

# National Images in French Discourses on Europe

by Mette Zølner, Ph.D, Assistant Professor

*Presented in the panel 'Identities and Discourse'*

*at the ECSA Sixth Biennial International Conference in Pittsburgh, 2-5 June 1999*

May 1999, First Draft - Comments are more than welcome!

Author's address:

Department of Intercultural Communication and Management

Copenhagen Business School

Dalgas Have 15, DK-2000 Frederiksberg

tel: + 45 38 13 31 41 - fax: + 45 38 15 38 40

e-mail: mz.ikl@cbs.dk

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## Abstract:

On the basis of the reading of French political debates in Spring 1999 (ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty and the European election), this paper presents the first outcomes of an analysis that illustrates how existing national myths shape political discourses on Europe in France. Striving at reaching beyond a simple opposition between Euro-sceptics and pro-Europeans the paper argues that underneath the predominant and apparently consensual pro-European discourse one can observe differing conceptions of the nation and the Republic which cross-cut the traditional Left-Right cleavage. To understand these differences one needs to take into account traditional French myths of the nation as well as of the Republic.

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## References

## 1. Introduction

In 1992, the Maastricht referendum illustrated clearly that Pro-European and Eurosceptical attitudes did not coincide with the traditional Left-Right cleavage in French politics. On the Right, the Euro-sceptics, Philippe Séguin and Charles Pasqua had founded *Demain la France* in 1991 and, on the Left, Jean-Pierre Chevènement broke with the Socialist Party and founded *Mouvement des Citoyens*. In 1994, the Euro-sceptical tendency was further confirmed by Philippe de Villiers's list *Mouvement des valeurs* which obtained .....% at the European elections. According to Perrineau's interpretation (1996: 58-59), the European elections 1994 indicated that the Left- Right cleavage, based on ideological and socio-economic differences, was about to be replaced by a 'cultural' cleavage reflecting diverging visions of the future, attitudes to the 'other', and of the relationship between state and civil society.

Yet, the recent ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty by a large parliamentary majority seemed to question that this new cultural cleavage had replaced the traditional Left-Right cleavage. The issue now is whether a broad pro-European consensus has been formed. In the opposition, Philippe Séguin had left his Euro-scepticism behind and entered the European camp as president for the RPR (*Rassemblement pour la République*)<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, within the governmental majority, one finds the anti-Maastricht parties, PCF (*Parti communiste Français*) and MDC (*Mouvement des citoyens*), which voted against the Amsterdam Treaty despite their government participation, although strong criticism was left aside in order not to make the *majorité plurielle* fall apart. Moreover, at the occasion of the European elections June 1999, MDC joined the list headed by the socialist François Hollande, and on which one likewise observed more federal views represented by the PRG (*Parti radicaux de gauche*). The PCF constituted its own list, headed by Robert Hue, who nevertheless held a 'Euro-constructive' discourse. Charles Pasqua did not succeed in constituting a list gathering the Anti-Amsterdam candidates from the Right (*gaullist*) and the Left (MDC), and bad polls encouraged him to join forces with another Euro-sceptic from the Right, Philippe de Villiers (*Rassemblement pour la France et l'indépendance de l'Europe*). In other words, a broad European consensus seems to dominate French politics leaving the Euro-scepticism of the

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<sup>1</sup> His departure in the middle of the European electoral campaign was not directly caused by divergence on European politics.

nineteen-nineties to Pasqua and de Villiers and to the political extremes, such as the National Front parties (*Identité Française and Mouvement National*) or the Trotkist parties (LO and LCR). Yet, even these parties did not present Anti-European attitudes as such, but rather nationalist and anti-capitalist views of the Europe to be constructed. This raises the question whether the cultural cleavage which came to the fore in 1992, has lost its explanatory power and the ideological cleavage - Right and Left - is back in.

The argument of this paper is twofold. Firstly, that the pre-dominant, consensual pro-European discourse is strongly intertwined with national mythology of *French Grandeur* and anti-Americanism. In other words, it is a discourse characterised, on the one hand, by a missionary image of France dating back to the French Revolution and, on the other, by the Gaullist idea of France from the post-war period. Secondly, the paper argues that despite the apparent consensus on a positive European line one can observe very different conceptions of the French Republic as well as of European integration which cross-cut the Left-Right cleavage. My argument will be that to understand these cleavages one needs to take into account traditional French myths of the nation as well as two different conceptions of the Republic, which through history have been termed: *jacobins vs. girondins, anciens vs. moderns, républicains vs. démocrates* and recently, *libéral-libertaire vs. bolcho-bonapartistes*.

In the first part the paper will map out the political context positioning the political parties with regard to the Amsterdam Treaty and the electoral campaign. This part will analyse the concept of sovereignty in the parliamentary debates on the ratification of the Treaty and the electoral strategies as well as their respective failure and success on the European agenda which was particularly loaded with the retreat of the European Commission, Agenda 2000 and, most importantly, the Nato-action in the former Yugoslavia which illustrated divisions underneath the apparent consensual discourse<sup>2</sup>. This part will illustrate that the Right-Left cleavage is cross-cut by three discourses on Europe: *souverainiste*, National-European, and Federalist. In the second part, the paper will analyse how the national image presented by these discourses relates to French national mythology. That is Republican nationalism and Counter-nationalism, General de Gaulle's French *Grandeur* and anti-Americanism of the

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<sup>2</sup> The paper will be based on political debates on Europe which in Spring 1999 furthered respectively consensus and division in the Right and Left political camps: parliamentary debates on the ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty and the campaign for the European elections June 1999. Sources are the home-pages of the National Assembly, the

post-war years respectively. Finally, the paper will argue that from underneath a predominant consensus on Europe, divisions emerge reflecting French national mythology.

## 2. Three discourses on Europe: *Souverainiste*, National-Europeans and Federalists

### 2.1 Parliamentary Debates on the Amsterdam Treaty: Sovereignty or shared Sovereignty

In March 1999, the National Assembly and the Senate adopted, not surprisingly, the ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty by a large majority (Senate 271 for and 42 against; National Assembly 447 for and 75 against). When reading the debates one observes that everybody, even the speakers who urged to vote against the Amsterdam Treaty, declared to be European<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, one RPR deputy did even explain his no-vote by the argument that since the Amsterdam Treaty constituted a lack of respect for national identity a ratification of the Treaty could be fatal for the European integration as a whole<sup>4</sup>. Also Le Pen's National Front, declared to be a *fervent défenseur de l'Europe* (20 objectives for Europe, home-page, February 1999). It follows that far from debating in favor or against Europe, deputies and senators discussed the kind of Europe to be constructed. President Chirac set the tone in a message opening the debate in the National Assembly:

“[...] une Europe qui doit être l'expression commune des peuples qui la composent, dans la fidélité à leur identité, à leur langue, à leur culture. Aucun n'accepterait de s'y dissoudre. Chacun à travers elle, veut au contraire exister davantage. [...] Loin d'être incompatible avec l'idée de Nation, l'Europe est le lieu politique et spirituel où cette idée peut respirer et s'enrichir avec le plus de force” (National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

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Senate, the political parties, *Libération*, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, *Le Monde*.

<sup>3</sup>“Certains s'en étonneront encore, je réaffirmerai ici ce que j'ai dit ici même il y a quelques mois : oui les communistes français sont pour l'Europe, sans réticences ni arrière-pensées” (Robert Hue, PCF, Debate in the National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

“La question n'est évidemment pas de savoir si l'on est 'pour' ou 'contre' la construction européenne. J'ai, pour ma part, la conviction que l'Europe est une nécessité” (G. Hermier, Debate in the National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

“La confusion, c'est faire croire que ceux qui refusent cette voie sont des anti-Européens qui veulent isoler la France” (Lionnel Luca, Debate in the National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

“Il n'est pas question de sortir de l'Europe, mais il ne devrait pas être question, non plus, de construire un Europe sans les nations et sans les peuples” (Phillippe de Villiers, *Mouvement pour la France*, Debate in National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

<sup>4</sup>“Le traité va multiplier les cas de décision prise à la majorité qualifiée. Même unies, la France et l'Allemagne pourront être mises en minorité. Des normes pourront leur être imposées contre leur volonté. C'est une faute que de laisser contraindre la France : on pourra le faire une fois ou deux, mais pas davantage, car il se manifesterait un refus de la construction européenne dans son ensemble” (Jacques Myard, RPR, Debate National Assembly 2 March 1999).

In other words, the Europe to be constructed was to be compatible with national identities and cultures and to ensure their persistence. His message ended by stating that the interest of France and Europe were not only compatible but even interdependent:

“Pour mieux servir les Français, je veux bâtir une Europe humaine et puissante.  
Être ambitieux pour la France, c’est aussi être ambitieux pour l’Europe” (ibid).

These two ideas - the compatibility between Europe and French particularities, and the interdependence of French and European interests - were echoed by speakers on both the Right and the Left, were they pro- or anti-Amsterdam<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, to a large extent, speakers agreed on the aim of ensuring French influence, interests and identity, but disagreed on how to do it. The dividing question was that of national sovereignty<sup>6</sup>, that is whether sovereignty was to be preserved on the level of the nation or whether it should be shared on a European level.

For the pro-Amsterdam speakers, French interests and influence could no longer be protected by France alone, which *de facto* had lost its sovereignty on certain policy issues. European integration is considered to be the means to compensate for the lost national sovereignty and regain political influence. That is, rather than entailing a transference of sovereignty, the Amsterdam Treaty was an instrument to recuperate sovereignty which would otherwise have been lost.

“[...] Dans ces domaines [circulation des personnes], l’action isolée des États est devenue de plus en plus difficile à maîtriser et il s’avèrait indispensable d’établir un partage de souveraineté efficace, avec condition de réciprocité des autres États participants. La pleine souveraineté des États est d’ailleurs très largement réduite

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<sup>5</sup>“[...] la France, principal moteur de la construction européenne, ne peut être le seul des Quinze Etats membres à ne pas ratifier ce traité [...]” (Béatrice Marre, PS, Debate National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

“L’Europe est pour la France le moyen de faire valoir ses ambitions” (M. Richard Cazenave, RPR, Debate National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

“Cette affaire de vision, de réalisme, de confiance en nous-mêmes, de respect des autres et de dialogue. C’est la meilleure façon pour la France de promouvoir ses intérêts et ses valeurs et de contribuer à un mode multipolaire dont l’Europe, en tant que fédération d’Etats nations, sera l’un des pivots” (Debate in the National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

“[...] Ce projet [européen] ne verra pas le jour sans une France exemplaire qui sache se réformer elle-même et aborder les réalités du XXIème siècle avec courage et détermination” (Pierre Lequiller, DL, Debate National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

<sup>6</sup> This was not surprising since the Amsterdam Treaty increased the number of decisions to be made by qualified majority and envisaged a ‘communautarisation’ of the internal security and the control of the borders. The latter had required a modification of the French Constitution (art. 88-2 and 88-4, Decision by the Conseil constitutionnel 31 December 1998).

en raison de l'indépendance de fait entre tous les États [...]" (Hubert Durand-Chastel,..... Debate in the Senate, 16 March 1999)

"Les nations d'Europe préfèrent-elles se voir imposer leurs décisions par une tutelle extérieure ou veulent-elles, en s'unissant étroitement, décider elles-mêmes pour elles-mêmes? Telle est la seule question qu'il faille se poser. [...] Nous ne devons pas hésiter, car chacune de nos nations, loin d'être amoindrie par l'Europe, verra son influence, sa force, sa solidité démultipliées. Ne restons pas prisonniers d'une conception archaïque de la souveraineté" (Edouard Balladur, RPR, Debate in the National Assembly, 2 March 1999)

"Plusieurs orateurs ont défendu, non sans une certaine émotion - je pense à Mme Catala - mais de manière maladroite, la souveraineté de la France. Je la défends moi aussi, comme je l'imagine nous tous ici. Mais nous devons comprendre que le monde a changé : notre pays doit se donner les moyens de relever le défi de la mondialisation. Le traité d'Amsterdam, loin de menacer la souveraineté nationale, la confortera dans son expression ultime" (Michel Vauzelle, .....*Rapporteur de la commission de affaires étrangères*, Debate in the National Assembly, 3 March 1999).

This view on sovereignty as being a question of political influence which may be exercised on the level of the nation as well as of Europe is also very clearly formulated outside the parliament by the president of *Union pour la Démocratie Française*, François Bayrou in the newspaper *Le Monde*:

"[...] nous voudrions faire accepter l'idée qu'elle [France] ne transcende pas les siècles, qu'elle change aujourd'hui de nature et qu'en partageant certains de ses attributs de souveraineté elle se grandit" (*Point de vue*, "Pour une France fédérale dans une Europe fédérale", *Le Monde*, 14 January 1999).

Unlike the pro-Amsterdam speakers, those opposing the Treaty considered transference of sovereignty to be equivalent to losing national independence, since France would no longer have the last say on decisions relating to national interests. That is, sovereignty was the capacity of saying 'no'. It follows that the use of qualified majority undermining the Luxembourg compromise was considered to be particularly problematic and in particular since this transference of sovereignty was irremediable.

"Faire vivre le projet européen, l'élargir à d'autres pays, nécessite de revoir le rapport entre nation et Europe, entre citoyen et pouvoir. Il faut réaffirmer que la souveraineté, conçue comme une liberté pour chaque peuple de choisir son destin, est inaliénable. Si nous sommes, bien entendu, conscients de la nécessité de partager des responsabilités d'ordre économique, monétaire et politique, celles-ci doivent être décidées, maîtrisées et réversibles, ce qui implique, selon nous, de maintenir un droit de veto au Conseil des ministres européens" (Danielle Bidard-Reydet, *Groupe communiste, Républicain et Citoyen*, Debate in the Senate, 16 March 1999).

“[...] un autre élément essentiel manque dans le traité d’Amsterdam, c’est un rappel du compromis de Luxembourg cher à tous ceux qui partagent une conception de l’Europe comme un espace de coopération avec droit de veto en ce qui concerne les intérêts vitaux d’un peuple, qui les définit lui-même [...] Il est vital pour notre identité que nous gardions en tous points le dernier mot sur les questions de circulation des personnes à l’intérieur de notre territoire et de franchissement de nos frontières “ (Philippe de Villiers, *Non-inscrits*, Debate in the National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

“Lors de la révision constitutionnelle, on a parlé de ‘souveraineté partagée’. Comme si la souveraineté pouvait se diviser! On est souverain ou on ne l’est pas. Chaque fois que la souveraineté est assortie de tels qualificatifs, cela signifie qu’elle n’existe pas - ce fut le cas à Vichy ou avec la doctrine Brejnev dite de ‘souveraineté limitée’.” (Lionnel Luca, RPR, Debate National Assembly 2 March 1999).

These attitudes did not diverge much from the one expressed by one of the leaders on the extreme right, Jean Marie Le Pen, *Front National-Identité Française*:

“La souveraineté, c’est le droit de choisir ces lois. De décider de ses impôts. D’avoir son gouvernement, son armée, ses juges, sa police, sa monnaie et surtout d’avoir sa maison. [...] Détruire la souveraineté de la nation, c’est détruire tout cela. Ce que précisément depuis trente ans, la construction fédérale européenne n’a cessé de faire” (Versailles, 17 January, discourse pronounced at a demonstration against the Amsterdam Treaty).

The above quotations illustrate that despite divergent political observations, one can observe similar views on sovereignty among pro-Amsterdam speakers on the hand and anti-Amsterdam speakers on the other. The latter conceived national identity as being linked to national sovereignty and independence. Sovereignty is the identity. Accordingly preserving French identity requires state sovereignty. In its essence, this is a nationalist idea, or to use the term preferred in the French debate, *souverainiste*. Conversely, for the pro-Amsterdam speakers, sovereignty is a mere instrument, which, in a globalised world, needs to be modernised in order to further French interests and political influence. That is, on a European level France has to share its sovereignty with nations having same interests.

To conclude, this short analysis of the meaning of the concept sovereignty in the parliamentary debates illustrated that the pro- and anti-Amsterdam cleavage cross-cuts Right and Left-wing parties, that is the governmental majority, on the one hand, and the opposition on the other. A look at the campaign for the European election will further illustrate divergence on the Europe to construct and on French identity.



## 2.2 European elections 1999

The electoral campaign started out as a national campaign rather than a European, since the heads of lists were all presidents of parties, apart from a few exceptions (*Verts, Mouvement des citoyens*). This is not new in France where European or local elections have often been transformed into declarations of confidence to a government or a president in function. Moreover, in the perspective of the presidential election in 2002, it seemed unavoidable that the issue of the European elections was transformed into a declaration of support to either the President Chirac or his Prime Minister Jospin, whose popularity turned him into a 'natural' presidential candidate. Consequently, the formation of lists were to a large extent driven by party politics and strategies in relation to French internal politics rather than to European issues. However, these strategies did not all succeed either because diverging conceptions of Europe overshadowed national political loyalty, or because political events revived existing conflicting views.

Such a failure was the strategy of Jacques Chirac to unite his majority on one list. In the Charter presented by *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR) and *Démocratie Libérale* (DL) national and European issues were said to be closely connected and the European elections were a choice between *une Europe des libertés et une Europe socialiste* (RPR home page, European elections 1999, consulted on 31 March 1999). Yet, this attempt to make the election a national issue failed and made the divisions of the pro-Amsterdam proponents in the presidential majority come to the fore. *Union pour la démocratie française* (UDF) held that the issue was not internal politics, but the electoral campaign was on the contrary the occasion to debate the Europe to be constructed, namely a federal Europe.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, wanting to be part of a 'pro-European' list, the president of UDF, François Bayrou, declined the invitation to adhere to the common list RPR-DL headed by Philippe Séguin who incarnated anti-Maastrichtism and Euro-scepticism:

“Comment demander à ceux qui ont porté l'idée européenne, qui se sont battus pour cette Europe, à temps et à contretemps, quand c'était facile, et plus souvent

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<sup>7</sup>“Ces élections ne constituent en aucun cas un enjeu de politique intérieure. Elles constituent pour nous un débat de fond où les convictions de l'UDF s'expriment très clairement” (*Démocratie Info, La lettre de la nouvelle UDF*, home-page of UDF, consulted on 8 February 1999)

“Tout le monde dit que les élections européennes seront des élections de politique intérieurs. On se trompe. Pour la première fois, je le crois, elles se dérouleront en grande partie sur le terrain européen. Nous le disons à l'avance : nous avons l'intention dans la campagne des élections européennes de parler de l'Europe” (François Bayrou, Discourse to Conseil national de l'UDF, 7 February 1999).

encore quand c'était difficile, de se ranger, pour les élections européennes, derrière celui [referring to Philippe Séguin] qui a tout fait et tout dit pour empêcher cette Europe de se faire?" (François Bayrou, *Conseil national de l'UDF*, 7 February 1999, home-page of UDF, consulted on 9 February 1999).

Yet, as Philippe Seguin's departure demonstrated, his person was far from being the only obstacle to a common RPR-DL-UDF list<sup>8</sup>. The main obstacle was UDF's desire to mark its clear European and federal profile<sup>9</sup> in contraposition to the ambivalent European line presented by RPR-DL list on the one hand and to the *souverainisme* of Charles Pasqua on the other. Consequently, the traditional Right presented three lists to the European elections, each of which incarnated a certain idea of Europe: *souverainiste* (Pasqua & de Villiers), federalist (Bayrou), and the major list which aspired to find a third way beyond federalism or *souverainisme* (Sarkozy & Madelein).

Stressing the plurality rather than the unity of his majority, the Prime Minister Jospin succeeded not only in presenting a common list with pro- and anti-Amsterdam proponents, but he also avoided that the different lists presented by governmental parties was interpreted as a failure. Considering that European elections did not represent a major issue and with a glance on bad polls, the *Mouvement des citoyens* joined the common list of the Socialist Party (PS) and *Parti Radical de Gauche* (PRG). The common PS-MDC declaration stated their divergent attitudes to the Maastricht and the Amsterdam Treaty, and pointed out that whereas the Socialists spoke about a '*fédération d'États nations*', the MDC considered the right term to be a '*Communauté des États nations*' which '*exercent en commun les compétences qu'elles ont décidé de confier à l'union*' (PS home page, consulted on 9 April 1999). Consequently, the electoral co-operation did not aim at overcoming their divergence on the Europe to be constructed but at a co-operation based on their common points of views and

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<sup>8</sup> Philippe Séguin's decision on 16 April 1999 to decline his responsibilities as President of the RPR and head of list is given diverging interpretations. Some observers argue that his decision was caused by a long-term tensed relation with President Chirac and his lacking support to Séguin's electoral campaign (*Le Monde*, 17 April 1999; 18-19 April 1999). Others argue that this is not a sufficient explanation and that Séguin's Euro-scepticism and his reticence in the question of French participation in the Kosovo actions were fundamental. What is beyond doubt is that Séguin appeared to be an obstacle to the unification of the Right-wing majority, which Chirac desired, due to his opinion in European questions.

<sup>9</sup> "Les gens sont pour l'union comme on aime la crème au chocolat : c'est une attirance automatique et c'est tellement agréable, explique désormais Pierre-Christophe Baguet, député centriste des Hauts-de Seine. Mais si on leur explique clairement nos divergences de fond sur l'Europe, ils admettent alors fort bien que Bayrou continue de mener sa propre liste, pro-européenne et fédéraliste (...) Bayrou ferait une grave erreur en allant boire l'eau tiède de l'union" (*Le Monde*, 21 April 1999, "Nos électeurs en ont assez que nous vendions notre âme").

preoccupations<sup>10</sup>. The common PS-PRG declaration was less clear. On the one hand PS and PRG stated *leur attachement à la part fédérale de l'Union européenne* and, on the other hand, the federal aspect is downplayed when declaring European integration to be compatible with *l'attachement aux valeurs républicaines et nationales* (PS home page, consulted on 9 April 1999).

The Communist Party and the Green constituted their own lists reflecting their divergent European attitudes. In his discourse to the National Assembly (Debate, National Assembly, 2 March 1999), Robert Hue envisaged a *Europe de nations solidaires*. For the European elections the PCF presented the list '*Bouge l'Europe*' adopting 'Euroconstructive' line which strive at overcoming what they defined as a *faux débat* between federalists and *souverainistes* and with the aim of strengthening the social chapter of the European union. Thus, despite the Communist vote against the Amsterdam-Treaty, the position of the Communist party was not clear-cut and it seemed to be closer to the National-European line of Jospin than for instance that of the MDC. When explaining the pro-Amsterdam vote of the *Verts*, Marie-Hélène Aubert declared that the party members were "*Citoyens du monde, résolument pro-européens* [...]" (Debate National Assembly, Green, 2 March 1999). This conscious a-national line was pursued in the electoral campaign. In its programme the party declared to be 'federal' and its list was headed by the German Green, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, who in addition to being a symbol of May '68 incarnated a Europe in which nationality would no longer matter.

When looking at the political extremes, one observes likewise division on the Right and unity despite divergence on the Left. For the two National Front parties (*Identité Française* de Jean-Marie Le Pen and *Mouvement National* de Bruno Mégret), the elections constituted a test: Who could mobilise the electorate as well as sufficient financial means? And which party could claim to be the legitimate National Front? Consequently, rather than the Europe to be constructed, the issue was the survival on the national political scene as being 'the' National Front. J.-M. Le Pen preserved the definition of '*Europe des nations*' and Bruno Mégret put forward '*La Nouvelle Europe*' and the slogan '*L'Europe d'accord, les Français d'abord*'. On the extreme left, *Lutte ouvrière* and *Ligue communiste révolutionnaire* constituted an anti-capitalist liste in the aim of gathering more than the 5% required to obtain a seat in the

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<sup>10</sup> "Le Parti socialiste et le Mouvement des Citoyens n'ont pas porté le même jugement sur le traité de Maastricht ni sur le traité d'Amsterdam qui s'inscrivait dans sa lignée. Ils n'entendent pas revenir sur cette divergence, mais considèrent que les enjeux à venir dans la construction européenne et les changements politiques survenus

European parliament. Their campaign theme was un-employment rather than Europe (*Le Monde*, 17-18 January 1999).

### 2.3 National Europeans, Federalists and *Souverainistes*

The reading of the parliamentary debates and observation of the political strategies for the European elections indicate that three different discourses on Europe cross-cut the Left-Right cleavage.

One discourse - the pre-dominant one - may be defined as National-European, in the sense that it strives at overcoming any opposition between the nation and Europe, that is European integration is compatible with the nation. The National-European discourse presents a pragmatic idea of the Europe to be constructed. Europe is to grow out of a co-operation around shared interests, and sovereignty is to be shared between the national and European levels according to what serves French interest best in a globalised world. As such the National-European discourse states that it is not either the nation or Europe, but 'both and'. Yet, more than anything the 'unclear' contour of Europe aims at reconciling Eurosceptics and federalists within both political camps<sup>11</sup>. In addition, this National-European discourse mirrors the European political strategy resulting from the co-habitation between the socialist Prime Minister Jospin and the Neo-Gaullist President Chirac. To the presidential definition of '*une Europe unie des États*', concurs the socialist '*une fédération d'États-nations*' based on shared sovereignty between nation and Europe<sup>12</sup> and aiming at reconciling the nation and Europe. Just as the Lionel Jospin expressed in the following way:

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permettent une approche commune des principaux défis à relever [...]” (PS home page, consulted on 9 April 1999).

<sup>11</sup>The reporter for the commission of Foreign Affairs, Michéle Vauzelle, PS, even encouraged to overcome this division which blocs the construction of Europe: “Mais l’Europe ne poursuivra sa marche en avant que si l’on en finit avec des ambiguïtés qui troublent la conscience de notre peuple. On parle de ‘fédéralisme’, comme si nous savions exactement les intentions des uns et des autres quant au respect du principe de la souveraineté nationale, comme si nous savions exactement ce qui, à part celle-ci, peut garantir notre liberté culturelle, notre langue, notre conception de la beauté [...] notre art de vivre... L’Union Européenne rend la France plus forte dans le monde ; elle sert à défendre la liberté de notre pays, non à la dissoudre. Alors, n’opposons plus les ‘fédéralistes’ aux souverainistes’ [...] (Debate in the Nationale Assembly, 2 March 1999).

“M. Balladur a aussi apporté son concours au président par intérim du RPR en se proposant de “vider une fois pour toutes cette querelle” du fédéralisme. Expliquant que, dans une Union fédérale, une majorité d’Etats pourrait imposer ses décisions à la France, le député de Paris a demandé : “Y a-t-il quelqu’un, dans ce pays, qui accepterait que les soldats français soient envoyés en Serbie contre la volonté du gouvernement ? S’il existe, qu’il le dise !” (Jean-Louis Saux, “Jacques Chirac exclut tout entretien officiel avec les chefs de la droite d’ici au 13 juin”, *Le Monde*, 28 avril, 1999)”

<sup>12</sup> Gérard Fuchs (PS) defined ‘une fédération d’Etats-nation’ in the following way: “Le parti socialiste parle, lui, d’une fédération d’Etats-nation, destinée à exercer en commun sa souveraineté (Debate in the National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

“opposer les nations à l’Europe est un exercice vain. Car l’Europe est l’espace même où, historiquement, sont nées les nations. Nous devons être capables de penser un objectif politique qui embrasse à la fois la nation et l’Europe. Ni négation de la nation ni repli national, mais une articulation harmonieuse entre chaque pays et notre Europe’ (Jospin’s at the European Socialists meeting in Milan, quoted on the PS’ home-page, common declaration PS-MdC, consulted on 9 April 1999).

A second discourse is self-declared federalist. On the centre Right it is represented by François Bayrou, UDF, who states: “*Oui, nous avons besoin d’une Europe fédérale pour la France*” (Le Monde, 14 January 1999, *Point de vue*) and that ‘Europe is already federal and this is the way to continue to ensure a democratically controlled Europe’ (F. Bayrou, Debate in the National Assembly, 2 March 1999). A federal Europe is likewise the declared aim of the Green Party. Jean-Luc Bennahmias (*secrétaire national des Verts*) writes in the preamble to the electoral programme: “[...] *Résolument européens, nous voulons plus et mieux d’Europe. [...] Nous voulons réinventer l’Europe [...] Une Europe politique, démocratique, fédérale, une Europe des citoyens*”. And finally the *Parti radical de Gauche* (PRG) which, when accounting for their pro-Amsterdam vote, stated that ‘the Treaty constituted one step towards a Federal Europe’ (Gérard Charasse, PRG, Debate in the National Assembly, 2 March 1999). As the National-Europeans, the federalists consider Europe as a mean to preserve political influence on their destiny, but they go beyond the nation-state speaking about a Europe with a clear distribution of power between European and local authorities according to the principle of subsidiary. Moreover, a federal Europe is to preserve existing cultural diversity and to ensure their peaceful coexistence.

A third discourse can be defined as souverainiste in the sense that national identity and independence is considered to be irremediably linked to state sovereignty which is not to be transferred nor divided<sup>13</sup>. It characterises the discourse of the National Front parties, parts of the traditional Right (de Villiers and Pasqua), as well as movements within close to the

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<sup>13</sup> ‘On n’est souverain ou on ne l’est pas [...] L’Europe fédérale n’est qu’un rétrécissement de la France. C’est pourquoi ce traité n’est pas acceptable’ (Lionnel Luca, RPR, Debate in the National Assembly 2 March 1999).

“Il faut rejeter le traité d’Amsterdam pour mettre un frein aux dérives supranationales [...] Il nous redonnerait la chance de construire l’Europe sans détruire la France” (François Guillaume, , Debate National Assembly 2 March 1999).

“J’aime l’Europe autant que vous, Monsieur Bayrou, mais j’entends la défendre sur la base de la nation. Je refuse que la France abandonne sa souveraineté, qu’elle perde sa substance à cause d’une Europe qui ne serait plus qu’une expérience dévoyée” (Philippe de Villiers, *Mouvement pour la France*, Debate in National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

“Nous sommes pour des coopérations renforcées, qui rendent tout leur rôle aux Etats-nations.” (Georges Sarre,

socialist party, such as MDC. In addition to their close views on sovereignty and national identity, the *souverainistes* likewise participated in the same events or fora of discussion. Thus, at a demonstration against the revision of the constitution, required to ratify the Amsterdam Treaty, one observed people from the National Front, de Villier's *Mouvement pour La France* as well as from the ranks of the Gaullist party (RPR). Within the Marc Bloc-foundation, founded March 1998 against the '*pensée unique*', one observes persons from pasqua's *Demain la France*, de Villier's *Mouvement pour La France* and, Chevènement's MDC (*Libération*, 26 May 1999).

In order to illustrate the dividing lines cross-cutting the traditional Left-Right scale the following table lists the three European discourses, the political parties and movements:

	<b>Right</b>	<b>Left</b>
<b><i>Souverainistes</i></b>	<i>Front National-Unité Française</i> <i>Front National-Mouvement National</i> <i>Mouvement pour la France</i> <i>Demain la France</i>	<i>Mouvement des Citoyens</i> <i>Gauche socialiste</i>
<b>National-Europeans</b>	<i>Rassemblement pour la République</i>	<i>Parti Communiste Français</i> <i>Parti Socialiste</i>
<b>Federalists</b>	<i>Union pour la démocratie française</i>	<i>Parti radical de gauche</i> <i>Verts</i>

So far, the paper has argued that the Right-Left cleavage is cross-cut by three conceptions of Europe, each of which defined by the way to exercise political sovereignty: on the national level (*souverainiste*), on the European level (federalist), or shared between the two levels (National Europeans). Further similarities and differences will be elucidated by an analysis of how their images of France relate to existing national myths.

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Mouvement des citoyens, Debate in the National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

### 3. French National Myths<sup>14</sup>

Traditionally, when discussing nationalism French scholars distinguish between, on the one hand, a predominant republican discourse and, on the other hand, a challenging counter-nationalism (Girardet, 1972<sup>15</sup>; Winock, 1990 [1982]<sup>16</sup>; Todorov, 1989<sup>17</sup>; Agulhon, 1992<sup>18</sup>; Nora, 1992<sup>19</sup>; Birnbaum, 1993<sup>20</sup>; Taguieff, 1995<sup>21</sup>). The former conceives of the nation as a political community consisting of equal individuals for whom belonging to the nation-state is the result of a rational choice. That is, in the words of Ernest Renan, national belonging is a daily plebiscite of adhering to a community of values, namely the Enlightenment ideas of rationality, progress and Human Rights, which are believed to have universal bearing for all men. In other words, republican nationalism is characterised by an optimistic belief in a future in which progress will bring a new and better society than the old and traditional one. Moreover, it represents the conviction that there is a mission to emancipate all men by bringing them universal values. Conversely, counter-nationalism represents an idea of an ethnic/religious community in which one inherits membership as well as one's positions and privileges within it. It emerged in the late nineteenth century in a period of national crisis when France had lost Alsace-Lorraine to Germany and French society was marked by a severe social and economic crisis. This was moreover the period in which the Third Republic was established. The Republic disappointed some, and enforced values such as secularity which

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<sup>15</sup>Girardet defines two kinds of nationalism in the debate on colonialism in the 1880's: "un nationalism d'expansion mondiale et un nationalisme de rétraction continentale" (Girardet, 1972, p. 62).

<sup>16</sup>Winock defines an open and progressive nationalism which was that of the patriots and then a closed and conservative nationalism which was that of the nationalists (Winock, 1990, pp. 11-18).

<sup>17</sup>Todorov (1989) describes the two national identities as two different kinds of ethnocentrism; one asserts itself as to be universal and another to be particular.

<sup>18</sup>Agulhon distinguishes a France which is conceived of as '*filie aînée de l'Église, terre de chrétienté symbolisée par Jeanne d'Arc*' and then a France which is the country of Human Rights, of Progress and with a universal mission (1992, pp. 825-850).

<sup>19</sup>Nora (1989) distinguishes two radically different national memories and identities: "[...] l'une qui fait de la France la terre promise des révolutions, qui a projeté le rationalisme des Lumières dans l'universalisme révolutionnaire pour le projeter à son tour sur la révolution soviétique idéalisée. L'autre qui ne cesse de se ressourcer aux profondeurs affectives d'un patriotisme filial et religieux, dans l'affirmation de sa permanence miraculeuse et de son essence intemporelle" (Nora, 1992, p.369).

<sup>20</sup>Birnbaum describes the two identities respectively as a 'projet de gesellschaft' since individualism and rationality are core elements and as à 'projet de gemeinschaft' since it is conservative and holistic (Birnbaum, 1993, pp. 14-16)

<sup>21</sup>Taguieff distinguishes between a predominant Republican nationalism vs. a counter-nationalism of Catholic and

others were against (Winock, 1990 [1982]). Counter-nationalism was conservative and traditional and formulated by doctrinaires such as Barrès and Maurras, in direct opposition to the republican national idea. Refuting Enlightenment values, it submitted the individual to the collectivity and to history and sought a strengthening of traditional authorities and values. These were the values of Catholic, rural France with its regional cultural diversity, which were placed in opposition to those of secular, urban, industrialised France.

It follows from the short description of the two national identities above, that their fundamental disagreements were the legitimacy of institutions (Republic vs. Monarchy; the division between Church and State) and the definition of the national community and its values. For the purpose of the present analysis, I will focus on the latter aspect. The two identities tell two different stories of the way in which France is an exceptional nation, and of how it shall remain so. For the Republican nationalism the French Revolution is the founding event which constitutes the particularity of France, that is its identity. Yet according to the Revolutionaries' own myth, the history of France goes even further back than the Revolution, namely to the mythic past of their ancestors, *les Gaulois* (Citron, 1991). Thus, the history which children were taught in the Republican school of the Third Republic started with '*Nos ancêtres les gaulois*'. Conversely, the narration of the Counter-nationalism begins with the baptism of Cloves, in the year 496, which constituted France as the first Christian kingdom, or put in more poetic terms as '*la fille aînée de l'Eglise*'. Catholicism and religion are interpreted as natural categories one is born into as a race or an ethnic group. Thus, one can sum up by saying that the two identities follow different story lines, which, nevertheless, have the same plot: France is a special nation. Yet the specificity of the nation is defined differently, either it is the French territory, people, religion, - or it is universal values.

It follows that Republican nationalism and Counter-nationalism have conceived the relation between France and the out-side world in different terms. The Republican nationalism considers that France has a mission in bringing the universal values out to the world and that it therefore has a leading role to play ('rayonner'). Conversely, counter-nationalism gives priority to the 'particular', that is French territory and people. An historical example of respectively the closeness and the openness of the two nationalisms are the years subsequent to the defeat to Germany in 1871. The question was then whether the main priority was to be

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anti-revolutionary inspiration (Taguieff, 1995, pp. 13-28).



given to the recuperation of the lost French territory, Alsace-Lorraine, or to the colonisation of new territories.

Putting them in their historical perspective, the two ideal types of identities have had their respective moments of glory and crisis. The predominant republican identity has been strongest in periods of national grandeur and has accompanied periods of modernisation. Conversely, counter-nationalism has emerged in periods of national crisis professing a return to traditional values as a remedy against a perceived national decline, which occurred subsequent to military defeats (ex. Boulangism - Vichy) and during socio-economic crises (ex. 1870's and the nineteen-thirties) (Noiriel, 1992; Winock, 1990 [1982]). Moreover, while the relation between the two national identities in some periods was marked by an intensified confrontation, such as during the Third Republic, other periods can be characterised by compromise<sup>22</sup>. Thus, as any other ideal-type, republican nationalism and counter-nationalism have never existed in their pure form and moreover, as Winock (1990 [1982]) argues, they have now and then been represented by the same personalities (such as Michelet or Péguy). In addition, the dichotomy between the two national ideas cross-cuts social and political cleavages and has been incarnated by various ideologies (Sternhell, 1978; Winock, 1990 [1982]; Birnbaum, 1993<sup>23</sup>). For example, since the Second World War, the republican identity has dominated socialism:

“L’existence d’une nation française ne faisait pas de doute. Elle avait été fondée par la Révolution de 1789 dont ils se voulaient les continuateurs. La France, terre des droits de l’homme, avait une mission : tenir le rôle d’un guide pour réaliser le socialisme dans le monde ; par son histoire même avait une vocation révolutionnaire” (Bergounioux & Grunberg, 1992: ).

And, as Nora points out, likewise Gaullism and Communism:

“Mais les deux ont eu de la France et de son histoire une vision également messianique, d’autant plus exacerbée qu’il revenait au Parti d’accomplir et de révéler sa vérité révolutionnaire et à de Gaulle de se faire un moment de l’éternel retour” (Nora, 1992: 369).

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<sup>22</sup> “Mais, entre ce nationalisme des “patriotes” et le nationalisme des “nationalistes” (ceux qui assumèrent le mot, Barrès, Déroulède, Maurras), et tant d’autres, il serait erroné d’imaginer une cloison étanche qui les isolerait l’un de l’autre. Entre ces deux mouvements, on observe des passages, des convergences, voire des compromis” (Winock, 1990 [1982]; p. 13).

<sup>23</sup> “Ces guerres franco-françaises, de la Saint-Barthélemy à la guerre d’Algérie en passant par la Commune ou Vichy, se déroulent à partir de nombreux clivages religieux, nationalitaires, sociaux, etc., qui ne se superposent pas toujours et se distribuent de plus, de manière fluctuante, sur un axe droite-gauche dont les valeurs se modifient elles-mêmes avec le temps” (Birnbaum, 1993, p. 30).

The French historian Winock writes that after the death of de Gaulle on 9 November 1970 '*tout le monde devient ou redevient gaulliste*' (Winock, 1990: 434). For politicians on the Right as well as the Left, references to De Gaulle serve to legitimate own politics and simultaneously discredit that of opponents<sup>24</sup>. Consequently, by becoming a part of the national patrimony, de Gaulle seemed to have succeeded post-mortem in incarnating a 'certain idea' of France which united the French people beyond political divisions (Rémond, 1954: 341). His national idea was that of Republican France characterised by national 'grandeur' and independence in the Europe of the cold-war. As de Gaulle considered that French independence was more endangered by US than the Soviet Union, he came to incarnate French resistance to American hegemony (Winock, 1990: 60). Accordingly, the French mission was to be the leading nation among 'small' nations representing an alternative to the two super-powers (Winock, 1990: 430). As such the Gaullist France was not only nationalist on behalf of France, but claimed to be the defender of the national idea against all empires, be it in Quebec, Cambodia or Latin America (Winock, 1990: 60; Grosser, 1989: 145-219). The Nation-State was likewise the basis of the Europe to be constructed, that is a '*Europe des nations*' with a common foreign and security policy independent of the US (Sirinelli, 1995: 431). It follows that de Gaulle took France into the Common Market (Grosser, 1989: 145-219), despite the fact that he, according to Winock, was the last 'credible French nationalist' (Winock, 1990: 430).

To finish this short overview of French national myths I briefly go back to the Republican nationalism, and in particular to diverging ideas of the Republic. A brief look of the titles of books and articles published the last couple of years illustrates that the Republic is increasingly discussed and referred to. In *Les enragés de la république*, Jallon & Mounier (1999) analyse how the Republic is back in as a reference point for intellectuals as well as politicians on issues such as immigration, school, social security and law and order, but also Europe. The French scholar Rudelle judges that with regard to the debate of Europe "...il s'agit autant d'Europe que de République. Plus précisément de la place que la Tradition

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<sup>24</sup>One example is given by Charles Pasqua : "Ne mériterait assurément plus le nom de Gaulliste un mouvement qui, non content d'abdiquer l'indépendance de la France, se satisferait, en plus, de le faire dans le dos des Français!" (Charles Pasqua, Convention pour l'Europe, 3-4 October 1998, home page of RPR, consulted on 27 January 1999).

*républicaine peut avoir dans une Europe qui se cherche encore*" (Rudelle, May 1997)<sup>25</sup>. This leads to the question of how to define the Republican tradition?

Though the Republic constitutes a common point of reference that frame the political life and cultures in France, one observes divergent interpretations upthrough history. One division, which cross-cuts the Left-Right cleavage, concerns the role of the State and its relation to civil society and local authorities. That is, whether the State, as the incarnation of general interests, should take the lead or whether this responsibility to a larger extent should be entrusted to private individuals, corporations or local authorities<sup>26</sup>. On the Left, this division refers to two political cultures - the 'first' and the 'second' Left. When confronting one another at the Socialist congress in Nantes, 1977, M. Rocard described the differences in the following way:

"La première culture, "la plus typée, qui fut longtemps dominante, est jacobine, centralisatrice, étatique, nationaliste et protectionnistes (...) la classe ouvrière française est entrée de plain-pied dans cette logique : mouvement revendicatif, refus des responsabilités partielles, recours à l'État central" ; la seconde culture est "décentralisatrice, elle est régionaliste, elle refuse les dominations arbitraires, celle des patrons comme celle de l'État. Elle est libératrice, qu'il s'agisse des majorités dépendantes comme les femmes ou des minorités mal accueillies dans le corps social : jeunes, immigrés, handicapés. Elle se méfie du règlement et de l'administration, elle préfère l'autonomie des collectivités de base et l'expérimentation" (quoted by Bergounioux & Grunberg: 426).

In 1977, Jean-Pierre Chevènement and his CERES represented the first Left, whereas M. Rocard and PSU represented the second one. Today, Chevènement and his *Mouvement des Citoyens* still represent the 'first' Left, but despite their departure from the Socialist Party one can still observe the two cultures within the Socialist Party as well as in the Jospin government.<sup>27</sup> On the Right, one finds a similar division between the Gaullist and Liberal

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<sup>25</sup>This is exactly what Charles Pasqua states: "Mais ce dont il va nous falloir trancher, mon Cher Philippe, ce n'est pas tant de l'Europe que nous voulons que de la France que nous voulons. De la France de sa République. De sa République et de ses institutions. De la Vème République, pour tout dire, qui a confié la souveraineté nationale au peuple, [...] (Charles Pasqua, Convention pour l'Europe, 3-4 October 1998, home page of RPR, consulted on 27 January 1999).

<sup>26</sup> "Comme la droite, la gauche est, en France, composée depuis longtemps de deux grands courants. On les a qualifiés de mille manières : les anciens et les modernes, les girondins et les jacobins, les nationaux-républicains et les démocrates etc. En traitant la tête de liste des Verts, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, de "libéral-libertaire", M. Chevènement suggère une autre segmentation, celle qui oppose les "lilis" (libéraux-libertaires, donc) aux "bobos", aux "bolcho-bonapartistes" ("Lionel, Jospin, les 'lilis' et les 'bobos'"; *Le Monde*, 1 February, 1999).

<sup>27</sup> "Le ministre de l'intérieur est, à l'évidence, un des chefs de file de ce dernier courant ['bobos', see foot-note above]. On retrouve très nettement ces deux camps au sein du gouvernement de M. Jospin. Les "lilis" - les Dominique Strauss-Kahn, Elisabeth Guigou et autre Dominique Voynet - sont ouverts sur le monde. Ils sont des pro-européens sans états d'âme. Ils font confiance à individu et à son sens des responsabilités et veulent favoriser l'initiative et l'innovation. Ils n'ont aucune méfiance à l'égard de la société civile et sont partisans de toutes les formes de la décentralisation. Les "bobos" - les Martine Aubry, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, Jean-Claude Gayssot -

Right (René Rémond 1982). For the Gaullist Right the state is to be strong in order to guarantee national unity and the general interest<sup>28</sup>, whereas for the Liberal Right, the state is to intervene as little as possible, the power of local authorities is to be ensured, private initiatives are to be encouraged and cultural liberties are to be granted (Rémond, 1982: 298-300).

#### 4. National Myths in the Three Discourses on Europe

##### 4.1 The Gaullist legacy of *Souverainiste*, National-European, and Federalist Discourses

Reading the three discourses on Europe one observes that all comment on certain French and European independence in relation to the United-States, this whether the issue is defence or the social and economic model. Thus, all discourses seem to have incorporated the Gaullist independence and anti-Americanism. Yet, for the National-Europeans and the federalists, the Gaullist myth is no longer valid for the French nation-state but for Europe:

“Pour moi, le choix n’est pas entre la France et l’Europe. La France et l’Europe vont ensemble et elles sont toujours allées ensemble. L’alternative se situe entre une Europe indépendante, souveraine, qui se donne les moyens de maintenir, parfois de recréer une souveraineté européenne et une Europe sous influence américaine. Telle est ma conviction (Michel Barnier, RPR, Debate in the Senate, 16 March 1999)<sup>29</sup>.

“Sur l’Europe politique, les avancées sont trop timides. [...] Doit-on accepter que les Américains décident de tout sur notre continent, comme sur le pourtour méditerranéen, au Moyen-Orient et bientôt en Afrique, quand c’est nous qui payons? [...] C’est parce que nous sommes Français que nous sommes pro-européens. Il est dans l’intérêt de la France que l’Europe se construise - fasse entendre sa voix - et joue un rôle dans un monde unipolaire que dominant les Etats-Unis” (Pierre Lequiller, *Démocratie Libérale*, Debate in the National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

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sont, au contraire, soucieux de préserver le génie français. Ils se méfient, d’une manière ou d’une autre, de l’Europe. Au contrat ils préfèrent la loi, à la conviction la coercition. Ils s’inquiètent d’un Etat central qui abandonnerait quelque parcelle de son pouvoir, que ce soit au profit des régions ou de Bruxelles”. (“Lionel, Jospin, les ‘lilis’ et les ‘bobos’”; *Le Monde*, 1 February, 1999).

<sup>28</sup> “Contre les ferments de division que recèle le tempérament français, c’est l’État qui est le mainteneur de l’unité nationale. Le bonapartisme et le gaullisme recueillent précieusement le double héritage de la centralisation monarchique et du jacobinisme. La passion centralisatrice, l’attachement à la souveraineté de l’État que professe un Michel Debré sont très représentatifs d’une orientation fondamentale du gaullisme” (Rémond, p. 325)

<sup>29</sup> “[...] nous ferons progresser l’ambition d’une Europe européenne, c’est-à-dire indépendante. Disons-le franchement : il faudra bien qu’un jour les Américains cessent, sur notre continent, de faire leur politique avec notre argent” (Michel Barnier, Convention pour l’Europe, 3-4 October 1998, home page of RPR, consulted on 27 January 1999).

“[...] l’Europe doit être forte et indépendante. C’est d’ailleurs pourquoi, menant une politique radicalement différente de celle qu’il [reference to Balladur] conduisait, ce gouvernement a refusé de signer l’AMI, a clairement posé le préalable de la réforme institutionnelle et refusé un retour dans les structures intégrées de l’OTAN” (Pierre Moscovici, PS, Debate in the National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

“Pour préparer l’avenir, il nous faudra surtout nous mettre rapidement en ordre de marche pour consolider à l’OMC la protection de notre modèle économique. Il ne peut être question ni de baisser la garde devant les Américains ni de céder devant le dumping économique ou social de pays moins développés” (Denis Badré, Union centriste, Debate in the Senate, 16 March, 1999)

“L’Europe veut-elle s’adapter par avance aux diktats d’une organisation mondiale du commerce, qui est de plus en plus une organisation commerciale du monde, imposée par les lobbies américains, ou est-elle capable d’imposer des règles sociales et environnementales harmonisées par le haut?” (Marie-Hélène Aubert, Green, Debate in the National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

Conversely, for the *souverainistes* the Gaullist myth remains valid for the nation, and a Europe which is not based on nation-states is, quite on the contrary, conceived to endanger French independence of US:

“Enfin, l’Europe fédérale ne peut être l’Europe européenne. Le général de Gaulle l’avait compris, sachant que seule la France avait la volonté de s’affranchir de la tutelle américaine. Déjà, nous avons réintégré l’OTAN [...] Peu à peu, nous nous alignerons comme les autres, sur la politique américaine, comme l’a montré la récente crise irakienne” (Jean-Jacques Guillet, RPR, Debate in National Assembly 2 March 1999).

“Comment ne pas voir que la révision de la PAC revient à demander aux agriculteurs européens de s’aligner sur les prix mondiaux, conformément à ce que veulent les Américains?” (Philippe de Villiers, Mouvement pour la France, Debate in National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

#### 4.2 National Europeans: The Republican France through Europe

The national mythologies expressed by the National Europeans, is that of the Republican and missionary France, but it is a France which now needs Europe to fulfil its mission. Chirac clearly expresses this conception of France in his message to the National Assembly which opened the debate on the ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty:

“Le destin de la France n’a jamais été de se replier sur son hexagone. Il est au contraire de se projeter vers l’extérieur et de se faire vivre et partager ses idéaux. Cette identité française, à laquelle nous sommes tous si profondément attachés, a, aujourd’hui et pour les temps qui viennent, besoin de l’espace européen pour

s'exprimer, pour essaimer, pour évoluer" (Jacques Chirac's message to the National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

The Prime Minister phrases the same vision of France in the following way:

"La France est une grande nation qui, certes affronte des problèmes, mais qui possède tous les atouts pour s'affirmer dans l'Europe, et avec l'Europe, dans le monde" (Lionel Jospin, Discourse to the National Assembly, 21 April 1998, home-page of Matignon, consulted on January 1999).

Thus, in the discourse of the National-Europeans one can in general observe a Republican nationalism, which is open to the outside and carrier of a 'message' to be communicated to Europe and through Europe. The Communists even consider that the role of France is to reorient the European integration:

"La France, son peuple, ont un grand rôle à jouer pour réorienter l'Europe vers l'épanouissement humain." (Hélène Luc, PCF, Debate in the Senate, 16 march 1999).

Thus, it is a France which has a 'lesson' to give and hardly anything is mentioned concerning that which France would have to learn in the perspective of European integration, that is, reforms etc.<sup>30</sup>

#### 4.3 *Souverainistes*: Modernised Counter-Nationalism and Jacobinist Republicanism

When looking at the *souverainiste* discourses, one observes elements of the counter-nationalist version of France, though with a certain modernisation. In a passionate discourse held at a demonstration against the ratification of the Treaty of Amsterdam, Le Pen characterised France by its Christian origins and its territory rather than by ideas and values. In that perspective, French identity is inherited and what matters is the defence of the territory and the sovereignty of the nation (Versailles, 17 January, discourse pronounced at a demonstration against the Amsterdam Treaty). Thus, sovereignty is an heritage which present generations are obliged to preserve and to transfer, unchanged, to future generations:

"La France appartient aux générations présentes et à celles qui vont leur succéder. C'est la raison pour laquelle une génération n'est que l'usufruitier et non le propriétaire de la souveraineté. Messieurs les Parlementaires, vous avez l'obligation de remettre à vos successeurs la souveraineté dans l'état où elle vous a

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<sup>30</sup> During the Parliamentary debates Balladur is the only one to do so: "Certes, la France doit préserver l'originalité de sa politique et de son message ; mais nous n'avons pas toujours nécessairement raison contre le reste du monde!" (Edouard Balladur, Debate National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

été confiée” (Jean-Marie Le Pen, Versailles, 17 January, discourse pronounced at a demonstration against the Amsterdam Treaty).

Yet, French glory, - *rayonnement* -, is not absent, but its objective is quite different from that of the Republican France. France is not an example of universal values, but of the preservation of the national idea. That is, illustrating that national specificity can be preserved in a world of globalisation and American hegemony. Thus, as for de Gaulle France should lead ‘nations’ and resist US hegemony. Le Pen phrases the idea in the following way: ‘*Nationalistes de tous les pays unissez-vous!*’ and strives at co-operating with other nationalist movements in Europe in the project ‘*Euronat*’ (homepage: [www.objectif-fn-20.com/euronat.htm](http://www.objectif-fn-20.com/euronat.htm), consulted 31 march 1999)<sup>31</sup>. Moreover, this Gaullist image has most likely been sought emphasised by presenting the General’s grand-child, Charles de Gaulle, on the electoral list of the National Front for the European elections 1999.

Also Philippe de Villiers and his *Mouvement pour la France* expresses a vision of France which is close to the counter-nationalist France, that is, it is defined in objective terms and by birth. Since, though his movement characterises the French nation by certain ‘values’, these values can only be acquired in the early childhood and only by Europeans, that is Christians (George Berthu, Member of the European Parliament, 1994-1999, interview with the author, 10 November 1995).

Unlike de Villiers, Pasqua presents a France which is that of the Republican nationalism. Moreover, his vision of the Republic is that of the Gaullist Right, that is of a Republic with a strong state as a guarantee of the general interest and a protection against social exclusion etc.:

“La République est fondée sur le mérite, elle contrarie ainsi le régime de l’argent. La République est généreuse, elle contrarie ainsi les égoïsmes. La République est un régime d’ordre, elle déplaît à tous les laxismes. La montée du communautarisme, de l’incivisme, des corporatismes, de l’anomie sociale menacent notre idéal républicain. Il faut refuser le renoncement et défendre la République, ....” (Pasqua, *Cahiers du Radicalisme*, 1998:177).

Yet, this Republic can not be preserved if French sovereignty is transferred to Europe, since the majority of the Europeans are said not share nor understand Republican values as well as elsewhere in the world:

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<sup>31</sup> These ideas of the nation are very close to those of Bruno Mégret, *Front National - Mouvement National*.

“Les valeurs de la République, [...] ne sont pas partagées dans la plupart des pays européens, beaucoup plus soucieux de droits individuels que de devoirs collectifs. Notre Constitution, qui reprend les grands principes de la République et les assoit sur une souveraineté nationale appartenant au peuple est [...] une anomalie en Europe. La laïcité est une exception française. Le droit des peuples, c’est à dire des nations, vaut à la France une vocation universelle [...] Pour tout dire, la France est bien souvent mieux comprise dans le Monde qu’en Europe!” (Charles Pasqua, Discourse in the Senate, 17 December 1999, home page of the *Demain-la-France*, consulted 31 March, 1999).

In other words, France is still to play its missionary role on its own and not through Europe. Also, Chevènement presents a France which is that of the Republican nationalism and like Pasqua and *Demain La France, Mouvement des Citoyens* urges to revive and preserve the Republic:

“L’attente de nos concitoyens est aujourd’hui de ‘faire retour à la République’ et , moins que jamais, de persister dans une course inadéquate vers l’Europe fédérale et utopique” (Georges Sarre, Debate in the National Assembly, 2 March 1999).

“Citoyens, nation, État et démocratie, affirmait Jean-Pierre Chevènement au congrès de Lille, c’est ce que j’appelle la République! (...) C’est aujourd’hui la République qu’il faut relever” (quoted by Bergounioux & Grunberg, 1992: 450)

As for Pasqua, it is an ‘indivisible’ Republic with a direct link between citizens and state and in which no corporations or communities interfere harming the general interests. Thus his Republic is that of the first ‘Left’, which Grunberg & Bergounioux describes as:

“[...] le patriotisme jacobin, exaltant le souvenir de la République militante, laïque, rationaliste et dépositaire de la mission émancipatrice de la patrie des droits de l’homme, convaincu de la supériorité du modèle républicain français sur les autres modèles de la démocratie pluraliste et de l’efficacité du creuset républicain” (Bergounioux & Grunberg, 1992:472).

#### 4.4 Federalists: An anti-Jacobinist France and Europe

Unlike, Pasqua and Chevènement, the federalists present a Republican nationalism which is declared anti-jacobinist, that is, a conception of the Republic close to that of the ‘second’ Left and the liberal Right. Moreover, a federal Europe is presented as a guarantee against jacobinist tendencies. Thus, the Green party writes in their programme for the European elections that a



*véritable fédéralisme* is a protection against centralism<sup>32</sup> and that administrative model of federalism could be a help to “*renouveler [...] les relations entre les collectivités locales et l’Etat ou encore les modes d’organisation des collectivités locales*” (ibid.). Consequently, rather than making Europe to be like France, Europe should on the contrary teach France how to make cultural diversities co-exist. However, France may also contribute with something to Europe, namely “[...] *la citoyenneté, la laïcité, le droit d’association...*” (ibid.).

Unlike the Green, F. Bayrou expresses his love for a France, which is that of Republican nationalism:

“Nous aimons passionnément la nation française, sa culture, sa vision de l’histoire” (Discourse to Conseil national de l’UDF, 7 February 1999, home-page of UDF, consulted on 9 February 1999)

‘Elle n’est pas une race et ne peut être réduite à sa dimension économique et sociale’ (*Le Monde*, 14 January 1999).

Yet, as the Green party, Bayrou optes clearly for an anti-jacobinist France, a federal France<sup>33</sup> and, the virtue of Europe is to oblige France to reform its institutions in that direction.

“[...] la vertu de l’Europe est de nous obliger, nous qui n’y sommes pas enclins - à porter un regard sur nos institutions, notre État, notre droit, à la lumière de ce que font les autres. Car la France, Etat de droit, est bien le pays d’Europe où il y a le plus d’État et le moins de droit” (ibid).

Yet, as the following quotation illustrate, France is less going to be taught by Europe, than simply being helped to revive and impose a French Republican tradition, that is that of the Liberal right, the girondins:

“Ce n’est pas la France qui est malade : c’est une certaine manière de la gouverner, de l’ignorer, de la maltraiter. Tout ce que nous rejetons, ce pays qu’on nous présente comme irrémédiablement coupé en deux, qui s’efforce de réinventer des guerres de religion sur tous les sujets, même quand ces guerres ont disparu depuis longtemps, l’absence de tout débat, l’idée que tout se gouverne d’en haut, même les régions, même les partis, que tout s’enrégimente, [...] Tout cela, [...] c’est le jacobinisme centralisateur, de droite et de gauche. [...] Nous ne voulons pas de l’Europe jacobine. Nous voulons la décentralisation. Pour reprendre les mots de l’histoire, et vous comprendrez qu’ici, à Bordeaux, nous y voyions plus qu’une coïncidence : face au vieil esprit jacobin, nous sommes les girondins de la France et les girondins de l’Europe” (Discourse to the *Conseil national de l’UDF*, 7 February 1999, home-page of UDF, consulted on 9 February 1999)

<sup>32</sup> “[...] des institutions fédérales sont le meilleur rempart contre tout développement d’un jacobinisme à l’échelle européenne” (Programme of the Vert, home-page, consulted 31 March 1999).

<sup>33</sup> “[...] Oui, nous avons besoin d’une Europe fédérale pour la France. Oui, nous avons besoin d’une France fédérale pour l’Europe” (ibid.)

Unlike the Green and the UDF, the *Parti radical de gauche* does not directly criticise jacobinism or the Republic. Moreover, the common PS-PRG declaration states that the European integration is compatible with national and republican values. Yet, the Republic in question is the one of the 'second' Left according to the former president of the PRG:

“Ici ou là, on semble redécouvrir la République. Les Radicaux, eux, ne l’ont jamais oubliée. [...] La République Radicale [...] est la République humaniste, celle qui, avec Alain, affirme la nécessité pour l’homme devenu citoyen de résister à l’oppression des pouvoirs, de tous les pouvoirs : l’État, l’Argent, l’Armée, l’Église, aujourd’hui les médias - [...]” (Crépeau, *Cahier du Radicalisme*, 1998: 159-160).

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has argued that based on an analysis of the way the concept of sovereignty has been applied in French political discourses in Spring 1999 three types of discourses - *souverainiste*, federalist and the national-European - can be distinguished. It is without any doubt the latter which predominates.

The paper argues likewise that all three discourses are marked by existing myths of the French nation and ideas of the Republic. Firstly, all discourses have been shaped by the Gaullist myth, that is, independence and resistance to Anglo-American hegemony. However, whereas the National-Europeans and the federalists seem to have transferred the Gaullist idea of an independent France to the European Union, the *souverainistes* stick to a strict Gaullist interpretation which implies an independent and fully sovereign France. Secondly, that the discourses refer predominantly to a ‘Republican nationalism’ which defines France on the basis of certain values and a certain role in the world. Yet, two examples of *souverainiste* discourses demarcate themselves by presenting a ‘Counter-nationalist’ France, namely the National-Front parties and de Villiers’ *Mouvement pour la France*.

Finally, the paper strives at furthering the understanding of what distinguishes the federalists from the *souverainistes* who have Republican nationalist views. That is, which factors can help us to understand their different points of views concerning national identity and sovereignty? The argument is that one element is their contrasting Republican tradition and in particular their definition of the role of the state and its relation to local authorities and civil society in general. The *souverainiste* on the Left as well as on the Right share the idea of a

strong state as a protector of general interests and they are reluctant to give up any of its competencies, be it to local authorities or to Europe or in order to strengthen protection of civil rights. Conversely, the federalists wish to diminish these jacobinist tendencies of the French Republic, to decentralise the political power, and to enforce the civil society.

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