

VERS L'EST:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE DIPLOMATIC, GEOPOLITICAL AND SOCIO-POLITICAL
FORCES SHAPING FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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ABSTRACT

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE DIPLOMATIC, GEOPOLITICAL AND SOCIO-POLITICAL FORCES SHAPING FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

(Under the direction of Dr. Gary Marks)

The following discussion underlines the socio-political, geopolitical, and diplomatic factors that have directed, and continue to direct, French foreign policy in the Middle East. Paris's diplomatic positions concerning the Middle East region during first five presidencies of the Fifth Republic will be examined extensively, in addition to an analytical representation of the development of contemporary French foreign policy itself. Furthermore, the electoral strength of French Jewish and Muslim communities, as well as the institutional realities of the Fifth Republic, will be investigated to exhibit which forces have yielded the most effect on Paris's foreign policy framework. This thesis ultimately argues that France's approach towards the Middle East, as well as Paris's overall "Arab" policy, stems from a geopolitical strategy that has, overall, remained remarkably continuous since the de Gaulle administration, and it has maneuvered relatively independently of economic and domestic socio-political forces.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In light of Paris's steadfast resolve to drive diplomatic negotiations during recent crises in the Middle East, French foreign policy decisions during 2006 have once again ignited considerable debate within many Western and Middle Eastern circles concerning the exact "role" that France should play in the theatre. Threatening the Middle East region with a potentially explosive political and military crisis, the Israel-Hezbollah-Lebanon conflict during the summer of 2006 elicited swift diplomatic mobilization in Western capitals, with Paris vehemently emphasizing its necessary central role in stabilizing the region. French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy reiterated France's critical participation within the crisis, stating "The multipolar nature of the world has never been more obvious.... Naturally France is playing its role, in complement with its partners."¹

Citing its historical ties to the Middle East during the colonial era and its political access to nearly all actors involved in or affected by the crisis, including Lebanon, Israel, Hamas, and Hezbollah, Paris demanded French involvement within any international peace proposals. During Security Council negotiations, Dominique Moisi emphasized that, "The French are in their historical role of representing the West vis-à-vis the most radical regimes

¹Katrin Bennhold and Dan Bilefsky. (2006). "Lebanon crisis puts France back in the diplomatic spotlight." *International Herald Tribune*, 7 August.
<http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/08/07/news/france.php>

in the region.....And since the U.S. and Britain are very busy in Iraq and the Germans are reluctant to send troops, all eyes are turning towards France.”²

Following Chirac’s stringent refusal to endorse military intervention in Iraq during 2003, in addition to recent violence within Parisian suburbs that highlighted the increasingly acrimonious relationship between Arab immigrant communities and the greater French population, the exact nature of the French Republic’s relationship to the Arab world is becoming ever more complicated. Are domestic socio-political forces responsible for France’s contemporary orientation towards the Middle East and the greater Arab world? Is French policy connected to a broader geopolitical strategy? Are traditional French policies facing necessary reform?

The following discussion consequently seeks to underline the socio-political, geopolitical, and diplomatic factors that have directed, and continue to direct, French foreign policy in the Middle East. An ideology stemming from the French Revolution and France’s historical cultural and political prominence on the European continent, the idea of France’s “mission civilisatrice” and its relationship to the development of French foreign policy will first be investigated in order to better understand Paris’s contemporary policies towards the Arab world. Additionally, the preeminence of the French Executive within foreign and security policy will be examined to underscore the critical relationship between French Arab policy and the Constitutional realities of the Fifth Republic. Moreover, in order to exhibit the development and eventual reorientation of Paris’s Middle East policy since Israel’s establishment in 1948, the political and diplomatic decisions undertaken during the first five administrations of the French Fifth Republic will be explored extensively. Lastly, in a similar vein to the work of John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt concerning the Israeli lobby in the United States, the electoral role of Jewish and Muslim ethnoreligious lobbies in France will be investigated to emphasize their relevance to the foreign policy debate.

² Bennhold, 2006.

Key Arguments

This analysis ultimately argues that France's approach towards the Middle East, as well as Paris's overall "Arab" policy, stems from a geopolitical strategy that has remained remarkably continuous ever since the de Gaulle administration's diplomatic reorientation concerning Middle East affairs during the 1960s, and has maneuvered relatively independently of economic and domestic socio-political forces. Furthermore, the paramount role of the French Presidential Executive regarding the direction of foreign and security policy has proven critical to the continuation of de Gaulle's ideological foundations. While all five Presidents of the Fifth Republic have indeed pursued varying diplomatic policies towards the Middle East, each, buffered by Constitutional autonomy, has defended and more or less maintained the traditional Gaullist framework of a diplomatically independent France, particularly concerning the Arab world. Nonetheless, the increasing economic and political segregation of France's Muslim and Arab communities poses a serious threat to the stability of the French socio-political framework and could have considerable repercussions within France's traditional foreign policy positions concerning the Middle East region.

CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF GAULLIST FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY

In Defense of La République

In the aftermath of the diplomatic crisis between France and the United States concerning the Iraq War in 2003, scholars and politicians on both sides of the Atlantic attempted to understand the causes of the trans-Atlantic acrimony, focusing particularly on the contemporary nature of France's diplomatic and foreign policy orientation. Ardently defending the supremacy of international institutions such as the United Nations while at the same time blocking NATO efforts to secure the Turkish border, France bewildered political leaders within both the United States and Europe through its seemingly incongruous diplomatic positions. Similar confusion has been directed towards French policies concerning the Middle East and the broader Arab world. France is frequently categorized as pro-Arab, an accusation that has been emboldened due to increasing anti-Semitic attacks within France. In reality, French diplomacy in the region is not "pro-Arab," "anti-Semitic," or "anti-American." Rather, French policy within the Middle East, and arguably every region of the world, has remained steadfastly rooted in the diplomatic, economic, and political interests of the French Republic itself.

Une Mission Civilisatrice

Similar to the United States, France argues that it has a unique role to play within the international geopolitical framework and a duty to proliferate its democratic values to all

areas of the world. Buffered by the propagation across the European continent of France's cultural achievements and political ideologies during the 18th and 19th centuries, French leaders on both the left and right entered the 20th century with a firm, collective belief in the nation's *mission civilisatrice*, or duty to serve as a civilizing beacon to the world.³

Acknowledging this ideology, Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin stated, "At the heart of our national identity, there is a permanent search for values that might be shared by others."⁴ Consequently, a dedication to the defense of France's "grandeur" and "rank" within the global arena has come to define French foreign policy. Paul Gallis argues,

"France's rank and influence in the world are important to French policymakers....Membership in the UN, close relationships with parts of the Arab world and former worldwide colonies, aspects of power such as nuclear weapons, and evocation of humans rights are central to France's self-identity within international affairs."⁵

A multilateral, multipolar world

Norman Bowen emphasizes that French foreign policy has remained noticeably consistent for nearly forty years, adhering to multilateralism, multipolarity, and regionalism. Declaring its steadfast allegiance to the United Nations Security Council during the buildup to the US invasion of Iraq, French representatives lambasted unilateralism and stressed the primacy of the UN in questions on international security. French "deference" to the United Nations, in which it holds critical veto, has developed into a central policy platform to strengthen France's international diplomatic strength, as it creates an international, legally endorsed venue from which to promote French interests.⁶

³ Paul Gallis. (2006). "France: Factors Shaping Foreign Policy, and Issues in U.S.-French Relations." Washington: *Library of Congress Congressional Research Service*, 19 May.

⁴ Gallis, 2006.

⁵ Gallis, 2006

⁶ Norman Bowen. (2005). "Multilateralism, Multipolarity, and Regionalism: The French Foreign Policy Discourse." *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 16 (1), 94-116.

Alongside defending the supremacy of the UN, France has continually refused any dominance of European security issues by the American-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and has defended its diplomatic and economic relationship with the Middle East despite increasing US intervention in the theatre. Advocating multipolarity, French politicians on both the Left and Right have consistently expounded their image of international relations as an arena in which nation states compete against one another and regions work in tandem to strengthen their influence, such as the European Union.⁷ Challenges continue to hinder French multipolar policies, however, particularly due to the EU's continued encroachment on France's traditional role in post-War Europe, exacerbated by the French population's rejection of the EU Constitution in May 2005. Dominique Moisi argues that France faces four critical challenges that threaten its traditional political and economic view of the world: globalization, unipolarity, continued European integration, and the immobility of its social-political and economic system.

“Today France is torn more than ever between the desire to be a modern, normal country and the reflex to cling to the belief that France is not like other nations. The first choice presupposes openness, flexibility, and a secure sense of one's identity. The second opposes globalization, is wary of a more unified Europe, and embraces anti-Americanism.”⁸

Paramount role of the United Nations

Dedicated to retaining its Great Power status following World War II, French political leaders, led by Charles de Gaulle, vehemently sought a new international framework that would protect French sovereignty and ensure its diplomatic strength. Originally refusing to co-sponsor any initiatives leading to the creation of the United Nations, due to its exclusion from the 1945 San Francisco Conference, France ultimately received an invitation to serve as a veto-holding member of the UN Security Council due to insistence by the British to

⁷ Bowen, 2005.

⁸ Dominique Moisi. (1998). “The Trouble with France.” *Foreign Affairs*, 77(3), 94-104.

have a fellow colonial power on the Council to counter the Soviet Union.⁹ Insisting that every member of the Council retain the right to defend its interests even in the face of Council disapproval, France, under the leadership of de Gaulle, immediately began a campaign to protect its exceptional status within both the Cold War and colonial framework, refusing at first to sever its ties with Lebanon, Africa, and Indochina. France's unique position in the post-War arena initially provided French leaders with a unique capability to proliferate its diplomatic and economic interests abroad while maneuvering between the two superpowers. In a statement given to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1945, a French general stated that France must not modify the "useful equilibrium" created in the "absence of immediate danger for France resulting from the equilibrium between the two superpowers."¹⁰

Bowen emphasizes the French leaders during the 1950s remained considerably skeptical of the newly endorsed UN, particularly as the body removed France's rights to its former League of Nations mandates in the Middle East. Moreover, due to American action within the Security Council, the UN successfully thwarted the Franco-British-Israeli military intervention in 1956 to reclaim the Suez Canal from Egypt's Nasser, furthering French concerns towards increasing American hegemony and the UN itself.¹¹

Paris and NATO

Arguably one of the most important topics in any discussion of the development of contemporary French foreign policy, the relationship between France and NATO ultimately proved to be a critical representation of France's ideological position within the worldwide

⁹ Bowen, 2005.

¹⁰ Bowen, 2005.

¹¹ Paul-Marie de la Gorce, Paul-Marie. (1997). "Europe and the Arab-Israeli Conflict : A Survey." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 26(3), 5-16.

diplomatic, security, and political framework. Having created its own nuclear deterrent, France leveraged its political and military capabilities to retain its power. Wary of American dominance within NATO and its potential threat to French military sovereignty, de Gaulle withdrew France from the organization's integrated military command in 1966, forcing US troops to leave French territory.¹² De Gaulle's action laid a geopolitical foundation that would define French foreign policy in the second half of the Twentieth century.

A French "Third Way"

A considerably burdensome policy for many leaders in the United States and various European countries, French politicians have continually stressed the need for multipolarity in the contemporary global geopolitical framework. Echoing de Gaulle's "Third Way" tactics from the 1960s, in which France could enjoy a unique position between the two superpowers, French calls for multipolar divisions foster a sense of exceptionalism, due to the fact that it endows nations such as France with unique geopolitical maneuverability within international affairs.¹³ As defined by Dominique de Villepin during his tenure as Minister of Foreign Affairs, the French view of multipolarity involves an international framework in which "each large geographic region, each big power, and collectivity of states can assume together their responsibilities, with the UN being the grand symbol."¹⁴ Michael Brenner and Guillaume Parmentier argue that France's defense of multipolarity stems from a desire to curb the *hyperpuissance* of the United States through the creation of independent decision-making spheres, a further projection of European power, and a

¹² Bowen, 2005.

¹³ Bowen, 2005.

¹⁴ Bowen, 2005.

decrease in the political and diplomatic weight of the US in international organizations such as the WTO.¹⁵

France's dedication to multipolarity faces considerable political weaknesses in light of Paris's recent dedication towards the establishment of autonomous venues for European defense. In a joint 2002 agreement with the British at St. Malo, France emphasized its desire for a European cadre within the NATO framework. Dominique Moisi notes France's contemporary geopolitical predicament, stating, "The only card with which France can challenge American hegemony is Europe, and to play it Paris must abandon much of its sovereignty."¹⁶ Bowen further emphasizes the inherent contradiction, stating,

"The emphasis on the Security Council marks a reaffirmation of France's role as a Great Power with worldwide interests separate from Europe...At the UN, France and Britain speak for themselves; they have resisted any suggestion that their separate seats be combined into a single permanent EU seat on the Security Council or that they should speak for Europe as a whole."¹⁷

¹⁵ Bowen, 2005.

¹⁶ Moisi, 1998.

¹⁷ Bowen, 2005.

CHAPTER III

FOREIGN POLICY AND THE FRENCH EXECUTIVE

Paramount to any analysis of French policy towards the Middle East and the greater Arab World is an examination of the constitutional role of the Executive within the French Fifth Republic and its inextricable relationship to the execution of French foreign policy. Divergent from the American presidential system in the respect that the French executive is divided between an elected president and a prime minister dependent on legislative majority, France's constitutional system nevertheless parallels the U.S. model in its allocation of considerable diplomatic power to the President.¹⁸ While a French president's authority is reduced during periods of Cohabitation with a Prime Minister of a different party, his/her control of central foreign and security policy matters remains relatively autonomous from Parliamentary action. In light of the instability associated with the Fourth Republic, which rendered the government unable to plan and execute long-term foreign policy objectives, Charles de Gaulle designed the Fifth Republic to bolster the central authority of the Executive.¹⁹ Highlighting the considerable power afforded to the President, former French Prime Minister Pierre Messmer concluded that the Fifth Republic offers essentially no room for legislative debate or input concerning matters of foreign and security policy

¹⁸ Tom Lansford and Robert J. Pauly, Jr. (2003). "National Security and the Strong Executive: The French and American Presidents and the War on Terror." *American Diplomacy*, May 20. http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/archives_roll/2003_04-06/lansfordpauly_exec/lansfordpauly_exec.html

¹⁹ Lansford, 2003.

because the President alone determines any final decision.²⁰ In addition to the office's authority to negotiate and ratify treaties, the President names French ambassadors and approves the candidacies of foreign ambassadors sent to Paris.²¹ When both the President and Parliament derive from the same political party, French presidential authority is one of the strongest within Western democracies, eliciting President Francois Mitterrand to suggest in 1964 that, "There are Ministers in France....It is even rumored that there is still a Prime Minister...but there is no longer a government... Only the President of the Republic orders and decides."²²

Tom Lansford consequently argues that the office "[provides] the President with wide ranging powers, and successive presidents have used their position to pursue both partisan policies and to reinforce long standing traditions in the nation's security policy."²³ These traditions, defined by an adherence to the grandeur and rank of France within the global geopolitical framework, have served as the foundation for French foreign policy in the Middle East. Due to this inexorable authority of the French presidency concerning diplomacy, Paris has thus been able to remain quite active within Arab and Middle East geopolitical affairs, maneuvering autonomously from Parliament and consistently buffered by the Elysée Palace's conviction that the France has an international "status and duty."²⁴

²⁰ Lansford, 2003.

²¹ Mark Kesselman, et al. (2005 ed.). *European Politics in Transition*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

²² Lansford, 2003.

²³ Lansford, 2003.

²⁴ Lansford, 2003.

CHAPTER IV

PARIS AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Immediate Post-War Framework

Following the Second World War, France faced considerable difficulty in altering its traditional colonial policy and adamantly attempted to prevent the decolonization of its once vast empire. Discussing the declining role of France in its former League of Nations Mandates in Syria and Lebanon during post-war foreign policy deliberations, Charles de Gaulle stated,

“In the Middle East our affairs are at an all time low...The Algerian crisis and the Suez incident have closed off our access to the Arab States....Naturally I intend to reestablish our position in the region of the world, where France has always been active.”²⁵

Phillipe Rondot argues that de Gaulle’s initial impetus to reassert French interests in the region set the stage for a continuous French foreign policy discourse concerning the Middle East, one that would last nearly forty years, spanning four presidential administrations and define France’s controversial relationship to the volatile region. Emphasizing the increasing prevalence of the idea of France’s “grandeur” within de Gaulle’s administration in relation to the Middle East and the greater Arab region, Amir Taheri argues that the Gaullists, “haunted buy a desire to conduct policies on the basis of a ‘grand design’ and intuitively hostile to pragmatism....looked for what they hoped would be a large, solid,

²⁵ Phillipe Rondot. (1987). “France and Palestine: From Charles de Gaulle to Francois Mitterrand.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 16(3), 87-100.

and above all “historical’ frameworks for policy....Once such framework was *la Politique Arabe de la France*.”²⁶

At the onset, France served as an ardent defender of the newly created Israeli state, voting for its admission to the United Nations in 1949 and fought alongside Israeli soldiers during the Suez Crisis. France also signaled a desire for stability in the region through its participation in the tripartite declaration alongside the United States and Britain calling for the preservation of the status quo in the Middle East. Furthermore, in a move that would aid in establishing the foundations for Israeli military dominance in the region, France supplied the Jewish state with the majority of its military arms capabilities.²⁷

Charles de Gaulle and the advent of Gaullism

Such policies, however, served to damage Franco-Arab relations across the Middle East region, which only worsened during the brutal Algerian War of Independence. Returning to power in 1958, Charles de Gaulle directed French diplomatic efforts towards reestablishing rapport with the Middle East. In a move to regain allies in the Arab world, infuriating large segments of the French pied noir community in the process, de Gaulle allowed the French electorate to vote in a referendum on Algerian independence and subsequently extricated France from the diplomatic and military quagmire that engulfed French foreign policy throughout the 1950s. Despite an increased rapprochement with the Arab world following this decision, de Gaulle did not confront the Palestinian question until 1967, when he declared to Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban that “one consequence of the hostilities will be that the problem of Palestinian refugees will assume an international

²⁶ Amir Taheri. (2003). “France’s Arab Policy: Time for a Debate.” *American Foreign Policy Interests*, 25, 323-336.

²⁷ Bowen, 2005.

dimension.”²⁸ Additionally, in a clear criticism of Israeli mobilization before the Six Day War, de Gaulle issued a statement regarding France’s refusal to approve or support any nation that uses arms first.²⁹ In a pivotal foreign policy maneuver, which raised eyebrows worldwide, he announced in November of 1967, “there were those who feared that the Jews, who through long years of dispersion had remained what they had always been – an elitist people, self assured and domineering, would, once gathered in the site of their former grandeur, transform into a burning drive for conquest.”³⁰ De Gaulle thus effectively placed the Israeli military and diplomatic mobilization within an imperialistic context.

Rondot argues that de Gaulle, in pressing for Israeli pre-war border recognition and developing connections with Arab nations in the region, essentially aimed to stabilize the Middle Eastern situation to the benefit of French involvement within the regional theatre. “France hoped to prevent the Palestinian question from being resolved at some new Yalta, where Washington and Moscow would reach an agreement at the expense of those involved, as was their wont.”³¹ Edwards Kolodziej emphasizes that de Gaulle’s policies towards Israel and its Arab neighbors during the 1960s stemmed from a broader Mediterranean policy that, in line with Gaullist doctrine, aimed to stymie any encroachment by the superpowers within the historically Francophone Arab region.³² Desiring the dissolution of the two-bloc international framework, de Gaulle pursued bilateral diplomatic and economic relations with all members of the two “imperial” systems, while also recognizing that no peaceful resolution could develop within the Middle East without Soviet

²⁸ Bowen, 2005.

²⁹ Rondot, 1987.

³⁰ Rondot, 1987,

³¹ Rondot, 1987.

³² Edward A. Kolodziej. (1971). “French Mediterranean Policy: The Politics of Weakness.” *International Affairs*, 47(3), 503-517.

acquiescence.³³ Any confrontation with the Soviet Union, and the United States for that matter, would undermine de Gaulle's Cold War "Third Way" policy of détente. At the same time, increasing hostilities within the region could have easily encouraged greater American and Soviet intervention, thereby suffocating French involvement in the region.³⁴ Kolodziej argues that de Gaulle's actions developed from fears that,

"...the eastern Mediterranean struggle would inevitably spill over into the Magreb, France's sphere of influence, and threaten to spread into Black francophone Africa....Siding with Israel would also snuff out emerging French efforts to improve relations in the Middle East from which it had been excluded since World War II."³⁵

The Pompidou Administration

Upon his arrival to the Elysée in 1968, Pompidou continued de Gaulle's initiative to protect French independence concerning foreign affairs and further pressed for global recognition of the Palestinian situation. Defending French interests in the region, in addition to the right and duty of France to play a significant role, he emphasized that France "owes it to herself to defend her moral and material interests – which are considerable and diverse in the entire Mediterranean region – particularly her longstanding and renewed ties with the Arab States – our policy is, and has always been, to counsel prudence whenever possible."³⁶ Paris stressed the need for a concrete resolution to the Palestinian problem, and its policies quickly earned France considerable favor in the majority of the Arab world. Muslims across the Middle East and North Africa showed significant unity in their opinion of

³³ Kolodziej, 1971.

³⁴ Kolodziej, 1971.

³⁵ Kolodziej, 1971.

³⁶ Rondot, 1987.

France, viewing it as the only power in the Security Council that utilized its veto in favor of Arab interests.³⁷

Valery Giscard D'Estaing

Valery Giscard D'Estaing continued the same diplomatic policy framework of his predecessors and based his position on Arab interest on two principles. First, France would continue to promote dialogue among all parties involved in the Middle East, and second France would pursue a bilateral policy of “friendship and cooperation” with Arab states.³⁸ Eliciting considerable concern from Israel and other Western nations, Giscard supported a 1974 UN resolution inviting Yasser Arafat to be present at UN debates over the Palestinian situation.³⁹ Meeting Arafat in the same year, French foreign minister Jean Sauvagnargues reiterated France’s dedication to reducing terrorism in Palestine and to ensuring the right of all states in the Middle East to exist within their own borders. Arafat, while not embracing all of the French demands, declared that the visit emphasized “France’s attachment to justice and the national rights of the Palestinians.”⁴⁰ Rondot notes that, ironically, French-PLO rapprochement continued throughout the decade, even in the midst of Palestinian terror attacks on French soil. Paris’s relationship with Jerusalem further deteriorated in 1980 when Giscard declared the Palestinian right to self determination, and numerous nations within the EEC acted in solidarity with the French position, including West Germany, the United Kingdom, and Italy. Not only did EEC support give France a stronger foundation from which to bargain, but it also offered the Elysée Palace an edge in countering American

³⁷ Rondot, 1987.

³⁸ Rondot, 1987.

³⁹ Rondot, 1987.

⁴⁰ Rondot, 1987.

diplomacy that increasingly emphasized bilateral agreements rather than an EEC-endorsed comprehensive, regional peace process.⁴¹ Collectively expressing the EEC's demand for PLO participation in the negotiation process, the 1980 Venice Declaration at the European Council conveyed Europe's conviction for mutual recognition by the Israeli and Palestinians communities of the other's right to exist. Israeli leaders balked at the concept and feared the UK would soon be pulled with France's increasingly pro-Arab wake.⁴²

Francois Mitterrand and the Socialist Revolution

Entering office in 1981, Francois Mitterrand commenced a Middle East platform that initially appeared divergent from his predecessors, due to a considerable portion of the French Left supporting the Zionist socialist ideology exhibited by the party's pioneers. Gaullist diplomatic undertones nevertheless defined his foreign policy towards the region.⁴³ While determined not to jeopardize French-Arab relations, Mitterrand believed that his predecessors had pursued a Middle East policy that had compromised French-Israeli relations.⁴⁴ Paul-Marie de la Gorce emphasizes that Mitterrand "believed that only by calibrating French policy via better and even intimate relations with Israel's leaders might he be able to contribute to a peace settle by convincing them to accept a fair settlement of the Palestinian question."⁴⁵ Israel's 1981 strike on a French-built nuclear reactor in Iraq received no condemnation from the Elysée Palace, and the Israeli bombing of Beirut during the same year received a similar muted reaction. Rondot argues that "new French policy in

⁴¹ Rondot, 1987.

⁴² Rondot, 1987.

⁴³ Rondot, 1987.

⁴⁴ Gorce, 1997.

⁴⁵ Gorce, 1997.

the Middle East could be characterized, in its early stages, by a desire to humor Israel while keeping open the channels for dialogue with the Palestinians.”⁴⁶

Although Mitterrand’s policies did not involve the full demands of the Venice Declaration, his insistence on the right of the Palestinians to obtain a “state” went considerably further than Giscard’s requests for a Palestinian “homeland,” prompting considerable denunciation by Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin.⁴⁷ French censure of Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in 1982, combined with France’s help in evacuating Palestinian fighters from Beirut, further strengthened French-Palestinian relations, culminating in a message sent to Mitterrand from Arafat, declaring, “From the rank of a friend, France has now become a brother.”⁴⁸

Jacques Chirac and the Middle East

Breaking with Mitterrand’s more staid involvement within the Middle East region, the Presidency of Jacques Chirac has elicited one of the most dynamic and controversial episodes in France’s historical relationship with both Israel and the Arab world. Taheri argues that Chirac’s “Arab” policy is driven neither out of kinship with Arab leaders such as Saddam Hussein, as many American leaders claimed during the 2003 Iraq War debates, nor out of overwhelming economic interests in the region.⁴⁹ Rather, Chirac’s vision is inextricably connected to de Gaulle’s foreign policy legacy that insists on France’s necessity for a Mediterranean “*profondeur*” to counter Germany weight in the EEC and the trans-

⁴⁶ Rondot, 1987.

⁴⁷ Rondot, 1987.

⁴⁸ Rondot, 1987.

⁴⁹ Taheri, 2003.

Atlantic Anglo-American axis. For Chirac, such *profondeur*, in practice, requires a “special relationship” with Arab States in the Magreb and the Middle East region.⁵⁰

Only months into his first seven-year presidency, Chirac had already invited over a dozen Arab government leaders to the Elysée Palace, attended the “peacemakers summit” in Sharm el-Shaikh, Egypt, and paid state visits to numerous Middle Eastern capitals. During a highly publicized trip to Jerusalem, Chirac actions incited considerable political controversy within Israel, setting the tone for his Middle East policy. Prevented by Israeli security from having direct contact with the Palestinian population during his tour of Old Jerusalem, Chirac declared, “This is not security; this is pure provocation, what do you want me to do? Fly back right away to Paris?”⁵¹ Emphasizing France’s role within the regional crisis, Chirac stated after the event, “People have to get used to our renewed presence, especially in this part of the world....We have interests and ideas and are determined to be seen and heard.”⁵²

A symbolic gesture of resistance to Israel, Chirac’s actions in Jerusalem immediately bolstered his reputation across the Middle East region as a friend to Arab interests. Olivier Guitta argues, “Chirac appeared, in the eyes of Arab opinion, to be the only Western leader that could counter the unconditional support of the United States to Israel.... [and] became more popular than certain leaders or kings in the Arab capitals.”⁵³

Chirac’s relationships with Saddam Hussein and Yasser Arafat further deteriorated French-Israeli relations and elicited considerable concern in Washington. France lobbied the UN to reduce sanctions against Hussein, who had enjoyed a personal relationship with

⁵⁰ Taheri, 2003.

⁵¹ Oliver Guitta. (2005). “The Chirac Doctrine.” *Middle East Quarterly*, 12(4), 43-53.

⁵² Taheri, 2003.

⁵³ Guitta, 2005.

Chirac since the 1970s, and supported the inauguration of the UN Oil for Food Program in 1996 which benefited Iraq.⁵⁴ Arguably rewarding France and Chirac for its efforts, Iraq bolstered trade between the two nations, and by the late 1990s France served as Iraq's chief trading partner. Nonetheless, the Franco-Iraqi economic realities in 2003 easily negate accusations that Chirac's diplomatic derived from significant commercial motivations. Exports and imports to/from Iraq represented less than 0.3% of France's total trade, and economic sanctions prevented any realization of French oil company contracts so long as Hussein remained in power.⁵⁵ Justin Vaisse argued in 2003, "If commercial interests were the main factor driving policy, the appropriate strategy for France...would be to back the U.S., to join the coalition, and insist on a share of the spoils, including debt repayment and the honoring of oil contracts."⁵⁶ Economic interests undoubtedly proved secondary to Chirac's geopolitical and diplomatic strategy in the region.

Lambasting Israel's isolation of Arafat, Chirac stated at the 2004 NATO Summit, "Arafat is probably the only person capable of imposing on the Palestinian people compromises, particularly of a territorial nature, which could not be imposed, today at any rate, by anyone else...This is why I believe that wanting to isolate him isn't very prudent or very much in line with a strategy of restoring peace."⁵⁷ Commenting on Arafat's medical stay in Paris during the final days of his life, *Le Figaro* stated that Paris literally turned into the capital of Palestine.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Guitta, 2005.

⁵⁵ Justin Vaisse. (2003). "Paris and the Middle East: Making Sense of French Policies." The Middle East Center at the University of Utah, March 11.

⁵⁶ Vaisse, 2003.

⁵⁷ Guitta, 2005.

⁵⁸ Guitta, 2005.

France's contemporary relationship with Hezbollah has also been controversial, particularly in light of recent military action between the organization and Israel during the summer of 2006, as well as Hezbollah's alleged role in the 1983 Beirut bombings that killed 58 French servicemen. Describing Hezbollah as a "social" organization, France has resisted policies from Washington aiming to label the group as a terrorist organization, and invited Hezbollah Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah to a 2002 Francophone Summit in Beirut.⁵⁹ Olivier Guitta argues that Chirac's policy has considerably advanced French perception within Muslim quarters of Lebanon that have been more sympathetic to Hezbollah's cause. Nasrallah noted in an April 2005 that his organization embraced France's role in the region, stating that the "Lebanese do not like to see France held hostage to the savage and aggressive American hegemony."⁶⁰

The Chirac administration also continued Gaullist policy concerning Syria, and Chirac echoed de Gaulle's previous statements on the "indestructible friendship" shared between the two nations.⁶¹ He was the only Western head of state to attend Hafez al-Assad's funeral in 2000 and has actively developed a relationship with his son, Bashar al-Assad, the current President of Syria. Relations strained, however, during 2004, when Paris joined Washington in supporting U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559 demanding Syrian military withdrawal from Lebanon. Various theories developed concerning French support for Lebanon, with the left-wing French paper *La Liberation* stating that Chirac's extremely close relationship with assassinated Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri forced him to choose between France's Arab allies.⁶² Nonetheless, France continues to invest human

⁵⁹ Guitta, 2005.

⁶⁰ Guitta, 2005.

⁶¹ Guitta, 2005.

⁶² Guitta, 2005.

and infrastructural capital into Syria, which BBC Correspondent Allan Little connects to the remnants of both France's "mission civilisatrice" and Gaullism that are directing the Chirac administration.

"America wants to topple anti-western dictators; France wants to work with them in the hope that they will become less anti-western. America believes it can introduce democracy to the Arab world; France is pleased when it manages to introduce ATMs to its banking system. Each - in separate ways - is trying to re-shape the Arab world in its own image - and bend the Arab world to its own needs."⁶³

⁶³ Alan Little. (2004). France and Syria: A Tangled History. *BBC*, 7 September. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3635650.stm

CHAPTER V

SOCIO-POLITICAL DOMESTIC FORCES

Inciting widespread political and academic backlash within the United States in the spring of 2006 following the British publication of their joint-authored article entitled “The Israel Lobby,” renowned political scientists John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt explored the US-Israel relationship in an effort to shed light on the socio-political and geopolitical forces driving American policy in the Middle East region.⁶⁴ Considering France’s longstanding involvement within the Middle East, one could easily surmise that domestic factors have served to drive Paris’s policies in a similar fashion. Through examining, however, the social-political and electoral power of ethnoreligious Jewish and Muslim communities within metropolitan France, one discovers, in fact, the opposite.

Immigration

Viewed as contradictory to the idea of “France One and Indivisible,” the socio-political status of ethnic minorities has traditionally been avoided by the French political elite. In line with Jacobin ideology, the French state defines itself by citizens rather than communities. The French High Council on Integration, proclaiming its dedication to process not assimilation, advocated that France, “maintain a doctrine of equality between

⁶⁴ John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt. (2006). The Israel Lobby. *London Review of Books*, 28(6). http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n06/mear01_.html

individuals, which is in France's tradition, principle, and genius, and it goes further in the fulfillment of the individual rights rather than the acknowledgement of minority rights, the value of which is not to be underestimated."⁶⁵

Nevertheless, whether leaders prefer to admit it or not, France is a multiracial and pluri-ethnic society, due to years of immigration from both its former colonies and other EU nations. Immigration and its consequent effects on the socio-political framework of French society is inextricably connected to any analysis of France's role in the Middle East, as it underlines the role that ethno-religious forces currently serve in defining certain French policy decisions. Political scientist John Keeler argues that the once ignored electoral strength of ethnoreligious groups such as Jews and Muslims is slowly gaining the attention of the French political establishment and may develop into a critical factor concerning contemporary French foreign policy concerning the Middle East.⁶⁶

The number of foreigners living within French territory currently approaches 9.8 million, representing approximately 15% of the population. While significant numbers of Italian, Spanish, and other European nationalities are included in this figure, by far the largest proportion of foreigners in France stems from its former colonies in Africa and Asia, as 30,1% are from North Africa, 9,1% from the rest of Africa, and 12,6% from Asia.⁶⁷ French colonial expansion during the late 19th century laid the framework for continued streams of movement between metropolitan France and its colonies.⁶⁸ Following crippling losses to its available working population after two world wars, France initially looked to foreign labor

⁶⁵ Dominique Maillard (2005). "The Muslims in France and the French Model of Integration." *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 16 (1), 62-78.

⁶⁶ William Safran. (2004). "Ethnoreligious Politics in France: Jews and Muslims." *West European Politics*, 27(3), 423-451

⁶⁷ "Immigration." *Understanding France*. <http://www.understandfrance.org> July 2006.

⁶⁸ Dominique Gross. "Three Million Foreigners, Three Million Unemployed? Immigration and the French Labor Market." *IMF Institute*. September 1999.

from neighboring European nations to fill the void and initiated guest worker programs with nationals from Belgium, Italy, and Spain.⁶⁹ Decolonization movements within Algeria and other colonies led to significant immigrant waves from non-EEC countries throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and the number of “French Muslims” from the Magreb region living in Metropolitan France climbed from 350,000 in 1962 to 470,000 by 1968.⁷⁰

Coupled with the maturation of the baby boom generation, economic crises during the 1970s put an abrupt halt to labor migration programs in an effort to curb increasing French unemployment rates, and the French government officially suspended legal immigration in 1974.⁷¹ Immigration continued nonetheless, as waves of family members arrived from across the world to join relatives living and working in France, creating contentious socio-political debates concerning how to best approach immigration and social integration in the face of a stagnating economy. Restrictive policies were put in place during the 1970s and remained a policy priority until the electoral victory of Socialists in 1981.⁷² Defending restriction, then Prime Minister Jacques Chirac claimed, “A country that as 900,000 unemployed people but more than 2 million immigrant workers is not a country where the unemployment problem is insoluble.”⁷³

Scholars and political analysts alike have faced a substantial barrier regarding how to analyze and approach immigration in the French context due to strict rules concerning census management and minority policy. In contrast to the Anglo-Saxon multicultural method, France equates citizenship with equal treatment and does not count racial and

⁶⁹ Kimberly Hamilton. (2004). The Challenge of French Diversity. Migration Policy Institute. November 2004. <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?id=266>

⁷⁰ Hamilton, 2004.

⁷¹ Hamilton, 2004.

⁷² Hamilton, 2004.

⁷³ Leah Haus. “Labor Unions and Immigration Policy in France.” *International Migration Review*. Vol. 33, No. 3. Autumn 1999, pp. 683-716.

ethnic groups. Legislation dating from 1978 forbids data storage on racial and ethnic origins.⁷⁴ Nonetheless, estimates by the French High Council on Integration currently place the total French Muslim population, as defined by culture, between four and five million, the majority of which being of Algerian, Moroccan, or Tunisian descent.⁷⁵ Following a decade of free circulation of Algerian Muslims between colonial Algeria and metropolitan France, immigration across the Mediterranean exploded during the Algerian War of Independence in the 1950s. National policies of assimilation of North African immigrants rapidly changed to measures of control and mistrust, epitomized in statements by French leaders. Maurice Bouges Maunory declared in 1958 the “indefectible belonging of the population of Algerian origin to the national community.”⁷⁶ Maillard notes that the increasingly acrimonious relationship between the French population and the immigrant Muslim community laid the adversarial foundation for contemporary French-Muslim relations.

“The Muslim community, therefore, was no longer part of the national community... The Muslims became heterogeneous in the double meaning of the word... it was a foreign body in the nation and it was composed of elements of a different nature.”⁷⁷

Ethnoreligious Mobilization

Of critical importance to any understanding of French policies towards the Middle East and the greater Arab world is the growing socio-political role of Muslims within the French Republic and the community’s ever increasing lobbying power. Analysis of the French Muslim population proves a complex research question, however, due to considerable religious, political, and sociological diversity within the Muslim populace.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Andrew Geddes. (2004). 'Britain, France and EU anti-discrimination policy: the emergence of an EU policy paradigm'. *West European Politics* 27(2), pp.334-53.

⁷⁵ Maillard, 2005.

⁷⁶ Maillard, 2005.

⁷⁷ Maillard, 2005.

⁷⁸ Safran, 2004.

French scholars and politicians often use terminology such as Maghrebi, Muslim, Arab, and Beur interchangeably, a situation that, according to William Safran, detrimentally homogenizes a considerably diverse population. While the majority of Muslims, meaning practitioners of Islam, are indeed Arab and can trace their ancestral lineage to the Maghrebi region of North Africa, France's Muslim community also contains a considerable North African Berber contingent that adheres to its own specific cultural tradition separate from Arabs.⁷⁹ Safran emphasizes that within the Arab population itself, one segment is considerably secular and has immersed itself fully into traditional French culture, while the other retains cultural ties to the country of origin.

Like the French Muslim population, the Jewish community in France is also incredibly diverse, divided along cultural and religious lines. A considerable segment can trace its French territorial ancestry to Roman times, while others moved to France as immigrants during the 19th and 20th centuries. Consequently, several cultural traditions exist within the Jewish population, the two largest being Ashkenazi Jews, who migrated from Central and Eastern Europe, and the Sephardi, a community that migrated from the Iberian peninsula to France in order to escape the Inquisition during the 15 and 16th centuries.⁸⁰

Such diversity within the Muslim and Jewish communities of France renders any examination of their respective lobbying power quite difficult, due to the multitude of identities within each group that dilute any sense of collectivity.⁸¹ Safran argues, nonetheless, that both populations are similar in two critical aspects, enabling effective comparisons of their lobbying and electoral power. First, each population is an

⁷⁹ Safran, 2004.

⁸⁰ Safran, 2004.

⁸¹ Safran, 2004.

ethnoreligious group, in which no distinct separation between ethnicity and religion exists. Second, a detail that is critically important to a discussion of French foreign policy, each community has faced criticism from the greater French population concerning its full membership in *La République Française*. The latter distinction is threefold, due the fact that both communities differ from the traditional Christian norm in France, both are often not considered to be rooted into French society due to a large number of immigrants, and, most importantly, both communities are often viewed as transnational, due to a considerable orientation towards relatives in foreign countries, such as Israel or Lebanon.⁸²

French Jews vs. the State

In order to both project the rights of the Jewish community while also ensuring the Republican values of the Revolution., Napoleon I established the Jewish Consistory in 1808 to represent the interests of French Jews in front of public authorities. At present, over fifty Jewish organizations exist within France, representing all spectrums of the Jewish population including both mainstream and Zionist sectors. Nearly all of the organizations have since pooled under the Conseil Représentatif des Institutions Juives de France (CRIF), which, despite its unofficial stature, continues to augment its visibility, notably after receiving an invitation to the Elysée Palace under the Pompidou presidency.⁸³

Muslims in La République

In a corresponding manner, French Muslims began to develop a diverse collection of independent organizations to represent their own interests throughout the latter half of the 20th century, including the Union des Organisations Islamiques de France and the

⁸² Safran, 2004.

⁸³ Safran, 2004.

Association des Etudiants Islamiques de France. Parallel to the CRIF, an ethnoreligious “umbrella” association entitled the Conseil Représentatif des Musulmans de France was eventually established to coalesce both ethnic and religious interests of the Muslim population.⁸⁴

Analogous to Napoleon’s establishment of the Jewish Consistory to fuse the Jewish community into mainstream French society, arguably in order to monitor its activity, the French government created the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman in 2003. Serving as an “interlocutor” between the Muslim population and the French state, the long overdue yet considerably controversial CFCM includes representatives from seven Muslim federations and five of France’s largest mosques, as well as six independent “qualified individuals.”⁸⁵

Safran emphasizes that the CFCM was designed “not as a lobby but as a means of mainstreaming, i.e. westernizing, Islam and keeping an eye on Muslim activities,” creating a socio-political entity parallel to Napoleon’s concept of a *Juif d’etat*. Many in France have lambasted the creation of the CFCM over fears that it infringes on France’s lofted Loi de 1901 separating church and state through a legitimization of Islam, leading potentially to the Islamisation of France rather than the Francisation of Islam.⁸⁶

Safran argues that both religious and secular Muslim groups have received equal mistrust in relationship to the French political establishment.

”Unlike Muslim religious organizations, which are viewed with apprehension because of the alleged fundamentalism of Islam and its links with foreign countries, secular Muslim groups are regarded with equal distrust because of their frankly ethnic orientation. In short, cultic Muslims threaten France’s secular ideology, while Muslims defined by ethnicity threaten France’s anti-communitarian Jacobinism.”⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Safran, 2004.

⁸⁵ Safran, 2004.

⁸⁶ Safran, 2004.

⁸⁷ Safran, 2004.

Muslim and Jewish Lobbying

Within the French framework, any reference to lobbying from an ethnic or religious perspective is frowned upon, which many outside of the Catholic or culturally French populations criticize as an effort to exclude minority voices. Due to the mainstream nature of Catholicism within French society, efforts from the Catholic community to fight against issues such as abortion or birth control are not often categorized as “lobbying” due to adhesion with the ideologies and orientation of a large part of the political elite. Furthermore, as no French political parties are specifically tied to traditionally religious themes, such as a Christian Democratic Party for example, ethnoreligious groups in the French political theatre find themselves at a considerable disadvantage at election time.⁸⁸

Congruent with the sweeping changes concerning French Middle East policy ushered in under the de Gaulle administration, political mobilization within Jewish and Muslim communities commenced during the 1960s due to a plethora of reasons. Using as a precedent the re-ethnification tactics of Bretons, Basques, and Occitans, French Jews began to assert their unique ethnoreligious place within France’s socio-political structure.⁸⁹ Safran related this re-ethnification to several factors, including increased concern over Israel’s security, the arrival of Jewish pied noirs from North Africa that exhibited no qualms about expressing their multifaceted identity, and an increase of seemingly anti-Semitic rhetoric stemming from all ends of the political spectrum, including de Gaulle himself.

Similarly, Muslims galvanized attention to their unique ethnoreligious identity during the same period, encouraged by increasing hostilities in the Middle East crisis and cemented through the growing socio-economic marginalization of Muslim communities.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Safran, 2004.

⁸⁹ Safran. 2004.

⁹⁰ Safran, 2004.

A dearth of ethnic or religious parties nevertheless complicated the ability of Jewish and Muslim communities to accumulate political power. Most attempts by constituents of either side to establish a party based solely on ethnoreligious identity failed, exemplified in 1997 when a Strasbourgeois iman created the Parti des Musulmans de France. Essentially created to elicit radical Islamic mobilization against Jewish interests rather than substantiate an electoral victory, the party receives less than one percent of the vote.⁹¹

Nonetheless, parties on both ends of the political spectrum have slowly begun to acknowledge that ethnoreligious groups can no longer be ignored. While the Jewish electoral vote is only two percent of the overall French voting population, a considerable “Jewish sensitivity” among politicians emerged on both ends of the spectrum. Crises in the Middle East have exacerbated this awareness, and the Jewish community in particular witnessed a political about face within the French political establishment following the Six Day War. Embraced by the Left during the first half of the 20th century due to its adherence to republican values and the maintenance of a separation between church and state, the Jewish community proved a considerable ally in French foreign policy towards the Middle East in the 1950s, when it ardently defended the interests of the nascent Jewish state.⁹² In the wake of Algerian independence and the Israel victory in the Six Day war, French politicians on the left and right embraced a considerably more anti-Israel foreign policy, and many viewed Jewish lobbying as a threatening representation of dual allegiance. Portraying the increasing hostility on the Left towards Jewish lobbying, Pascal Boniface, director of the Institut des Relations Internationales et Strategiques and a member of the Parti Socialiste, emphatically stated that the left needed to abandon Jewish interests in favor of the Muslim community due to not only the significantly larger size of the Muslim electorate but also the

⁹¹ Safran, 2004.

⁹² Safran, 2004.

conflict between French pro-Arab foreign policy and the pro-Israel pressures of Jews.

“There is no Jewish lobby... but there is a pro-Israel lobby that goes beyond the bounds of the Jewish community.”⁹³

Political Realities

At present, French governing bodies at national and regional levels involve dismal numbers of Muslim representatives. The French Assembly includes only two Muslims, out of the total 908 electoral representatives, and barely 2.4% of locally elected authorities are of North African origin. Furthermore, a “Muslim vote” has yet to fully materialize within the French electoral arena.⁹⁴ Oliver Roy argues that the idea of a Muslim vote is inane due to such diversity with the community, and Islam within France “has failed to supersede other identity patterns, social strategies, economic interests, and so on.”⁹⁵ Stephanie Giry emphasizes that the 1.2 Muslims in France that are eligible to vote have traditionally displayed voting patterns no different to those of the greater French population, and that the only “distinct political trait” of the French Muslim community is its political disengagement.⁹⁶ More than twenty-three percent of naturalized Muslim immigrants are not registered to vote, which Giry connects to a lack of recognition among Muslim voters of their political rights as citizens. Those that do vote have tended to display a tendency to vote with the Left out of concerns toward economic marginalization. Among topics central to Muslim voting patterns are unemployment, social inequality, education, and the cost of living.⁹⁷ Furthermore, elites within Muslim communities have shown no interest in establishing an Islamic Party or a

⁹³ Safran, 2004.

⁹⁴ Stephanie Giry (2006). “France and its Muslims.” *Foreign Affairs*, 85(5), 87-104.

⁹⁵ Giry, 2006.

⁹⁶ Giry, 2006.

⁹⁷ Giry, 2006.

Muslim lobby. Displaying the weak relationship between Muslim political action and lobbying, a Euro-Palestine list created in 2004 during the European Union Parliamentary Elections to advance the Palestine cause in Brussels and Strasbourg failed to receive even 10% of the French vote, including areas dominated by Muslim communities.⁹⁸

Increasing Electoral Influence

Electoral realities, however, are slowly changing, and increasing Muslim political mobilization may prove critical in defining French foreign and domestic policies as the first decade of the Twenty-First century comes to a close. Many predictions indicate that over one-fourth of the French population will be Muslim by 2025, a trend that may eventually place non-Muslim Frenchmen in the minority.⁹⁹ Furthermore, while the growing population of Muslim immigrants has traditionally encouraged xenophobic Frenchmen to embrace the anti-immigrant ideology of Jean Marie Le Pen's far-right Front National, France's *Extrême Droite* has ironically commenced a campaign to attract Muslim voters.

Timothy Savage emphasizes that many political observers have suggested that French and European far-right parties should begin to court Muslim voters, in a similar fashion to the U.S. Republican Party's growing relationship with the Hispanic-American population. The Front National is currently proving remarkably popular with various sectors of the Muslim immigrant community due to its support for Arab and Islamic causes abroad and the party's consistent anti-American, anti-Israel stance.¹⁰⁰ Michel Gurfinkiel notes that, "Islamic leaders in France are advising their followers to act as 'democratic and responsible

⁹⁸ Giry, 2006.

⁹⁹ Timothy M. Savage. (2004). "Europe and Islam: Crescent Waxing, Cultures Clashing." *The Washington Quarterly*. Washington, D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies

¹⁰⁰ Michel Gurfinkiel. (2006). "France's Le Pen to Strike a Deal with Muslims." *The New York Sun*. http://www.nysun.com/article/27822?page_no=1

citizens,' i.e., to register as prospective voters and to enter as full-fledged activists into all major political parties, either right of left.... a reconstructed, Muslim-friendly National Front stands a good chance to win many of them."¹⁰¹ Considering Le Pen's xenophobic, Euro-skeptic, and isolationist platform, an electoral victory for the Front National, due in part to increasing support from France's large Muslim community, would undoubtedly have far-reaching effects on Paris's traditional foreign policy framework.

¹⁰¹ Gurfinkiel, 2006.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Through an examination of the diplomatic positions undertaken by the first five Presidential administrations of the French Fifth Republic concerning the Middle East, this analysis has emphasized that Paris's policies have proven remarkably consistent since Charles de Gaulle's tenure at the Elysée Palace due to a continued adherence to traditional Gaullist diplomatic principles. While varying personalities and domestic political orientations have resulted in slight divergences, each of the five Presidents remained diligent in the continued proliferation of the Gaullist foreign policy framework, one that demands a diplomatically independent yet engaged role for France within the international arena. Stemming from France's historical role in the region, the Middle East has remained a cornerstone of Paris's diplomatic agenda, and the Fifth Republic's constitutional structures have enabled the Elysée Palace to maneuver relatively autonomously from domestic socio-political and lobbying forces.

Nevertheless, domestic pressures are becoming ever more inescapable, and the increasing electoral strength of French Muslim communities may have considerable effects on Paris's traditional diplomatic priorities, as well as on international perceptions of the French Republic's long-exalted values. A report published by the International Crisis Group conjectured that continued political and economic marginalization of Muslim communities

could foster further violence, as displayed in November 2005, and religious radicalism.¹⁰² Consequently, the already increasing presence of Salafi groups in French suburbs, which promote stringent scriptural adherence and encourage Muslims to disengage from Western society, could very well escalate into a potentially disastrous situation.¹⁰³ Stephanie Giry notes that the French government therefore faces a conundrum: “Having feared that the communal bond of French Muslims might somehow become a political problem, French politicians may now have reason to worry about how individualism, when taken to an extreme, might lead to anomie or radicalism.”¹⁰⁴ Olivier Guitta likewise emphasizes that increasing domestic pressures may in fact force French leaders to strengthen Paris’s relationship with various Middle Eastern despots, thereby tarnishing France’s cherished democratic self-image.

“Growing Islamist pressure inside France may.... push Chirac and his successors to pursue an even more pro-Arab policy....The legacy of the Chirac doctrine....may not be the French grandeur that Chirac and his allies seek, but rather a reputation for cynicism, hostility to democracy and reform, and association with the worst excesses of Middle Eastern society.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Giry, 2006.

¹⁰³ Giry, 2006.

¹⁰⁴ Giry, 2006.

¹⁰⁵ Guitta, 2005.

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