze Fransa'nın Avrupa bütünleşmesine yaklaşımlarını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada öncelikle Fransa'nın Avrupa bütünleşmesindeki rolü ve 'Avrupa' fikrinin Fransız milli kimliğinin İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrasında yeniden oluşturulmasındaki önemi ele alınacaktır. Çalışmada ayrıca Avrupa bütünleşmesi sürecinde Fransa'nın izlediği politikalar ve bütünleşme sürecinin Fransız siyaseti üzerindeki etkileri de ele alınmaktadır. Fransa'nın Avrupa Birliği'nin inşası sürecinde oynadığı önemli role karşın Fransa- Avrupa bütünleşmesi ilişkileri hiç de kolay olmamıştır. Fransa başlangıcından günümüze daha ileri düzeyde entegrasyon ile ulusal egemenlik devrinin sınırlandırılması arasında kırılgan bir denge oluşturmaya çabalamıştır. Şüphesiz, söz konusu dengeyi koruma konusundaki geleneksel kaygılar ve Fransa'nın 'Avrupa' algılamaları Türkiye'nin Avrupa Birliği üyeliğine yönelik Fransız karşıtlığını belirleyen önemli unsurlar arasındadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Avrupa Bütünleşmesi, Fransa, Fransız Politikasının Avrupalılaşması*

France creates daylight. To her Civilization owes the dawn. The human mind in order to see clearly turns in the direction of France. She is at the same time solar and starry. (Victor Hugo, 1877)¹

France is not really herself unless in the front rank. To my mind France cannot be France without greatness. (Charles de Gaulle, 1970)

1. INTRODUCTION

General de Gaulle was the last great practitioner of this rhetoric of the philanthropic superiority of France in the twentieth century (DePorte, 1991: 251). Although France compensated for its defeat in 1940 largely by succeeding in acquiring a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, a position that conferred the country great-power status; she was by no means what she proclaimed to be before World War II. The role of France in the concert of nations has declined after the 1970s; the language about rank and grandeur, however, has persisted in the terms of discourse of French foreign policy. France looked for international rank and grandeur in the European integration project. It was in the mirror of Europe that France welcomed her cultural, political, intellectual influence over the continent; by assuming an active role in the building of a European community from the very beginning.

It was Valéry Giscard d'Estaing who confessed first during his presidency that France was a medium-sized power. "In one sphere, in fact, the French have become aware of their relative smallness, and that is in Europe" (Gildea, 2002: 284). Europe is no longer what it used to be in the 1960s; a community of six western European countries coming together under the leadership and cultural and political domination of France. With the successive enlargements of the EU, and most importantly following the adhesion of Great Britain, the complex dynamics of a multiplicity of smaller states, as well as the even more striking economic domination of Germany after the German unification, France's ambitions and pretensions to lead the European construction have come to an end.

Today, France has doubts about the direction in which Europe is moving, as she faces increasing difficulty in finding her place in the new EU geography. In this scene, Turkey's possible EU membership increases the anxiety of a France which has long been facing the bitter reality: She is no longer "*la reine des nations*" in Europe (Winock, 2006: 30). My contention is that French understandings of Turkey's EU candidacy are firmly related to the recent challenges that threaten France's leading role in Europe. Evidently, the arguments in the French debate on Turkey's potential membership, though not static, are shaped to a large extent by the French visions of Europe, in addition to a set of particular characteristics of French politics and society. Studying relations of France with the European construction in retrospect is thus extremely important for examining the reasons behind the French

¹ Victor Hugo (1877, quoted in DePorte, 1991: 250).

popular and elite opposition to Turkey's possible adhesion to the EU. Only after evaluating the complex relationship of France with the European construction, I believe, French perceptions of Turkey's EU membership can be properly understood.

This study attempts to identify France's cumbersome relationship with the European integration from the beginning to present with a particular focus on the country's role in the European integration process, the meanings, as well as the impacts of this process on French domestic politics. In the article a concise sketch of French conceptions of European integration, from the very beginning to the most recent times, placing the emphasis on competing alternative projects and conceptions which had -and now have- a determining role in the European agenda of France is provided.

2. POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION OF FRENCH NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE IDEA OF EUROPE

Following its early and decisive defeat in the Second World War, France had to face a deep identity crisis as the foundational myths of Frenchness had collapsed and the identity constructions of the Third Republic simply became obsolete (Gildea, 2002; Nora, 2001). The traumatic experience of France during the war years' collaboration of the Vichy government with the Nazi regime is the most important single reason behind the rupture in French national identity. The French government's responsibility in the deportation of Jews, including French nationals, as well as other European Jews to concentration camps tainted the very basis of the French nation-state (Birnbäum, 1998; Burrin, 1992). The Vichy regime not only placed the legitimacy of the old political order in France under question, but also challenged one of the basic foundational myths of French national identity; that of France as the realm of democracy, universalism, constitutional citizenship, civilization and human rights (Gildea, 2002).

A second shock that added to the crisis of French nation-state identity came with the process of decolonialization. The decadence and dissolution –the loss of most of the colonial territories- of the Empire culminating in the war in Algeria led to an ongoing political crisis in the Fourth Republic. With the institution of the Fourth Republic, the contradiction between France's quest for rank and grandeur and the self-assumed mission to civilize and liberate oppressed peoples became much more visible (Gildea, 2002). The feeling of decadence was so strong in France that the new international paradigm could not be accepted easily; the liberation of old colonies became significantly problematic and generated much frustration in France. The successive losses of colonial territories and the brutal measures taken shocked the French, and shook the French traditional national identity deeply (Nora, 2001). The colonial wars, especially the Algerian War which Nora calls "truly our War of Secession" was "a civil war and an intense crisis in the national conscience" (Nora, 2001: VIII). The Algerian conflict not only destroyed the credibility of the Fourth Republic in the eyes of the French nation, as Hazareensingh (1994: 267) notes, but also invalidated the self-image of a France striving to promote a higher rank of

humanity. A century-old “*mission civilisatrice*” had come to an end with decolonialisation.²

Starting immediately after the Liberation, France has committed itself to redefine French national identity construction. In order to overcome the traumatic loss of identity and the collapse of the legitimacy of political order in France, a new legitimization campaign which was based on the construction of a new nation-state identity was initiated. In order to expel the specter of collaboration, France under the leadership of de Gaulle created and made strategic use of the myth of the Resistance (Gildea, 2002: 4; Nora, 2001). Simultaneously, however, the Vichy regime was kept out of the collective memory of the French; strategically, in an attempt to dissociate it from the French nation-state. The French chose total silence, and pretended that the Vichy regime never existed, reducing it to a kind of a state in part of the Hexagone, and not a regime of the French nation (Marcussen and Roscher, 2000: 335; Silverman, 1999). Raymond Aron remarks on this silence in his conversation with Jean-Paul Sartre in 1945: “The fundamental reason for this silence is that what had happened had been erased” (cited in Finkielkraut, 1996: 41).

When he came to power in 1958, de Gaulle committed himself to stopping further erosion of French self-respect by ending the Algerian war and fostering the reconstruction of the wounded French national identity. In the reconstruction of French identity, the idea of Europe has played a crucial role, in revitalizing the foundational myths of French identity under the Fifth Republic. In order to cope with the loss of international rank and grandeur, De Gaulle and the political elites of the period have made strategic use of the idea of a unified Europe, a Europe in the image of France, built and guided by France in the light of French Enlightenment values. The strong emphasis on traditional myths of Frenchness, such as democracy and other enlightenment values, and respect for human rights were also extremely important in regaining French self-respect (Hazareesingh, 1994). The leading role France had to play in the European reconstruction through integration was closely associated with ‘French exceptionalism’, i.e. France’s destiny to shape its environment, coming from being the first of nation states and the experience of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment. France’s exceptional stance in the world was translated into the European level, as de Gaulle (and later Pompidou) argues, “France is Europe”. France, as Pompidou suggested in 1964, was “condemned by its geography and its history to play the role of Europe” (cited in Gildea, 2002: 258).

The post-war reconstruction of national identity through Europe was merged with the idea that France has always had of herself, however, this does not mean that the amalgamation is unproblematic. The European dimension of French identity has

² The most problematic case with regard to French identity was the case of Algeria which was a French département; i.e. part of metropolitan France. The Algerian war was one of the most tragic periods of France in the twentieth century during which France had to apply tight censorship on printed media, movies, and novels, which challenged the self-image of France as the pays des droits de l’homme (Gildea, 2002: 31-34).

found significance within the political and intellectual elites in France, and a significant degree of Europeanization in French politics has been observed through the decades. But this has not always been the case amongst the ordinary French public. France continued to be in favor of Europeanism; so long as Europe meant French aspirations, Europeanization was acceptable (Delanty, 1995: 144).

3. THE COMMUNITARIAN OPTION: A DIFFICULT CHOICE

The idea of European integration in France dates back to 1950, the year in which the Foreign Minister of the Fourth Republic Robert Schuman, in a speech inspired by Jean Monnet, proposed integrating the coal and steel industries of Western Europe.³ Following Schuman's declaration, the community model for integration in Europe entered French debates seriously for the first time (Colin, 2005; Parsons, 2002). These debates gave way soon to the Paris Treaty signed in 1951, which founded the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) between Belgium, West Germany, Luxembourg, France, Italy and the Netherlands. Being the first European community the ECSC also entailed a supranational 'High Authority' which was given the power to take decisions about the coal and steel industry in the six member states (Colin, 2005).⁴ Following the success of the ECSC, the communitarian integration went one step ahead when the six Western European countries decided to integrate their economies further by signing the Treaties of Rome in 1957, which created the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) and the European Economic Community (EEC) (Parsons, 2002: 47).

In all these decisive events that paved the way to the European Union, French choices were particularly important. France has been the leading force of European communitarian integration from the very beginning. According to many experts, "European cooperation took the shape it did in the 1950s- the institutionally strong, geographically limited EEC- above all because the French government demanded it" (Parsons, 2002: 48). The leading role of France was related not only to the fact that it was the only nation that could manage such a project -as neither Germany nor Italy were able to do this, and Britain was not interested-, but also because it had strong reasons to assume a pioneering role (Hayward, 1996). As Parsons (2002) correctly argues, the communitarian option was a rational move for France, in that it contributed greatly to the country's international policy priorities, such as ensuring security against the German threat and regaining rank and grandeur at European and international levels. An integrated Europe, besides forming an effective anchor in the post-war reconstruction of French national identity, was seen as the most suitable

³ The idea of a unified Europe in France dates back to 1929, to the speech Aristide Briand, the French prime minister of the period, gave in the presence of the League of Nations Assembly. Briand in his speech proposed the idea of a federation of European nations, 'Etats Unis d'Europe', based on solidarity and the pursuit of economic prosperity as well as political and social co-operation. Another early vision about a unified Europe is the book *Europe* which Edouard Herriot published in 1930.

⁴ Jean Monnet was the president of the supranational High Authority between 1951 and 1954.

way to provide a buffer between France and the superpowers reshaping the continent with uneven power (Drake, 2003: 13).

Initially, France's interest in European integration was driven, more than anything, by the geopolitical imperative of reconciliation and coexistence with Germany. The community option in European integration, as structured in the ECSC (and later EEC) aimed to reach this objective through economic integration. The underlying idea was that economic integration would eventually lead to political integration in Western Europe, which would definitely move away from the haunt of war in Europe. For France, the communitarian model also offered immediate benefits such as being able to supervise West Germany's new foreign policy (Parsons, 2002). The economic advantages of communitarian integration, such as securing access to German coal to keep French industries internationally competitive and thus contributing to the economic recovery of the country had also been particularly influential in the decision of France to undertake such a project (Milward, 1984; Moravcsik, 2000).

3.1 The European Defense Community

The 'community option' however, was not the only alternative available to reach these objectives; post-war reconciliation, ensuring peace in Western Europe and economic recovery. There were instead a multitude of competing alternative models for reaching the same set of objectives. Because of the plentitude of alternatives, the establishment of the communitarian model as the dominant path to defy the specter of war out of Europe took time and was a cumbersome process. Interestingly, the creation of the ECSC following the Schuman Declaration did not lock France onto the path of the EEC; but instead, it generated a fierce debate on alternative models of integration (Parsons, 2002: 59). From 1951 onwards these alternative visions of Europe competed with each other; heated debates between those who favored a confederal model of integration in Europe and those who supported the communitarian model dominated French politics (Hayward, 1996). In the midst of these debates, the ruling elites of the Fourth Republic, with the assertive encouragement of the United States, went one step further and proposed the establishment of a 'European Defense Community' (EDC).⁵ Developed by two prominent names of the Fourth Republic, Robert Schuman and René Pleven, the EDC foresaw the creation of a European army, which would take further the communitarian integration of Europe and serve the ultimate goal of political union in Europe (Colin, 2005; Hayward, 1996).

For France, the EDC meant an alternative way of keeping Germany under pressure, and of obstructing the much feared creation of a new German army, since a supranational 'European army' would allow the tightest control of German

⁵ The EDC, that implied a strong military and political integration, was substituted by the Western European Union (WEU). However, since NATO and WEU overlap, WEU had a minor role in European defense.

rearmament. Although developed and supported by the French government, the proposal generated much frustration in France; and a wide opposition camp including the Communist Party and de Gaulle himself was formed against the proposal (Lacouture, 2001: 125). After the signing of the EDC treaty in 1952, all nationalist and anti-federalist opinion, hostile to a European army and US intervention, converged to fight the EDC treaty. As a result of radical opposition to the proposal, the French National Assembly vetoed the application of EDC at the end of August 1954. The French veto brought the project to an end and demonstrated that political and military union in Europe was not yet feasible (Colin, 2005; Ferrand, 2003). In other words, the failure of EDC showed the supporters of a federal Europe that the ‘communitarian option’ had its own limits.

3.2 The Fouchet Plan and the Gaullist View of ‘*Europe des Patries*’

French concerns with the community model being the dominant pattern of European integration however, had not come to an end; even after the Treaty of Rome, those who favored confederal or traditional models of inter-state politics in Europe continued their efforts to reform the European integration process. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, France tried to enforce an alternative model, known as the ‘Fouchet plan’ after the leading French negotiator Christian Fouchet. The aim of the plan was to construct an intergovernmental European Political Union of the EEC Six. Behind the Fouchet plan⁶ was De Gaulle’s idea of ‘*Europe des Patries*’, an alternative model which involved deeper political integration in the 1960s than the European Union has achieved to this day (Giauque, 2000: 93).

The basic difference between the two alternative models, however, was that unlike the ECSC or EEC, the Fouchet Plan was built on the ‘co-operation’ instead of the ‘cohesion’ of the nation states, limiting supranational integration and the transfer of sovereignty rights to supranational bodies: “The Fouchet plan, i.e. the organization of a political co-operation incipient between the States of Western Europe. [...] Of course this Europe will not be like the one known as supranational” (Charles de Gaulle, 1965 cited in Morelle, 1998: 56).

What the French were proposing under the Fouchet Plan was a confederation of ‘nation states’ that would work together -again under the leadership of France- to form common policies in the areas of defense, economics, cultural affairs, and foreign relations. The Europe of Nations would thus serve up as the main forum for European defense issues and would de facto replace NATO and control all the existing European communities (Giauque, 2000: 99). As an intergovernmental arrangement for European foreign and economic policy coordination, the ultimate political objective of the Fouchet plan was to create a ‘third force’ in Western Europe, ‘*Europe puissance*’ to fight the hegemonic domination of the US, to protect Western Europe against the Soviet threat, and to deal with these superpowers from a

⁶ The formal negotiations on the Fouchet plan took place between February 1961 and April 1962.

position of equality. Europe as a ‘third force’ thus meant an alternative between capitalism and communism (Hayward, 1996; Lacouture, 2001).

The Fouchet negotiations, however, failed to bring a ‘Europe of nations’ into life, mainly because of the reluctance of the five Western European countries to get involved in any scheme that could damage the Common Market and NATO (Giauque, 2000). The Fouchet Plan had also generated great concern in the United Kingdom which declared, a priori, that it was against the creation of any political formation which would exclude the United Kingdom (Giauque, 2000: 94). Furthermore, the ECSC members –especially Western Germany- feared that France would seek to exclude the Americans and the British from any role in Western Europe, break up NATO, and establish French hegemony in Western Europe. The plan’s strong emphasis on defending national sovereignty and limiting supranational integration also generated frustration in France’s partners.

4. SEARCHING FOR A FRAGILE BALANCE

Following the collapse of the Fouchet Plan, the communitarian option ultimately won over the confederal and traditionalist models, and became the dominant form of European integration. After the settlement of the model, France continued to lead the integration process in all the decisive moments of European integration during the late 1960s and 1970s. Across time, however, France has developed a wary attitude to secure a fragile balance between protecting national interests and sovereignty and deepening European integration (Drake, 2005; Hazareesingh, 1994). France’s relationships with Europe, during the right-wing presidencies of the 1960s and 1970s, can best be understood by taking into account French concerns about securing this balance.

During the late 1960s, under the presidency of de Gaulle, France strived to protect the process of European unification against the “outsiders”, namely the United States and the United Kingdom. Limiting the impact of the USA and Britain on Western European integration was amongst the primary concerns of the European policy of France. President De Gaulle was convinced that Britain would act as the “Trojan horse” of the United States if it was admitted to the EEC, and thus dissolve the European integration by turning it into just another “Atlanticist” organization (Hazareesingh, 1994: 277; Moravcsik, 2000: 7).⁷ For that reason, British efforts to gain entry into the EEC were consistently opposed by de Gaulle. France vetoed the membership of Britain in 1963 and blocked the enlargement of the EEC to include Norway, Ireland, and Denmark along with Britain.

⁷ Jean Lacouture in his biography articulates De Gaulle’s idea of constructing a ‘Europe européenne’. A ‘European Europe’ was a Gaullist notion of an independent European alliance against the superpowers, especially vis-à-vis the United States, which will confederate the Nation-states of the old continent in the leadership of Paris (Lacouture, 1990: 313).

At a press conference on January 1963, de Gaulle explained in detail why Britain was not ready to undertake a “genuinely European” approach (Moravcsik, 2000: 6). The official claim behind the French veto was that Britain was not sufficiently European-minded yet to break away from the Commonwealth, and to accept a common agricultural policy. In 1967, France vetoed for a second time British entry into the EEC, claiming that Britain was not economically prepared for joining the Common Market. Britain could not join the EEC before De Gaulle was succeeded by Georges Pompidou, who lifted the French veto on Britain’s entry into the Common Market conditionally.⁸

Despite the fact that Pompidou lifted the French veto on British entry into the EEC, his priorities in French policy towards European integration were not significantly different from those of De Gaulle (Winock, 1999: 496). In other words he was as enthusiastic as his predecessor in keeping a constant balance between sovereignty and further integration in Europe. In the period following the admission of Britain along with Ireland and Denmark to the EEC in 1973, the European integration process came to a halt, especially because of the Oil Shock and the resulting economic difficulties. During this decade up until the early 1980s, European issues were not high on the political agenda in France, which was dominated by debates on economic policies. Public interest in European integration was extremely limited as it was barely registered as an electoral issue until the early 1980s (Ladrech, 2001).

5. EUROPEANIZATION OF DOMESTIC POLITICS: THE MITTERRAND YEARS

The early 1980s witnessed a revival of interest in European issues in France, basically because of the admission of Greece, Spain and Portugal to the Union. Mainly due to the concerns about its economic impacts, the enlargement generated a vivid debate in France, especially regarding the potential negative impact on French agriculture of allowing Spain to join the EEC (Rupnik, 2004). These debates revived French public interest in European integration and the issue once again entered the political agenda of France.

With the election of Francois Mitterrand and the formation of the Socialist Party (PS) government in 1981, the European integration entered more explicitly than ever before the political and economic orientation of French social democracy and contributed to the evolution in the identity of the French Left. French socialists initially had a critical attitude towards European integration, since they perceived the Common Market as an “organizational front for monopoly capitalism” (Ladrech, 2001: 37-39). Despite hesitations, however, French socialists soon reverted to a more pro-European discourse. Within a few years of the election of socialists to power in 1981, a re-interpretation of European integration began. During the early phase of his

⁸ On the condition that the issue of agricultural finance (i.e. the Common Agricultural Policy which would benefit France most) was settled first. See Moravcsik (2000) for a detailed examination of French diplomacy and veto on British entry into the EEC.

presidency Mitterrand developed a particularly Euro-enthusiastic approach. French socialists increasingly argued that France's future lay in Europe; as Mitterrand once declared "France is our fatherland, Europe is our future" (quoted from *Le Monde*, 4 September 1992).

The Socialist governments under Mitterrand pursued an effective European policy, aimed at enhancing France's role within the EU, shaping the EU towards policies amenable to French domestic interests, and serving the needs of a social Europe (Ladrech, 2001: 40). The notion of the "European social model" became the motto of Mitterrand's policies in shaping European integration: "Europe will either be Socialist or she will not be".⁹ Mitterrand not only adopted the Gaullist view that Europe should be constructed in France's image but also extended the myth of the French '*mission civilisatrice*'; this time, towards Europe (Marcussen and Roscher, 2000: 338).

In collaboration with his fellow socialist Jacques Delors who served as the President of the European Commission from 1985 to 1995, Mitterrand struggled to set up the necessary structural change in the European integration project to build up a social Europe and played a major role in the Single European Act (SEA) and the Maastricht Treaty (Cole and Drake, 2000:28).¹⁰ During this period the Common Market, or the EEC, evolved into the EU, with many of the features of a federal body, such as a single currency and a central bank. The most explicit emphasis in terms of shaping the European construction was the commitment to attain a higher profile social policy, which eventually brought the inclusion of a social chapter to the Maastricht Treaty and the Employment Chapter in the 1997 EU Amsterdam Treaty (Ladrech, 2001: 41). In conjunction with the active European policies of Mitterrand's presidency, European integration acquired a complementary dimension in attaining domestic policy objectives. This process of Europeanization in French politics involved the adaptation of French domestic politics and institutions to the needs and rationale of European integration. As a result, during this period the PS evolved into a more explicitly reformist and European party, adapting to the new external stimuli of the EU (Ladrech, 2001: 37). The leadership of François Mitterrand played an important role in this evolution.

6. THE MAASTRICHT REFERENDUM: CONSENSUS AND CLEAVAGES REGARDING EUROPE

The Maastricht Referendum of 1992 is an important event in France's relations with Europe. In France, as in the past during the debates on the ratification of the European Defense Community (EDC), old wounds were reopened and the parties split down the middle. A closer look at the political debates surrounding the

⁹ Quoted in *L'Unité*, January 1976, reprinted in Featherson (1988: 107).

¹⁰ Mitterrand and Delors together, oversaw the Single European Act (1986), the reunification of Germany (1990) and the Maastricht Treaty (1992).

referendum on the Maastricht Treaty may shed light on the existing divides regarding the European integration process in today's France.

In 1992 when President Mitterrand put the Maastricht Treaty to a referendum, he described it as a rampart against economic and social *laissez faire*. The idea of the "European social model" which was a key element in Mitterrand's conception of Europe was at the core of the PS campaign for an affirmative vote in the referendum (Ivaldi, 2006: 64). The Treaty put to referendum in great expectation of an open endorsement however, won approval by only the slightest of margins –51 per cent of those who voted in the 1992 referendum- and generated deep scissions both in the right and left wings of French politics.

In fact, from the very beginning, there had been several divides on the European issues in France. The referendum simply made the cleavages of French politics on European integration more visible, both in the right and left wing parties.

All parties at the centre of the political spectrum, the socialists (PS), the Gaullists, RPR (*Rassemblement pour la République*), the UDF (*Union pour la Démocratie Française*), and the Greens, were divided over the issue (Criddle 1993: 231). Both ends of the political spectrum, the Communists (*Parti Communiste Français*) and the *Front National* (FN), on the other hand, campaigned for a negative vote in the referendum. The PS succeeded in maintaining a fairly clear supportive position on Europe in the referendum by claiming it to be an alternative utopian project. These arguments however did not convince Eurosceptics within the PS (Parti Socialiste), such as the former minister and party faction leader Jean-Pierre Chevènement. Claiming that the Treaty was too liberal, Jacobin Eurosceptic Chevènement left the party in 1993 and subsequently formed the *Mouvement des Citoyens* with a group of left-wing Jacobins (Ivaldi, 2006: 55). The PCF (*Parti Communiste Français*) considered the Treaty as a compromise with liberal capitalism and campaigned for a Non in the referendum. The PCF was endorsed by trade unions, left-wing intellectuals, and dissidents from the PS and the RPR which organised a *Comité pour une autre Europe* (Committee for another Europe) (Appleton 1992: 8). The Greens could not make any official statement as the leaders were split over the issue: Antoine Wächter (Greens) and Brice Lalonde (*Génération écologie*) were in favour of ratification while Dominique Voynet and Alain Lipietz were against the Treaty (Appleton 1992: 9f.).

The Maastricht referendum also generated heated debates in the right of French politics. While supporters of Maastricht on the French right, argued in favor of a "binding" strategy supporting European integration, opponents supported a return to the traditional balance of power politics. Chirac, who followed the Gaullist legacy during the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, expressed very similar ideas as his counterparts in the French left about the Europeanization of French distinctiveness: "...If France says Yes (to the Maastricht Treaty), she can better reaffirm what I

believe in French exceptionalism...” (Chirac, 1992 cited in Marcussen et al. 1999: 621).

In the Gaullist movement, the most significant split over Europe took place when a minority of RPR Eurosceptics, such as Charles Pasqua and Philippe Seguin, stuck to a traditional Gaullist understanding of sovereignty (Ivaldi, 2006: 53). The unrest in the French centre right was not confined to the *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR) only; the Maastricht referendum also brought cleavages in the UDF, the most European of all the political groups in France. Claiming the process of European unification to be a threat to French sovereignty, Philippe de Villiers abandoned the UDF and founded a new party, *Mouvement pour la France* (MPF) which revived nineteenth century nationalism in opposition to a federalist Europe (Perrineau, 1996).

7. THE EUROPEAN POLICY OF FRANCE DURING “COHABITATION”

The Maastricht referendum represents both a consensus -though a weak one- over European integration, and a disagreement over the future of European integration, and about France’s place and role within it. In 1995 Jacques Chirac succeeded François Mitterrand. With the electoral success of the Left in the 1997 parliamentary elections, and the formation of a left wing government under the Presidency of Jacques Chirac with the participation of PS, PCF, Greens (*Les Verts*), *Parti Radical de Gauche* (PRG), and the *Mouvement des Citoyens* (MDC), a new phase of French relations with the EU followed. During the years of “cohabitation”, an evolution in major left-wing political groups’ stance towards European integration had occurred. In the government, the PS grasped the possibilities the EU provides at a supranational level to pursue domestic goals, as well as to build up alliances with left wing parties in other EU member states (Ladrech, 2001: 47).

In office, the PCF adopted a more constructively critical, but generally supportive standing; and developed a more pro-sovereignty position while accepting the EU as a supranational level to pursue national and regional goals, to control the adverse impact of globalization and to challenge the interests of multinational finance-capital in Europe (Ladrech, 2001: 42). The Greens, on the other hand, for the first time ever in the government, transformed themselves into the most Euro-enthusiastic, or “Euro-federalist” group on the Left of French politics, comparable only to the centre-right UDF (Ladrech, 2001: 43). The Greens during “*la gauche plurielle*” (the Plural Left) government promoted institutional reform within the European Union that would involve the transfer of further supranational power to Brussels, especially regarding environmental issues and the control of nuclear power.

The pro-Europeanism of France during the cohabitation period, however, remained somewhat blurred, reflecting the internal ambiguity, doubts and differences in the versions of pro-Europeanism of the constitutive parties of the government of *la gauche plurielle*. Following the electoral victory of UMP (*Union pour un Mouvement Populaire*) in the legislative elections of 2002, the ambiguity of France’s

official pro-Europeanism significantly diminished relative to the period of cohabitation (Drake, 2003). The official objectives of the French European policy of the UMP governments since 2002 was to stabilize, clarify, and democratize the European Union. Despite their claim for institutional reform in Europe, UMP governments after 2002 did not break with the tradition and rejected strong federal ideas; still in search of a balance between sovereignty and integration (Drake, 2003: 18).¹¹

8. CONCLUSION

Today, in France, there exists a full range of differing views over the *finalité* of European construction, which have been evolving through time, ranging from the federalist view that seeks a deeper social, cultural and political integration to the idea of a “*Europe des Etats*” or “*Europe des Nations*” that supports a more conventional and less enthusiastic union of states with greater emphasis on national sovereignty. France, under the Presidency of Jacques Chirac, officially supported the conception of a “*Europe à deux vitesses*”; a European Union of differing levels of integration, which ranges from strong co-operation and a European common market to a federation-like creation in spheres such as defense or monetary and fiscal policies. Under Chirac’s presidency, France’s official policy emerged into a European “Federation of Nation States”, lead by a small pioneering group of eager EU members –“*le noyau dur*”, on selective grounds such as defense, or internal affairs (Lefebvre, 2004: 83-84).

In France, today, a significant majority of the parliamentary political groups are pro-European, supportive of the idea of a unified Europe; with significant exceptions such as the extreme right, sovereignists, and some fractions of the left. It could be said that, in its broad contours, mainstream parties (UMP, UDF, PS) and the Greens are in favor of the European Union with its existing structures. These pro-European groups support increased co-operation on issues such as defense, internal affairs, monetary and fiscal policies and alike. The majority within the political spectrum can thus be conceived as supporting the federalist vision of Europe, with tighter co-operation and deeper integration. There exists however many internal divisions in both the centre-right and left-wing parties with regard to the vision of Europe, which constantly lead to heated inner party discussions. The French right, in almost all of its colors, is cautious in matters of the transfer of sovereign rights; again a wide degree of diversity in attitudes exists, varying both in the right of the political spectrum and within the right-wing political groups. The sovereignists, both those that are positioned in Philippe de Villier’s MPF, and those that are in the ranks of

¹¹ In fact, as Lequesne (2006) correctly notes, French governments of both the right and left of the spectrum have successively rejected all the institutional reform scenarios that may involve further federalism since 1994. The incapacity of French rulers to accept reform scenarios proposed by the leading French and German personalities such as the Schauble-Lamers Project, Delors’ proposition of *Jédération d’Etats Nations*, and Fischer’s proposition of ‘*centre de gravité*’ has triggered deep disenchantment amongst the French pro-Europeans (p. 33).

UMP as well as “neo-Gaullists”, are the most attentive components in these matters. By all accounts, François Bayrou’s Union for French Democracy (UDF) is the most pro-European party in French politics.

The election of Nicolas Sarkozy, a pro-European right wing leader, as the new French President, surely represents a continuation of the traditional pro-European stance of French presidents. When it comes to Turkey’s adhesion to the EU, however, Sarkozy’s election clearly represents a break in the official presidential discourse of France, which has never been particularly hostile to Turkey’s EU candidacy. The succession of Jacques Chirac who declared once “We are all children of Byzantium”¹² by Nicolas Sarkozy, who contradicted him simply by stating that “If Turkey were European, we would know it.”¹³ reflects how structural the rupture in the French presidential discourse is.

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¹² Chirac, November 14, 2004.

¹³ Sarkozy, *France 2*, December 18, 2004.

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