

SARKOZY, FRANCE, AND NATO

WILL SARKOZY'S RAPPROCHEMENT TO NATO BE SUSTAINABLE?

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I. Introduction

Sarko 'the American'?

When the former French President, Chirac, left office in May 2007, some people in the White House and on Capitol Hill might have breathed private sighs of relief. Chirac had become one of the main obstacles for the normalization of Franco-American relationship, even if this was not openly admitted. Expectations were high. Had not the incoming French president, Sarkozy, the nickname 'Sarko l'Américain'? A nickname, as Sarkozy himself wrote in his book *'Témoignage'* (Testimony), that "was meant to kill (me)".(1) In the same book Sarkozy expressed his great admiration for the US. "I appreciate," he wrote, "the social mobility of American society. One can start from scratch and have an extraordinary success. (...) Merit is rewarded".(2) He also wrote: "I want to develop especially our relationship with the US. Our situation is special. Here is a country that a part of our elites publicly declares to detest, or, at least, regularly criticizes in a way that makes a caricature of it. This is a bit strange, because it concerns a nation with which we have never been at war, which is not often the case, which has come to help us, defend us, liberate us two times in our recent history; with which we share a system of democratic values that are extremely close; a nation of which our children dream to learn the way of life and to

share the passions. In addition, we are speaking of the first economic, monetary and military power of the world. We are sailing the same ocean. It is not necessary to be a great strategist to understand that it is in our interest to have the best possible relationship with this country.”(3)

Expectations for improved Franco-American relationships were high at both sides of the Atlantic. The question, however, is if Sarkozy’s admiration for the dynamism of the US (which fits well with his own dynamic character) will result in a real and enduring change in French foreign policy vis-à-vis the United States.

II. Paris – Washington: Starting with a Blank Slate?

Right from the start of his Presidency it was clear that Sarkozy was eager to normalize Franco-American relationships. Very unusual for a French President, he spent his first summer holidays in the US and used this opportunity to visit President Bush in Kennebunkport. However, an improved personal relationship between the leaders of the two countries is not enough. For many observers the litmus proof of Sarkozy’s transatlantic engagement will be if he keeps his promise to reintegrate France into the military organisation of NATO, which France left by a decision of De Gaulle in 1966. Such a rapprochement of France to NATO is not new. His predecessor, Jacques Chirac, made a similar proposal to reintegrate France at the beginning of his Presidency (4), on the condition that a European (read: French) officer would head NATO’s Mediterranean South Command, a proposal which was promptly refused by the US. The question, therefore is, if the time was not ripe for a French return into NATO in 1995, is it the right time today? To answer this question we should look at three important developments that took place since 1995, which have had a deep impact on the way of thinking of the French political and military establishment:

1. A new French assessment of the emerging *multipolar* world
2. A sense of *powerlessness* of France, which – curiously – was matched by a different sense of powerlessness of the US
3. The gradual transformation of a transatlantic NATO into a ‘*Global NATO*’

A Multipolar World: How Chirac's Dream Became Sarkozy's Nightmare

In the beginning of the 1990s, after the demise of the Soviet Union and the victory of the allied forces in Iraq in the (First) Gulf War, it became *bon ton* to speak of a unique 'unipolar moment' in modern history. The United States had become the uncontested global power, which was equalled by no country in the world. The bipolar system of the Cold War had been replaced by a unipolar system, which was considered to give the US a unique chance to influence the new emerging world order. Not everybody in the West, however, saw this as a positive development. The French, especially, were suspicious. It was the French Foreign Minister, Hubert Védrine, who coined the word 'hyperpower' (hyperpuissance) for this new kind of super-superpower.(5) The word was, maybe, meant to be neutral, but it got nevertheless a negative connotation.

President Chirac openly attacked the unipolar world. (6) He heralded the coming of a new, multipolar world order of which he considered France to be one of the instigators. His opposition in 2003 in the Security Council against the War in Iraq – together with Russia and China – was seen by him as a decisive moment in the formation of a multipolar world. At that time I wrote: "The question is, however, if Chirac's obsession with multipolarity will not cause a lot of damage: first to the transatlantic relationship, second to the EU, which is deeply divided as a result of his approach, and finally to France itself. Chirac's view of the virtues of a multipolar world might be a little bit too rosy. Maybe he has in mind the mutually balanced 'concert of nations' of nineteenth century Europe. But that period was a short exception in Europe's long, bloody, multipolar history. As Pangloss in Voltaire's "Candide", who discovers that the real world is not 'the best of all worlds', Chirac (or at least future French Presidents) might find out that a multipolar world is not 'the best of all worlds', but an utterly dangerous place."(7).

The last sentence now sounds almost prophetic. In an important speech on foreign affairs to a conference of French ambassadors on 27 August 2007 in the Elysée Palace (8), President Sarkozy signalled that "since 1990 the bipolar confrontation has disappeared." In itself this should be a source of satisfaction. But is it? Sarkozy skipped in his speech the unipolar moment, obviously assuming that this moment has already passed and went on to speak about a "...reality which is not less

worrying: the world has become multipolar, but that multipolarity, which could announce a new concert of the great powers, drifts towards a clash of power politics.”(9) Chirac’s multipolar Garden of Eden is ‘worrying’ for his successor. And it is not only the US that is accused by Sarkozy of a unilateral use of power, but also two of Chirac’s former allies in his quest for a multipolar world: Russia and China. “Russia”, according to Sarkozy, “imposes its return on the world stage by playing with a certain brutality (“avec une certaine brutalité”) its trump cards, especially oil and gas.” He adds: “When one is a great power, one has to abstain from brutality.” On China he wrote: “...(it) transforms its insatiable search for raw materials in a strategy of control, especially in Africa.”(10)

Sarkozy’s view of the emerging multipolar world is a far cry from Chirac’s rosy dream world. It is not the best of all worlds, but a deeply dangerous place. This is not only because the top players in the new world order are less kind and more rude than expected, but also because middle sized countries, such as Iran (or North-Korea), by acquiring nuclear weapons, could quickly become destabilizing factors. Sarkozy’s pessimistic view impacts the way the new French government assesses NATO. For President Chirac NATO had become the toolbox of an arrogant American ‘hyperpower’ which needed to be ‘counterbalanced’. For Sarkozy NATO is the common security organisation of Europe, Canada and America, which – as democracies – have a common interest in defending Western values and should try to shape an orderly organized multipolar world.

The Different French and US Experiences of Powerlessness:

French Ante-Bellum *Ohnmacht* Versus American Post-Bellum *Ohnmacht*

There is another experience that has brought not only France, but also the US to reassess the utility of NATO. This is an experience of relative powerlessness. This powerlessness, however, was different in origin and was felt at different moments. The French experienced this powerlessness *before* an armed conflict, the US *after* a successful military intervention. It is interesting that the experiences of powerlessness of both countries, although different in origin and character, bring them to the same conclusion.

French Ante-Bellum Ohnmacht

When in the 1990s ethnic wars started in the former Yugoslavia, the member states of the European Union were forced to stand passively by. Powerless they had to watch a diabolic tit-for-tat of ethnic cleansing and mass murder taking place on their own continent, without being able to intervene and stop the bloodshed. For the French, especially, the apostles of an autonomous European defence, it was a humiliating experience that an intervention in the Balkans became only possible after the US – reluctantly – had decided to step in. These conflicts showed the relative unpreparedness of the French army - at that time still mostly a conscript army - to deploy and maintain troops on short notice even in nearby European theatres.

After the War in Kosovo there was a *prise de conscience* in Paris not only of the quantitative, but also of the enormous *qualitative* gap between American and French war-fighting capabilities. The French had to admit also that they – unlike the British – had been too late in professionalizing their army.(11) Even more so, being outside the military integrated structure of NATO, they had deprived themselves of the opportunity of making their army interoperable with that of the US and their main European allies. The self-isolation of France in the Atlantic Alliance since 1966 may have brought some political and commercial advantages in third countries, but from a military point of view it was a purely negative factor. The French experience of *ante-bellum Ohnmacht*, the relative powerlessness to intervene and to project its military power in crisis situations and to work smoothly together with the US and its European allies, was rather frustrating and made alarm bells ring. This experience was a second factor that led to a re-evaluation of NATO's integrated military structure and a renewed interest of France to be part of it.(12)

US Post-Bellum Ohnmacht

The US case was quite different from the French, but it had - strangely enough - similar consequences. For the US the War of Kosovo was a turning point. The intervention was a NATO-led war, which the US fought together with its allies. It was for the Americans a highly frustrating experience. Firstly, the necessity to find a consensus not only before, but also during the campaign, rendered it difficult to fight

the war, because there was a premium on being able to make quick decisions. Secondly, the US was frustrated because of the political limitations set by some of its allies, especially the French.⁽¹³⁾ Thirdly, the war showed the huge technological gap between the US army and the armies of its allies, which made the interoperability extremely difficult.

The Kosovo war was for the US a war conducted by Gulliver, who was helped, and even more often hindered, by little dwarfs. The big lesson the US learned from the Kosovo experience was, therefore, that on a future occasion it would 'go it alone'. And that was what the US did after 9/11. After the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon the NATO allies immediately and for the first time in NATO's history invoked Article V, offering their military assistance. The US thanked them for their friendly gesture, but then decided to fight the war in Afghanistan alone – with only minor roles for the UK and the Northern Alliance, a local ally. Afghanistan may be considered as the beginning of the 'unipolar moment', which reached its apex one year later, in 2003, with the attack on Iraq. Here again the US decided to go it alone – equally with minor roles for the UK and a local ally: in this case the Kurdish Peshmerga.

The US 'hyperpower' quite easily defeated the armies of the Taliban and Saddam Hussein. Problems arose, however, *after* the wars were won. In Afghanistan and in Iraq the US was confronted with terrorism, criminal attacks, urban guerrilla warfare, and waves of tribal and ethnic violence. At the end of 2007, almost six years after the intervention in Afghanistan started and almost five years after the invasion of Iraq began, the situation in both countries was still far from stabilised. Political analysts spoke about 'quagmires', where – in order to avoid an outright defeat - a permanent military involvement of the US for the next ten to twenty years might be necessary.⁽¹⁴⁾ Confronted with its relative powerlessness after the military victories, its *post-bellum Ohnmacht*, the US quickly rediscovered the utility of its allies, not only for peacekeeping and reconstruction purposes, but also for combat tasks.

The interesting outcome, therefore, from both French ante-bellum Ohnmacht and US post-bellum Ohnmacht, is that through these experiences of relative powerlessness *both* countries have rediscovered NATO as an important and useful instrument of

their security policy. The US is moving from its haughty ‘tool-box’ approach it developed after Kosovo. The French are giving up their self chosen isolationism which made its army lag behind the US and the UK.

Both countries are thus converging in their renewed interest in NATO. The question, however, is: converging to *what kind* of NATO?

What Kind of NATO?

French ‘NATO Nostra’ Versus US ‘Global NATO’

Both the US and France rediscovered the utility of NATO for their national purposes, but what kind of NATO? That is, indeed, the big question. And in answering this question we will see that the newly won convergence of both countries immediately starts to diverge.

Let us begin with Sarkozy’s view of NATO. This view contains four components:

- a. NATO is *our* NATO
- b. Therefore Europeans should have more influence than currently is the case
- c. NATO is and should remain a *transatlantic* organization, that primarily deals with the security interests of Europe
- d. NATO should remain a *defence* organization and should, therefore, not take on new roles and tasks

NATO Nostra

‘*NATO Nostra*’: ‘NATO is Ours’. That could be the new adagium of President Sarkozy. For him NATO is not longer something ‘alien’, ‘Anglo-Saxon’, or ‘American’ as it was for his predecessors. On the contrary. “That Atlantic Alliance”, he told his ambassadors in August 2007, “do we have to remind you, is ours: we have founded it, we are today one of the principal contributors to it. Of 26 members, 21 are members of the European Union.”(15) It is interesting how Sarkozy used the word ‘ours’ here in two different ways: in the first sentence it refers to France and in the second sentence to the EU. For him both meanings are interchangeable. The message

is clear. France should re-appropriate its *own* organisation. Reintegrating France into the military organisation of NATO is not a humiliating walk to Canossa, but it is, on the contrary, a glorious *coming home*. This is, of course, only true if such a return does not imply an acceptance of the existing status quo in which the US is the unchallenged leader of this organization, which is able to unilaterally set the agenda.

Changing NATO's Internal Power Structure: A French Deputy SACEUR?

Therefore Sarkozy's second point is that NATO has to change. From its start in 1949 NATO has formally the structure of an organisation of equal, autonomous members, but the informal structure was quite different. Its informal structure was that of a *cobweb* with in the middle the US as a big spider that had bilateral contacts with the individual allies, located at the different ends of the web. Between these allies there was no organised contact and even if this would exist it would not help, because they often disagreed on policies and preferred therefore to create and maintain a special relationship with the superpower in the middle. In 1962 President Kennedy already promised to change this informal structure. In this year, celebrated as 'the Year of Europe', he pleaded for a Two Pillar NATO - a more equilibrated structure with a North American Pillar and a European Pillar. Kennedy was assassinated one year later and his successors in the White House, dragged in the Vietnam War, had other preoccupations than building a two-pillar NATO. The idea, however, regularly surfaced again at the European side of the Atlantic – if not as an outright two-pillar NATO, then in the disguise of a 'transatlantic security dialogue' between the US and the EU, as was, for instance, proposed by the German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder in February 2005.

President Sarkozy, however, seems in the short run to be less interested to set up a European pillar in NATO, as to directly strengthen the national, *French* position in NATO. In a report of the French Senate on the evolution of NATO of 19 July 2007 there was a first hint of what the new French government was aiming at. In order "to re-equilibrate the Atlantic Alliance in favour of the Europeans" the authors wrote, one should think of "the possibility 'to europeanize' the function of Deputy SACEUR, actually given to a Brit, attributing it alternately to different European countries." (16) One could question the use here of the word to 'europeanize', because the function, in

a certain sense, has already been 'europeanized'. Since 1978, when General Gerd Schmueckle became the first German Deputy SACEUR, the command has rotated between Britain and Germany. When the defence committee of the French Senate proposed to attribute the function 'alternately to different European countries', this should not be read that France is prepared to accept a Lithuanian, Danish or Czech Deputy SACEUR. French intentions became clearer in October 2007, when Laurent Zecchini wrote in *Le Monde*: "One suspects that Paris will claim the function of Deputy SACEUR, but no official demand has yet been made. NATO diplomats think that the French initiative is, at this stage, a kind of trial balloon to test the reactions in the Atlantic Alliance, as well as at home."(17) In fact, French designs have not changed much since the beginning of the 1960s, when De Gaulle proposed a Franco-British-American triumvirate in NATO. The only significant change is that the leading group it wants to join now includes a fourth member, namely Germany.

NATO's main purpose should remain the security of Europe

The third component of the French vision is that NATO's main purpose should remain what always has been its *raison d'être*: the security of Europe (and North-America). This does not mean that France is opposed to 'out of area' operations, conducted outside the territory of the Atlantic Alliance, but these interventions outside NATO territory should be directly or indirectly relevant for the security interests of Europe, in areas such as combating terrorist threats or safeguarding energy supply lines. This position has also an impact on the membership structure and eventual partnerships of NATO. According to the French vision, NATO should restrict its membership to the existing North American and European allies. After the recent enlargements of NATO, France is reluctant to take in new countries, such as Georgia and Ukraine, which have, again according to the French, no vocation to become members of the European Union. NATO membership in Europe should coincide as much as possible with EU membership, in order to use NATO as an instrument for the European Security and Defence Policy.(18) For the same reason France is very critical of transforming the existing relationships with the so-called 'contact countries': Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South-Korea, into fully-fledged partnerships. It would radically change the character and scope of NATO and prepare the ground for the 'global NATO' the French do not want.(19)

NATO should remain a military organisation

Last but not least: in the French view NATO should concentrate itself “on its most traditional calling, which is essentially military.”(20) The fact that NATO has taken on more and more ‘soft power’ roles is regarded by France as undermining the essence of NATO which was created as an organisation of collective defence. The French vision is that crisis management is more a role for the the UN *and* for the EU, which is better equipped for quick and short ‘Petersberg’ interventions. It is regarded as ironic that the only two times that the newly founded NATO Response Force came into action was for purely civil actions: in September 2005 after hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana, and in October 2005 after an earthquake ravaged Pakistan.

France is sceptical about the new ‘global approach’ - a mix of civil and military operations - that is on the American agenda since NATO established its ‘Provincial Reconstruction Teams’ in Afghanistan which combine providing military security with civil reconstruction and institution building. In April 2004, Hans Binnendijk, a director at the US National Defense University, wrote: “What Iraq shows us is that NATO must supplement its combat troops with forces that can begin stabilization. This means civil affairs, medical, engineering and intelligence units that can pave the way for civilian nation-building.”(21) Binnendijk acknowledged that “European militaries have many of the building blocks for these forces. The Germans and Italians are developing units that specialize in stabilization and reconstruction missions (...).” He regretted that “unfortunately, NATO is not organized to take full advantage of the experience and training of these national militaries.” He suggested a possible solution based on a stabilization and reconstruction force: “This would not be a clone of the NATO Response Force. That force is relatively small, ready to deploy quickly and prepared to encounter heavy resistance.” The stabilization and reconstruction force could be “larger, take longer to deploy and could follow in the footsteps of the NATO Response Force.”(22)

Conflicting French and US Visions of NATO

If we compare the French vision of NATO with that of the US administration (the Bush administration – but equally an eventual future Democrat administration), then

the differences immediately catch the eye. In many aspects the US strategy is the *opposite* of the strategy proposed by France. The US certainly acknowledges that the security of Europe was the original *raison d'être* of the alliance – and even that it will remain one of its anchor points. However, after the disintegration of the Soviet empire and the enlargement of the EU the security of the European continent has become a less urgent concern for the US – on the condition that an enduring pacification of the former Yugoslavia takes place. US concerns have increasingly shifted to other parts of the globe: to hidden and omnipresent Al Qaida networks, to Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, the shimmering Middle East conflict, Lebanon, Pakistan, North Korea and, last but not least: to a militarily more assertive China. This new world order is – contrary to the vision of George Bush Senior - not a place of peace, prosperity and democracy, but a potential dangerous theatre, full of emerging conflicts. In this context it was quite logical for the US to broaden the scope of the Atlantic Alliance. Not ideology, but hard historical facts have already pushed NATO 'out of area': first in the former Yugoslavia, and later in Afghanistan.

The US wants to go further on this road and make NATO into a *global* security organisation. It expects its European allies to follow its lead. Three main reasons can be put forward to understand the American view.

Firstly, due to perceived common *interests* among the members of NATO. In a globalised world the security of Europe cannot be decoupled from the security in the rest of the world. The US and Europe have a common interest to combat international terrorism and destroy its safe havens, which are mostly in failed states. The US and Europe equally have a common interest to halt the proliferation of nuclear weapons and to build countervailing powers if certain regional powers become too dominant vis-à-vis their neighbours (as, for instance, Russia versus the Baltic states, Georgia and Ukraine; China versus Taiwan).

Secondly, because of common *values*. Despite some shameful incidents and policies, (such as 'Guantanamo' and 'Abu Ghraib') , the US considers itself – together with Europe – as the world's main supporter of the rule of law, democracy and human rights. In a world with instantly available, real time information, where the US and its allies have the possibility to intervene on short notice, it is no longer possible to

passively stand aside when massacres and genocides take place that could be prevented, or stopped at no great risk.

Thirdly, because of an appeal to the need for transatlantic *solidarity*. After World War II the US has offered the Europeans a military shield against the Soviet threat. Western Europe has mainly behaved as a *consumer* of security, based on the provision of a public good by the US. The US thinks it is time that Europe gives up its consumer attitude and becomes a fully-fledged co-provider and producer of security (for instance by spending at least 2 percent of its GDP on defence) to share the burden.(23)

III. Two Remaining ‘Wild Cards’: French Public Opinion and Turkey

Apart from the above mentioned problems, caused by opposing French and US strategic visions on the future of NATO, the French return into the military integrated structure of NATO could also be jeopardized by two other factors of which one is *internal* and an other *external*.

1. The *internal* factor is opposition from French public opinion and a part of the French political elite.
2. The *external* factor is relationships with Turkey.

A Growing French NATO Lobby Versus an Anti-American Public Opinion

Voices in favour of a return of France into the military integrated organization of NATO have become louder in recent years. Among these voices are first those of the French military, frustrated by the fact that the French self-isolation within NATO was hampering the modernisation and interoperability of the French army with the armies of its allies. A second lobby is the industrial lobby that hopes that French armaments sales will be boosted after a return of France in the military organization. Last but not least, there is a political lobby, not only in Sarkozy’s UMP, but also in the opposition Socialist Party, that considers that France has a lot to gain by giving up its special position in the Atlantic Alliance.

Although the pro-NATO lobby has been rapidly growing in recent years, there remain some big hurdles for Sarkozy. One of these is French *public opinion*. In an opinion poll for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, conducted in July 2007 – two months after Sarkozy came in power – the percentage of respondents who thought that France played a positive international role was 87 percent. Germany was a good second with 82 percent. The US, however, got only 38 percent and ended almost *ex aequo* with China (34 percent), a country that is not really a model of democracy and respect of human rights.(24)

In an other opinion poll, published in September 2007 by the German Marshall Fund of the United States, one of the questions read: “Should the EU address international threats independently or in partnership with the United States?” While 40 percent of the Germans and 43 percent of the British respondents opted for a independent European position, the percentage of the French that agreed was, with 58 percent, considerably higher.(25)

We should not underestimate the force of French public opinion, of which anti-americanism is a constant feature. According to the French historian Philippe Roger there are deep seated reasons for French attitudes towards the US: “French anti-americanism is not a short-term value. It is anchored in history, and very little dependent on conjuncture. (...) It does not date back to the War in Vietnam, as one often assumes, nor to the Cold War, nor even to the 1930s when it reached a high point. Already at the end of the nineteenth century all the ingredients are united.” (26) These ingredients are that anti-americanism is ‘consensual’, and is not based on ‘left, nor right’. It is based on a broad, bipartisan undercurrent of latent and manifest anti-americanism in French public opinion, which could easily be stirred up by the – still - substantial part of the French political elite that clings to France’s special position in the Alliance.

These hard-core paleo-Gaullists cannot only be found in Sarkozy’s Gaullist UMP, but equally in the Socialist Party and in the smaller parties on the right and on the left. We should not forget that the socialist President Mitterrand was, in his foreign and defence policy, more Gaullist than the centrist Giscard d’Estaing, and, maybe, even more than Chirac.(27) One of these ‘socialist Gaullists’ is Hubert Védrine, a former

foreign policy adviser of President Mitterrand, who was a Minister of Foreign Affairs in the government of Lionel Jospin. Curiously enough, shortly after his inauguration Sarkozy invited Védérine to write a report on France and globalization. In his report, published on 5 September 2007,(28) Hubert Védérine launched a frontal attack on *la tentation 'occidentaliste'*. This 'Western temptation' (a virus, of which - tacitly - he might think Sarkozy to be infected) led in his eyes to a vision in which the common values between the US and Europe were overemphasized.

“According to its logic,” wrote Védérine in his report, “this school – strongly developed in the UMP and in the industrial and defence world, present in the PS, significant in the media - thinks that the particular position of France in NATO is a ‘problem’. Until now the four first successors of general De Gaulle have maintained the essence of the decision that he was forced to take in 1966 after eight years of unsuccessful negotiations with the United States: to liberate France from each *automatic* military engagement, while staying, of course, in the Alliance. Even if this question was not the subject of public debates during the electoral campaign, nor after the election of President Sarkozy, the temptation of a return in NATO certainly exists.”(29)

Hubert Védérine has clearly not much sympathy for this position and he doubts the argument that it would reinforce France’s position vis-à-vis the US. “That would give France,” he wrote, “an influence on the United States, comparable with that of the other allies, that is to say almost non-existent.”(30) These remarks of Védérine are a sign on the wall: not only at the right side of the political spectre, but also at the left side there are still many opposed to Sarkozy’s U-turn in the French security policy. This paleo-Gaullist elite is only waiting for the first cracks to appear in the newly found Franco-American friendship to stir up a public opinion that has never lost its latent anti-American undercurrent. (31)

Turkey

There is still another, second wild card for Sarkozy that could spoil his policy of rapprochement to NATO and that is Turkey. In the presidential campaign Sarkozy has taken position against Turkish membership of the EU and proposed instead that

Turkey become a member of some nebulous ‘Mediterranean Union’. It was not clear if this anti-Turkish stance was based on a deep conviction or on tactical calculations, meant to attract the vote of the electorate of the extreme right Front National, a vote he needed to become president. The last interpretation may be supported because he did not mention Turkey once in his campaign book ‘Testimony’. However, in his speech to the French ambassadors he explicitly stated that there are two possible visions on the future relationship with Turkey: membership or a ‘as close as possible association’. He continued: “I am not going to be a hypocrite. Everybody knows that that I am only in favour of an association. That is the idea which I have defended during the whole election campaign. That is the idea which I defend since years.”(32) So Sarkozy may have deep felt convictions on the issue. Opposition to EU membership of Turkey cannot only be found in the Front National, it is also the official line of Sarkozy’s UMP and can equally be found in the centrist parties UDF and MoDem. As there are relatively few Turkish immigrants in France compared with Germany or the Benelux, Turkey is the ideal *Priegelknabe* on which anti-Islam feelings can be projected without provoking a reaction of the local immigrant population, which is mostly of Algerian and Moroccan origin.

The problem, however, is that when Sarkozy goes too far in his Turkey-bashing, that this will undermine his strategy of rapprochement to NATO. Turkey is not only a candidate EU member state, but also a longstanding and important member of NATO (it has, after the US, the second biggest land army of the Alliance). As a NATO member it has a substantial influence on decisions of the Alliance. EU-led missions that would make use of NATO assets according to the Berlin Plus agreement would, for instance, need case by case approval of the North Atlantic Council. This would Turkey give a possibility to use its veto right. This does not mean that Turkey could block the return of France into the military integrated structure of NATO, but it could veto a proposal to appoint a French Deputy SACEUR, which is the prize Sarkozy needs in order to make his NATO U-turn acceptable to French public opinion.

The ‘Reflection Group’

In order to prevent the Turkish question becoming a serious obstacle to plans to reintegrate France into the military organisation of NATO and to ‘europeanize’

NATO, Sarkozy proposed during the December 2007 EU Summit in Brussels to install a 'Reflection Group'. This committee of 12 carefully selected persons, chaired by former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez, will prepare a report on the shape and function of the European Union in the years 2020-2030. This committee will present its report in 2010. This means that Sarkozy's hands will be free during the French EU Presidency in the second half of 2008. Any upcoming debate in France on Turkish EU membership will be referred by him to the 'work in progress' of this committee. Sarkozy has already indicated that the negotiations with Turkey can continue for thirty of the thirty-five chapters that still have to be opened. These chapters are in his view compatible with association and do not necessarily lead to membership. Given the fact that the other EU member states will appoint a majority of committee members who will not share the French preoccupations, the final report will certainly keep the door open for Turkey, adding some minor caveats to please the French.

Sarkozy is certainly an intelligent tactician, who prepares his 'coups' well in advance. During the French EU Presidency (which will be the last French EU Presidency if the Treaty of Lisbon will be ratified) Sarkozy wants to re-launch the European Security and Defence Policy. A central role will be played by a European Defence White Book for which he hopes the French Defence White Book, that will be ready in June 2008, will be the model. The European Defence White book should be an important boost for the European Security and Defence Policy at the EU Summit of December 2008 – when also the Franco-British European defence initiative of Saint-Malo celebrates its tenth anniversary. By launching this new European defence initiative Sarkozy will seek to silence any criticism inside France when he attempts to reintegrate France into the military structure of NATO at the NATO sixtieth anniversary summit in April 2009. The final prize being a French Deputy SACEUR, secured in September 2009. However, for this prize there is a price to pay, which is the acceptance of the long term strategic goals of the US for the future of the Alliance.

NOTES

1) Nicolas Sarkozy, *Témoignage*, XO Editions, Paris 2006, p.62 (My translation, MHVH).

2) Ibid. (My translation, MHVH).

3) Ibid., pp. 261-262. (My translation, MHVH).

4) Chirac's defence policy was highly volatile. For an analysis of the no less than *six* different, and often contradictory, phases in Chirac's European defence policy, see Marcel H. van Herpen, *Chirac's Gaullism – Why France Has Become the Driving Force Behind an Autonomous European Defence Policy*, http://www.cicerofoundation.org/pdf/vanherpen_chirac_gaullism.pdf

5) Védrine gives the following definition of the word 'hyperpower': "The word 'hyperppower' expresses, according to me, that the American hegemony, to use the word of Brzezinski, manifests itself on all levels: the economy, trade, technology, invention capacity, diplomacy, language, images, information technologies. This multiplicity is not contained in the notion 'superpower', which is too exclusively military, nor in the notion of 'great power' which is too classic." *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 28 May, 1998. Published in Hubert Védrine, *Face à l'hyperpuissance – Textes et Discours 1995 – 2003*, Fayard, Paris, 2003, pp. 117-118 (My translation, MHVH).

6) As soon as 1978 Chirac already attacked the bipolar world order. In his book *La lueur de l'espérance* (The Spark of Hope) he wrote : "The world has nothing to win from the Soviet-American dyarchy. Opposing ourselves to it, we do not only defend our independence and our interests, but also the freedoms and the peace of the world. Among all states France is one of the best placed – if not the best placed – to take the lead of such a resistance (..)". Jacques Chirac, *La lueur de l'espérance*, La Table Ronde, Paris, 1978, p. 226.

7) Cf. Marcel H. van Herpen, *France: Champion of a Multipolar World*, In the National Interest, Vol. 2, Issue 19, May 14, 2003

<http://www.inthenationalinterest.com/Articles/Vol2Issue19/vol2issue19vanherpenpfv>

8) Allocution de M. Nicolas Sarkozy, Président de la République, à l'occasion de la conférence des Ambassadeurs, Paris, 27 August, 2007, p. 13, (My translation, MHVH)

<http://www.elysee.fr/elysee/root/bank/print/79272.htm>

9) *ibid.* p. (My translation, MHVH)

10) *ibid.* p.7. (My translation, MHVH)

11) They did so in 2002. The UK army was fully professionalised in 1963.

12) The technological superiority of the US army certainly was one of the 'pull' factors for Sarkozy to seek closer cooperation with the US. This factor is also stressed by G. John Ikenberry, who in a report for the National Intelligence Council wrote: "To the extent that the United States continues to be at the leading edge of modernization, the other major states will ultimately find reasons to work with and engage the United States." G. John Ikenberry, *Strategic Reasons to American Preeminence: Great Power Politics in the Age of Unipolarity*", National Intelligence Council, 28 July 2003. Text available at http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/cia/nic2020/strategic_reactions.pdf

13) The intervention in Kosovo was the first NATO military operation in which France participated since De Gaulle withdrew from the military integrated command in 1966. More than a hundred French warplanes took part in the bombing. But General Wesley K. Clark needed French permission for a strike in Montenegro. Cf. Kenneth R. Timmerman, *The French Betrayal of America*, Crown Forum, New York, 2004, pp. 216-218.

14) This argument is, for instance, developed by Robert J. Jackson and Philip Towle in the last chapter of their book *Temptations of Power – The United States in Global*

Politics after 9/11, (Palgrave, Macmillan, Basingstoke & New York, 2006), which – tellingly – has been given the title: ‘Creating Quagmires: Winning the Wars, Losing the Peace’.

15) Speech of Nicolas Sarkozy of 27 August 2007 to the Ambassadors, o.c. p. 7. (My translation, MHVH).

16) *Rapport d’Information fait au nom de la commission des Affaires Etrangères, de la défense et des forces armées sur l’évolution de l’OTAN*, Par MM. Jean François-Poncet, Jean-Guy Branger and André Rouvière, senators (French Senate, No. 405, Annex of Protocol of the Session of 19 July, 2007), p. 54.

17) “La France concrétise par quatre propositions sa volonté d’un retour complet dans l’OTAN” (France expresses by four proposals its willingness to completely reintegrate into NATO), *Le Monde*, 10 October 2007.

18) It is interesting to note that NATO membership, until recently, has played an important role as an incubator for EU membership. The new EU member states became NATO members before becoming EU members. With the anti-Turkish stance of President Sarkozy and the debate on the so called overstretched ‘absorption capacity’ of the EU, this role of NATO enlargement seems to have come to a standstill.

19) Some US defence analysts, such as Ivo Daalder and James Goldgeier, even want to enlarge further than only with the four contact countries. “NATO must become larger and more global,” they wrote, “by admitting any democratic state that is willing and able to contribute to the fulfilment of the alliance’s new responsibilities.” These democratic countries would include “Australia, Brazil, Japan, India, New Zealand, South Africa and South Korea”. Ivo Daalder and James Goldgeier, “For Global Security, Expand the Alliance”, in: *International Herald Tribune*, 12 October, 2006. <http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/10/12/opinion/eddaalder.php?page=1>

20) French Senate Report, No. 405, o.c., p. 47.

21) Hans Binnendijk, “Postwar planning : A new, but necessary, job for NATO”, in: *International Herald Tribune*, 9 April 2004.

22) *ibid.*

23) In the US there is great bitterness, and sometimes openly expressed repugnance, at the low key involvement of most of its European allies in Afghanistan.

24) TNS SOFRES, *Observatoire de l'opinion sur la perception de la politique étrangère de la France*, July 2007.

25) The German Marshall Fund of the United States, *Transatlantic Trends Key Findings 2007*, p.15. Curiously enough, in the same survey 55 percent of the French view NATO as essential for their country's security (equal to Germany: 55 percent). But, maybe, this is because no question was asked about the reintegration of France into the military organization of NATO.

26) Cf. Philippe Roger, *L'ennemi américain – Généalogie de l'antiaméricanisme français*, Paris (Seuil), 2002, p. 10. (My translation, MHvH).

27) Cf. Marcel H. van Herpen, *Chirac's Gaullism – Why France Has Become the Driving Force Behind an Autonomous European Defence Policy*, o.c.

28) Hubert Védrine, *Rapport pour le Président de la République sur la France et la Mondialisation*, www.iris.france.org/docs/pdf/rapport-mondialisation-2007.pdf

29) *Ibid.*, p.37 (My translation, MHVH).

30) *Ibid.*, p.38 (My translation, MHVH)

31) A comment on Sarkozy's plans by Yves Boyer, Deputy Director of the Paris-based Foundation for Strategic Research, gives already a taste of the coming debate. Under the heading ‘ France and NATO or the Return to Canossa’, Boyer criticizes this return into an organisation that is in a ‘dynamism of decline’. Our allies,

according to Boyer, “would furtively make jokes on the come-back of an arrogant nation that finally acknowledges that it was wrong and at last understands that it was playing in a category above its means. France will be ‘normalised’. It will not be going to Canossa, but something like it.” Yves Boyer, « La France et l’OTAN ou le retour à Canossa – La défense française n’a rien à gagner à une intégration aux allures de ‘normalisation’ », in : *Le Monde*, 25 September 2007.

32) Speech of Nicolas Sarkozy of 27 August 2007 to the Ambassadors, o.c., pp. 6-7. Also in an article published in *The National Interest* after the presidential elections, Nicolas Sarkozy was rather clear. “Whether Turkey meets the conditions for entry or not,” he wrote, “does not solve the problem. On this matter I have always been clear: I do not think Turkey has a right to join the European Union because it is not European.” Nicolas Sarkozy, “Liberté, Fraternité... Modernité?”, in: *The National Interest*, No. 90, July/August 2007, p.15.

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