



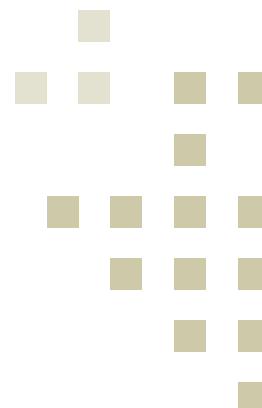
[692] Paper

French foreign policy and the limits of Europeanisation

The changing French position on EU enlargement

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[Summary] This article focuses on the changing French position on EU enlargement. The aim of the analysis is to study the interplay between the foreign policy of the EU and the foreign policy of France, but also between the official French foreign policy and the French public opinion. Most of the literature on EU enlargement underestimates the importance of public opinion. This article is therefore an attempt to present a more comprehensive understanding of the changing French position on enlargement by combining a top down with a bottom up approach. By doing this the analysis do not consider whether enlargement is good or bad, but rather how a member state's position on this issue may change both through a process of Europeanisation and as a result of changes in domestic public opinion.

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Introduction

This article focuses on the changing French position on EU enlargement. The aim is to study the interplay between the foreign policy of the European Union¹ and the foreign policy of France, but also between official foreign policy and public opinion in France. Most of the literature on EU enlargement has underestimated the importance of public opinion. This contribution seeks to present a more comprehensive understanding of the changing French position on enlargement, by combining a top-down approach with a bottom-up one. The analysis does not take a standpoint on whether EU enlargement is good or bad: it is more concerned with how a member state's position on this issue may change, both through a process of Europeanisation and as a result of changes in domestic public opinion. Thus, the objective of the analysis is twofold:

First, it aims at uncovering the extent to which the French official position on EU enlargement has changed through a process of Europeanisation and elite socialisation within the EU. One could argue that it has become 'suitable' for EU members to be supportive of the enlargement process, and increasingly difficult to be against it. While France has traditionally supported deepening before widening, the French political discourse has recently been very much in accordance with the EU norm. France supported the inclusion of 10 new countries in 2004, as well as agreeing to include Bulgaria and Romania from 2007 and even to opening up

¹ This paper considers the EU's policy on enlargement as a type of foreign policy action. While EU enlargement is not part of the CFSP, it is part of a broader definition of EU foreign policy that includes all external action of the EU.

negotiations with Turkey from October this year. Can this be understood a result of a Europeanisation of the French elite?

Second, we will look into the importance of French public opinion and how it affects the official French position on enlargement, thereby either accelerating or slowing down the effects of Europeanisation. According to the Standard Eurobarometer from 1998 to 2005, the French public has become increasingly sceptical towards the enlargement of the European Union. This is clearly shown by France's rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in a referendum on 29 May 2005. Since the Treaty was developed in order to make an enlarged Union function better and more efficiently, this rejection has been interpreted as a protest against enlargement – both the enlargement that has taken place and future plans, especially the prospects of including Turkey. This interpretation is further strengthened by the fact that the negative result of the referendum almost immediately led to discussions concerning the possibilities of further enlargement. Recent statements from French political leaders indicate a slight return to a more restrictive official policy on this issue. Does this mean that public opinion has slowed down or even reversed the process of Europeanisation in France?

This article is organised in four sections. In the first part I present the theoretical debate in the literature on enlargement and position my own contribution in relation to this literature. In the second part I offer an overview of the French official approach towards EU enlargement, showing the apparent change from reluctance to support, due to elite socialisation and Europeanisation. The third part focuses on opinion polls on enlargement from 1998 to 2005, comparing French views with the average in the EU as well as specifically in Germany and in the UK. In the fourth part, I discuss the importance of public opinion and how it may

influence official policy and thus limit the socialisation and Europeanisation of French elites on the question of enlargement.

The literature on enlargement

Most theoretically informed studies of EU enlargement take the Union's enlargement policy as the dependent variable and try to explain why and how this policy has been developed. This means that much of the literature has been dominated by a debate concerning whether the support for enlargement towards the East was motivated by normative/ideational arguments (Constructivist approaches) or purely instrumental arguments (Rationalist approaches).

In a chapter on the logics underpinning EU enlargement, Helene Sjursen and Karen Smith (2004) suggest that enlargement is justified by reference to common values or to universal principles rather than common interests. Similarly, Frank Schimmelfenning (2001) argues that economic and geopolitical interests alone cannot account for the Union's decision to embark on such an ambitious and costly enlargement. He argues that the West, confronted with the power of norm-based arguments, has talked itself into a commitment to admit countries that share its liberal values. It is, in his view, 'rhetorical entrapment' that has subsequently sustained enlargement, even though mere association for East European states would have better served the interest of the EU 15.

Opposed to this view, Andrew Moravscik and Milda Anna Vachudova (2003) argue that the Western support for Eastern enlargement still may be explained through an interest-based analysis. They argue that it is the long-term positive effects of enlargement that explain the positive attitude in the West, and that measures of idealism have only played a supporting

role. They argue, for instance, that rhetorical idealism can easily flourish when ‘the impact is marginal’, when ‘measurable economic and geopolitical benefits are on offer’ and when ‘economic costs are marginal or sunk’ .

While these approaches propose different explanations for why the EU as a whole or the governments in the Western part of Europe support enlargement, they do not question whether this support will last. Both approaches focus exclusively on the elite level, which means that they fail to account for the fact that public opinion seems increasingly sceptical towards enlargement, and that this in turn may influence the official policy – first in individual member states, and then in the EU as a whole.

It has been argued that the popular rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in France (and the Netherlands) was mainly motivated by perceived fears that enlargement would lead to negative economic consequences and more unemployment. As popular support is crucial to the success of the enlargement project, it is necessary to include this level in the analysis.

Thus this article looks at attitudes towards enlargement among both elites and the general public, using the case of France. The interesting thing about France in this context is that its official policy has traditionally been more reluctant than that of many other countries towards the enlargement process, and has favoured deepening before widening. However, Eastern enlargement was difficult to resist, even for France. Göran Persson, the Swedish prime minister, left no room for doubt under the Swedish Presidency in 2001: ‘Any country that tried to block enlargement would bear a heavy and historic responsibility’ (quoted in *The Economist*, 17 May 2001).

Instead of arguing that the official French support for Eastern enlargement is a result of rhetorical entrapment, as Schimmelfenning does, I will argue that this is a result of Europeanisation or elite socialisation within the EU.

In previous work on Europeanisation, I have been inspired by the spiral model on socialisation developed by Risse and Sikkink (1999). While this model was developed in order to understand the process that states undergo to comply with human rights norms, it also relates to broader theoretical debates in International Relations about the influence of ideas and norms on the behaviour of states. This model focuses on a process of socialisation, through which central ideas held by individuals become norms in the sense of collective understandings about appropriate behaviour – and then, in turn, lead to changes in the identities, interests and behaviour of individuals and states. It can be argued that support for EU enlargement has become one such widely accepted EU norm.

According to the spiral model, a socialisation process takes place through various phases. The process starts when member-state representatives adapt their discourse in accordance with the norm. Initially, they employ arguments in order to further their *instrumentally* defined interests – or they engage in rhetoric, as Schimmelfenning (1999) defines it. The more they justify their interests, however, the more do they become entangled in arguments, and the logic of argumentative rationality slowly takes over. Processes of *argumentation and persuasion* rather than instrumental bargaining prevail when actors develop collective understandings that form part of their identities and lead them to determine their interests (Risse & Sikkink, 1999:16). This means that such a socialisation process often begins with instrumental adaptation, while learning and a more profound change in interests and identity may follow at a later stage.

Elsewhere, I have applied this model to show the extent to which the official policy of EU member states and states closely linked to the EU have become Europeanised or socialised into complying with the common EU norm in security policy, which I have defined as a ‘comprehensive security approach’ (Rieker 2005; Rieker forthcoming). Here, I will use the same model in order to investigate the extent to which the official position of a member state (France) on enlargement changes in accordance to the EU norm, promoting strong support for further enlargement.

While this model may help explain how elites get socialised in the EU, its top-down approach means that it fails to account for the importance of public opinion. This is problematic, since there always will be a limit to how far such a socialisation process may go if challenged by sceptical public opinion. While public opinion seems less important when studying changes in foreign and security policy, it is crucial in relation to EU enlargement, which has more direct consequences for a whole range of aspects in the daily lives of the average man and woman. By including this level of analysis, I hope to show that a combination of these two levels is mandatory for a more comprehensive understanding of changes and/or continuity in a state’s official policy on enlargement.

The popular reluctance in France – exemplified by the recent rejection of the Constitutional Treaty – indicates that there are limits to how far elite socialisation can go. While French political leaders have gone from hesitation to support for the enlargement process, and apparently not merely for instrumental reasons, public opinion has grown increasingly sceptical. To the extent that public opinion matters, this may, in turn, influence also official policy towards further enlargement.

In the next two sections, we will examine the difference between French elites and the general public in attitudes towards enlargement over time. In the final part, I discuss how the spiral model may be adapted so as to take into account the importance of public opinion.

French official policy on enlargement

Traditionally, France has been somewhat reluctant to any enlargement of the European Community/Union. While Charles de Gaulle was directly hostile to British membership, George Pompidou agreed to Britain's joining but was profoundly suspicious of the Ostpolitik conducted by Willy Brandt in the early 1970s and was reluctant towards the admission of Greece, Portugal and Spain. The latter actually split the French political parties. While the Gaullists nourished fears for French farmers, Mitterand hoped that the arrival of these three southerly countries would tip the balance in the Community, away from a German and liberal Europe and towards a Mediterranean and social democratic Europe. When this did not happen, reluctance toward further enlargement was once again strengthened. France feared that its influence would diminish, but also that the EU would dwindle into nothing more than a free market zone – exactly what it believes the British have always wanted (Vernet 1992).

Faced with the choice between deepening or widening, the French government opted for the former, believing that closer ties would add to the cohesion of the Community while expansion would involve the risk of reducing it. With the end of the Cold War and the opening towards the East, this was not an easy choice. In fact with de Gaulle's vision of a 'Europe extending from the Atlantic to the Urals', the French regarded themselves as the pioneers of Western policy towards the East (Vernet 1992). There were three main reasons for France's scepticism towards further enlargement.

First, the fear of *losing its historical leadership* of the Union. While France felt confident of its leading role in an EU of 15 members, this would have to change in an EU of 25. Second, the fear of undermining the *French model of big government* and high taxes, with enlargement bringing in more low-wage, low-tax countries. Finally, the fear of having more countries with an *Atlanticist foreign-policy orientation* in the EU.

The importance of the last point was evident in the run-up to the Iraq war in 2003, when the candidate countries strongly supported the USA. While Iraq and the EU's enlargement may seem unrelated, in the French view they are closely linked. France has long cherished ambitions that the EU could some day act as a superpower capable of standing up against the United States. It has also long suspected the Central Europeans of being a Trojan horse for the Atlantic alliance within the EU – and the Iraq crisis dramatically illustrated these fears. According to the French, the Americans were acting dangerously, providing Europe with both an opportunity and a duty to unite against the US 'hyperpower'. But France's ambition of presenting a united European front was undermined by expressions of support for the US position. First came a letter from eight European countries – five current EU members, plus Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, the three biggest members-to-be. Then came a letter from the Vilnius Ten, a central European and Balkan group which included five more countries due to join the Union the following year. This led Jacques Chirac to threaten to block the enlargement of the EU to take in ten more countries set to join from May 2004 (*The Economist*, 28 April 2005).

Given the strong consensus among EU leaders that enlargement must come, it was difficult for France to implement these threats. In addition, most French political leaders seemed to

accept that enlargement was both inevitable and necessary, despite their misgivings about the consequences. Even Chirac has officially expressed strong support for enlargement on several occasions. In a speech held in Vilnius in 2001 he said that there was no need to doubt the will among the Europeans in general, and the French in particular, to make enlargement successful:

When the Wall fell, I was among the first to defend the need to reconcile geography and history. And I have supported the entry of your countries in the European Union. Today, I may tell you that you are welcome. You should not doubt the determination of the Europeans, and in particular the French, to make enlargement successful. And to make it succeed rapidly. For us, as for you, enlargement is a great political ambition before it is a technical project (Chirac 2001).²

And in a speech to his diplomatic corps in 2003, shortly after the Copenhagen summit that decided to enlarge the Union with ten new countries and in the midst of the Iraq crisis, Chirac also expressed firm support to the upcoming enlargement, while emphasising the need for stronger institutions:

After the successful introduction of the Euro, the year 2002 ended in Copenhagen with an historical enlargement. The European family is finally together. France receives the ten new countries with joy but also with emotion. This enlargement is a chance since it opens new horizons to the Union, new spaces for activities, and the perspectives of renewed exchange between people.

But enlargement also represents a challenge and a responsibility. The passage from 15 to 25 members in the spring 2004 will deeply change the nature of the Union. It will be richer in diversity, but also more heterogeneous. The functioning of its institutions should adapt to a

² *Dès la chute du Mur, j'ai défendu, parmi les tout premiers, la nécessité de réconcilier la géographie et l'histoire. Et j'ai souhaité l'entrée de vos pays dans l'Union européenne. Aujourd'hui, je peux vous dire que vous y êtes les bienvenus. Ne doutez pas de la détermination des Européens, et en particulier des Français, à réussir l'élargissement. Et à le réussir vite. Pour nous, comme pour vous, l'élargissement est une grande ambition politique avant d'être un projet technique.*

new reality. Those who have the will and the means should go ahead and show the way. The European Union will have to ask itself questions concerning the limits of its extension, and define privileged partnerships with its new neighbours in the East and in the Mediterranean region (Chirac 2003).³

Chirac even voiced support for Turkish membership as a long-term goal. In 2004 Chirac said that Turkey could become a member in the perspective of 10 to 15 years, if it improved its human rights record and reformed its legal system (Georges-Picot 2004). At the European Council Meeting in December 2004, the French also agreed to start negotiations with Turkey in October 2005. On the other hand, Chirac has also made it clear that France is likely to hold a referendum on this issue, and in this he has been widely supported by several other French politicians. This indicates why we must follow the evolution in French public opinion, if we are to be able to say something about French official policy on this issue.

While official support for further enlargement will depend on how public opinion develops, it is still possible to argue that France's traditional scepticism towards enlargement has to some extent been replaced by an increased support and that this seems to be a result of a socialisation process within the EU. Still, there are limits to how far such a Europeanisation may go, if it lacks support in public opinion.

French public opinion on the future of Europe and the enlargement process

³ *Après l'introduction réussie de l'euro, l'année 2002 s'est achevée à Copenhague par un élargissement historique. La famille européenne se rassemble enfin. La France accueille les dix nouveaux pays membres avec joie mais aussi avec émotion. Cet élargissement est une chance car il ouvre à l'Union de nouveaux horizons, de nouveaux espaces d'activité, des perspectives d'échanges renouvelés entre les hommes. Mais l'élargissement est aussi un défi et une responsabilité. Le passage de 15 à 25 membres au printemps 2004 va profondément changer la nature-même de l'Union. Elle sera plus riche de diversité, mais aussi plus hétérogène. Le fonctionnement de ses institutions devra s'adapter à une nouvelle réalité. Ceux qui en ont la volonté et les moyens devront pouvoir aller de l'avant et montrer le chemin. L'Union européenne sera également conduite à s'interroger sur les limites de son extension et à définir des relations de partenariat privilégié avec ses nouveaux voisins de l'Est et du pourtour méditerranéen.*

On 29 May 2005, a clear majority (55%) of the French rejected the EU Constitutional Treaty in a referendum. Even though the latest public opinion polls had shown an increase in the ‘no’ camp, many optimists were hoping that the French would finally change their mind – that they would realise that their country, as one of the founding fathers of European integration and a keen supporter of a strong and independent Europe, could not reject a Constitutional Treaty aimed precisely at strengthening the political aspects of the EU. There was also good reason for optimism, since the Eurobarometer from autumn 2004 had shown that 70% of the French supported the Constitution. Even the survey (Eurobarometer 62, 2004) taken in May and June – at the same time as the referendum – showed that 60% of the French supported the Constitution!

But while the majority supported the Constitution, there was also a clear majority, both in France and in the EU in general, who worried about the consequences of enlargement. They cited fears such as ‘the transfer of jobs to other member states which have lower average costs’, ‘more difficulties for farmers’, ‘increase in drug trafficking and international crime’ and ‘a loss of social benefits’ (Eurobarometer 62, 2004: 143). In addition, only 32% of the French supported further enlargement of the EU beyond that which took place in 2004. The link between the Constitutional Treaty and further enlargement had also been established in the political debate prior to the referendum.

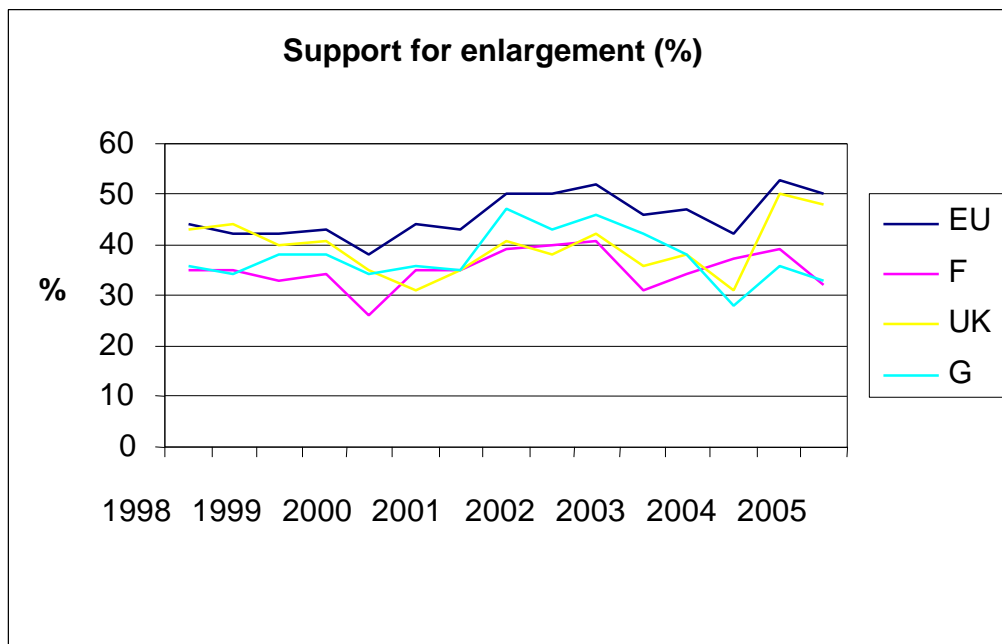
Within the EU, there has been scepticism to the enlargement process for some time. A Eurobarometer opinion poll taken in 2002, just as EU governments were concluding the terms for the 2004 enlargement, showed very little popular support for this process. In fact, 41% of EU citizens did not want to know any more about the candidate countries, 76% did not wish

to live or work in them, and as much as 91% said they felt ‘no ties of any kind’ with them. (Eurobarometer 56.3 2002: Executive summary).

Looking at the Standard Eurobarometer, we note that general support for the enlargement process dropped from 50% in spring 2002 to 42% in spring 2004. In France, public opinion has consistently been more sceptical to enlargement than the EU average. Only 40% of the French supported enlargement in 2002 – but this figure has also remained more stable than in most other countries. In spring 2004, 37% of the French said they were in favour of enlargement. In this poll, taken only a few months before the ten new members joined the EU, the score was lower only in Luxembourg (37%), Austria (34%), the UK (31%) and Germany (28%). The report therefore concluded: ‘with the approach of 1 May 2004, support for enlargement is fading’ (Eurobarometer 61, 2004: B92).

Of all EU nationalities, the French are among the most hostile to enlargement. Looking at the Standard Eurobarometer from 1998 (when this question was first posed) to the beginning of 2005, for the EU as a whole, we see that support for enlargement has seldom been over 50%. Only from autumn 2001 to spring 2003 did it increase to 50% and 52%. In comparison, in France support has never exceeded 41%. Interestingly, support in the UK and Germany has also been lower than the EU average. This means that the numerical majority of the EU population has been against enlargement for most of this period.

	1998	1998	1999	1999	2000	2000	2001	2001	2002	2002	2003	2003	2004	2004	2005
Spring (S) / Autumn (A)	S	A	S	A	S	A	S	A	S	A	S	A	S	A	S
EU	44	42	42	43	38	44	43	50	50	52	46	47	42	53	50
France (F)	35	35	33	34	26	35	35	39	40	41	31	34	37	39	32
United Kingdom (UK)	43	44	40	41	35	31	35	41	38	42	36	38	31	50	48
Germany (G)	36	34	38	38	34	36	35	47	43	46	42	38	28	36	33



Still, the Standard Eurobarometer opinion poll from November 2004 concludes that there has been ‘an important increase in support for *further* enlargement’ (Eurobarometer 62, 2004: 154). However, one main reason for this change is that, from May 2004, the new members are included in the survey, and support for further enlargement is particularly strong in these countries.

But that is not the only reason. There has been a notable upswing in the EU 15 as well. While 53% of those surveyed in the EU 25 supported further enlargement, the figure for the EU 15 was not so very different – as high as 49% (Eurobarometer 62, 2004). In France, however, there was no big change, with only 39% of those surveyed declaring themselves in favour of further enlargement. And in this survey, the difference between the UK and France is much more marked than six months earlier, with 50% of the British respondents in favour of further enlargement.

Data from the most recent Eurobarometer survey, from spring 2005, show a drop in support for further enlargement in the EU 25. The decrease is most pronounced in France and Germany, where figures fell from 39% and 36% in autumn 2004 to 32% and 33%, respectively, in 2005. In the UK, support has remained close to the average, at 48% .

In order to have a better idea of how the public opinion relates to the question of enlargement, we should examine the answers given to more detailed questions on the consequences of enlargement. The more specific the questions, the greater the increase in the number of negative replies in most member states. For instance, when the data are specified for various candidate countries, only 35% support membership for Turkey.

While the standard Eurobarometer does not have that many specific questions about enlargement, in March 2003 there was a Flash Eurobarometer on EU enlargement (Eurobarometer 140, 2003). This showed a clear majority (65%) who agreed that enlargement would reduce risks of war and conflicts in Europe, that the EU would have a stronger voice on the international scene (78%) and that Europe would be culturally richer (82%) after enlargement. On the other hand, a majority also agreed that enlargement would be expensive for the current member states (68%) and that it would be more difficult to make decisions in an enlarged EU (76%). In addition, 43% opined that enlargement would mean an increase in unemployment in member states, and 41% thought that social welfare levels would drop in the current member states.

The differences between the UK and France are not that great. However, the difference is most pronounced for the two last questions concerning unemployment and social welfare: here we find the two countries situated on opposite sides of the EU average, with the French

expecting more negative consequences after enlargement. Also interesting is that a clear majority in Germany expect enlargement to bring such negative consequences.

Even though there are not many specific questions about enlargement in the twice-yearly Standard Eurobarometer, the section dealing with ‘the main concerns of European citizens’ may provide some important indications. For instance, the two most recent surveys show that unemployment is seen as the main concern. In autumn 2004, 46% in EU 25 and 51% in France mentioned unemployment as their main concern. In spring 2005, the corresponding figure had risen to 50% in the EU, but figures for individual member states are not available. Unemployment is also seen as one of the policy areas where people have a rather negative view of the Union’s role – only 25% of the EU 25 and 19% of the French feel that the EU plays a positive role in combating unemployment. The EU scores much better in policy areas linked to another major concern – insecurity. With regard to the fight against crime, the fight against terrorism, and defence/ foreign affairs, there are more positive perceptions of the role of the EU (Eurobarometer 62, 2004: 27).

As noted, unemployment the main concern, with over 40% fearing that enlargement will bring greater unemployment. This may give some indication of the trend. Thus it is not surprising to see an increase in popular resistance to further enlargement – in France and in other EU countries as well.

Public opinion and the limits of Europeanisation

While France’s political leaders seemed to have been ‘Europeanised’ and socialised into supporting the enlargement process – whether out of political correctness (instrumental adaptation) or true conviction (learning) – the French public sees things differently.

Why is it important to study the evolution in public opinion? France's rejection of the Constitutional Treaty and the increasing scepticism towards EU enlargement may, in turn, lead to changes in the elite discourse as well. In fact, shortly after the results of the referendum in France, political leaders made it clear that they would focus more on defending French national interests in the EU, and that the enlargement process would have to be slowed down. A few weeks after the referendum and prior to the European Council meeting, the French parliament organised a debate on the potential consequences of the referendum. Recognising the seriousness of the situation, Dominique de Villepin opted to talk about 'political difficulties' rather than a 'crisis'. The newly appointed French prime minister, wishing to show that he was attentive to the dual demands expressed through the vote on 29 May, argued that he would:

...defend the interests of our country while taking into account the worries and the aspirations of the French [and] defend the unity of the Europeans (quoted in *Le Monde*, 17 June, my translation).⁴

But de Villepin also argued that the enlargement process now had to proceed more slowly:

The French want to know in what kind of Europe they are constructing their future and where the external borders will be. The engagements taken in relation to Bulgaria and Romania will be kept, with special attention to the agreed criteria. But beyond that, we should open a process of reflection with our partners concerning the nature of future enlargements (quoted in *Le Monde*, 17 June, my translation).⁵

⁴ *Défendre les intérêts de notre pays en prenant en compte les inquiétudes et les aspirations des Françaises et des Français [et] défendre l'unité et le rassemblement des Européens.*

⁵ *Les Françaises et les Français veulent savoir dans quelle Europe ils construiront leur avenir et quelles seront ses frontières. Les engagements pris à l'égard de la Bulgarie et de la Roumanie seront tenus, en veillant avec une attention*

A former French prime minister, Edouard Balladur, currently head of the Commission for External Relations in the French Parliament, was even more explicit:

Europe cannot enlarge eternally; its recent extension has already provoked too much fear. Once those states with which definite agreements have already been made, on condition they fulfil the agreed criteria, are integrated, all new enlargement has to be postponed for a long time. (Quoted in *Le Monde*, 17 June, my translation).⁶

Although not mentioned explicitly, it is the question of Turkish membership that is the most worrisome. While French officials have already indicated that a referendum will be held on this issue in the end, they are now seeking to postpone the opening of the negotiation process due to begin in October. Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin has recently argued that negotiations should not open unless Turkey declares itself willing to recognise Cyprus. Technically, Turkey has fulfilled the obligations agreed by member states at the European Council meeting in December 2004: Turkey passed legislation in six areas, bringing it closer to EU democratic norms; it also agreed to extend a customs agreement to cover all 25 EU member states – but it insisted this did not mean recognising Cyprus (*EUobserver* 3 August 2005). French political leaders are now trying to use this point in order to postpone the opening of negotiations.

Lately there has been more focus on the negative aspects of enlargement. For example, in a recent book, Jacques Généreux (2005) argues that the decision in the mid-1990s to press ahead with the total integration of ten new East European countries into the full panoply of

particulière au respect des critères fixés. Mais au-delà, nous devons ouvrir une réflexion avec nos partenaires sur les modalités des élargissements futurs.

⁶ *L'Europe ne peut s'élargir indéfiniment, son extension actuelle a suscité déjà trop de craintes. Une fois intégrés les Etats envers lesquels des engagements précis ont été pris, sous réserve qu'ils remplissent eux-mêmes les conditions prévues, il faut différer pour longtemps tout nouvel élargissement*

Brussels institutions – not to mention the opening of negotiations on the same basis with Turkey – has rendered Europe ungovernable.

These examples indicate that there are limits to how far Europeanisation and socialisation may go, and that compliance with the EU norm of continued support for further enlargement is no longer evident. However, this has found very little reflection in the literature on enlargement. Both the Constructivist and the Rationalist approaches seem more interested in explaining the support for enlargement, and avoid questioning the support itself.

The Constructivist turn in the literature has included an important focus on collective identity formation. However, unless complemented with recognition of the various factors that may slow down or even alter this process, this approach risks presenting analyses of EU integration in general – and EU enlargement in particular – dominated by normative and wishful thinking, rather than objectivity. In an area such as EU enlargement, public opinion clearly matters: it may influence official policy and challenge the collective understanding of what is appropriate behaviour.

In recent years, considerable attention has been paid to bridging the gap between Rationalist and Constructivist approaches (Checkel 1997; Adler 2002; Rieker 2004). A greater focus on public opinion could be one way of doing this. As this analysis has shown, collective identity formation and Europeanisation may be challenged and thus limited by changes in public opinion, forcing political leaders to become more instrumental in their policy choices than originally intended. This means that also the spiral model of Risse and Sikink should include an aspect that controls for trends in public opinion. The analysis in this paper may be seen as one modest example of how this may be done.

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