

## Intense European Diplomatic Activity in the United States

**Nicolas Sarkozy's first official visit to the United States as President of the Republic could not have escaped you. Issues of discussion were numerous including Iran, global warming, Afghanistan and the Middle East. But above all, the visit served as an occasion for reaffirming the friendship between France and the United States.**

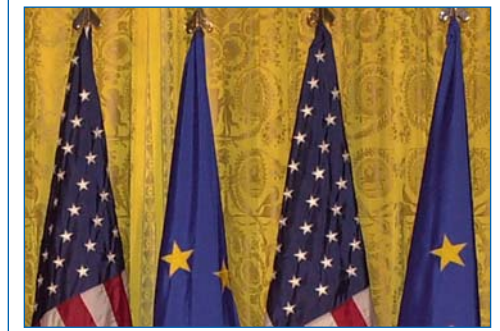
The visit was largely discussed by the French media but less so in the United States. Once again, Franco-American relations were described in terms of passion and seduction ("Operation Seduction", "Falling in Love Again", "Big Love"). The visit was above all a media event, but the form privileged at heart.

In his speech to the American Congress, specially united for the occasion, Nicolas Sarkozy recalled the historic bond between France and the United States, without forgetting to pay homage to the American soldiers that fought for France during World War II. The speech was without surprise and without risk: Congress was quick to give an ovation and shake the hand of the French President, whereas in 1996, a large portion boycotted the speech made by President Chirac. More than an official meeting between two heads of state, Nicolas Sarkozy wanted to give a new spirit to Franco-American relations, the objective being larger than the simple renewal of ties that have been tender since French opposition to the Iraq War. Nicolas Sarkozy wanted to "regain the heart of America". This attempt at regaining the favor of the American people came through a speech aimed at pleasing both the Republicans and the Democrats.

Behind the obvious desire to renew the bond with the United States and to open a new chapter in Franco-American relations, Nicolas Sarkozy succeeded in avoiding taking a position that anyone could reproach. He chose the path of consensus without taking any real risks. Thus, no notable advancements were made. Concerning Iran, the two Presidents agreed that a diplomatic path was necessary- a conflict in Iran would put France in the same dilemma as 2003, a situation little desirable for a new President. Nicolas Sarkozy also promised that France would stay in Afghanistan for as long as necessary, even suggesting the possibility of military reinforcements. Concerning NATO, President Sarkozy called for the possible re-evaluation of French relations with the organization in exchange for the reinforcement of the European pillar of the Alliance. Chirac's attempt failed in 1995. The few points of divergence concerned Turkey, whose admittance to the EU the US had supported, while the French President stayed reserved on this question and the weakness of the dollar. In a nod to the Democrats, Sarkozy asked the United States to head up the fight against global warming.

These topics were already on the agenda during the time of Chirac, and the French position has changed little since then. Where a rupture seemed to have been repaired, is there still a continuity of French foreign politics, faithful to its mantra, "allied, but not aligned"? Even if there is little change in the disagreements between France and the United States, the tone is radically different. Nicolas Sarkozy knew how to find the words and the tone that pleased Americans. Will that suffice in confronting future international issues?

In the presence of the American president, Nicolas Sarkozy preferred to evoke mythical figures of American culture such as Elvis Presley, Duke Ellington, and Marilyn Monroe, but made no allusion to the situation in Iraq or Guantanamo, making the event one for the media instead of an advance in transatlantic relations.



### FRENCH-US RELATIONS THROUGH INTERNATIONAL CRISIS :

**1966** : In the middle of the Cold War, General de Gaulle decides to remove France from the Integrated NATO Command on May 7, effectively instigating the removal of all foreign military equipment from French territory (including American military bases in France).

**1983** : At the time of the Euro Missile Crisis, President Francois Mitterrand gives his support to the installation of Pershing 2 missiles in Germany as a counterweight to those of the Soviet Union.

**1990-1991** : During the Gulf War, French and American military forces work together.

**1998-1999** : The international community reacts to the Balkan crisis by creating a "contact group" to which both France and the United States belong

**2001** : Following the September 11 attacks in New York, the United States declares war against terrorism and Jacques Chirac gives his support to the US

**But since 2002**, French diplomacy opposes more and more the desire for military action in Iraq on the part of the US government

**2003** : Tensions grow between France and the US when France openly opposes war in Iraq in the United Nations (even if elsewhere, France continues to cooperate with Americans in Afghanistan).

**2005** : The two countries join together for the Lebanese problem: together, they call together for the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon.

**2006** : During the conflict between Israel and Lebanon, France and the United States make a joint effort for the implementation of a cease-fire (resolution 1701 of the United Nations).

**2006-2007** : France and the United Nations cooperate in the United Nations for the resolution of the Iranian nuclear crisis (resolutions for sanctions in Iran).

### COMMERCIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN FRANCE, GERMANY, AND THE UNITED STATES

France was the 8th commercial partner of the United States in 2006 (France was 9th in 2005). In 2006, the total of French exports to the United States reached 34 billion dollars compared with 22.3 billions dollars of imports to France from the United States.

Germany is the 5th commercial partner of the US. German exports to the United States reached 89.1 billion dollars in 2006 and imports from the US were worth 41.3 billion dollars.

Another guest, another ambience. After the reception of the French President, the German chancellor was welcomed to the President's ranch in Crawford, Texas at the end of last week. This visit to the Bush family ranch constitutes a true diplomatic recognition for which few international actors have had the privilege. The mood and the setting were very different: the atmosphere was more convivial and simpler as Angela Merkel prefers discretion when advancing different agendas. The order of the day was little changed: Iran, North Africa, East Asia, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo were discussed in great detail by the American President and the German Chancellor. As with Nicolas Sarkozy, Iran was at the heart of discussion, as President Bush looks for support in opposing the nuclear ambitions of Tehran. Angela Merkel and George W. Bush both agreed that diplomacy remained the best way of overcoming the impasse with Iran. In the case of failure on a diplomatic level, Angela Merkel agreed to a third series of sanctions, but was stricter than the French President about working within the framework of the United Nations. The visit was the occasion for American and German leaders to discuss questions in depth, discreetly and privately, and surely more effectively.

**By Charlotte LEPRI**  
Research Fellow, IRIS

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