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## France: “Europeanization” or Interaction?

Georges Couffignal  
Political Science Professor  
Université Paris 3 Sorbonne Nouvelle

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### Introduction

Despite the ambiguity surrounding most of the terms used in this study, which are discussed in the first section, this chapter attempt to identify the interactions, the interferences and interdependencies that exist between the external policies of France, and the external policies of Europe towards Latin America. When examined over the course of an extensive period, four distinctive phases can be observed:

The first one fits into an *upload* perspective, as France tried to pressure the EEC into acting on behalf of French strategic interests on the international stage in Latin America. In this scenario, Latin America became a ready back up for French politics; a “*reservoir de votes*” to dip into during multilateral interactions. This understanding, initiated by de Gaulle, has always existed. But his successors quickly realized the impossibility in the long run of establishing a third channel between the East and the West loyal to the French president’s original vision. Thus, a second phase, during the time period that stretches from Valéry Giscard d’Estaing’s term in 1974, France progressively understood that as a smaller power, it would be unable to spearhead alone a policy on the international front. As a consequence, France was left attempting to influence European decisions in the direction of its own agenda: that is, building a multipolar world. The emphasis in relation to Latin America was put on two fronts: promoting the presence of French multinational firms in the region, and cultural

policy. The rest, particularly trade policy, was unavoidably done within the EEC framework.

A third distinct period spans across the Presidencies of François Mitterrand (1981-1995) added a special feature: France asserted its commitment to the construction of Europe, and when Spain and Portugal joined the EEC in 1985, ushered in a wave of change. Latin America progressively became important to the attempt of European countries to construct a common European foreign policy. Through the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which defined the CFSP as one of the three fundamental pillars of the new Europe, Spain and Portugal in fact played important roles in the consolidation of European-Latin American relations.<sup>1</sup> The summit bringing together leaders of EU-LAC States has taken place every other year since 1999, and a “Latin American policy” has progressively been taking shape at the European level.

The fourth period, corresponding to Jacques Chirac’s presidencies (1993-2007), France successfully imposed (*uploaded*) the enforcement of customs within the CAP while negotiating with external partners. Starting in the early 90s, negotiations with the MERCOSUR have therefore always been tense (with the tacit agreement of Spain). France also managed to upload its preferences in other areas of the EU’s relations with Latin America, like the intergovernmental format of EU-LAC summits, and an emphasis on technical and education cooperation. However, in relation to the Iraq war, France did not manage to impose its views to the rest of the EU, as CFSP unity broke down entirely, although he managed to keep his country’s independent stance against the US, to the relief of some in Latin America.

Some of the foundations of the currently in place since Nicolas Sarkozy came to power in 2007, were actually set during Jacques Chirac’s second mandate (2002-2007). In these years, France has decided to step away from

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<sup>1</sup> Numerous Spanish and Portuguese high-ranking public servants held positions in European organizations. Javier Solana from Spain, NATO’s former Secretary General, was nominated High Representative of the European Union for the CFSP in 1999, the year Europe decided to establish a “strategic partnership” with Latin America. On this subject see Manuel Alcantara and Maria Salvadora Ortiz (ed.), *Relaciones entre América latina y Europa : balances y perspectivas*, Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2008. See also the chapter on Spain in this book.

Latin-America as a whole, and refocused its bilateral efforts on specific countries that it deems essential, both to its economic interests and its political strategies: Brazil and Mexico. For relations with the rest of the region, France has progressively delegated cooperation policy to the European Union, in what can be characterized as a sort of *outsourcing*. This strategy was initiated in the mid-90s. In the context of French declining power and with the creation of numerous cooperative programs between Europe and Latin America implemented by Spanish and Portuguese governmental officials of the European Commission, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs encouraged diplomats to utilize these programs in order to avoid duplication of European efforts, in a process that could be broadly characterized as *download*. Today, we can observe a sharp decline in France's engagement towards bilateral French and Latin American relations (particularly in terms of credits afforded to scientific, cultural, and technical cooperation), relations that had survived many highs and lows during a half a century of existence. Despite the protests sometimes expressed by political officials, this turn towards disengagement is probably irreversible.

## 1. Conceptual considerations

### 1.1. The concept of Europeanization and French foreign policy

The "europeanization" of national politics within the European Union has been the focus of many studies and has generated a great deal of interest. This europeanization has considerably affected the definition of internal public policies<sup>2</sup>. One of the main features of the Union is the *production of norms* that it

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<sup>2</sup> Litterature on the subject is very prolific. The most famous is the CAP and the budgetary constraints imposed by Maastricht. But most of the state's realm of action focuses on food, energy, transportation, work rights, health, environment, etc. Refer to Cowles (M. Green), Caporaso (James), Risse (Thomas) eds., *Transforming Europe. Europeanisation and Domestic Change*, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 2001.

“imposes” on its members, who are obliged to enforce them as internal law<sup>3</sup>, under penalty of, either fines, imposed by the Commission, or of sanctions decided by the European Court of Justice. In France for example, it is said that more than 80% of the laws adopted by the Parliament were originally developed in Brussels.

The *bottom-up* and *top-down* concepts, also known as *upload* and *download*, have thereby been elaborated in an attempt to analyze the relation between national and European politics. These two perspectives underline the necessity of analyzing both dimensions of policy-making, from *bottom-up* and *top-down*, in order to fully grasp the complexity and various levels of the process. This dual perspective is particularly explicit in most of the studies that focus on economic relations outside of the European Union (EU), whether these studies have been commissioned by international organizations (CEPAL, SELA, OECD, etc), specialized research groups and centers (CELARE, OBREAL, OIRLA, etc)<sup>4</sup> or universities<sup>5</sup>.

The idea of the *Europeanization of national foreign policies towards Latin America* is based on the premise that a “European Foreign Policy” exists and that it is sufficiently powerful to interact with, if not to directly influence, national foreign policies. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss here in detail the theoretical framework of foreign policy-making and the multiplicity of the various actors in a field which includes numerous and increasing dimensions: bilateral political relations, economic relations, trade flows, cultural cooperation, development cooperation, positioning in international organizations or in large

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<sup>3</sup> Laïdi (Zaki), *La norme sans la force, l'énigme de la puissance européenne*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> CEPAL : Comisión Económica para América Latina ; SELA : Sistema Económico Latinoamericano ; OECD : Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development ; CELARE : Centro Latinoamericano para las Relaciones con Europa ; OBREAL : Observatorio de Relaciones Europa América Latina ; OIRLA : Observatorio Integración Regional Latinoamericana. Many studies have been undertaken by these research centers. Go to their respective websites for more details.

<sup>5</sup> See for example Ghymers (Christian), Quenan (Carlos), Romero (Antonio), ed., *Relaciones América latina y el Caribe – Union Europea : analisis y perspectivas* », Caracas, ediciones del SELA, 2008 ; Ghymers (Christian), Quenan (Carlos), « Las relaciones América latina y el Caribe – Union Europea : hacia la VI Cumbre birregional de Madrid », SELA, février 2010 ; Santiso (Javier), *Amérique latine, Révolutionnaire, libérale, pragmatique*, Paris, CERI/Autrement, 2005.

international conferences, etc. Yet, it is pertinent to point out that, in contrast to some other member States like Spain or Germany, which have seen in European integration a way to redefine their identity and foreign policies, in the case of France, from de Gaulle to Sarkozy, the national control of defense and foreign policy matters has always been fiercely defended. French reticence to all transfer of national sovereignty in this policy area has always been clearer than in other member states, bar Britain. It was particularly visible during the negotiation of the Maastricht Treaty and its aftermath, with a keen insistence in maintaining its intergovernmental character. The Amsterdam Treaty added in 1997 the position of “High Representative of the CFSP”, but France, together with Britain, made sure its sphere of independent action was in fact very limited. All decisions in these matters had to be approved unanimously by the members of the EU, which ultimately limited its breadth and power. Despite the revision of the unanimity rule with the introduction of “constructive abstention” and “enhanced cooperation” by the Nice Treaty of 1999 and the creation of a Vice President of the Commission in charge of external relations of the EU by the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009 it appears that, for the time being, foreign policy-making remains one of the kingly functions of the member states, and France, together with the UK, is one of the key defenders of such principle.

The Constitution of the Fifth French Republic in 1958, which deals only incidentally with foreign policy, reserves for the Parliament<sup>6</sup> the ratification of international treaties (art. 53), except when the President (art. 11) decides to do it by referendum, as for the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 or the Constitutional Treaty of the EU in 2005. Yet, in practice, it distributed the responsibilities for International relations among the President of the Republic, who defines the broad orientation, the Prime Minister, who implements it; and the Parliament, which is normally a registry of international actions, except when it is compelled by the government to participate on important questions, like, for example, during the decision not to participate in the Iraq war. From the beginning though, the first President of the Fifth Republic, Charles de Gaulle, made foreign policy one of his

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<sup>6</sup> The “Parliament” here means both chambers: the *Assemblée Nationale* and the *Sénat*.

main priorities. In 1959, the President of the National Assembly Jacques Chaban-Delmas coined the expression “reserved domain” (*domaine réservé*) to describe a practice that was later adopted by all of de Gaulle’s successors: when it comes to national defense and foreign policy, the president sets forth the big ideas and makes the decisions, while the government abides by them. In times known as “*cohabitation*” (when the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister are from opposite sides of the political fence), the power of decision is shared (*domaine partagé*), but the preeminence of the role of the head of state remains paramount. So in contrast to most other member states, which are parliamentary democracies, the semi-presidential nature of Fifth Republic sets France apart from the rest in terms of the composition of the policy network involved in the formulation and conduction of foreign policy, which is more disaggregated and uncoordinated in other member states as Germany, for example (see chapter on Germany).

## 1. 2. Foreign policy towards Latin America

Another conceptual issue that needs to be questioned for this analysis is how relevant is the notion of “Foreign Policy” towards “Latin America”? What has been France’s foreign policy towards Latin America since the beginning of the Fifth Republic? Is it fair to talk of only *one* Foreign Policy towards a region characterized by such a vast heterogeneity in political regimes, such a great diversity in conjunctural situations, as well as economies, regions, and populations of such diverging scales?<sup>7</sup> To this question must be added the issue of the “transatlantic triangle” (United-States-Europe-Latin-America). Even though Latin America is considered to be a secondary actor by France, the United States and Europe, all policies directed towards its countries must take into account the interactions that they all have with one another. In the time period studied here,

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<sup>7</sup> Couffignal (Georges), « L’Amérique latine ou les Amériques latines ? », in *Questions internationales*, la Documentation Française, Paris, n°18, march-april 2006.

French presidents have been successively confronted with the political initiatives of American leaders, from John F Kennedy's "*Alliance for Progress*" in 1961, to Ronald Reagan's "*Caribbean Basin Initiative*" in 1982, and George Bush's "*Enterprise for the Americas Initiative*" in 1990.

It is equally relevant to question the use of the expression 'European Foreign Policy.' On one hand, Europe is confronted in Latin America with the same kind of diversity of situations. On the other hand, since Europe is not a unified actor on the international stage, can we identify any kind of foreign policy in any or all domains of international interactions? By analyzing in detail the diversity of policies towards Latin America elaborated and implemented by Brussels, we have determined that this type of conclusion was probably premature, for most policy areas<sup>8</sup>. In his work on the Europeanization of the French Foreign Policies towards Asia<sup>9</sup>, Reuben Y. Wong avoids the expression and prefers to use "*Europe's External Relations System*" instead. In his research, he tries to understand the interactions between three important levels: the Foreign Policies of the member States, the external commercial relations and the CFSP<sup>10</sup>. In this paper, we will follow his example by focusing our attention on those fields where Community *interactions* are evident, such as trade, development cooperation and "political dialogue".

### 1.3. France's relations with Latin America before 1958

It is important for this analysis to point out that relations between France and Latin America are old, rich, and dense. The *libertadores* of Spanish colonies (José Artigas, Francisco de Miranda, Simon Bolívar, San Martín, General Sucre) were heavily influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution and Enlightenment

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<sup>8</sup> Couffignal (Georges), « Les relations Union Européenne – Amérique latine : simple routine ou prolégomènes d'une politique étrangère européenne ? », in Couffignal (Georges), dir., *Amérique latine 2010 : Une Amérique latine, toujours plus diverse*, Paris, La Documentation Française, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Wong (Reuben Y.), *The Europeanization of French Foreign Policy. France and the European Union in East Asia*, Basingstonke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 3.



philosophy. Most of them were also great admirers of Napoléon. They imported the civil code into the young republics they had contributed to build. The Brazilian constitution of 1889 was largely inspired by that of the French Third Republic. Its motto, « order and progress » was taken from Auguste Comte. During all of the XIXth century, these links continued to flourish through constant exchanges, notably due to French scientists' (botanists, geographers, naturalists) continuous attraction to those countries, where they founded schools, faculties, and institutes. The elites of these young nations were completely *afrancesadas*. Thus, at the end of the XIXth century, France applied itself to present *European Civilization* to the elite as a model of cultural leadership. The French language was extremely fashionable and was taught almost everywhere. Authors, artists, architects and French theater were the reference. The bourgeoisie would travel to France for long retreats, while fallen leaders and overthrown dictators would find refuge there. It can be noted that for a long time, Latin America's elites were engaged in a strong cultural relationship dependency with France.

Politically, France was intensely engaged in the region where big power rivalries played out. More than once, it helped Latin Americans stand up against the ambitions of the British and the Americans in the region. The French Intervention in Mexico, between 1861 and 1867, decided by Napoléon III and intended to establish a Francophile empire to contain the emerging power of the United States, did not reverse this current of sympathy. The French were vanquished militarily and withdrew in February 1967, leaving Maximilian behind, who was condemned and executed. This dramatic episode marked the end of French military presence in Latin America, but not of its political influence, which remained important, given that France still keeps three territorial possessions in the area: Martinique, Guadeloupe and the Guyanne. As will be explained below, this presence certainly has had some incidence in its policy towards Cuba on Human Rights.

During the XXth century, these relations were strengthened, particularly in the field of cultural and artistic interactions. Most of the great Latin American novelists lived in France: Vicente Huidobro, Alejo Carpentier, Alfonso Reyes,

Octavio Paz, Mario Vargas Llosa, Julio Cortázar, Gabriel García Márquez, Miguel Ángel Asturias, Pablo Neruda, César Vallejo, to name just a few. This once led Carlos Fuentes to declare « the ultimate homeland of a Latin American is France »<sup>11</sup>. Mario Vargas Llosa declared in the speech he gave upon the reception of the Literature Nobel prize on 7 November 2010:

Pero, acaso, lo que más le agradezco a Francia sea el descubrimiento de América Latina. Allí aprendí que el Perú era parte de una vasta comunidad a la que hermanaban la historia, la geografía, la problemática social y política, una cierta manera de ser y la sabrosa lengua en que hablaba y escribía. Y que en esos mismos años producía una literatura novedosa y pujante. Allí leí a Borges, a Octavio Paz, Cortázar, García Márquez, Fuentes, Cabrera Infante, Rulfo, Onetti, Carpentier, Edwards, Donoso y muchos otros, cuyos escritos estaban revolucionando la narrativa en lengua española y gracias a los cuales Europa y buena parte del mundo descubrían que América Latina no era sólo el continente de los golpes de Estado, los caudillos de opereta, los guerrilleros barbudos y las maracas del mambo y el chachachá, sino también ideas, formas artísticas y fantasías literarias que trascendían lo pintoresco y hablaban un lenguaje universal.

## **2. Historical overview of France's relations with Latin America and the European Union**

### **2.1. From Charles de Gaulle to Georges Pompidou: Latin America as a critical arena for the French political strategy to overcome a bipolar world.**

When de Gaulle came to power in 1958, France still benefited from the positive historical image of the country dating from the XIX<sup>th</sup> century. During his presidency (1958-1969), Charles de Gaulle took particular notice of the region, which had contributed 300 of the 400 *Comités de la France libre* created in

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<sup>11</sup> Virginie Baby-Collin, « Cultures et identités », in David Albrecht et alii, *Amérique latine*, CNED-SEDES, 2005, p. 30.

support of his action in 1940.<sup>12</sup> In addition, he believed that Latin America offered the perfect opportunity to help France free itself from the bipolar imprisonment of the East-West conflict, and distance itself from the United-States. He condemned the 1965 American military intervention in the Dominican Republic, left NATO's integrated command in 1966, and reinstated commercial relations with Cuba despite the hostility of the United States. Most notably, he went on a very long trip (from September 21<sup>st</sup>, to October 16<sup>th</sup> 1964) and visited ten South American countries (Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Brazil) while refusing to stop in Washington.<sup>13</sup> In response to the French tradition of recognizing states while overlooking their internal affairs, all the state leaders of the countries he visited, many of whom were dictators or head of military juntas, warmly welcomed him. During these trips, he also delivered many speeches with international resonance.

On one of these occasions, he elaborated upon the concept of *latinité* (latinity), possible vector of differentiation between Latin American countries and Washington. He systematically underlined the fact that France and the countries visited belonged to the same community of men who share linguistic roots, Catholicism as the dominant religion, a common history, common values and common civilizations, to which the United States did not belong. This idea of a cultural community had the effect of reinforcing French cooperation with Latin America in the artistic, linguistic, and cultural domains broadly defined. Yet, the notion of *latinité* was not always well received, particularly in countries such as Bolivia or Peru. But the support for the idea of *latinity* stemmed from the increasing decline of the French language, gradually being replaced by English as the elite language in Latin America. So he enacted a broad policy of "*rayonnement culturel*" to support the study of the language and culture of his country, and somehow promoted the idea that studying in France, could be seen

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<sup>12</sup> Offroy (Raymond), « De Gaulle et l'Amérique latine », *Espoir* n°61, 1987.

<sup>13</sup> He had previously made a triumphal trip to Mexico (16-19 March 1964) which appreciated his political stance of keeping distant both from the United States and the Soviet Union, and during which he gave a famous speech with the phrase « Marchemos la mano en la mano » [« let's walk hand in hand »] The video of this speech is available on the internet site of Fondation Charles de Gaulle.

as an act of resistance against American hegemony. According to Mathieu Trouvé, for de Gaulle, the concept of *latinité* could be reinforced by the existence of the EEC. At a speech delivered at the *Maison de l'Amérique Latine* in Paris in February 1961 de Gaulle declared:

Les raisons psychiques et politiques d'une étroite entente et d'une croissante coopération entre la France et l'Amérique latine sont aujourd'hui plus fortes que jamais. D'autant plus, qu'en ce moment même, il se forme avec la France, à l'Occident de l'Europe, un groupement fécond et puissant d'États, Italie, Allemagne, Belgique, Hollande, Luxembourg, imprégnés comme elle du même esprit que jadis, l'Espagne et le Portugal transmirent au Nouveau Continent. Dès lors, pourquoi ne point espérer qu'on voie apparaître un jour, de part et d'autre de l'Atlantique, un monde latin uni et renouvelé ?<sup>14</sup>

De Gaulle's political strategy was not as successful as he had hoped. Latin Americans remained skeptical of the Third Way (*troisième voie*) put forward by France. As his trip ended, Mexican, Colombian and Venezuelan leaders made a point to firmly reassert the ties that bound them to the United States<sup>15</sup>. Although the outcome of his trip was limited in political terms, nonetheless, it renewed an interest in cultural, scientific, technical, and diplomatic collaboration.<sup>16</sup>

Besides, De Gaulle's actions were decisive for the expansion of the Common Market to the agricultural sector in 1962 and the set up of the CAP, which absorbs, still today, more than 40% of the EU's budget. This policy quickly became a major stumbling block for the development of relations between the EU and Latin America, especially with MERCOSUR in the 1990's. In this respect, it is worth noting that France provoked one of the first major European crises in relation to the agricultural issue and voting in the Council, known as the "empty

<sup>14</sup> Quoted by Matthieu Trouvé, "Entre spectacle et mission. Le voyage du général de Gaulle en Amérique du Sud du 21 septembre au 16 octobre 1964", *Espoir* n°130, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> Loaeza, Soledad, "La visita del general De Gaulle a México: El desencuentro franco-mexicano", *Foro Internacional*, v. XXXI, núm.1 (121), 1990, pp. 294-313. « Le voyage du général de Gaulle en Amérique latine : septembre 21- octobre 16, 1964 », *Espoir* n°114 (1998),

<sup>16</sup> Chonchol (Jacques), Martinière (Guy), *L'Amérique latine et le latino-américanisme en France*, Paris, l'Harmattan, 1985.

chair crisis” in 1965<sup>17</sup>. When the crisis was finally resolved in 1966 through the “Luxembourg compromise”, France had managed to make its Community partners accept most of its views both on the CAP, and more broadly, on voting rules across the EEC<sup>18</sup>. This was a rather conspicuous instance of “upload”, as France imposed most of its preferences into an EU policy that had numerous consequences in Community life and in relations with Latin America.

As will be explained in the following pages, these views had a long lasting impact in French foreign policy towards the region. In fact, up until Nicolas Sarkozy’s presidency, cultural politics were in the forefront of French diplomacy towards Latin America. Equally, the idea that France could, given certain conditions, represent a political ally against US hegemony, has lasted and was most visible during the Iraq war of 2003.<sup>19</sup> French opposition to any trade deal between the EU and Latin America that upsets the CAP has also been a constant and durable feature.

## 2.2. Giscard d’Estaing: adjusting priorities to power realities

The presidencies of Georges Pompidou (1969-1974) and Valéry Giscard d’Estaing (1969-1974) were notable by the absence of a well-defined political strategy towards Latin America. In terms of foreign policy, Georges Pompidou tentatively followed the steps of de Gaulle, although, in relation to the EEC, he adopted a less obstructionist stance, which allowed the first enlargement to take

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<sup>17</sup> See the book that John Newhouse devoted to this crisis : *30 juin 1965, crise à Bruxelles*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1968.

<sup>18</sup> On De Gaulle’s European policy see Maillard Pierre, *De Gaulle et l’Europe : entre la nation et Maastricht*, Paris, Tallandier, 1995, ou à la monumentale somme de Edmond Jouve, *Le général de Gaulle et la construction de l’Europe : 1940-1966*, deux tomes, Paris, LGDJ, 1967, 1850 p.

<sup>19</sup> During the discussions in the UN Security Council that preceded the American led invasion of Iraq, the two Latin American countries that were present as non-permanent members, Mexico and Chile, found great relief from the pressure of the US, as France’s menace to veto the resolution removed the need for an explicit vote against.

place.<sup>20</sup> Later on, a newly elected Valéry Giscard d'Estaing took a firm stand against his predecessors by affirming that France had become a mid-range power with limited influence.<sup>21</sup> Giscard d'Estaing believed that the priority was to ensure a positive commercial balance with the region, and maintain political stability in the French territories located in, or adjacent to, the Caribbean. This has been a powerful reason behind France's more pragmatic approach towards the issue of democracy and human rights in Cuba when compared to other members of the EEC, like Germany or Poland. Also, the fact that Martinique, Guadeloupe and Guyana – the furthestmost regions of the EU - belonged to France allowed this country to be a member of the CEPAL.

Concerned with French national interests and conscious of the diminishing voice given to France in the international concert, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing came up with the notion of *North-South Dialogue* in 1974, and organized in 1975 the first meeting of the world's most industrialized countries (first known as the G6, it later grew to become the G8). Diplomatic French relations with Latin America sought to promote these initiatives, while continuing to develop the cultural diplomacy instigated by de Gaulle. It is important to underline that Giscard d'Estaing, while staying true to the tradition of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states, and maintaining good relations with the various regimes, helped France open its door to political refugees fleeing Latin America's dictatorships, a move strongly supported by the Socialist Party (see next section). Preoccupied by the possible effects of the political instability in Central America and the possible chain reactions of the revolutionary movements there, Paris focused its resources on ways to stabilize the political situation of countries in order to insure a secure buffer zone surrounding the French Antilles.

Moreover, retaining possessions and former colonies in the Caribbean was behind France's strong support for the Lomé agreement between the EEC and the ACP countries signed in 1975, which gave preferential access for its former

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<sup>20</sup> De Gaulle had vetoed twice British entry to the EEC : in 1962 and 1967. It was only after his departure that enlargement negotiations could proceed. They concluded with the accession of Britain, Ireland and Denmark in 1973.

<sup>21</sup> Ayache (Georges), « Puissance et influence internationale », *Géoéconomie*, n°37, Paris, 2006.

colonies and those of Britain and the Netherlands' agricultural exports to the Common Market, in clear discrimination of other Latin American countries, especially in Central America and the Caribbean. It could thus be argued that, together with the banana régime, the Lomé Convention was, in fact, another instance of French successful *upload* of its policy preferences into the EU's trade and development policies. Clearly, this *upload* was possible because the French diplomats managed to frame their national interests in Community terms and, most crucially, because they were supported by other powerful member states, such as Britain and the Netherlands.

In sum, during this period, France had less ambitious goals for its policy towards Latin America and a less confrontational profile within the EEC. Yet, it still managed to remain on the driving seat of those EEC policies that impinged upon relations with Latin America, and with Caribbean possessions in particular: trade and development. At that stage of European integration, these were the key policy areas managed by Brussels and everything else remained bilateral. So the mode of interaction between French and European policies towards Latin America in this period was mainly of *uploading*.

### **2. 3. François Mitterrand's European commitment and Latin America**

François Mitterrand initiated a decisive change, by scaling up interaction between European and French foreign policy towards Latin America. In 1985, with the support of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Jacques Delors, a prominent French socialist, was nominated president of the European Commission. This nomination confirmed France's commitment to the construction of Europe and thereby broke away from de Gaulle's tradition of keeping the EEC's institutions at arms' length. With Spain and Portugal's entry in the EEC in 1986, Latin America progressively became integral to the process of constructing a European Foreign Policy.



As discussed above, before 1981, relations between France and Latin America were somewhat scarce, but the Socialist Party had a very active Latin American cell, which helped many Argentinean, Chilean, Uruguayan, and Brazilian individuals to take refuge on French soil. From the start of his term, and with the backing of his minister of Foreign Affairs, Claude Cheysson, François Mitterrand personally stayed in contact with many countries of Latin America, by visiting them or welcoming most of its leaders at the Elysée. He delineated three topics, which he deemed most pressing:

- 1) The issue of political instability in Central America and the nature of the solutions to address it;
- 2) The need to put into place a new policy of cooperation towards the Third World based on key countries such as Algeria, India and Mexico;
- 3) The issue of human rights.<sup>22</sup>

Mitterrand focused French foreign policy on certain countries (Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Cuba, Central America) but vacillated in the beginning between his socialist inclinations and his desire to make France one of the leader's of the EEC. This oscillation manifested itself most clearly in his positioning towards Argentina, Mexico, and even more so, in Central America. France defended Argentina's position to renegotiate its external debt<sup>23</sup> with the EEC and the *Club de Paris*, but when the Falklands/Malvinas war broke out in May and June 1982, France stood next to Britain, as did all other EEC members. The Community decided to sanction Argentina and "imposed a package of economic sanctions, which included a total ban of arms sales to Argentina".<sup>24</sup> France then tried, without success, to mediate in the conflict between Argentina and the United Kingdom. In this way, it became clear that, during the period, Community cohesion took precedence over bilateral relations with far away countries like Argentina, and France accepted to "download" the EEC embargo which the

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<sup>22</sup> Jouineau (Sophie), *La politique extérieure de la France à l'égard de l'Amérique latine pendant le premier septennat de François Mitterrand*, DEA thesis from the IEP in Paris, s.n, 1990

<sup>23</sup> Stetsenko (Ala) et Lukina (Svetlana), « Política latinoamericana de Mitterrand » in *América Latina*, n°10 (1985), Moscow

<sup>24</sup> Joakim Krentz, « Hard Measures by a Soft Power ? Sanctions Policy of the European Union 1981-2004 », Bonn International Center for Conversion, paper 45, 2005, p. 22



Thatcher government managed to extract from its Community partners, even though it tried to mend fences bilaterally –to no avail.

Relations with Mexico illustrated another interesting way in which Community and French bilateral policies interacted. Mexico represented a key country within Mitterrand's Third-World political campaign, which also included Algeria and India, and he made sure to maintain strong ties with all of them. On the advice of his Latin American counselor, Régis Debray, France and Mexico signed in 1981 a joint declaration recognizing the Salvadorian *guerilla*, the *Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional* (FMLN) as a legitimate political force that should be included in any attempt to solve the conflict in El Salvador, a move that certainly irritated Washington and other Latin Americans.<sup>25</sup> As will be explained below, from that moment onwards, France opted for a multilateral approach to act jointly with its Community partners, in the framework of the nascent EPC.<sup>26</sup>

The civil wars in Central America and the search for solutions to them were of great concern to François Mitterrand, as a socialist.<sup>27</sup> Beyond that, as de Gaulle had expressed before him, France should try to step away from the East-West mindset and find a way to replace military interventions - favored by Ronald Reagan, notably in his *containment* and *roll back* strategy - by political solutions. On that issue, France made it clear that it wanted to position itself as leader of Europe. But in these matters, French policy evidenced various structural contradictions that weakened it. Nominating Régis Debray as a presidential advisor on Latin American Affairs was perceived as a provocation to many in other countries who did not appreciate the *Che Guevara* as much as he did<sup>28</sup>. As a consequence, the French-Mexican Declaration of August 28, 1981 was not

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<sup>25</sup> "Declaración Conjunta Mexicano-Francesa sobre El Salvador", Tlatelolco, 28 August 1981, in Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (Mexico), *Informe de Labores, 1981-1982*.

<sup>26</sup> Mexico also multilateralized its action in relation to Central America through the Contadora Group.

<sup>27</sup> For the role of European Socialist parties in articulating the positions of Spain, France and Germany towards the Central American conflict, see Eusebio Mujal-León, "El socialismo europeo y la crisis en Centroamérica" in *Foro Internacional*, v. XXIV, n. 2, 1983, pp. 155-198.

<sup>28</sup> Hermet (Guy), "Política francesa en América Latina" in *Foro Internacional*, Jan-Mar 1986, Colegio de México, México, 385-398.

warmly welcomed by many political sectors inside France. Outside, in September 2, 1981, eight countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, the Dominican Republic and Colombia) met in Caracas and adopted a Declaration “in response to the French-Mexican declaration,” in which they categorically rejected the intromission of a European country in their affairs.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the (previously suspended) sale of arms to Nicaragua placed France on the side of the Soviet Union and Libya, the other two suppliers of the *Sandinista* army. Therefore, shortly afterwards, a clear de-radicalisation of French policy towards Central America became visible, and this was done by embracing joint action with other EEC partners, through the San José dialogue initiated in 1984. For France, as for other European partners, like Germany, it was easier to face Reagan’s bellicist attitudes in a multilateral fashion, rather than single-handedly or bilaterally. Thus, the articulation of a distinct political stance towards Central America became a catalyst for the reinforcement of the framework of EPC, the precursor of CFSP. So, instead of a U-turn to change an initially radical policy towards Central America, France, like other member states and Spain turned to the EPC.<sup>30</sup> In this instance, rather than upload or download, it seemed that cooperation through EPC generated a “cross load” that moderated all EEC member state’s positions.

Consequently, the EEC found itself thrust into the midst of the East-West conflict, and timidly suggested following a third option, supporting the *Contadora* Group’s arguments in favour of a regional solution to Central America’s conflicts. Ronald Reagan considered the arrival of the Sandinistas to power and the help that Cuba provided to them (and, as a matter of fact, to the Salvadorian insurgents of the FMLN) as the triggering forces behind the political uprising in Central America. In contrast, the EEC – with the determined backing of French diplomacy - brought its support to the *Contadora* Group. Created in 1983, it included Mexico, Panama, Venezuela as well as Colombia, and viewed the

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<sup>29</sup> Marie Claude de Saint-Hilaire, « Amérique centrale : chronologie des événements 1980-1982 », *Politique étrangère*, vol 47 (2), 1982, p. 337.

<sup>30</sup> Spain had not yet joined the EEC, but participated in the San José dialogue since 1982, when the Socialist party got to power with Felipe González.

archaic and unjust social structures of these countries as the main cause for armed conflict. Confronted with the military solution favored by the United States in El Salvador and Nicaragua, Europe suggested social and economic reforms and increased its developmental aid. Following *Contadora*, it supported the efforts of the *Contadora Support Group* created in 1985 (Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Uruguay). It adopted the same stance towards the *Esquipulas Plan* elaborated in 1987 by Oscar Arias, which eventually pacified the region.

The European and French ideas to solve the Central American conflicts were therefore in complete opposition to those held by the United States. How did Latin Americans perceive these opposite political stances? While the French-Mexican declaration was not well received, as previously mentioned, Europe's support of the *Contadora* and *Arias Plan* – both encouraging of diplomatic independence in the region - were strongly welcome. The support of Europe was in fact essential to these countries. For the first time, they were not alone against the strictly bipolar perception of conflicts instigated by the Reagan administration.

Moreover, as part of this process, in 1984, the EEC signed the *San José Agreements* with the countries of Central America, which allowed them to benefit from a number of commercial privileges. These agreements helped to restore the image of Europe in a region that had previously condemned the EEC's trade protectionism and its support of Britain in the Falklands/Malvinas War. They also established that the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of both sides would meet up annually, which launched an ever-growing political relationship between Europe and Latin America. As a result, during the following decade, Europe became one of Latin America's main economic partners, second only to the United States (see below). Thus, the 1980s were the first years to truly witness Europe's entry on the Latin American stage since the Second World War. Equally, they marked the appearance of Latin America on the EEC agenda, beyond the banana regime and the Lomé Convention. Crucially, the Central American issue became a catalyst for the early development of EPC, that is, Community action beyond the economic realm. This decade also gradually ushered the emergence of a certain

diplomatic autonomy of Latin American States, banded together against the United States' renewed impetus for interventionism in the area.

Beyond Central America, it must be stressed that, under Mitterrand's two terms, cultural diplomacy as well as scientific and technical cooperation continued to grow, both at the national and at the EEC level. In terms of funding, French bilateral cooperation with Latin America ranked third behind francophone Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa, although Asia was already starting to take over Latin America. Moreover, cooperation was truly collaborative, not charitable: in the biggest countries similar projects were funded by both sides. An emphasis on cultural exchanges and the promotion of the French language continued to be supported by a dense network of educational establishments (33 bi-national middle and high schools), of about 250 *Alliance Française* committees (local centers teaching French), of several Cultural Centers and of two research institutions (in Mexico and Lima). At the EU level, Mitterrand promoted his former Foreign Minister, Claude Cheysson, to European Commissioner for North/South relations under the first Delors Commission, thus assuring a strong French imprint into EEC Relations with Latin America for the rest of the decade. It was under both Frenchmen leadership that regular consultations were established between the European Commission and the group of Latin American ambassadors in Brussels (known as GRULA). These lead to the publication of a common document in 1987 which outlined the technical and economic direction in which the relationship should develop,<sup>31</sup> including a steep increase in EEC development funds for Latin America. It must be added though, that in this process of upload, the French were strongly supported by Spain, which joined the EEC in 1986.

With regard to the political stance of promoting human rights defended by François Mitterrand, it must be noted that it did not extend to Cuba. On the one hand, France had expressed great sympathy for the feat of Fidel Castro, from the start, as his insistence on independence from the United States met that of De

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<sup>31</sup> Roberta Lajous "Las Relaciones de México con Europa Occidental: 1982-1988", *Foro Internacional*, v. XXX, núm. 3, 1990, pp. 567-573.

Gaulle, and carried widespread approval within public opinion. On the other hand, and in more pragmatic fashion, Paris never lost sight of its two Caribbean territories, Martinique and Guadeloupe, where the French Communist Party was well established. It was therefore important for Paris to maintain amicable relations with Fidel Castro to avoid any risks of destabilization in the French Antilles.

In short, it could be argued that Mitterrand's first decade as president coincided with France's most intense relations with Latin America since 1945, as well as a real upgrade in the EEC's agenda. France was a clear "uploader" of its policy preferences with regard Latin America, and especially with Central America, into EPC as much as EEC development policy. Indirectly, trade policy, which continued to discriminate in favour of ACP countries, and against Latin America, continued to be a result of French upload into the CAP.

During the 1990s, the idea of a European policy towards Latin America made progress, but with France losing the driving seat. This is because EU foreign policy regarding Latin American came together through the conjunction of two events that diminished the relative weight of France: the 1986 adherence of Spain and Portugal to the EEC on the one hand (see chapter on Spain), and the 1989 Fall of the Berlin Wall on the other. The trading of the EEC/EU inside the "backyard" of the United States was possible partly because of the end of the Cold War, as an uncontested enthusiasm for free trade and democracy flourished among the three sides of this triangular relationship. Indeed, this event took place at a time when authoritarian or dictatorial regimes in Latin America had gradually been replaced by democracies. The United States, which had centered its political interventions in Central American conflicts on the promotion of democracy, could only salute these new regimes and respect their will to create their own autonomous foreign policies. The EU and Latin America seized the opportunity. Thus, during Mitterrand's second term, French influence on EU Latin America relations became less obvious, as other systemic factors and Spanish leadership took over. Indeed many European programs catering to Latin American issues still today owe their existence to the discussions held, and the

resolutions adopted, during these Iberoamerican summits promoted by Spain since 1991.<sup>32</sup> Spanish officials in Brussels participated greatly in the increase of technical, economic, but also political exchanges set in place between the two regions. One of the first moves by the Spanish government in Brussels was to get Cheysson's post for Abel Matutes. And the most prominent was Manuel Marin, Vice-President of the European Commission, decisively backed by its President Jacques Delors, who personally pushed through the establishment of the Río Process in 1999. It is also mostly because of the efforts of Spain with French support that, by the end of François Mitterrand's second term in 1993, Latin America had been declared, not unlike Southeastern Asia, a region of economic priority for Europe.

#### **2. 4. Jacques Chirac's pragmatism.**

Though Jacques Chirac (1995-2007) followed the tradition started at the beginning of the Fifth Republic of cultivating Latin America as a "reservoir of votes" in multilateral fora, his political goals were also to promote French economic positions. While pursuing French involvement in the politics of the European Union, he left behind Mitterrand's support for the supranational institutions, the Commission in particular, to push forward a more intergovernmental view of integration. The sympathy with which France was still regarded in Latin America seemed favorable to the elaboration of a new policy<sup>33</sup>, articulated around four priorities, of which the first two were elaborated in Brussels as a result of the launch of the CFSP since the Maastricht Treaty:

- To reinforce the Rule of Law;
- To reinforce the political dialogue;
- To encourage the French companies to set up in Latin America;

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<sup>32</sup> See for example Jarque (Carlos M.), Ortiz (Maria Salvadora), Quenan (Carlos), ed., *América latina y la diplomacia de las Cumbres*, Secretaría General Iberoamericana, Madrid, 2009.

<sup>33</sup> Drouhaud (Pascal), "Le retour de la France en Amérique latine", *Défense nationale*, (53) 11, Paris, 1997 (p.109-122).

- To continue bilateral and multilateral development cooperation.

The most visible change in bilateral relations with Latin America was that Chirac reoriented the underlying purpose of French cultural policy by asserting that it must be at the service of expanding economic influence. It was therefore necessary to promote the teaching of French as a language of commerce and business. However, French cultural policies in Latin America appeared too inconsistent to really participate and support economic activities. Since the end of the Second World War, France had passively benefited from the favorable perception Latin Americans held towards European countries, and had never questioned its position as a soft power. France was, in fact, and still is, considered a country of great cultural breadth and will remain the country of the Enlightenment and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Similarly, the use of the French language has been associated to a certain idea of social excellence. Nevertheless, France is not associated with the notion of Modernity anymore: the United States has swiftly replaced it in that regard. In addition, Americans were becoming increasingly present in Latin America, through their universities and their scholarship policies. As a response, Jacques Chirac redefined the content of France's cultural relations with Latin America, putting an emphasis on scientific exchanges, technical cooperation and the promotion of language in the economic sphere (notably by creating the position of "international volunteers" placed in French companies abroad). He actively and efficiently worked towards the recognition of *cultural diversity* in international instances. After organizing a meeting in Paris in June of 1996 with native Latin Americans, during which he underlined France's commitment to support Indigenous Latin America, Chirac, used the "reservoir of votes" held by Latin American countries and Canada to get the *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions* adopted by UNESCO.

At the EU level, France lobbied for the 2000 European-sponsored construction of a *Common Area of Higher Education Latin America- Caribbean*—



*EU (ALCUE)* in order to reinforce academic exchanges<sup>34</sup>. This first initiative allowed the creation of other programs such as ALFA (the development of university networks between countries of both continents) and Alban (graduate scholarships allowing Latin American students to study in Europe). It was easy for France to “upload” this preference for privileging cultural and scientific cooperation with Latin America because it was a goal shared by many other member states, particularly Spain, Germany and the UK, and did not meet any opponents. Paradoxically, however, this increase in Europe’s visibility and potential on the academic scene allowed France to progressively disengage from bilateral scholarship programs, even though the number of European grants offered by the Alban program (now extinct) was far behind what was put forward by the United States (Fulbright), the United Kingdom (British Council) or Canada. In a way, it could be said that France “outsourced” this kind of cooperation to the EU. In any case, after ten years of existence, the results of the EU-LAC process remain rather limited, while cooperation in higher education and academic exchange is one of the few areas, which have yielded concrete, if not spectacular, results.

It must be noted with regard to the establishment of the EU-LAC bi-regional relationship, that the institutional format adopted by “Rio Process” since 1999, was in line with French (and British) preferences regarding European Foreign Policy: an intergovernmental format where summit meetings of heads of state and government of both sides kept the lead of the process, side-lining the Commission and resisting the creation of any new organization.

In the international political arena, it was notable how Jacques Chirac positioned himself in the direct line of action inherited from de Gaulle in relation to the United States: he brought his support to Latin American countries trying to assert their autonomy and sought their backing in the international arena. Accordingly, in 1997, France supported Bolivia in its campaign to have the

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<sup>34</sup> Girardin (Brigitte), « la France, l'Europe et l'Amérique latine », *Géoeconomie*, n°37, Paris, 2006.



“principle of co-responsibility” in drug trafficking recognized.<sup>35</sup> This was in direct opposition to the exclusively repressive policy of Americans to sanction solely the narcotic-producing countries, rather than both ends of the chain. The EU adopted a similar position shortly after, showing the French capacity to still upload their views into certain European initiatives, even against the US. In this case, as had happened during the Central American wars, acting as part of the EU gave France, as well as the others member states, more room for maneuver to hold positions that ran counter to those of the US. Other instances of this strategy were visible in the communiqués of the EU-LAC summits, which condemned the extraterritoriality of the Helms-Burton law, some of the excesses of the war against terrorism, and praised multilateralism as opposed to the unilateralism of the Bush administration<sup>36</sup>. In these cases, instead of Europeanization, acting through the EU seems to be the outcome of an instrumental calculation that uses the EU as an additional instrument available to French foreign policy.

The most dramatic instance of Chirac’s will to maintain the independence of French foreign policy was his threat of veto to the UN Security Council resolution that would have legitimized the Anglo-American military intervention in Iraq, decided by George W. Bush in 2003. French diplomacy actively sought the support of Chile and Mexico during the UN’s Security Council meetings, and certainly represented an important asset to sustain the difficult positioning of these countries. It has to be said, however, that in this particular (but immensely important) case, France even with the strong support of Germany, did not manage to “upload” its preferences at the European level. European unity completely broke down under a strongly divided opinion among member states and within member states. So, this time, it was France (and Germany) who represented an alternative for Latin Americans against US pressure, not the European Union as such, and, for once, neither Spain.

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<sup>35</sup> On March 15, 1997, when touring South America, Jacques Chirac opposed American policy as he declared in La Paz that France recognized the principle of co-responsibility of consumption countries in the issue of drug-trafficking.

<sup>36</sup> See for example : III Cumbre América Latina y el Caribe – Unión Europea, *Declaración de Guadalajara*, Mexico, May 2004, §§ 11,16,18 and 19.

On the economic front, the French government put into place many incentives to help French businesses expand in Latin America and, in particular, in the MERCOSUR region. In March 1997, Chirac spent nine days touring Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia accompanied by more than a hundred businessmen<sup>37</sup>. He clearly wanted to favor the development of economic relations with a region which represented two thirds of South America's GDP. These enterprises greatly benefited from programs of privatization implemented in several countries, notably Argentina, where France became the biggest foreign investor. The French economic plan then focused on Brazil, which provided the incentive for many big French companies (such as EDF, BNP, Renault) to move to the region. Yet, at the EU level, France led the "protectionist" camp in all the free-trade negotiations with Latin American countries (Mexico, Chile) or regional groupings (MERCOSUR, Andean Community, Central America) that were initiated during this period. Always zealous to preserve the rural policy of the EU from the perceived threat of external competition, France has always been the most outspoken "uploader" of a tough EU negotiating position with third parties. Even with Mexico, whose agriculture does not represent a threat to anyone in Europe, France was concerned about the precedent that free trade negotiations between that country and the EU could set for others.<sup>38</sup> And there is no doubt that the agricultural sector has been the main stumbling block to negotiations with MERCOSUR, still stalled after fifteen years.<sup>39</sup> Yet, it has to be recognized that France has been an extremely successful "uploader" of CAP protectionism, because, behind its loud voice, lies a near consensus on the issue among EU

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<sup>37</sup> « Chirac en voyage d'affaires en Amérique latine. Entamée demain au Brésil, la première tournée du Président sur le continent a d'abord des objectifs économiques ». *Libération*, 11 mars 1997.

<sup>38</sup> "Francia bloquea el acuerdo de libre comercio entre la UE y México", *El País*, 27/02/1996. José Antonio Sanahúja, "Trade, Politics, and Democratization: The 1997 Global Agreement Between the European Union and Mexico" en *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, v. 42, núm. 2, Special Issue: The European Union and Latin America: Changing Relations, Miami, Fl., Miami, 2000, pp. 35-62., pp. 48, 52.

<sup>39</sup> The day after the relaunch of EU-Mercosur negotiations was announced at the Madrid UE-LAC summit of 2010, France announced it would block the process because of the agricultural sector. "Diez países europeos encabezados por Francia protestan ante Bélgica por TLC con Mercosur", *ABN*, 12 May 2010.

members states, including those who want a closer relationship with Latin America, like Spain or Germany, or those who favour free-trade in general, like the Netherlands, and in some cases, even Britain.

### **3. Recent developments with Nicolas Sarkozy**

#### **3.1. Political relations: Strong relations with Latin America's emerging powers and a green light for Europe in the rest of the region**

In terms of foreign policy, Nicolas Sarkozy has managed to follow in the footsteps of his predecessors, while somehow breaking away from their legacy. On the one hand, continuity has been apparent in terms of the style adopted with regard to foreign relations issues, a style not dissimilar to that of de Gaulle. Sarkozy wants to hold the decisive role in the foreign policy realm. His way of governing, his desire to take action swiftly and to intervene in all domains, as well as his efforts to be visible to the media while being perceived as a problem-solver, all flourish in the international sphere, a field devoid of any overarching governmental agency and prone to multiple crises. Catering to international relations has taken up a large segment of his schedule: in the first two years of his term, he was out of the country on official affairs more times than Jacques Chirac during his twelve years in power.

On the other hand, Sarkozy has completely distanced himself from the Gaullist desire to break away from the United States. As a deputy during the time of the American intervention in Iraq, he was a strong partisan of France supporting the deployment. Since becoming President, he has reincorporated France in NATO's integrated command in 2008, and has relentlessly worked to be recognized as a privileged partner by the US (first by George W. Bush, then by Barack Obama), albeit with limited results. In breaking with de Gaulle, Giscard d'Estaing, Mitterrand and Chirac, all of whom sought international support in their attempt to change the existing international order, Sarkozy is preoccupied only

by the action taken by France (and by him in particular) within the international sphere. This philosophy informed Sarkozy's many initiatives during the French presidency of the European Union in 2008, i.e. to solve the Georgian crisis, the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean (the objectives of which remain unclear), or his activism to ratify the Lisbon Treaty.

In this context, Latin America has only occasionally been perceived as a critical arena for France in the international order, depending on whether particular projects are deemed important. With no more overall international ambition, the strategy of the "reservoir of votes" has slowly dissipated and been replaced in practice, by the concern about helping French companies succeed outside the country. This is why now France concentrates its efforts towards a handful of emerging countries considered a priority in the region: Brazil and Mexico and, to a lesser extent, Argentina, Venezuela and Colombia. Because of their economic scope and their geopolitical position, Brazil and Mexico are countries that are capable of exercising a considerable regional, even international, influence. Brazil, Mexico and Argentina are members of the G20, which has become a privileged vehicle for discussing many international issues since the financial crisis of 2008 broke out. Mexico is also a member of the OECD. This privileged relationship with Brazil and Mexico translates into the creation of a large number of programs that do not necessarily connect with EU policy, but rather a wide variety of multilateral or bilateral institutions.

On the French-Brazilian front, the UNAIDS program was launched by the General Assembly of the UN in September 2006, under a joint initiative by Presidents Lula and Chirac.<sup>40</sup> Efforts were made to transform the UN's diverging positions within its program for the environment (United Nations Environment Program -UNEP), and Brasilia backed France's candidacy to the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO). France is also a strong proponent of Brazil's permanent entry in the United Nations' Security Council.

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<sup>40</sup> This program works to eradicate a variety of pandemics (aids, malaria, tuberculosis). It has been funded by taxing plane fares. The first results of UNITAID are very encouraging.

In relation to Mexico, a “High level Group”, composed by 15 French and Mexican personalities (namely, high-ranking businessmen and preeminent intellectuals), was created in 2007 with the goal to revive bilateral relations, particularly on the economic front. Eighteen agreements were elaborated to confront international issues, from world governance, to climate change, and to revive French-Mexican cooperation in key areas (security, health, research, education, training, sustainable development). During Sarkozy’s visit in December 2008, a “strategic partnership” between France and Mexico was adopted to reinforce the cooperation and dialogue. Yet, his insistence that Mexico should participate actively in peacekeeping operations did not go down well among the ruling and chattering classes.

### **3.2. Economic relations and development cooperation**

Economically, France is very involved in both countries with 350 French companies located in Mexico and 400 in Brazil, 35 of which belong to the CAC 40 (French stock exchange index). Brazil is France’s number one commercial partner in Latin America. In Mexico though, France owns only about 1% of the market share, a number that has not changed in several years, while Asian imports are gaining traction. As a supplier, France ranks twelfth behind the United States, but also China, Japan, Korea, and is fourth in the European ranking, behind Germany, Italy, and Spain.

In terms of cooperation, the contribution of France’s Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MAEE) to Brazil reached 3.9 million Euros in 2008 (excluding schools), and Mexico receiving 2.7 million in 2009. These two countries are the only ones in the region which have not had their cooperation budgets reduced during the past years. In both countries, the priority is research and technological innovation (France is Brazil’s second scientific partner behind the US) as well as technical cooperation. In Brazil, the governmental prioritizes focus on social policies, small-scale sustainable agriculture, and state reform. In Mexico, the

focus is on the modernization of public institutions, most pointedly, in police cooperation and the war against organized crime (scientific police, training for the federal police) and of public administrations (training at the *École Nationale d'Administration* (ENA) of future public servants, reinforcement of territorial public functions). In the case of Brazil, France is working on the definition of a new kind of partnership concerned with multilingualism and cultural diversity, while in Mexico it focuses primarily on health (lab research and training). In conclusion, cultural, scientific and development cooperation with both these countries is important. 2005 was the year of Brazil in France, 2009 of France in Brazil, while 2011 should have been the year of Mexico in France.<sup>41</sup>

This shift towards bilateralism has been accompanied by a lack of interest in regional multilateralism, illustrated by Sarkozy's cancellation of his participation in the Fifth EU-LAC Summit only weeks before it took place in Lima (May 2008). Latin American countries were disappointed by this late cancellation, which they interpreted as a sign that France held little interest in the region. The Madrid summit of May 2010 confirmed this: Sarkozy spent less than half a day. He was only interested in meeting the presidents of Brazil and Chile. It must be noted, however, that this loss of interest in the bi-regional summits is not exclusive to France, as the process has yielded poor results. Since the Vienna summit in 2006, the EU, like France, has been abandoning the idea of negotiating free-trade agreements with regional blocks in Latin America, in favor of bilateral agreements with particular countries.<sup>42</sup>

While it was promoting bilateralism with a few countries, France participated very actively in setting up European programs of cooperation with Latin America,

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<sup>41</sup> On February 15, 2011, the Mexican government decided to withdraw from all the activities scheduled, after Nicolas Sarkozy decided to dedicate this year to Florence Cassez, a French woman condemned to 60 years of prison for complicity in kidnapping, and whom Mexico refused to extradite. See Georges Couffignal, « L'année du Mexique en France. Un gâchis qui aurait pu être évité », *Le Monde*, 22 février 2011.

<sup>42</sup> For more than 15 years, the EU had as apriority to negotiate Free Trade agreements with Latin America's regional groupings, MERCOSUR, CAN, MCCA... The EU signed in 2000 a deal with Mexico and in 2002 with Chile. After the disintegration of the Andean Community, it has opened negotiations with Peru and Colombia. Despite the unchanged preference to negotiate block by block, the EU cannot fail to notice the failure of its policies on the matter, as the only agreement of this sort, with Central America, was signed as late as 2010. Sberro (Stephan), « Existe-t-il une relation stratégique entre l'Amérique Latine et l'Europe ? », *Problèmes d'Amérique latine*, 66/67, fall/winter 2007.

trying to “upload” its policy preferences. With Spain, it headed the *Eurosocial* program, to promote social cohesion in Latin America. The program facilitates the exchange of knowledge between public administrations in the fields of justice, education, employment, taxation, and health in order to reinforce managerial institutions of public policies and therefore reinforce social cohesion<sup>43</sup>. In this case, French uploading has been successful, since the promotion of social cohesion is a policy objective widely shared among EU members and the European Commission. However, it has been difficult to give it concrete meaning in relation to Latin America, given the meager funds dedicated to it, so the results in this area have been rather scarce.

Similarly, France has taken several steps towards launching a *EuroClima* program, which strives to limit the gas emissions of Latin American countries by helping them to acquire tools to fight climate change. Yet, in this stance, France was confronted with both the reluctance of the European Commission to put forth large amounts of funds into the program and the relative disinterest of Latin American countries in the matter. In fact, most of them (as it was made apparent during the 2009 Copenhagen Summit) consider that climate change is, first and foremost, the responsibility of developed countries.

Despite these specific attempts to influence EU policy towards Latin America, the general trend today, is that France follows the European Union lead when it comes to dealing with policymaking towards the region as a whole. This decision has been taken at the highest level, despite the constant effort of certain high-ranking officials of the MAEE that deal with the region. Apart from Mexico and Brazil, the amounts awarded through bilateral cooperation have been decreasing rapidly (more than 30% from 2008 to 2010). Cooperation policies are left to the European Union, which allows the President to more pointedly focus on actions that enhance his media visibility – for example, France sought to position itself as a mediator between Colombia and Venezuela in order to obtain the

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<sup>43</sup>[http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/latin-america/regional-cooperation/eurosocial/index\\_fr.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/latin-america/regional-cooperation/eurosocial/index_fr.htm).



liberation of Ingrid Betancourt - and to maintain strong bilateral relations with a few emerging countries considered as a priority.

### 3. 3. Changes in the administrative structure

These developments are particularly clear when observing the structure of the MAEE, on the one hand, and the French diplomatic presence on the other. The *Direction d'Amérique* of the MAEE, which has competences over the countries of both South and North America, is linked to the French Permanent Representation in Brussels regarding the sectorial dossiers which are treated by the Commission, or those in which France has positions that it wants to have adopted at the EU level (upload). However, the programs launched by the various DG's of the Commission towards Latin America are not really coordinated with the MAEE's. Brussels could thus have cooperation programs with certain countries in Latin America (for example in the field of higher education or of State reform), while France develops similar programs in the same fields without any real coordination between them. This is a common issue in the field of cooperation where competencies are shared between the EU and the national level. Having said that, most of the time, France relies on the EU for the essential part of its cooperation policy, except for the Mexican and Brazilian cases, or in very particular and politically sensitive cases, like Cuba and Haiti. As to linguistic aspects of cooperation policy, which is strictly national, most actions are delegated to the Alliance Française, an agency created at the end of the XIXth century and with a large degree of autonomy, which has antennae all over Latin America. Last, in the field of development cooperation, it must be noted that, an institution created to act in Africa and former French colonies, the *Agence Française de Développement* (AFD) has started operating in Latin America and the Caribbean very recently.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> cf. Quenan (Carlos) et Velut (Sébastien), (dir.), *Les enjeux du développement en Amérique latine*, Paris, AFD-Institut des Amériques, 2011.



Retrenchment from the region is visible in the structure of diplomatic postings. Their staff is now very limited, except for the two countries considered as « strategic », as are indeed their budgets. This evolution is not unique to Latin America. In 2009, the MAEE introduced a classification of embassies, dividing the world in four categories, in order of importance. None in Latin America is in the first category. Mexico and Brazil are in the second, while the rest are in the third and fourth categories, which means they are endowed with very limited resources. These changes are the result of a general rationalization of French public administration that has touched upon all Ministries (the RGPP, *Réforme générale des politiques publiques*), as well as a major internal reorganization of the MAEE. Another source of pressure for change has been the increase in France's participation in the fiduciary funds of multilateral and EU programs, which come out of the MAEE budget, thus leaving ever fewer money for bilateral action.

## Conclusion

In accordance with our analytical framework, this review of the evolution of French foreign policy towards Latin America in relation to Europe shows that the region has never been considered a priority for French diplomacy, and keeps on declining, except for a couple of “emerging” powers. For a very long time, Latin America could have been a strong supporter of France's efforts to build a new world order (by changing the bipolar rationale, by becoming a spokesman to the third-world, by encouraging the emergence of a multipolar stage, etc.), but this never quite worked out, apart from very particular instances, like the conflict in Central America during the 1980s, and the discussions in the UN Security Council previous to the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

In the early years, Europe was perceived as a potential amplifier for the ambitions of France. At the time, the French diplomatic apparatus was directed towards having its positions adopted by European authorities (*upload*), as well as

by the Latin American countries (!). Today though, things have changed. France has abandoned the instrument of “cultural diplomacy” on the international scene, and any ambitions of cooperation towards the region as a whole have been relinquished to the European Union’s authority, and the Spanish who lead them.

In short, France now participates in the initiatives decided by Brussels (*download*) and focuses its foreign policy efforts on the few countries it deems politically and economically relevant in the emerging new world order, as do other member states like Germany or the UK, as result of declining power, resources and influence on the world stage.

This chapter has identified four distinct periods of French relations with Latin America, over which, the EEC/EU role has varied. The first period, with De Gaulle, was basically one of uploading French trade and cooperation interests into the nascent EEC, thus having great influence over the latter’s relation to Latin America. The President himself carefully cultivated the rest of the relationship bilaterally. The second period, with Pompidou and Giscard d’Estaing was still of French upload into the EEC, facilitated by a less confrontational –if still strongly intergovernmental- approach to European integration. The third period, that of Mitterrand, represented the highest point of relations between France, the EU and Latin America, especially visible in the rapprochement that took place around the San José process. French commitment to European integration ensured that this country had enormous influence in the setting up of the nascent EU Foreign Policy towards the region. The last period, that of Jacques Chirac, set general trends that continue still today: a tendency to disengage with the region, except for a couple of important countries, while leaving everything else to the EU. However, Chirac still used the EU as an instrument when this was suitable and was key in establishing the EULAC strategic partnership in a multilateral and intergovernmental framework. Sarkozy, in contrast, seems less interesting in using the EU to pursue French interests (*upload*) and more prone to leave to it anything that it does not consider a priority, in what looks more like a sort of outsourcing.

This successful French “upload” of its policy preferences in a policy area, which is apparently not directly related to Latin America or “indirect upload”, has indeed been an important obstacle in the development of further links between the two regions, despite the fact that it is favored in other influential policy areas, like diplomacy, industry and culture. This clash between the “global” and the “sectorial” logics that articulate French views in the EU,<sup>45</sup> is present in other member states as well in relation to Latin America, notably Spain and Germany.

Revised by L. Ruano and G Couffignal on 04.10.2011

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<sup>45</sup> Christian Lequesne, Paris-Bruxelles : Comment se fait la politique européenne de la France, Paris, Sciences Po, 1993, p. 24.