

Sarkozy's election: A new Era for France?

by Charles Rault*

That's what one could call the french paradox. Most of the world, especially in the United States, viewed France as an outdated country having the last trotskist and other pro-marxist political parties in the world; a country bound to oppose America because of its so-called anti-american 'roots'. The world has been wrong. Yesterday, France has chosen a new president through a pro-conservative landslide victory for Nicolas Sarkozy, elected with 53% of the total vote and a record turnout. 30 minutes after he officially became acquainted with his election as President, Nicolas Sarkozy chose to re-affirm the friendship of America and France by telling "American friends that they can rely on our friendship ... France will always be next to them when they need us." Something which no one heard since WWII or since 1962 when General de Gaulle assured President Kennedy of his inalienable support against the Soviet Union during the Cuba Missiles' Crisis.

In 2003, because France (including Nicolas Sarkozy) opposed the War in Iraq; many in the United States' media accused France of 'treason' and of making its opposition to the United States the cornerstone of its foreign policy. Beyond any rational consideration, some even called french 'surrendering monkeys'; something which caused profound outrage in France, a country which lost 2 millions of its men in 20th century's wars. When Nicolas Sarkozy briefly met US President George Bush last summer, leftists depicted him as a neocon pro-Bush; the 'worst' insult one could receive in France. Leftists were completely wrong, French didn't care. If they're not keen on Bush; most of them know that the friendship, the alliance between France and America is an essential means to make the world better. Both countries worked effectively in Lebanon, Africa, Afghanistan and in the ongoing combat against Terrorism. And America now has understood that the tough 2003 opposition of their oldest friend has been justified. France: Friend or Foe? The right answer is definitely 'friend'.

This election opens a new era for France; an era towards modernity, challenge and power. With Nicolas Sarkozy, France could enter the 21st century as one of the main world powers. Foreign comments these last years made France a weak and declining country. Many were afraid of Jean-Marie Le Pen's record score in 2002; this was overreaction. Five years later, most of the french voted, a new 'élan'¹ for democracy; a model of civic participation for the West. Behind the picture, there's a modern, a proud and a challenging France. And this France unveiled itself today, a France which is to re-define its foreign policy's priorities particularly by re-balancing its stance on the Mideast and by making its alliance with America one of its top priority. Europe, too, is to get more importance in french politics. But make no mistake, France is to defend its interests, its culture, its language and its influence 'avec force et audace'². The threats are multiple and the security context is very tense. The presidential campaign unfortunately avoided tackling such issues. President Sarkozy has now to deal with them. France definitely entered a new stage of its history given a new generation of policymakers are to lead the country. A wave of change which second phase will start in 2012 and which will include new young high-skilled contestants. France is back!

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1 fervour

2 with strength and audacity