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**GENDER, POLITICS AND THE MEDIA: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE
2007 FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

PRESENTED BY: Giuliana Pappalardo

TUTOR: Dr Begoña Nuñez Perucha

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1. INTRODUCTION

The power mass media have on their readers or viewers has never been neglected. For a long time, the importance of language in the construction of people, in general, as social subjects, including their gender identities, has attracted the attention of linguists, anthropologists, discourse analysts, sociologists and semioticians, who have given different accounts of the relationships between news representation and the production and reception processes (Bell, 1991; Fowler, 1991; Chandler, 1994; Reah, 1998; Ungerer, 2000; Fairclough, 1995, 2001; van Dijk 1988, 2001, to name just few).

As a matter of fact, mass media, being, on the one hand, one of the most popular vehicles through which the population gets into contact with the world and, on the other, a powerful ideological apparatus, have a big responsibility in the shaping of new or maintenance of old social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and beliefs.

Van Dijk (1988: 176) notes that a distinction is to be made among news reports, other media texts and non media ones by saying that “[n]ews reports in the press are a member of a family of media texts types that need their own standard analysis”. The reconstruction and the reproduction of news involves “both complex forms of text processing as well as the cognitive strategies and representations that underlie these processes” (ibid. 179).

The categories object of our study are those which refer to the representation of women and men who work in the field of politics, since we consider that the ever increasing preoccupation with gender equality should also take into consideration the way gender dichotomies are perceived and voiced in the media.

The representation of gender in the media has already received a certain amount of attention mainly due to the existing stereotypes the press is found to maintain when presenting women and men (Ballaster et al., 1991; Talbot, 1992; Caldas-Coulthard, 1995;

McLoughlin, 2001, inter alia).

Most studies focus on the analysis of representation of women and their negative and often trivializing media coverage. Caldas-Coulthard (1995), for instance, has highlighted that women, in general, are not, or at least in small proportions, given voice in the press. They are part of the unaccessed voice and this implies that, being media instruments of cultural reproduction and implicated with power, women are dissociated from power structure (ibid.: 226). Cameron (1995) has illustrated how the press misused language and gender research to promote what she called “verbal hygiene” in an attempt to give advice to women on how to become more successful by looking like men. Walter (1998: 221), although recognizing that women’s voices were “drowned out in the corridors of power” has advocated for a *genderquake*. She has argued that newspapers are becoming not only more tolerant but also celebratory of the power of women (ibid: 195). Goddard and Mean Patterson (2000) have highlighted the way in which media encode information about women and men by following a shared system of reference about gender stereotypical roles. The case of male and female politicians, on the contrary, as it is a rather new event, has been of interest only recently. Walsh (2001), examines gender bias against women in various communities of practice (such as politics and the church) which undermine their possibility of challenging a widespread masculinist culture. She concludes that media texts are often embedded with a competing and contradictory ideology of gender. However, she suggests that “...(some) media institutions also function as sites of discursive struggle in the ongoing debate about appropriate gender roles and behaviour, rather than simply reproducing conservative gender ideologies” (ibid.: 4). In the same year Lakoff (2001), while investigating on the effects that speakers’ use of language have on social, economic and political identity, devotes a section of her book to the way Hillary Clinton, who has decided to enter fields which had been previously neglected to her, is described by the media. Research has been made on previous elections such as the one by Gidengil and

Everitt (2000) on Canadian elections, Walsh's (2000) study on Margaret Becket's bid for the Labour leadership in 1994, and Fountaine and McGregor's (2000) analysis of news' framing of political women in New Zealand, to give just few examples. They have once again emphasized the unequal treatment on the part of media of the possible female political leaders and sustained that this could undermine their possibility to challenge and to change the prevailing masculinist culture.

As far as the representation of masculinity is concerned, the works of Johnson and Meinhof (1997: 11) are worth mentioning. They have collected different analysis of the language of men (by Talbot, Neff van Aertselaer, Coates, Cameron among others) in an attempt to show that "...the implicit assumption that men and women are binary opposites, and that speech constitutes a symbolic reflection of that opposition, is inherently problematical both from the point of view of language *and* gender". The aim, as Neff van Aertselaer (ibid.: 159) states, is that of being fair when claiming for gender equality by also offering an account of how masculine roles are constructed.

What our research wants to focus on is the representation of women and men politicians in today's British quality press during the French Presidential elections held this year (2007). In these elections Ms Royal and Mr Sarkozy managed to pass the second round and "fought" face to face for the final victory. The ultimate objective is to see whether there is a certain degree of change with respect to what previous research has shown.

1.1. Reasons for the present study

Some days after the end of the French elections the *Guardian* published an article entitled "*Ségolène Royal faced sexism, sour grapes and petty jealousies - and she never really stood a chance (May 9, 2007)*". This article seemed to cast doubts on the fair treatment of the female candidate by the public opinion.

Being this the case or not, it must be admitted that the recent French Presidential elections have once again called into question the real existence of a gender equality system that makes it possible for women, aiming at occupying places predominantly prerogative of men, not to be hindered by other factors but their actual qualities for the position.

The situation in France seems to be in line with that in other European countries. As we learn from Khursheed (2000: 226), in France women are active in all areas of politics but they are underrepresented in sites of decision making, that is, there is a basically masculine political culture which prevents women from using resources for political action. Parity is extremely important but this does not imply that they are better represented than in other countries and that their rights are advanced. Moreover, in the year 2000 France introduced a law, known as 'parity law', which obliged political parties to have an equal number of female and male representatives among their members. However, since this law has not been applied at a national scale, these elections have represented, through Ms Royal, the first chance for France to have a serious female candidate for the first time. The outcome of the election was Nicholas Sarkozy's victory over Ségolène Royal for 53.1% against 46.9%

As we have previously stated doubts like the ones we have hinted at the beginning have led to several studies on the representation of women politicians in the media but few have combined the Critical Discourse Analysis Approach (henceforth CDA) and the Feminist one.

As Walsh (2001: 27) notes "a number of approaches to CDA, including that of Fairclough, marginalize the importance of specifically gendered identities and relations and the social inequalities to which these contribute". This is due to the fact that, among the determinants of power, the only factor that has been privileged has been class. As a result, gender inequalities have been interpreted as derivative of capitalism, thus underestimating those cross-class "fraternal alliances" which have contributed to the exclusion of women

from certain areas of the public sector. According to Walsh (2001) and other feminists, class must be joined to other variables like race, age or the stances that individuals adopt when facing gender politics¹. Her idea of connecting all these variables with an analysis which is contextualized and which takes into account the insights of critical linguistics and the analysis of the wider discursive and social changes relevant to the analysis of gender is the one we want to apply to our corpus.

Our study will not only give us insights into the current tendencies in the representation of women and men politicians in the press but also contribute to further examine the role language has on the perpetuation of an unequal distribution of power. By combining CDA and the feminist approach we want to highlight the importance of acquiring a critical perspective when confronted with the construction of gendered identities and relations as well as the social inequalities to which this may give rise.

1.2. Working Hypotheses

Recent studies on media coverage of politics have demonstrated that women are more likely to be described by using negative gender distinctions when compared to men. Conversely, men are more likely than women to be described in gender-neutral terms (Caldas-Coulthard, 1995; Mills, 1995; Goddard-Mean Patterson, 2000; among others). Politics is now assisting on the introduction of more female leaders among its lines such as Angela Merkel in Germany or Hillary Clinton in the U.S.A. to name some. Nevertheless, the media, though much more cautiously than in the past, tend to keep on resorting on the same frames or gender polarization, thus reinforcing “the myths of essential female-male difference” (Bing and Bergvall, 1996: 18). Our hypothesis is that this habit is still far from being eradicated even when the same European Commission urges Europe to implement a

¹ Moreover, the concept of class itself is a highly contested one and many feminists (Skeggs, 1997, for instance) have demonstrated that class relations are perceived by men and women in different ways (in Walsh, 2001)

policy of gender equality in every sector of society. In particular, this study starts off from the assumption that, though some changes have been made regarding men and women's representation in the media, there is still a subjacent gender ideology in many newspapers which is worth uncovering.

1.3. Aims and scope of the research

Bearing these premises in mind, our objectives are the following:

1. To analyse the linguistic tools media texts used in the writing of news report which deal with women and men aiming at occupying the same position of power in the public sphere and, more specifically, in politics.
2. To examine which stereotyped views of the world are implied in the representation of men and women politicians and their effect on the way we conceive differences in terms of gender.
3. To ascertain whether there is any evidence that as women's power has increased their media representation has improved as well.

In brief, we will try to answer the following question: how is dominant discursive construction of late modern mass media articulated as to perpetuate a particular view of women and men?

1.4. Corpus and methodology

1.4.1 Description of the Corpus

The samples for our analysis consist of a group of 18 articles on the 2007 French

elections published between May 2nd and May 6th, that is, during the hectic pre-electoral week. They belong to the online version of the most widely read British quality papers (the *Guardian*, the *Independent*, and the *Times*) and made up about 17,274 words.

Our choice was motivated by the fact that, being quality papers, they are assumed to be targeted at an educated audience and addressed to a non-gender-marked population. Thus, they are likely to guarantee a serious insight on the topic. Together with these 18 articles, two interviews (in English) to the French contenders and other satellite articles served as reference as well. These last ones were used to probe into issues which go beyond the samples as such.²

The three broadsheets (henceforth abbreviated as *T*, *G*, and *I*) we have referred to have different characteristics.

The Times is widely known for its influential role in politics and the shaping of public opinion about foreign events. Though traditionally a moderately centre-right newspaper and a supporter of the Conservatives, it has endorsed the Labour party in the last two British elections.

The Independent, instead, although claiming to represent opposing political opinions shows a tendency towards the ideologies of Liberal Democrats. The stereotypical reader of *The Independent* is politically left-wing and a Liberal Democrat, or perhaps a Labour voter.

The Guardian, on the other hand, manifests sympathy with the middle-ground liberal to left wing parties, although it enjoys a reputation of a good journalism, and a significant space is left to right or centre voices.

As far as the content of the articles is concerned we will now proceed to a brief description of it to facilitate the comprehension of the analysis we are going to propose. *The Times*, the *Guardian* and the *Independent* followed on a daily basis the events (the Presidential elections) occurring in France during those days and commented on the

² See additional material section in the Appendix

developments each new situation was provoking. As in any electoral campaign, the voices of Mr Sarkozy and Ms Royal, the two contenders who passed the first round, were widely heard and their actions followed with increasing attention. Their behaviours, their last words, their postures were extremely important since they would determine the final outcome of the elections. Moreover, they were given the opportunity to take part in a debate on television which caused a lot of expectations.

As a result, the first group of articles (May,2) dealt with the preparation for the much-awaited televised debate; the second (May, 3) with the reactions to and the impressions on the face-to-face meeting, the third (May 4) with the consequences of their performance on the second round of the elections, the fourth (May, 5) with the last rallies of the two contenders to gain more support and finally the fifth (May, 6) with the first results of the elections and the rise of the Right-wing contender. Two remaining articles dealt with Mr Sarkozy's wife (*G*, May 2) and the politics of style in the elections (*I*, May 4)

We can say that, in general, news follow a structured praxis which is essential for each paper to maintain its credibility. As van Dijk (1988: 137) observes the different structural transformations of source texts to final news discourse depend on three main factors, namely, the format of the news discourse, the relevance of a given topic or issue and finally various news values which journalists must take into account.

The articles analysed that conform our corpus are the following³:

| | <i>The Times</i> | <i>The Guardian</i> | <i>The Independent</i> |
|------------------|---|--|---|
| 01/ 05/ 02 | <i>Dracula and Mary Poppins fight it out on screen for the last votes</i> | <i>Sarko and Ségol go tete-a-tete on Tv</i> <i>Où est Cecilia? France agog as Sarkozy's wife goes</i> | <i>Royal vs Sarkozy: Battle for the 'Bayrouistes'</i> |

³ Articles are referred to in the table by their headlines

| | | | |
|----------|---|--|--|
| | | <i>missing for 10 days</i> | |
| May 3 | <i>Royal takes the battle to Sarkozy</i> | <i>Royal ignites election debate with attack on Sarkozy</i> | <i>Royal wins round one in 'boxing ring' debate</i> |
| May 4 | <i>Confident Sarkozy lines up his team</i> | <i>Royal wins praise for TV debate-but fails to close the gap</i> | <i>Royal redeems herself on TV- but it may be too late</i> <i>Fashion victor? The politics of style</i> |
| May 5 | <i>France set to pick man it fears over the woman it likes but doesn't trust</i> | <i>France heads to right as political showman delivers final performance of campaign</i> | <i>Royal rallies, but Sarkozy is heading for the Elysée Palace</i> |
| May 6 | <i>French give Sarkozy a mandate for reform</i> <i>Women voters shun Royal</i> | <i>Sarkozy 's first hundred days</i> | <i>The world according to President Sarko</i> |

1.4.2 Methodology

The analysis of the elements which pertained to the articles here examined took into consideration the following factors: being one of the fewest opportunities to assist on a public confrontation between female and male politicians who aimed at reaching a position normally held by men, the event would probably give rise to many contrastive opinions, including stereotyped ones. Media discourses would mirror the ongoing situation and reflect public opinion.

Among all the articles published during those days (i.e. from May 2 to May 6) we firstly selected the ones referring to Mr Sarkozy and Ms Royal. They were carefully read with the aim of identifying linguistic resources likely to convey ideological content, stereotypes, categorizations and any biased interpretation of the two contenders' behaviour. Finally, the linguistic features were grouped according to the most relevant features

common to all the articles. The following ones were selected: the lexical features, the nominal qualifiers, the metaphors used to describe the contention between the two, the framing of the two contenders' utterances, the presence of external voices and the underlying ideological assumptions. We finally related our results to the insights on language and gender.

We proposed a qualitative analysis since our objective was to examine all the aspects which could support or reject our hypothesis rather than seizing the frequency of a unique type of linguistic structure by using quantitative methodology. Moreover, we found that quantifying was not very relevant in some cases but that it was more important to relate those elements to the specific context and situations. By following Fairclough's three-dimensional conception of discourse (i.e. discourse as text, as discursive practice and social practice) (1989, 1992, 1995) we analysed and interpreted the data considering the dialectical relationship between texts, discourse and social structure.

1.5 Organization

After this introductory chapter, chapter 2 sets out the framework for using feminist critical discourse analysis to be applied to the corpus we have chosen. Chapter 3 will start with the analysis of our corpus by examining the lexical aspects of the articles (section 3.1), the nominal groups (section 3.2) and the metaphors used (section 3.3). In particular, we deal with the categorization of the characteristics of the two contenders in terms of femininity and masculinity, the "labels" used to identify each contender and the presence of a stereotyped masculine imagery provided by the metaphor of war. Chapter 4 will examine how the repertoire of voices is presented and in what way the intervention of the writer's voice modifies or influences the meaning content of the utterances. Thereafter, section 4.1 will deal with the representation of Mr Sarkozy's and Ms Royal's voices, section 4.2 with

other people's ones, i.e. commentators, ordinary people and so on. In section 4.3 connectors, comparisons and negation will be analysed to highlight the writer's assumptions and presuppositions cued in different articles. In the concluding chapter of our study we will present a summary of the results obtained from the analysis and their implications.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND GENDER STUDIES

As previously stated, the framework for the analysis of texts discussed in this paper draws on a combination of the field of Critical Discourse Analysis and studies on language and gender.

2.1 The CDA Framework

Critical discourse analysis stems from the need to offer a more accurate observation of how language is constructed to maintain power and dominance.

This kind of analysis traces back if not to Aristotle to the philosophers of the Enlightenment who preceded the more recent members of the Frankfurt School (Adorno, Benjamin and others). After the 1960s their main heir was Jurgen Habermas. Together with them another line of influence was the one represented by Gramsci and his French and British followers. The most important aspects of the first kind of discourse analysis were the need to relate the analysis of the grammar of texts to their contexts of use and link linguistics to the anthropological and social sphere. These considerations were at the basis of the development of discourse analysis from the 70s onwards (see the work of Althusser (1971), Foucault (1980) and Pecheux (1982), who kept the integration between discourse

and socio-political analyses in France, the U.K. and the U.S.A). Within the multidisciplinary aspect of discourse analysis, which took into consideration the insights of linguistics, sociology, anthropology and cognitive linguistics, the work of Fowler (1979) and his followers started a new way of approaching the text. Critical linguistics, as it was called, aimed at analysing not only the different aspects of language but also its relation with the social context in order to uncover mechanisms of power and dominance. This kind of analysis was later applied, by Fowler himself, to the media (1991) in an attempt to show that news is practice, that is, a product of the social and political world where it works. Hence, according to him, any aspect of the linguistic structure (phonological, lexical, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic) can carry ideological significance. The achievements of critical linguistics were based on Halliday's systemic grammar which linked language and the social and personal needs language answers to (cf. Halliday, 1978, 1985).

The tradition of critical analysis was followed by Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995, 2001), van Dijk (1989, 1996, 1997, 1998, and 2001) and Wodak (1991, 2003), among others who have shown how text and talk contribute to the reproduction of certain ideologies of dominance.

According to Fairclough (1999: 6) what is distinctive about CDA is that it brings together critical social science and linguistics within a single theoretical framework and its main aim is that of focusing on discursive strategies which legitimate or naturalise social order and inequalities. He emphasises the importance of sociocultural change and change in discourse.

In addition to this, he has maintained that ideologies are strictly related to the way we conceive the world, that is, with the mind, since "interpretations are generated through a combination of what is in the text and what is 'in' the interpreter, in the sense of the members' resources (MR) which the latter brings to interpretation." (Fairclough 1989:141). In this sense, according to this author, MR are understood as representations stored in

people's long-term memory. They are made of a collection of different elements (grammatical forms of sentences, the properties of objects and people, expected events and so on). Dominant ideologies are instead defined as constructions of reality (the physical world, social relations, social identities) which are built through discursive practice.

Van Dijk (1996, 1997, 1998, and 2001), focuses more on the socio-cognitive dimension of ideologies and sees a relation between social structures and discourse with the mediation of cognition, which involves "...personal as well as social cognition, beliefs and goals as well as evaluations and emotions, and any other 'mental' or 'memory' structures, representations or processes involved in discourse and interaction" (2000: 98). By drawing a detailed model of how textual comprehension involves various levels of personal and short-term memory the analyst shows how news audiences, in reformulating stories about the world, need to recur to a variety of schemas which have been acquired during their lifetime. This leads to the acceptance of the framework that media usually propose since, in most cases, alternative positions are not provided. To his purpose, van Dijk (1998: 5) relies on cognitive science in order to analyze the way in which discourses control people's minds. To explain this further he uses the concepts of mental and cognitive operations as studied by cognitive science. Moreover, he argues that power and dominance are exerted by elite groups (parliamentarians, journalists, teachers, for instance) who have a privileged access to discourse and communication while ordinary people have a limited range of influence (their group of friends and their family) and can only be consumers and users. (see van Dijk, 1993).

After this general overview of CDA, we will present Fairclough's three dimensional view of discourse as it is the one we will follow in our study.

2.1.1 Fairclough's three dimensional view of discourse

Fairclough's (1992) framework for discourse analysis aims at considering language use as a form of social practice rather than simply as an activity influenced by situational variables (as sociolinguists argue). This would imply, according to him, that discourse is at the same time a mode of action and dialectically related to social structure. To say it in another way, discourse and social practice mutually influence each other. As a consequence he proposes a three dimensional view of discourse: discourse as text, discourse as discursive practice and discourse as social practice. By combining three analytical traditions (the linguistic, sociological and the microsociological one) he aims at analysing, first of all, texts according to the traditional form of linguistic analysis (Halliday's systemic linguistics) then moves onto the discourse practice dimension which encompasses text production and consumption to finish with the sociocultural practice dimension which may involve the immediate sociocultural context or the whole systems of culture and society (Fairclough,1992).

Moreover, he argues that discourses are the expression of power relations and involve anything that can be thought, written and said about any kind of topic. They rely on prior texts and are generated by a combination of other discourses or texts. As a result, he adds, the interpretation of the intertextual context depends on the analysis of which text the author is resorting to and on the eviction of anything which is taken for granted, i.e. presupposed. Due to these premises, his model of analysis takes into consideration three stages, the *description* of text, the *interpretation* of the relationship between text and interaction and the *explanation* of the relationship between interaction and social context. However, he himself recognizes that description presupposes interpretation, so a strict separation among the three stages is itself not totally correct. The concept of discourse analysis as text is related, according to him, to vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, relation among sentences and text structure while the interpersonal and intertextual structure, the

processes of production and consumption, as well as the study of the socio-cognitive elements projected onto the text belong to the notion of discourse as discursive practice. The notion of discourse as social practice, instead, involves the relationship between discourse and society, that is, social conventions which in turn are influenced by and influence the way we conceive the world.

In the light of these considerations, for this author, the analysis of media discourses, as versions of reality and not just mirrors of it, must include the following:

“..account of what choices are made-what is included and what is excluded, what is made implicit, what is foregrounded and what is backgrounded, what is thematized and what is unthematized, what process types and categories are drawn upon to represent events, and so on”. (Fairclough, 1995: 104)

2.2 Gender Studies

A look at the academic literature in this field shows that feminist linguistics moved from an initial marginalized position to an influential one. Nowadays, it influences almost any kind of linguistic studies which, in one way or the other, address the issues of language and gender.

The term “gender” has been defined in different ways: early feminists like Lakoff (1975) have basically focused on the analysis of women’s language to highlight their fundamental lack of power. Others have argued that this term indicates the gains feminists have achieved (Modlesky, 1991), while some others have observed that it has allowed for the analysis of gender differences (Butler, 1990; Fuss, 1989). These theories have subverted both the work of constructionists who believe sexual difference is constructed by society and culture and essentialists who refer to biological difference.

Since 1973 the feminist approaches have moved around three different models of

language and gender⁴: the *deficit* model (women seen as disadvantaged speakers), the *dominance* one (women seen as negotiating their position with men) and the *cultural difference* model (women's identities as influenced by other factors such as ethnicity, sex segregation etc). According to Cameron (1996: 40) in the 80s the *difference* model was the one which mostly prevailed since men and women were seen as outsiders belonging to different verbal cultures.

The current tendency, however, is the one which tries to avoid overgeneralization and stereotyping by proposing a new approach which does not simply detect differences but uses them to analyse the kinds of “varying accommodations to those styles [masculine and feminine] in the process of producing *themselves* as gendered subjects.(Cameron, 1996: 46).⁵ This postulates, then, as Cameron observes, that it is your culture, your preferences and your verbal interactions that define womanhood instead of a pre-defined set of norms on what it means being a woman (*ibid.*). In this sense the stereotyped vision of man and women is to be reacted against.

Eckert and McConnel-Ginet (1998 : 490) denounce too much abstraction in the treatment of language and gender since the latter is abstracted from other aspects of social identity thus giving an idea of homogeneity across communities, of behaviour and linguistic manifestations which is misleading. What is needed is the exploration of the complexities of language and gender interface within and across different communities⁶, and the consequent acknowledgement of varieties as the norm instead of normative conceptions of women and men.

The idea that gender is socially constructed rather than natural, is at the basis of feminist discourse analysis⁷. The feminist critical approach to discourse highlights the

⁴ See Cameron (1996) for a detailed description

⁵ See also Bing, Bergvall (1996); Freed (1996); Meyeroff, (1996); Coates; (1997); Walsh, (2001); *inter alia*

⁶ ¹ They refer to the concept of *communities of practice* understood as “...aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavour” taken from Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, 1992

⁷ Fact already expressed in Simone de Beauvoir 's famous dictum that ‘one is not born a woman, rather becomes a woman’ (1949)

importance of finding textual traces and cues of dominant ideologies of gender inequality by means of linguistic and semiotic analysis instead of simply describing changes. In this regard, Mills (1995) and later Walsh (2001) have argued that non-literary genres draw upon cultural scripts and other larger schemata which work across discourse types, thus reflecting dominant ideologies about gender.

It is possible now to pose the question on the production of gender stereotypes on media texts. If stereotypes can be avoided, what remains to be understood is how they are produced to reinforce asymmetrical relations of power. Simplification is an aspect which produces stereotypes as processes of representation and although it cannot be avoided it must be detected .

Aspects like the construction of identity through the use of a variety of voices, the appeal to readers' personal and social schemata which influence their view of the world and the attendance to the specificities of the text/context interface are important concerns of the feminist critical framework. Looking at all these aspects will enable the analyst to unravel the complex practice media texts use to maintain stereotyped images of men and women.

3. THE LINGUISTIC REPRESENTATION OF MASCULINITY AND FEMMININITY.

The main aim of this section is explore the way language is used in our corpus to represent the two political leaders, Mr Sarkozy and Ms Royal. In this way we will also see whether there is a certain degree of difference, in terms of gender representation across the three newspapers.

Section 3.1 examines some categories presented in our corpus of articles to ascertain whether the lexical patterns and naming practices used by the texts producers reflect differences in terms of positive and negative representation of both political leaders.

Section 3.2 will consider the use of the metaphor of war which is typical of the language of politics (Gidengil and Everitt, 2000) and its relation to the battle of sexes.

The analysis concentrates on areas where both a power differential and a value differential are being conveyed by means of lexical choice. Stressing the role of vocabulary in such an analysis, we intend to follow Fairclough's (1989: 109) remarks that an examination of the lexical choices in a text demonstrates how "ideological differences between texts in their representations of the world are coded in their vocabulary", which, in turn, is related to van Dijk's (1984: 41) suggestion that "lexical variation may be a function of knowledge, education, class, profession, or other social factors and thus be associated with variable evaluation of the power, status or other properties of speakers".

3.1 Lexical patterns

It is widely accepted that we are not just passive recorders of what we perceive around us but that we employ language to impose our ideas on our environment. This means that we use a linguistic system to organize, in our minds, the huge amount of impressions and perceptions which come from the world around us. In other words, we encode reality in different ways.

As to the language we use to describe sexes, it has been pointed out that the categories we use to define male and female are not just imposed by someone above us but are part of our social behaviour (Caldas-Coulthard, 1995; Goddard-Patterson, 2000, *inter alia*). We use certain categories to mask a whole range of implicit descriptions which say a lot of our values.

With regard to the representation of Ms Royal and Mr Sarkozy in terms of stereotypes, our corpus shows that the two candidates are presented differently and the informational value of the way they are framed appears important. *The Times*, which endorsed Sarkozy from the beginning, tends to highlight Ms Royal's *shifting opinions and*

shaky grasp of matters of state.....her shaky campaign to stress uncertainty in her programme and opposes to it the image of a *pugnacious Sarko* endowed with *steely-self assurance* and promising *radical change* (May 2). Even when, on the occasion of a televised debate between the two politicians which took place on May 2, the other two newspapers appraise the woman's new posture by using expressions such as *gutsy performance* (Independent, May 3), *feisty and eloquent performance* (Independent, May 4) or *forceful behaviour* (Guardian, May 3), *combative performance* (Guardian, May 4) *The Times* maintains its negative presentation of the female contender. A comparison among the following paragraphs taken from the three newspapers on May, 3 may give an idea of how Ms Royal's new attitude is evaluated differently (bold ours)

(1) It was clear that her strategy for the evening was all-out attack against the candidate whom she and the Left have vilified as an advocate of brutal policies and a danger to the peace of France. However, **it was not clear that she would benefit from her long-winded and often emotional argument.**(T, May 3)

(2) Ségolène Royal last night **surprised** France and her rightwing opponent Nicolas Sarkozy“(G, May 3)

(3) Ms Royal was seen to have **scored points with her forceful approach** (G, May3)

(4) A **pugnacious and impassioned** Ségolène Royal **scored a points victory** over an often-rattled Nicolas Sarkozy in the French presidential television debate last night (I, May 3)

(5) Mme Royal **refused to be browbeaten** by the confident sometimes overconfident front-runner (I, May 3)

There are, actually, a number of other examples where the writers' negative or positive evaluation of the candidates is implicit in the vocabulary. They draw on classification schemas which, according to Fairclough (1989: 115), are in part systems of evaluation. The sentences below may add further evidence of the way Mr Sarkozy and Ms Royal are stereotypically described by two newspapers (G and T):

The Times (May 2)

(6) To gain the upper hand, **Ms Royal** must exude **a presidential authority that has**

been lacking from a shaky campaign in which even supporters have compared her **nurturing, brisk, style** to that of Mary Poppins. She will probe in Mr Sarkozy's steely self-assurance by needling him over the supposedly heartless reforms that he is planning for France".

(7) Adapting his **usual aggressive tactics** for combat with a woman, **Mr Sarkozy** will seek to highlight Ms Royal's shifting opinions and shaky grasp of matters of state.

The Guardian (May 2)

(8) On the other hand, all agree that the Socialist **Ms Royal**, 53, the first woman to stand a chance at leading France, **has to be on the offensive"**

(9) For the **ambitious and volatile Mr Sarkozy**, 52, the frontrunner for several months, it will be a difficult and delicate exercise. He needs to challenge his female rival and show he has the qualities of a true head of state **without appearing bullying or macho, or losing his quick temper.**

As we can see from the examples above, aggressiveness, pugnacity are positively evaluated by the *Times* but they must be adapted when there is a confrontation with a woman (the weak adversary). The *Guardian*, instead, by pinpointing her unique status of first woman to have been able to walk on paths previously unknown to women seems to imply positive qualities although it stresses the fact that Ms Royal has to be on the offensive. Moreover, it mentions the word "macho" which insinuates the risk (or the possibility) in Mr Sarkozy of actually behaving as such or have behaved as such..

The *Independent*, on the other hand, presents a different conceptualization of aggressiveness and underplays its importance. In a sentence like "Part of M. Bayrou's vote came from the centre-right, out of the aggressive, divisive style of M.Sarkozy" (I, May 2), the writer, by pairing the first adjective with the second negative one, shows that the consequences of an aggressive style are not so much appreciated by everybody.

A close look at another article in *The Times* (May 5) shows that Mr Sarkozy collocates with "tough-talking... abrasive personality... readiness for change that has

marked an extraordinary campaign..., agent of radical change” thus giving an ideological frame for classifying the winning behaviour. The same tone is maintained on the following day (*pugnacious, fiercely ambitious and hyper-energetic*). As on previous occasions, he is positively judged for efficiency and impact rather than for empathy or communicative sharing. His personality is contrasted with Ms Royal’s one (*nurturing, overtly feminine*) and with the obviously failure-leading claims of a *near mystical bond with the people*. When Sarkozy’s victory is almost perceived as a fact (that is, the day of the second round of the elections (May, 6), the same newspaper (*The Times*) words the rise of a new political era by comparing Sarkozy’s *muscular plans* to Ms Royal’s *single-handed attempts to modernise the left during the campaign*. The image it gives of her is that of a polite looser (*Ms Royal accepted defeat with a smile*).

Coinciding with the day of *The Times*’ supplement (*The Sunday Times*), the editor introduces another article which is devoted to Ms Royal. (*Women voters shun Royal*). The content is, once again, in line with the previous one but this time the blames on Ms Royal are direct. By deprecating the Left contender for her use of gender slogans the writer reinforces his negative presentation of her.

(10) Segolène Royal played what she hoped was **her trump card** in the last hours of the battle for the French presidency: **her femininity**. (Sunday Times, May 6)

Even feminists themselves are made reference to and seem to deny Ms Royal even the right to fight her own battle as a woman, by depriving her of any kind of support.

(11) It was not just women on the right who felt tempted to put the boot in. **Feminists who might have been expected to applaud the first woman with a real chance of becoming president sniffed at what they saw as her prudishness**. (Sunday Times, May 6)

Although acknowledging that the three newspapers’ political stances are an important

factor in the construction of the piece of news, we believe that the references to both contenders fall into systems of categorizations which favour a certain stereotyped view of masculinity and femininity.

Other examples may support our hypothesis. The table on the next page shows how “being calm”, “unflappable” and “precise” relates to victory while “passion”, “feisty behaviour” achieved as last resort in an attempt to emulate “masculine aggression” may result as fake and unconvincing. Here, even the newspapers which had, at least from a political perspective, a reason to create a positive image of the woman fall into male/female stereotyping.

| | <i>The Times</i> (May 4) | <i>The Guardian</i> (May 4) | <i>The Independent</i> (May 4) |
|---------------|---|--|--|
| Ms Royal | <i>.NO REFERENCE TO HER</i> | <i>...perhaps “overplaying” her anger</i> <i>..treat Mr Sarkozy with....”masculine aggression</i> | <i>..feisty and eloquent performance</i> <i>scored points for passion and guts..</i> <i>..found her authentic” voice” as a passionate but modernizing and pragmatic Socialist</i> |
| Mr Sarkozy | <i>..Increasingly confident Sarkozy...</i> <i>..had a quite clear idea..</i> | <i>..showed enough unflappability for both of them..</i> <i>...comfortable lead..</i> | <i>..achieved his aim of being calm and reasonable..</i> <i>..he was determined to come over as a managerial and moderate man of action..</i> <i>...was praised for calm and precision..</i> |

Table 1 (Characterization of Sarkozy and Royal in terms of male and female stereotypes)

Leaving political issues apart, which we have assumed have played their part in the

construction of each news article, what we want to demonstrate is that the different representation of the two candidates may have certain kinds of implications. Recalling, once again, Fairclough's view of language (1995: 55) as "simultaneously constitutive of 1) social identities, 2) social relations, and 3) systems of knowledge and beliefs....", the way in which the female and male dichotomy has been stressed in almost all the articles analysed introduces a scenario which, although somehow changed, may encourage stereotyping.

As we have seen, the candidates are usually described in terms of their characters and behaviour.

If we refer to what Fairclough (1989) says about how readers get to the interpretation of discourses we can come to understand the relationship between representation and interpretation of certain values and beliefs. According to Fairclough (ibid.: 159) readers make use of what he calls *scripts* that are meant to define what subjects typically do and how they conduct relationships. We can say that the scripts here are the roles attributed to women and men as representatives of different subjectivities. As we can observe, the two candidates, instead of simply representing themselves or a political programme, are portrayed according to preconceived ideas on femininity and masculinity.

Language plays a very important role in cognition since it frames the way in which we organize our thoughts. An important aspect of this organization is categorization which helps us store the great amount of information we receive everyday. In the light of these considerations the above mentioned categories for men and women may be considered automatic, effortless ways of categorizing our knowledge. However, as Goddard and Mean Patterson (2000: 52) have rightly pointed out, "simplifying also means having to lose information and make general assumptions, which means the loss of individual details". The reader can resist the kind of schematization presented for women and men but can easily fall into the acceptance of such a division. This will depend on the producer being

normative or creative in relation to her/his MR. As Fairclough (1989: 165) puts it “[i]n so far as particular direction of creative use and adaptation of MR come to be systematic, they may bring about long-term transformations of MR and, thereby, of the social relations which underlie them”.

As a matter of fact, adjectives and nouns are categories which often mask implicit descriptions that pertain to specific cultural values. So, for instance, as Goddard and Mean Patterson (2000: 34) claim, “[t]he way in which we talk about sexes indicates that we possess a shared system of reference about traditional roles and about what is deemed masculine and feminine”. Research has shown that people relate specific characteristics to one sex or the other independently of the actual attributes of real individuals. The following table illustrates this kind of categorization (in Goddard and Patterson, *ibidem*)

| | |
|--|---|
| WOMEN | MEN |
| Intuitive, emotional, submissive, empathic, spontaneous, nurturing, cooperative | Logical, rational, aggressive, exploitative, strategic, independent and competitive |

Table 2 (*Characteristics attributed to women and men, in Goddard-Patterson, 2000*)

The examples we have previously given seem to us a piece of evidence of how some of these attributes are actually used to describe the two candidates. They seem, indeed, to imply that only the ones men possess lead to victory. An aspect which seems to contribute to this is the fact that, on the one hand, the writers stress gender roles by calling Ms Royal “the first woman president”, “the female candidate”⁸ and on the other, they inform the

⁸ Practice which was also used by Ms Royal herself in interviews and public speeches (see interview in the

reader that special strategies have been used so as to be successful in a confrontation with the opposite sex, as the following example show.

(12)... have been rehearsing with sparring partners of the **opposite sex** to devise the killer lines that could swing the vote. (T May2)

(13) ..adapting his usual aggressive tactics for **combat with a woman**...(ibid)"

(14) The pugnacious Sarko insists that he will not **treat a woman** differently from a male opponent, but he could not resist a touch of Gallic gallantry on Sunday.. (ibid)

(15) He needs to challenge his **female rival** and show he has the qualities of a true head of state without appearing bullying or macho..." (G, May2)

(16) Mr Sarkozy also denied he had been practicing softening his tone to avoid appearing too macho." The idea that you should not **debate with a woman** in the same way that you do with a man is quite macho I think," he told French journalists" (ibid)

Despite the work of feminist and gender theorists, the idea of a dichotomy still persists. The writers do not hesitate to describe the two politicians in terms of male and female and in doing so they contribute to the perception of a binary opposition of sex and gender categories. Moreover, the necessity of categorizing is felt only in the case of Ms Royal as if the male contender were the norm. Bing and Bergvall (1996) have pointed out that we tend to use the terms *female* and *male*, *woman* and *man*, *feminine* and *masculine* much more frequently than intersex or intergender terms such as *hermaphrodite* and *androgynous*. Although this implies that our society is in general organized on a dichotomous assumption of female and male one might wonder whether this practice is reinforced and enacted in discourse and whether this might be resisted in favour of a theory of gender as performative and ever-changing rather than fixed.

3.1.2 Nominal qualifiers

Another aspect which is worth our attention is the nominal qualification or the noun phrase

elements which relate to Ms Royal and Mr Sarkozy as “appositive units” (cf Downing and Locke, 1992: 463)

A look at the table on the next page (Table 3) shows how the two are usually presented. As a matter of fact, a distinctive difference in terms of references to candidates’ personal information can be outlined⁹.

| NEWSPAPERS | SARKOZY | ROYAL |
|------------------------|--|---|
| <i>The Times</i> | <p>Mr Sarkozy, 52, the conservative favourite,...(May,2)</p> <p>Mr Sarkozy, a radical conservative,..(May,3)</p> <p>..Mr Sarkozy, the Interior for most of the past five years,...(May,6)</p> <p>Mr Sarkozy, a lawyer by training but a professional politician since his 20s...(May, 5)</p> | <p>Ms Royal, 53, the Socialist challenger,(May,2)</p> <p>Ms Royal, an unorthodox Socialist Minister,..(May, 5)</p> <p>Ms Royal, whose partner....., (May,6)</p> |
| <i>The Guardian</i> | <p>Mr Sarkozy, the rightwing former interior minister,...(May,2)</p> <p>Mr Sarkozy, later appointed budget Minister,..(May,2)</p> <p>..than Mr Sarkozy, a trained lawyer,....(May,3)</p> <p>The right-wing favourite</p> | <p>Ms Royal, the first woman to stand a chance...., (May,2)</p> <p>Ségolène Royal. The first woman to get this close...(May,5)</p> <p>Ms Royal, an outsider who.....(May,5)</p> |
| <i>The Independent</i> | <p>The centre-right candidate, Nicolas Sarkozy,....(May,4)</p> | <p>France’s would-be first woman president, Ségolène Royal...(May,4)</p> <p>The Socialist candidate, Ségolène Royal...(May,6)</p> |

Table 3 (Nominal groups qualifying Mr Sarkozy and Ms Royal)

⁹ It is worth mentioning that in the body of the articles both are usually referred to by their names/surnames/age, aspect which being the norm, we did not include in our analysis (cf analysis by Caldas-Courthard, 1995)

As can be observed from the table we are repeatedly reminded that Ms Royal is a woman, the first one, and an outsider. In the case of relational identification (i.e. how people are judged in terms of their relationships with others) the situation is sometimes the same (*female rival/female president...*).

Mr Sarkozy is instead described more professionally; we are informed on his previous occupations, we come to know he is not new in this field apart from being verbally proficient and having behind him a career as a lawyer. The same kind of information is omitted when dealing with Ms Royal who, as we know, has occupied important roles in the government as well¹⁰. Mr Sarkozy's attributions are more factual while Ms Royal's ones highlight the fact of her aspirations being a novelty. Her identity is constructed as 'the other' mainly in terms of her gender.

As Caldas-Courthard (1995: 237) argues that men are glossed by their professional roles (i.e. position in the government or in some kind of public institution), while women are characterized in terms of marital status. As we can observe the tendency has somehow changed for the woman since no reference is made to her family (although being Mr Hollande her partner and the head of the Left party at the same time, some reference is made to him) but the omission of professional information when writing about Ms Royal may hide a resistance to apply the same rules the writers follow to describe a man.

The naming devices seem therefore to place the candidates in specific positions and highlight once again that there is unbalance in terms of abilities and possibilities.

3.2 The metaphor of war and the battle of sexes

The choice of words, that is, the style of discourse, may signal either the relationship

¹⁰ Environment Minister in 1992, Minister of Education in 1997, of Family Affairs in 2000 and President of the region of Poitou-Charentes in 2004

among speech partners or the attitudes and ideologies of the writer. Newspapers in general play on words and situations by using semantic operations such as metaphors, parallelisms or irony which are aesthetically functional (Fairclough, 1989; van Dijk, 1989). However, special uses of these kinds of syntactic patterns may be done not only to attract the hearer's/reader's attention but also to be more effective in carrying a particular message. Fairclough (1989: 119) recognizes the ubiquity of metaphor in media discourse, by saying the following:

Metaphor is a means of representing one aspect of experience in terms of another, and is by no means restricted to the sort of discourse it tends to be stereotypically associated with- poetry and literary discourse. But any aspect of experience can be represented in terms of any number of metaphors, and it is the relationship between alternative metaphors that is of particular interest here, for different metaphors have different ideological attachment.

When dealing with the debate of May 2, published on May 3, the three newspapers use different metaphors which are built around the concept of war.

The headlines below show how the debate is firstly introduced .

The Guardian (May 3)

- (17) Sarko and Ségo go tete-a-tete on TV
- (18) Royal ignites election debate with attack on Sarkozy

The Times (May 3)

- (19) Dracula and Mary Poppins fight it out on screen for the last votes

The Independent (May 3)

- (20) Royal vs Sarkozy: Battle for the 'Bayrouistes'
- (21) Royal wins round one in 'boxing ring' debate

In examples (18), (19) and (20) we find the metaphorical construction of the so-called ARGUMENT IS WAR which is, according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), widely

conventionalized in popular culture. Although there is no physical battle, there is a verbal battle and this is reflected in the fact that the debate is structured as an argument (attack, defence and counterattack). The image of a polarized dichotomy between the two contenders, Ms Royal and Mr Sarkozy, gives the idea of a winner and a loser, that is, of one part being finally unequivocally accepted and the other absolutely rejected. It is presupposed that the debate is the last chance for the contenders to get close to the Presidency. What is paramount is not the political project but the strategy, the postures and the language.

In example (21) the battle becomes a game (“boxing ring”) and again the image of the face to face encounter is structured as a fight between two different ideological positions. But, while in examples (18-21) the writers want to reinforce the idea of struggle, of a competition for the obtainment of a prize in one headline (example17) the debate is compared to a love meeting. Here the same idea may be presupposed (that of a prize in the end), although not so clearly stated as in the cases of war or games.

Politics is by definition a battlefield since opposite stances are always fighting to gain support. We know from everyday life experience that politicians from different parties rarely work in unison for the country’s own good. For this reason the source domain of the war is easily applied to the new target domain of politics and other domains involving some kind of confrontation.

Even in the body of the articles the source domains (war/duel/battle) have the scope of maintaining the idea of an unbalance between contenders. The *Times* (May 3) describes Ms Royal as “the Socialist contender” and Mr Sarkozy as “the conservative favourite”. While Ms Royal “...*aims to needle the tightly- strung Mr Sarkozy*” (i.e. hard task) Mr Sarkozy will just need to “*highlight Ms Royal shifting opinions and shaky grasp...*”. Gender is widely mentioned and we are told that Mr Sarkozy is “*adapting his usual aggressive tactics for a combat with a woman*”, or “*has been training with female sparring partners*

to find a tone that establishes superiority without condescension”.

Again inside the articles, *The Guardian* (May 3) keeps on using the same domain when saying that Ms Royal “*surprised France and her rightwing opponent Nicolas Sarkozy by coming out all guns blazing to attack him during their much awaited live televised head-to-head debate*” (*bold ours*). The writer uses the image of a “*televised duel*” and talks about the search for the one “*who got upper-hand in the battle to be boss*”.

The *Independent* follows the same line, on the same day, when writing about the one who “*scored a points victory*” in a clash where we assisted on “*exchanging flurries of sharp verbal blows without landing any knock-out punches*”.

The effect of the above mentioned metaphor is that of convincing the reader of the extreme importance of the confrontation, not only from a political point of view but also from an interpersonal one. It is a battle between two parties but also between two sexes, two styles, two implied different social and moral values. As van Dijk (1989: 82) points out, metaphors may be used for persuasive ends, that is, have a perlocutionary function to ensure that the message has been properly understood and accepted.

It has also been noted that, in terms of stereotypes, masculine imagery predominates in metaphors of politics. Gidengil and Everitt (2000), for instance, regard the application of conventional political frames (e.g. metaphors of warfare and sport) to women as a more subtle but insidious form of bias rather than preoccupation with “feminine” characteristics. In their analysis of the 1993 Canadian leaders’ debates they conclude that “what is perceived – positively - to be combative in a man may be judged – negatively - to be aggressive in a woman” (ibid. : 6).

The examples already presented show a similar situation. Media coverage of the French elections, on the one hand, presents Ms Royal as being repeatedly blamed for having a “laid-back” attitude, for lacking presidential authority, thus for her low-key style, but, on the other, the writer over-emphasizes the counter-stereotypical behaviour when she,

for instance, comes out “all guns blazing to attack...”(G, May3), later defined as a “masculine aggression” (G, May 4). In a way, both men and women are stuck in stereotypical roles with the result that a negative reaction may arise when the “ideal male or female identity” is not represented.

We would add that the reader is invited to look at another level of meaning, to resort to a script which underlies the acceptance of biological essentialism. In short, it is assumed that one has to force oneself into roles which are given by nature and society. As Velasco Sacristán (2005 : 239) notes in her analysis of metaphor and gender in advertising:

Since metaphors create a link between cognitive models, we can define cultural gender metaphors as those metaphors that rest on asymmetrical cultural practices (e.g. androcentrism, patriarchy, etc), primarily based on gender stereotypes that result in discrimination against men or women.

In conclusion, it should be pinpointed that the three newspapers show no degree of change if a comparison is to be made with previous media treatment of political elections(cf. Gidengil and Everitt, 2000; Walsh, 2000; Fountaine and McGregor, 2000, *inter alia*)

4. SPEECH REPRESENTATION AND WRITER'S IDEOLOGY

It has been made clear so far that discourse is not just "a bunch of words" but a significant aspect of everyday life which determines our social responses. As we have previously indicated in the introduction, critical discourse analysts have repeatedly stressed the importance of considering discourse as a mirror of what we come to understand as real. That is, it constitutes conceptual frameworks by which we attempt to understand ourselves and our experiences, as well as the world around us.

Thus, the concept of discourse recognises the very real ways in which words, and

hence understanding, shape the social lives of men and women and the types of knowledge they produce and institutionalize.

The feminist approach to CDA (Mills, 1995; Walsh, 2001; Litosseliti/Sunderland, 2002; *inter alia*) has stressed that the choices that texts producers make are not casual but are aimed at creating a compliant reader through the positioning of traces and cues which favour a certain reading while discouraging others. As Walsh (2001: 31) perceptively points out, this practice encourages people either to strengthen or challenge dominant conceptual frames among which she includes those that reinforce the idea of normative gendered identities or gendered relations. Gendered identities involve particular constructions not only of women but also of men, thereby maintaining the idea of gender polarization, which is presented as a common sense assumption.

Bearing these premises in mind, this section looks at how media texts are interpreted, as a route to understanding how the circulation of media texts influences social action. More specifically, how the female/male polarization is maintained, by the media, to perpetuate the idea that politics is a predominant male sector, thus more suited to men.

As we have previously mentioned, there has been a considerable amount of work within media studies and discourse analysis that contributes to this question. One approach to understanding the complexity of how, and to what extent, media texts influence social action has been to offer ever more precise accounts of how particular audience members interpret particular texts in particular contexts, and which different resources, skills, habits and preferences they bring to the act of interpretation. Writers play an important role on the way the reader interprets events and it will be on their “voices” that we will focus our attention in this chapter as a way to decode what is presupposed and assumed. When writers reproduce oral interaction they make use of their assumptions in order to convey a simplified idea of the characteristics of the real one. Van Dijk (1989) and Bell (1991), among others, acknowledge that most information used by journalists is not direct and the

production of the final copy follows a complex route. This implies that the quoted saying is presented through different voices and the trustfulness of what is referred may be questioned.

Hence, section 4.1. will focus on Ms Royal’s and Mr Sarkozy’s voices as they were glossed by the newspapers, section 4.2 will deal with the variety of voices (ordinary people, politicians, commentators and so forth) which were reproduced during the pre-electoral week, while section 4.3 will examine how the assumptions and presuppositions implied by the writer’s voice favour a particular interpretation of the situational context.

4.1 The framing of the protagonists’ voices : Sarkozy and Royal

Numerous studies of media discourse have pinpointed the role reporting verbs play in providing an interpretative frame for quotations. The group of articles that comment on the televised debate which took place on May 2 are rich in personal evaluations and attributions which may hint at the ideological positioning of the newspaper. The verbs we list in the table below (table 4) show the different choices made by each newspaper when introducing Ms Royal and Mr Sarkozy’s words.

| | GUARDIAN | TIMES | INDEPENDENT |
|------------|--|--|---|
| Ms Royal | fumed snapped back <i>argued</i> <i>interjected</i> | <i>attacked him</i> shot back replied <i>accused Mr ...</i> | <i>refused to</i> <i>accused him</i> <i>attacked</i> <i>drew attention</i> |
| Mr Sarkozy | in turn told her <i>dismissed Ms Royal's attempts</i> <i>promised to allow</i> | <i>sought to depict</i> <i>pressed</i> came back | <i>said</i> <i>tried to paint Ms Royal</i> <i>suggested</i> |

Table 4¹¹ (*List of the glossing verbs used to introduce Ms Royal and Mr Sarkozy's voices*)

We think that, in the case of Ms Royal, the choice of particular kinds of verbal processes aims to highlight her verbal violence (*attacked, snapped back..*) If we compare them with the ones used for Mr Sarkozy (*said, suggested...*) we can easily notice the difference. The writers' choice could have been different and this would have affected the meaning content of the clause.

The effect of choosing these alternatives can be said to indicate something of the attitude of the text's author towards the participant whose words he or she was reporting, and towards the truth of the proposition, or, otherwise, of what the participant was saying. Thus, if we take a pair of sentences such as the ones below from *The Times*, we find that (36) is neutral in regard to the author's attitude to the participant and what he is saying and it produces a different effect on the reader. The second (37), on the contrary, implies that Ms Royal has to overcome some resistance if she needs to use a violent posture to persuade her audience of the truth of what is said. This element of doubt is conveyed entirely by the choice of the verbal process *shot back*, a choice made by the writer.

(36) The 35-hour week was a complete catastrophe for the French economy," Mr Sarkozy **said**. (T, May3)

(37) Ms Royal **shot back**: "Then why did you not scrap the law if it was such a disaster?" (T, May3)

Likewise, the *Guardian*, on the same day, uses a similar kind of contraposition (fumed/told).

(38) I'm scandalised!" she **fumed**. "It's the height of political immorality," He in turn **told her**, "Calm down, and don't wave your finger at me", suggesting she had "lost her nerve" whereas a presidential figure must learn how to stay calm." (G, May 3)

¹¹ Italics for indirect speech

The glossing verbs are, as we have said, the ones which reveal the presence of the text-producer, thus they are highly linked to his/her interpretation of the facts. They give a specific illocutionary force to the sentences quoted. According to Caldas-Coulthard (1995) these verbs are not only metalinguistic but also metapositional because they categorise the posture of the utterer. In our articles they do not serve to silence women's voices, as it was observed by Caldas-Coulthard (*ibid.*: 235) when analysing her group of articles. In our case, they are used to stress that her need to gain the control which her previous behaviour has neglected to her made her "overplay anger" (G, May 3) and release a "long-winded and often emotional argument" (T, May 3), thus unconvincing and unnatural.

To sum up, if at a superficial level the presentation of voices appears to be used to give the implied reader the illusion of facing an objective and balanced portrayal of how politics works, at a deeper one we find that they help to influence the minds of the voters and condition their choices.

4.2 The construction of gender identity through a repertoire of voices.

An aspect which is typical of news discourse is the presence of quotations which help support the reporters' view of the events being narrated. Media studies have considered them as an important feature of mediatized political discourse. Van Dijk (1988: 87), for instance, says that quotations "...not only make the news report livelier but are direct indications of what was actually said and hence true-as-verbal-act". Fairclough (1995 : 55), when talking about the orders of discourse (i.e. the discourse types which come from different discursive practices of a community that can be mixed together in particular texts) states that they may be drawn upon in various ways. He adds that voices in discourse "can simply be unselfconsciously used, they can be self-consciously deployed for rhetorical

purposes, or they can be contested, undermined and struggled against.”(ibid.: 188).

The group of articles analysed here makes a wide use of external voices which are introduced through different techniques. Sometimes they are embedded in the reporters’ comments (as in all which refer to commentators, experts, and statistics or to the writers’ comments on the debate) while, on other occasions, the writers make direct use of discourses to offer a true evidence of both the politicians’ and ordinary people’s thinking. As van Dijk points out (1988 : 86) this way of offering opinions that do not pertain to the journalists themselves may not be the real truth but just functions as “ the illusion of truth”, hence complying with the rhetoric of news.

The Times uses both the indirect and the direct form and the first one seems to be essentially intended to further stress differences among the two contenders at the expenses of the woman (Ms Royal). As the sentences below show there is a semantic control on the sentences being uttered by a plurality of voices.

(22) A **Sofres poll** yesterday found that 56 per cent of those who intend to vote for Ms Royal **will do so because they want to block** Mr Sarkozy. Only 42 per cent believed in the candidate (T, May 2

(23) But **commentators agreed** that there was no knockout punch on either side. (T, May 3)

(24)...**the consensus was** that she had performed better than expected against an opponent with superior debating skills (T, May 3)

As we can observe, *The Times* uses polls and an apparently unitary front (“...*commentators agreed.*”, *many enemies*) to underplay the importance of a renewed Ms Royal since Mr Sarkozy is still the most credible one.

In the *Guardian*, reformulations are fewer. One stands out for introducing indirectly (critics’ cries) and through the use of the adversative “despite”, a negative view on Mr Sarkozy:

(25) Despite **his critics' cries** that he is a US-style neo-conservative, a racist authoritarian, and a volatile power-freak with a complex about his height, who poses on a horse to look like Napoleon charging into battle, Mr Sarkozy is coasting on the highest support of any politician in France for decades. (G, 5 May)

Here the writer presupposes there is something unclear in this rising popularity and does so by offering two opposing views which allow him to keep aloof from any kind of accusation.

The Independent uses external voices to give a more positive vision of the female candidate, to take in ordinary people's opinions and also to enhance Ms Royal's innovative impact on people. We can find indirect speech like the following:

(25) **Fashionistas say** that Mme Royal has compensated for her often plodding campaign by creating a brilliantly balanced visual "image": part mumsy, part brisk business woman, part no-nonsense, part chic.(I, 4 May)

(26) **Style commentators in France say** that her greatest triumph has been her choice of wardrobe. (I, 4 May)

(27) Nicolas Sarkozy, 52, **is accused by his many enemies** in France - not all of them on the left - of being too American or too "Anglo-Saxon" in his attitudes, but the world is likely to find that he is deeply French (I, 6 May)

In the sentences like the above the rewording serves the function of offering the implied reader a view not only of the general opinion but also analysts' and commentators' who are portrayed as a unitary front, thus trustful and coherent.

The following sentences, instead, indicate how the writer words fears or predictions from the perspective of the voters. People's voices are, indeed, directly coded in the texts both in the *Guardian* and the *Independent*:

(28) "He wants to avoid a brutal confrontation", **said an advisor** (G, 2 May)

(29) "He's going to be playing for time and for a 0-0 draw", **he [Hollande] said** (G,2 May)"

(30) "He pits people against each other, he stigmatises French people of foreign origin," **said Elyane Barras, a retired administrator.**

(31) "There will be riots again on the estates," **said Sorraya Baiddou, a student** from the suburbs" (G, 5 May)

(32) "She's not the ideal woman for the job, but between a cold and cholera, I'd choose a cold," **said one voter from Paris.**(G, 5 May)

(33) "He is the man that killed Le Pen," **said a waiter from Marseille.** "He has restored democracy to the south of France." (G, 5 May)

(34) "No. Never," **Thomas says.** "The man is dangerous. He is a French Berlusconi, or even worse, a French Mussolini. He will divide France and maybe tear us apart." (I, 2 May)

(35) Laure Leforestier, an assistant mayor of Rouen... "In the end, although she may be unimpressive in many ways, she is the more modern candidate of the two," **she said.** "She understands the desire for a new, less bombastic, more grass-roots approach to politics. Sarkozy just doesn't get it." (I, 2 May)

A general overview of the clauses chosen gives a clear idea of the importance, for each newspaper, of introducing a wide category of social agents which contribute to political discourse. Apart from the usual ones (professionals, analysts, politicians etc), the presence of ordinary people (as in examples (28-35)) incorporates elements of popular reaction into the reports themselves. Women voices are introduced as well, usually expressing their views on the female candidate (as in example (35)). However, again, the representation of people talking in the news is a cultural construct which hides values and beliefs. Hence either the reformulations or the selection of which voices to include may be ideological and used to highlight or reinforce ideas. In the case of our articles what leads choices is the political stance of each newspaper but the female politician keeps to be referred to as an outsider, although sometimes bringing positive changes.

4.3 Text writers' presuppositions and assumptions

As we have seen the interpretation of a text by the readers involves the interpretation of

many factors such as the situational context and the intertextual context. This is done, according to Fairclough (1989 : 145) partly on the basis of external cues and partly on the basis of the reader's MR which help her/him to interpret the cues interspersed in the text. Participants rely on assumptions which are connected to other discourses and which determine what can be taken for granted (presupposed), alluded or disagreed with. Fairclough (ibid. : 152) claims that presuppositions are cued in the texts through a series of formal features like juxtapositions of clauses, negations, comparisons, special connectors and so forth. They are not properties of the text but are "aspects of the texts producers' interpretations of intertextual context" (ibid). These formal features are also found in our corpus to convey the writer's views on the confrontation between a woman and a man politician and they are coded in the sentences' structure.

In the following examples, (39) and (40), the use of even though/although signals that what can be expected to happen, given the assumption that aggressiveness is what works in politics, may fail to happen.

(39) They agreed Ms Royal had surprised the nation by showing she had the gumption and standing of a president and had boosted her image, **although** Mr Sarkozy was tactically brilliant on policy detail" (G, May 3)

(40) Ms Royal was seen to have scored points with her forceful approach, **even though** some conceded she was weaker on arguments and fine detail than Mr Sarkozy, a trained lawyer"

(G, May 3)

However, Fairclough goes on by saying that relationships between sentences "are not always cued by connectors; they can be implied by mere juxtapositions of sentences" (ibid). In the *Independent* (May 3) we found some examples illustrating this point.

(41) In a studio designed to resemble a boxing ring, the Socialist candidate, Mme Royal, 53, gave a fluent and gutsy performance which may go some way towards drawing undecided voters. **It remains to be seen** whether she did enough to alter the dynamics of a campaign which appears to be heading towards a comfortable victory for the centre-right candidate.

The above mentioned clauses stand in relation of contrast and give a different image of the participants. Ms Royal's attitude is cast doubt upon and it is implied that her renewed approach can hardly erase the impression of weakness she has previously given. The implied assumption is that the two contenders' difference lies in Mr Sarkozy and Ms Royal being the embodiment of rational and emotionally-driven characters respectively.

We can observe then that the same schema, the same kind of categorization, which we found as a recurrent feature in many articles, is reinforced even by the encoded assumptions. Another example may illustrate this point. The importance of image in politics is now a commonly assumed theory many politicians have embraced in our Western world. A staff of advisers are said to back their public presentation. Nothing is apparently left to chance since every single aspect is considered equally important for the positive impact a political leader may have on her/his electorate. Nowadays newspapers usually comment on the style of one or the other politician but in our corpus the comments, surprisingly enough, refer mainly to Ms Royal and reveal certain presuppositions. As a matter of fact, the comparisons used to describe both contenders are again indicative of which frames the text producer is drawing upon. Some presuppose we relate a certain style to specific roles which are specifically suited for women and men. The article which appeared on the *Independent* (May 4) "*Fashion victor? The politics of style*" whose lead paragraph "*Ségolène Royal is hoping that elegance and glamour will be vote-winning qualities*" leave no doubt about the negative connotations these words may have. Again the two contenders are compared in the body of the text but this time on more trivial matters.

Ms Royal

(42) She **looked** stunning: part **headmistress**, part **barrister**, part **mother-of-the-bride**"(I, May 4)

(43) [Vincent Grégoire] She's now using it to demonise Sarkozy. **It's like** she's saying 'I am the light, I am an angel, a **pure and fragile woman**. He wears black. He is always dark. I am the future.'""(I, May 4)

Mr Sarkozy

(44) He looked **like the manager** of a provincial shipping company.” (*I, May 4*)

(45) Mme Royal's presidential rival often wears very dark suits and ties, which make him **look like a high-class waiter** or a **pocket-sized Count Dracula**”(*I, May 4*)

The implicit comparisons seem to presuppose that political goals of women are incompatible with the image of high-profile institutional roles required in politics. The man owns qualities (sentences (44) and (45)) which could be suitable for the charge he is running for while the woman's ones may be appraised for other aspects which have nothing to do with what she aims at¹².

To sum up interpreters operate from the beginning with assumptions about the context and as a result, as Fairclough (1989 : 151) states, the values that a particular text proposes depend on the interpreter's typification of the situational context understood as “the system of social and power relationship at the highest and societal level” (ibid. : 152). Presuppositions like the ones interspersed in our body of articles can be of different nature but their ideological aspect must not be undervalued since what they assume may justify the maintenance of the status quo in terms of stereotypes referred to women and men.

5. CONCLUSION

In this last chapter we will offer a synthesis of the results obtained by our research and some reflections derived from them.

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This is perceived by Ms Royal herself who, in an interview, (on February 1 2007) taken from an interview made by Daphne Barak for the Asharq Alaw Sat newspaper (a Pan-Arab Saudi daily newspaper published from London, UK.) criticises the way women, entering the field of politics, are in general depicted.

“I think that all the women who become involved in politics are treated in the same way. They rate their physical aspect and, above all, there is a permanent doubt about their credibility and their stature. They do not have the height or the “suit”. So we have to do more; we do not have the right to make mistakes. This is why we go forward and we're forced to be the best” (The whole interview is presented in the supplementary material section of the Appendix)

The main aim of our analysis was to ascertain whether some gender biased practices, which feminist and critical analysts of media discourse had previously observed, still persisted nowadays. The focus was on women and men occupying political office and aspiring at acquiring a higher political position, namely, that of President. The occasion of the French presidential elections on May 2007 appeared to offer the suitable material to conduct our study.

The results obtained by a combination of the instruments provided by the critical discourse analysis and the feminist approach have lead us to draw some conclusions. We can say that our paper has demonstrated that gender stereotypes still exist but at a more refined and subtle way. In fact, at a superficial level we found no difference (e.g. use of terms of address), as initially expected. but some kinds of categorizations were found.

Indeed, apart from political stances which may have contributed to a more favourable or unfavourable presentation of the Left-wing or Right-wing leaders, it can be noted that all of them could not help to depict Mr Sarkozy and Ms Royal in terms of gender stereotypes. First of all, the practice of gendering the woman position was a constant element in many articles and it was used to stress the difference in terms of behaviour, capacities and qualifications. The linguistic devices (lexis, nominal qualifiers and the metaphor of war) used by the journalists were numerous, as shown in chapter 3. In a normal situation this could have been acceptable considering the fact that two personalities and two political programmes were facing each other. But we found that the criticism and the approval were based on a stereotyped system of categorization which attributed specific roles to men and women. We have demonstrated, in fact, that stereotypical mental schemas do not only refer to women but also to men and that this situation may be counterproductive for both in the long run. When the roles were subverted on special occasions puzzlement was the result.

We have also showed that even the implementation of stylistic devices (metaphors), more common in literary genres, followed patterns which lingered on the same kind of perceptions, MR or mental schemas. In terms of stereotypes, masculine imagery still predominated in metaphors of politics and the confrontation was framed as a battle not only between two parties but also between two sexes, two styles, two implied different social and moral values. The contrasting political ideas were linked to opposing behaviours, styles, sexes thus giving the impression that the notions such as “a woman’s language” or “men’s style” really exist, as if people could only be judged in terms of pre-existing gender identities.

Moreover, the woman was framed both as an outsider and as agent of change but her previous experience and capabilities were undervalued on different occasions, thus giving rise to a situation, which, in a way, underlied contradictions. Mr Sarkozy, instead, was presented with a background knowledge on political matters and legal ones and more capable of keeping the control of the situation.

The analysis in chapter 4 showed how the attempts to show impartiality and impersonality were achieved through the use of external voices which, as we know, tend to be manipulated by the newsmakers. Quotations were chosen on purpose to support one view or the other and even the references to style and fashion (used only for Ms Royal) aimed at presenting the female candidate herself as a compliant agent of a preferred attention to appearance.

Furthermore, the use of reporting verbs had its ideological significance in producing a negative image of the woman since the text-producers portrayed Ms Royal as impassionate, sometimes overplaying anger and not always in control of the situation. The male politician (Mr Sarkozy), instead, though sometimes blamed for aggressiveness and desire of protagonism, was usually described and appreciated for his

abrasive image, pugnacity, strength and eloquence.

We can conclude, then, that the idea of “political correctness” has not actually contributed to the improvement of the way women are represented and the persisting attempts to maintain the idea of the division of competencies based on biological essentialism contribute to accept the status quo.

One has to wonder why the situation keeps only lightly modified. Indeed, although it has been widely demonstrated that the modern bias facing women in politics is that the media simply use traditional frames (based on the concept of male dominance) in coverage of women, it seems there is no possibility for women to be depicted in another way but as “outsiders”. By focusing once again on these asymmetrical representations we hope to have contributed to give a further impulse to the study of gender related to discourse.

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APPENDIX

From **The Times**

May 2, 2007

Dracula and Mary Poppins fight it out on screen for the last votes

Charles Bremner in Paris

About 20 million viewers will tune in to a French television duel tonight between Dracula and Mary Poppins.

The images are the caricatures of each other that Segolène Royal and Nicolas Sarkozy hope to imprint in viewers' minds as the finalists for the French presidency vie for millions of undecided votes ahead of Sunday's run-off.

Ms Royal, 53, the Socialist challenger, and Mr Sarkozy, 52, the conservative favourite, have been rehearsing with sparring partners of the opposite sex to devise the killer lines that could swing the vote.

The first French candidates' debate since 1995 is the last chance for Ms Royal to capture the centrist vote that she needs to break the momentum of the reforming conservative who is running more than four points ahead of her in polls. She aims to needle the tightly-strung Mr Sarkozy into revealing the dark and "brutal" side of his nature that she and the Left have turned into their chief weapon.

Adapting his usual aggressive tactics for combat with a woman, Mr Sarkozy will seek to highlight Ms Royal's shifting opinions and shaky grasp of matters of state.

They will face one another six feet apart at a square table while they answer questions from two interviewers.

Mr Sarkozy has been training with female sparring partners to find a tone that establishes superiority without condescension. The pugnacious Sarko insists that he will not treat a woman differently from a male opponent, but he could not resist a touch of Gallic gallantry on Sunday, saying: "You should not reduce Mme Royal to her femininity – as great as hers is. She is a politician."

To gain the upper hand, Ms Royal must exude a presidential authority that has been lacking from a shaky campaign in which even supporters have compared her nurturing, brisk, style to that of Mary Poppins. She will probe in Mr Sarkozy's steely self-assurance by needling him over the supposedly heartless reforms that he is planning for France.

The last Royal-Sarkozy debate on television has been traced to 1993. Mr Sarkozy was a junior minister after a general election in which Ms Royal lost her junior ministerial post. She accused him of bullying and called him a steamroller.

"Don't speak to me like that!" she snapped. "All the viewers can see that what you are saying is off the wall."

With his promises of radical change, Mr Sarkozy maintains a four to six point lead, but there is uncertainty because one in five voters are undecided. The indecision reaches 40 per cent among the 18 per cent of voters who backed François Bayrou in the first round.

Ms Royal has spent the past week courting these key voters by casting herself as a safe choice for peaceful change and predicting upheaval if Mr Sarkozy wins.

Ms Royal's strategy springs from figures that show that the deciding factor in the election will be the strength of feeling against Mr Sarkozy. A Sofres poll yesterday found that 56 per cent of those who intend to vote for Ms Royal will do so because they want to block Mr Sarkozy. Only 42 per cent believed in the candidate.

President Chirac's former Interior Minister has been campaigning for the past week to soften the harsh image that has fuelled the "anyone but Sarkozy" campaign. "I want to protect France from the out-sourcing of jobs," he told France television yesterday. "I want to control immigration, I want to give them the security to which they are entitled."

Mr Sarkozy may have been helped with centrist voters when Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the far-Right National Front, called on his supporters to abstain from voting in Sunday's election.

France has had no presidential debate since 1995 because President Chirac refused to engage with Mr Le Pen after he broke through into the run-off in 2002.

Killer lines in three of the four previous debates were credited with helping swing the vote in the final days of campaign. In 1974, in the first debate, Valery Giscard d'Estaing, Finance Minister from the centre-right, scored a hit against François Mitterrand, the veteran Socialist opposition leader, by saying: "You do not have a monopoly over the heart, Mr Mitterrand."

The killer questions

He should say

What is the difference between Hezbollah and Hamas?

What is the difference between an aircraft carrier and a submarine?

Which capitalists do you plan to start punishing first?

Who will defend the country if the Army is supervising juvenile delinquents?

Why do you admire Tony Blair?

She should say

Which brand of tranquiliser works for you?

When will you publish your wealth-tax return?

How will you protect French industry while promoting free trade?

Why has your wife Cecilia been absent for most of the campaign and what will she do if you are elected?

Why do you admire Tony Blair?

From **The Times**

May 3, 2007

Royal takes the battle to Sarkozy

Charles Bremner in Paris

Nicolas Sarkozy, the favourite for the French presidency, was thrown on the defensive last night when Ségolène Royal, his Socialist challenger, subjected him to a fierce assault over his past record and his supposed political “immorality”.

Mr Sarkozy, 53, who enjoys a four or five-point lead in opinion polls before Sunday’s run-off vote, struggled at moments to keep his balance as Ms Royal attacked his ideas and record in a long television debate watched by up to half of all French households.

“I regard what you are saying as the height of political immorality,” Ms Royal, 53, snapped at Mr Sarkozy in an argument over spending on the handicapped in schools.

Mr Sarkozy, a radical conservative, kept up the courteous tone that he had adopted towards the first woman contender for the Elysée Palace as Ms Royal sought to catch him out on detail and blamed him for the record of the outgoing administration of President Chirac.

It was clear that her strategy for the evening was all-out attack against the candidate whom she and the Left have vilified as an advocate of brutal policies and a danger to the peace of France. However, it was not clear that she would benefit from her long-winded and often emotional argument.

“What a pity you didn’t do that during your five years in government,” Ms Royal said repeatedly as Mr Sarkozy parried her interruptions in the 2½ debate.

“Why do you treat anyone who is not of your opinion with irony, even with contempt?” an exasperated Mr Sarkozy responded.

Ms Royal’s aim throughout the tense debate, the first between presidential candidates since 1995, was to shake Mr Sarkozy’s claim to superior experience and statesmanship. Dressed in a strict black suit that contrasted with her usual pale colours, she even suggested that Mr Sarkozy “do his homework” when the pair clashed over nuclear reactors.

Ms Royal and Mr Sarkozy sought to prove that each had the formula for pulling France out of its relative economic stagnation and sense of moral crisis, but the Socialist dwelt on her empathy for the people while Mr Sarkozy talked figures and policies.

“I want to be the president who creates a France where aggression and violence is receding, a France that will win the battle against unemployment,” Ms Royal said. “You are in part responsible for the situation in which France finds itself,” she told Mr Sarkozy.

She accused Mr Sarkozy’s Government, in which he served as Interior and Finance minister, of failing to tackle unemployment and street crime. “Madame, do you want me to complete a sentence?” he asked at one moment, tripping over his words.

Ms Royal attacked him over his plans for heavy cuts in the civil service and cited the case of a policewoman who was raped last month as she returned from work at night.

“Under my presidency every woman police officer will be accompanied to her home after work,” Ms Royal said. She scored points when Mr Sarkozy denounced the 35-hour maximum working week, introduced in 1999 by the last Socialist Government .

“The 35-hour week was a complete catastrophe for the French economy,” Mr Sarkozy said. Ms Royal shot back: “Then why did you not scrap the law if it was such a disaster?”

Mr Sarkozy sought to depict Ms Royal as an old-school tax-and-spend Socialist, and gained the upper hand when he pressed Ms Royal on her plans for raising the incomes of the poor and pensioners with new taxes on business. “Give me figures,” Mr Sarkozy said.

She replied: “My tax will be at the level necessary for social justice.” He came back: “That’s a stunning piece of detail. Can’t you give us a figure?” Ms Royal replied: “No, I can’t.”

“I see,” said Mr Sarkozy, who began his career as a trial lawyer.

No winner or loser emerged at the end of nearly two hours, but the consensus was that she had performed better than expected against an opponent with superior debating skills.

“Ségolène Royal pulled it off well,” Stéphane Foukes, a director of the Euro RSCG agency, said. “Sarkozy was no doubt guided by the fear of getting carried away.”

But commentators agreed that there was no knockout punch on either side.

Latest poll

53.5% Sarkozy

46.5% Royal

(of those who answered; 15% undecided)

Source: Ipsos

From **The Times**
May 4, 2007

Confident Sarkozy lines up his team

Charles Bremner

With the presidency within his grasp, an increasingly confident Nicolas Sarkozy dropped hints yesterday on who he would appoint as prime minister to manage the whirlwind of change that he has promised France.

The favourite for Sunday's run-off said that he had "quite a clear idea" on who would head his government, if elected. Along with hints from the man concerned, this was taken as confirmation that the post would go to François Fillon, 53, a former Social Affairs and Education Minister, who is Mr Sarkozy's campaign director.

Mr Fillon, who has a Welsh wife, Penelope, and Franco-British children, would be a less popular choice than Jean-Louis Borloo, the puckish Social Affairs chief, who is one of Mr Chirac's most admired ministers. Coming from the left, social-minded wing of the Union for a Popular Movement, as the Gaullist bloc is now called, he is at odds with Mr Sarkozy's radical self-help creed, but Mr Sarkozy could benefit from a consensual government chief who would counter his abrasive image.

As well as planning to put France back in the EU driving seat by the summer, Mr Sarkozy has promised to undertake a frantic programme of radical social and economic reforms. These would symbolise his promise to restore the work ethic, trim the state and encourage enterprise. The work would start after President Chirac leaves the Elysée Palace on May 16.

Mr Fillon is a former Chirac lieutenant who joined Mr Sarkozy after he was unceremoniously sacked by Mr Chirac in 2005. As prime minister he would have to start campaigning immediately for next month's parliamentary elections.

Before embarking on the promised break with France's old ways, he would first have to fulfill an unprecedented pledge by the candidate Sarkozy on the shape of his government. This, he has promised, will be tiny by French standards with only 15 ministers and, in a revolutionary step, half of them would be women.

Mr Sarkozy's promise has thrilled his women lieutenants, who include new stars such as Rachida Dati, a glamorous former judge from an Arab background, who has become one of his most visible campaign aides. Michèle Alliot-Marie, the outgoing Defence Minister, is also expected to have a big job, possibly retaining the same portfolio that she has held successfully under President Chirac.

Top jobs are expected to go to Alain Juppé, President Chirac's former party chief and Prime Minister, and Mr Borloo. Posts are expected to go to dissident members of the Union for French Democracy, the party of François Bayrou, the centrist presidential candidate who turned the party against his former Gaullist allies.

A Sarkozy prime minister would first move on removing taxes on working time beyond the 35-hour working week, and mortgage interest would immediately be made tax-deductible in order to promote Mr Sarkozy's pledge to turn France into a nation of homeowners.

From **The Times**

May 5, 2007

France set to pick man it fears over the woman it likes but doesn't trust

A new political era will start on Sunday as Sarkozy heads for the Elyse Palace

Charles Bremner in Paris

France appears set to open a new political age tomorrow by choosing a President it admires but does not widely like, while rejecting the more popular alternative it does not trust to cure the country's economic ills.

With a nine-point lead in opinion polls, the tough-talking Nicolas Sarkozy should cruise home against Ségolène Royal, the Socialist who promises caring reform with generous public spending and state direction.

He promises radical change – *la rupture*, as he puts it – yet his election would mark the first return of a sitting French Government since 1978.

The intensely fought run-off ends a campaign in which hope of renewal has been heavily invested in candidates from a new political era. Mr Sarkozy, 52, and Ms Royal, 53, are both a generation younger than President Chirac, who leaves the Elysée Palace in ten days.

Both were disliked in their parties as overambitious, underqualified upstarts who were out of their depth. But they have captivated France as unorthodox, solitary leaders with fierce ambition ascribed to childhood trauma.

Each as adults took their absent fathers to court to extract support for their mothers. Psychiatrists writing in the media have noted that each has sought through over-achievement to prove themselves to unloving fathers.

Mr Sarkozy, whose slogan is “work more to earn more”, has led the field in every opinion poll since December in the most hotly contested election since 1981. Yet his power to convince voters that he can improve life is matched by the fear that he stirs with his un-French gospel of self-help and his uncompromising character.

Ms Royal, an unorthodox Socialist who claims a near mystical bond with the people, yesterday made a desperate appeal to voters to “open their eyes . . . and see the danger of the violence and brutality that will be triggered in our country if Mr Sarkozy is elected”. Appealing to voters to “choose the light” over Mr Sarkozy's darkness, she said there is “something indecent about his arrogance.”

Mr Sarkozy, an outsider with immigrant origins and rightwing thinking, recognised yesterday that he was on the brink of achieving a lifelong quest for power and with it the chance to revamp Europe's most regulated nation. “France is moving,” he said. “People have realised that the real danger is standing still, that we can no longer be a nation where you can make more money on welfare than working.”

His arrival on the republican throne created for the late Charles de Gaulle would open a new political age for France. For the first time since the 1950s it will have a President who does not subscribe to the primacy of “social solidarity” – the welfare state doctrine followed by both Left and Right.

Ms Royal has been trying to fan dislike, widespread among the young and especially nonwhites, for Mr Sarkozy's abrasive personality and supposedly divisive ideas: the work ethic, law-and-order, discipline and national identity.

Mr Sarkozy has put his ideas into practice in nearly five years as Interior Minister. He is also depicted as dangerously close to the owners of media and industry. Showing new steel, Sègo attacked an uncharacteristically docile Sarko over all of this in a television debate on Thursday, but she failed to dent his armour.

One of the oddities of the 2007 campaign is that the stylish and feisty Ms Royal remains far more popular than the pugnacious and moody favourite for the election. With her nurturing, overtly feminine personality, she scores double Mr Sarkozy's ratings as "sympathique" and in tune with ordinary people.

Yet for all their political differences and mutual antipathy, the two have oddly similar profiles. Both fought their way to the top from outside the Parisian elite, typified by M Chirac.

The characters of both were marked by conflict with their fathers. Each also had an adored political father-figure: Mr Chirac for Mr Sarkozy and the late President Mitterrand for Ms Royal.

The defining moment in Mr Sarkozy's political career was his breach with Mr Chirac in 1995. Ms Royal has remained loyal to the memory and principles of Mitterrand, for whom she worked in the 1980s.

The prospect of turmoil in the immigrant ghettos and mass strikes under a President Sarkozy is widely cited as cause for rejecting the tough-talking son of a Hungarian immigrant and half-Jewish mother. Le Monde, daily of the thinking establishment, worried yesterday about tensions that could follow the election of a candidate who stood for "American-style conservatism". Voters should take a gamble and choose Ms Royal's "European-style Social-Democratic realism," it said.

The apparent readiness of voters to reject such warnings and put aside distaste for Mr Sarkozy's Napoleonic ambition is proof of a readiness for change that has marked an extraordinary campaign.

Five years after voters put Jean-Marie Le Pen, the far Right agitator, into the run-off with President Chirac and two years after rejecting the European constitution, the mood of revolt has given way to hope and high expectation. All 12 candidates in the first round of the election on April 22 cast themselves as outsiders who would heal France's sense of stagnation and deal with globalisation, a force that is deemed to be a threat to the nation.

In the biggest turnout for decades, voters routed Mr Le Pen and the leftwing fringe and eliminated François Bayrou, the centrist. He scored a healthy 18 per cent with a hybrid plan for market reform while keeping the dirigiste state.

The bulk of the vote went to the candidates of the big parties that have governed since the 1950s. Over the past week, Ms Royal has made a play for Mr Bayrou's supporters, but at least a third of them have sided with the supposedly dangerous Sarkozy.

Mr Bayrou neatly defined the choice while he was still in the running: "Both Royal and Sarkozy worry people – Sarkozy because we know where he is heading. Royal because we do not know where she is heading."

Reviewing the campaign, commentators voiced optimism. "This has been the most passionately fought election since 1965," said Jean Viard, a director of the Sciences Po institute yesterday. "It is about change on all sides.

There is a paradox in Mr Sarkozy's expected victory. For the first time since 1978, voters will be returning to power the party of government. In every parliamentary election since that year, the ruling party has been thrown out. This is evidence of how successfully Mr Sarkozy, a lawyer by training but a professional politician

since his 20s, has transformed Mr Chirac's discredited Gaullist machine, the Union for a Popular Movement, and cast himself as the agent of radical change.

He has managed to promise economic change while reassuring a fearful and nostalgic section of the country that he can restore the moral values and grandeur that have faded with France's malaise. His latest target is the legacy of the 1968 student revolt. The libertarian ideas of the Sixties generation destroyed France's moral compass, he says. "They put Harry Potter on the same level as Victor Hugo. They made the pupil equal to the teacher." Unlike Mr Chirac and other conservatives who began as leftists, Mr Sarkozy was a rightwing activist when he was a student.

Mr Sarkozy's approach hails far more from France's Bonapartist tradition of authoritarian leadership than from the doctrines of Tony Blair, who is admired as a pragmatic moderniser by both Mr Sarkozy and Ms Royal.

While denouncing the social protection that stifles the nation, he shares none of the *laissez-faire* ideas that were brought to the world in the Reagan-Thatcher years. As the campaign has drawn to a close, Mr Sarkozy has struck an increasingly patriotic, populist and lyrical note. He is talking of his communion with the nation, "which I have come to feel like a living person". In Montpellier at his final rally on Thursday, he said: "The people have risen, the people have regained the power to speak. I have touched the soul of France."

He is aware, though, that after declining under 12 years of grand Chiraquien rhetoric, France expects him to deliver fast. "I will provide results," he promised. "I will not disappoint or deceive."

Election timetable

May 6 Election: the presidency goes to candidate who gains most votes. The new President appoints a Prime Minister and Cabinet to run the country pending parliamentary elections in June

May 16 Deadline for President Chirac to leave office, making way for his successor. A new Prime Minister is installed with a temporary Government

June 10 First round of general parliamentary elections. Straight majority system, but candidates must achieve more than 50 per cent to win a seat

June 17 Second round of elections to decide seats not won outright in the first round

Around June 25 President is likely to reshuffle the Government after elections. If the new parliamentary majority is from the party opposed to the President, it will chose a new Prime Minister, who will appoint a government — an awkward political arrangement called "cohabitation"

From [Times Online](#)

May 6, 2007

French give Sarkozy a mandate for reform

 Charles Bremner, Paris

Nicolas Sarkozy, the son of a Hungarian immigrant, has won the French presidency with a solid majority that he described tonight as a mandate for a moral renaissance and radical reform of the over-regulated welfare state.

Thousands celebrated late into the night in the Place de la Concorde after the 52-year-old leader of President Chirac's Union for a Popular Movement defeated Ségolène Royal, the Socialist, with 53 percent of the vote. The turnout after their bitter fortnight's duel since the first round was a near-record 85 percent.

"Together we are going to write a new page of history," the pugnacious former Interior Minister told cheering supporters. "The page, I am sure, will be great and it will be beautiful." Ms Royal accepted defeat with a smile, telling supporters that she had nevertheless relaunched the left.

"Something has risen which will not stop. Let us keep in tact the energy and joy... of this campaign," she said. Her Socialist colleagues were, however bitter over the third presidential defeat of their party in succession.

"The flag of the Left lies on the ground," said Laurent Fabius, one of the most senior Socialists.

Mr Sarkozy delivered a lyrical victory speech, voicing his love for "this great and beautiful nation which has given me everything". He promised to be "the president of all the French" and fulfill his promise of immediate radical reform.

"The French have chosen to break with the ideas, habits and behaviour of the past," he said. "I will restore the value of work, authority, merit and respect for the nation."

He would also rid France of its habit of "repenting" for its past historical sins. "This repentance is a form of self-hatred," he said.

Mr Sarkozy offered friendship to the United States, but urged Washington to act urgently on climate change. He also warned fellow European leaders that he expected them to join him in making the Union more protective.

"It must not be the Trojan horse for globalisation's ills," he said.

By choosing Mr Sarkozy, France turned a deaf ear to the warnings of Ms Royal and much of the left that his muscular plans for restoring the work ethic, cutting welfare and fighting crime would lead to violence and even insurrection.

Police were out in force in Paris and in immigrant districts on all the big city outskirts in case of violence by youths who see Mr Sarkozy, the Interior Minister for most of the past five years, as their enemy.

Accepting her defeat, Ms Royal told cheering supporters on the Boulevard Saint Germain: "I understand your disappointment, but I tell you, something has arisen which will not stop."

Smiling as some supporters wept, she added: "I undertook a profound reform of the political world and of the left. The high turnout rate showed the revival of political life in France. "

Mr Sarkozy's victory, the first since 1969 by a candidate from the outgoing President's party, marks a change of generation after 12 years under President Chirac, 74, although he is not the youngest to be elected to the monarchical presidency of the Fifth Republic. His triumph followed a campaign in which all candidates offered paths for ending the relative economic decline and moral malaise that has afflicted France over over 15 years.

Mr Sarkozy, fiercely ambitious and hyper-energetic, had promised by the most radical -- and un-French -- recipe for restoring the country's pride and wealth. "Work more to earn more" was the simple slogan that he used to convince the country that its renaissance lies with individual effort rather than reliance on the "social solidarity" which has created the world's shortest official working week and one of Europe's highest unemployment rates.

The defeat of Ms Royal, who was the favourite until Mr Sarkozy launched his campaign in January, is expected to lead to blood-letting in the Socialist party after general elections for a new Parliament in six weeks. Ms Royal, whose partner Francois Hollande is the party leader, was never fully supported by Socialist elders who objected to her single-handed attempt to modernise the left during her campaign.

In next month's elections, voters are expected to return a parliament dominated by the UMP, the former Gaullist movement, which Mr Sarkozy took over in 2004 and jettisoned the semi-socialist doctrines that had been applied by Mr Chirac.

Royal vs Sarkozy: Battle for the 'Bayrouistes'

The cathedral city of Rouen is controlled by centrists who voted for François Bayrou in the first round of the French election. How they switch will determine who wins power. By John Lichfield

Published: 02 May 2007

Thomas, 29, looks like a typical Nicolas Sarkozy voter but he detests Nicolas Sarkozy. He is a young, neatly dressed executive, soon to be married. He wants France to "break out of our rigid, inward-looking way of doing things". He wants France to, "open its windows on the world".

On Sunday, Thomas says he faces an "agonising choice". He will either vote for the Socialist candidate, Ségolène Royal - "who does not impress me at all" - or he will cast a spoiled, or blank, ballot. And why not vote for M. Sarkozy, the front-running, centre-right candidate? The man who claims to represent a more modern, less rigid, outward-looking future for France?

"No. Never," Thomas says. "The man is dangerous. He is a French Berlusconi, or even worse, a French Mussolini. He will divide France and maybe tear us apart."

Welcome to Rouen, the largest city in France run by centrists and a key battleground in the second round of the presidential election on Sunday.

I met Thomas when he was watching a speedboat race on the river Seine. The event - like the city of Rouen itself, part- dynamic, part-picturesque - symbolises the choices France faces on Sunday. Old vs New is easy. But what is old and what is new? What is old, but worth preserving; and what is new, but menacing?

Mme Royal has sometimes compared herself to Joan of Arc, who was the last, significant, female, would-be leader of France. Joan was tried and burnt to death in Rouen nearly 600 years ago this month. Mme Royal's fate could also be decided here, in the capital of upper Normandy, on Sunday. The votes of hundreds of thousands of young, educated, anxious, middle-class voters in provincial cities such as Rouen will decide the next president. They are the "18-35 Club": liberal, economically and culturally; ambitious but not selfish; patriotic but pro-European.

They are unimpressed by the old left-right ideological warfare. They are frustrated by the hidden ceilings and blockages in French society. They are angry with the self-seeking, vacuous clannishness of French politics.

In the first round, they voted for the centrist candidate François Bayrou. Now they face a "terrible dilemma", according to Jean-François Mabire, 36, who was president of the "Young People for Bayrou" campaign in the Rouen area. "In the second round, for many young people, including me, the choice is not, as you might imagine, between Royal and Sarkozy. It is between Royal and a blank ballot," he says.

"It is a question of deciding whether Sarkozy is so dangerous that you must vote TSS - Tous Sauf Sarkozy (anyone but Sarkozy) to keep him out. Or whether you should register your milder feeling of repulsion for Mme Royal by abstaining or, better still, voting 'blank'." That is why tonight's televised debate between the remaining candidates will be pivotal - more so than similar debates in the past.

M. Sarkozy, 52, holds a lead of four to five points over Mme Royal, 53, in the opinion polls, but it

is shrinking slowly. Many younger viewers, such as Thom-as and Jean-François, will be watching the debate not to judge between "Sarko" and "Sego". They will be giving Mme Royal a final chance to impress them.

There are many other unknowns. Will the poor, multi-racial suburbs - where M. Sarkozy is loathed - turn out once again en masse as they did in the first round on 22 April? Will the voters of the extreme left and extreme right - one in five of all votes last time - switch in large numbers to Mme Royal and M. Sarkozy. Or will many stay at home? The far-right leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, yesterday urged his voters to "abstain massively".

Most commentators agree, however, that the key to France's future lies in the 6,800,000 votes cast for M. Bayrou on 22 April - 18.85 per cent of the vote. More precisely, the key lies in part of the Bayrou electorate, which can be split into three segments. The smallest group came from the centre left. They are the culturally liberal, middle-aged lefties or so-called "Bourgeois Bohemians" (Bobos). They are teachers and middle-ranking civil servants and have returned meekly to Mme Royal.

Part of M. Bayrou's vote came from the centre-right, out of distaste for the aggressive, divisive style of M. Sarkozy. However, they will now back the former interior minister.

That leaves the largest and least predictable part of the "Bayrouistes": the floating voters or first-time voters or long-term supporters of M. Bayrou's centrist party, the Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF). How will they vote in the second round on Sunday?

Laure Leforestier, an assistant mayor of Rouen, will be the UDF - soon to be renamed "Democratic Party" - candidate for Rouen in the parliamentary elections in June.

"What is absolutely clear," she says, "is that the great divide in the Bayrou vote is a generational one. People over 40, especially those who have always voted UDF, are still conditioned by our tradition of electoral alliances with the right, the Gaullists and now with (Sarkozy's party), the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP). They have an aversion to voting left. They will mostly vote for Sarkozy.

"But the younger people who voted for Bayrou in great numbers are either turning in droves to Mme Royal or they are undecided. They may vote blank or abstain on Sunday but it is clear that they cannot stomach Sarkozy. They are scared by him, as I am. There is something totalitarian about Sarkozy, something uncompromising and unRepublican. He says he represents a new approach but, to me, he is the old, intolerant, clan politics made even more brutal."

There is a great paradox here. M. Sarkozy presents himself as a youthful man: a man who is going to revive France economically and "morally". He talks of - or, at least, he used to talk of - "rupture" with the past. The sociology of the first round vote paints a different picture. Among those aged 18 to 40, Mme Royal was the clear winner and M. Bayrou ran M. Sarkozy close for second place. Among voters above 40 - especially the over 60s - M. Sarkozy was the runaway victor.

This suggests that M. Sarkozy's true appeal is conservative and patriotic, not modernising and reforming. If you go to a Sarkozy rally, you get both versions: Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

M. Sarkozy rants like a populist outsider against, "politicians and technocrats, trades unionists and fraudsters". He makes protectionist attacks on the euro and world trade policy. Then he makes moderate and sensible-seeming proposals for liberalising the French economy.

The sociology and age-profile of the first-round vote suggests that it was the "ranting" Sarko who topped the poll in the first round; not the reasonable one. Hence the aversion to M. Sarkozy -

bordering on hatred - of thoughtful, moderate people such as Jean-François Mabire, a legal adviser to a large company in the Rouen area. He is an economic liberal but believes in the importance of the Republican values of fraternity and equality.

France can only succeed, he says, if it moves forward together, breaking down its old rigidities and borders of race, class and political, or ideological, clan.

"This is what terrifies me in Sarkozy," he says. "The spirit of the times is about removing boundaries and releasing energy and sharing power.

"Sarkozy's brutal language, his subliminal message, his whole way of being, is bullying and clannish and totalitarian."

M. Bayrou has been playing footsie with the Socialist candidate in recent days without formally supporting her. The unprecedented, unofficial TV debate between second and third placed candidates last Saturday, "did Mme Royal a great deal of good", Mme Leforestier believes.

Her boss, the UDF mayor of Rouen, Pierre Albertini, has already declared for M. Sarkozy. So have most of the UDF members of the national assembly. Mme Leforestier says the apparent split between M. Bayrou and his party is easily explained. The UDF deputies have been subjected to "extreme pressures" from M. Sarkozy's UMP.

She prefers not to elaborate. Other officials say the UMP has threatened to run candidates against them in the parliamentary elections in June - unless they declare for M. Sarkozy. Traditionally, UMP and UDF candidates have stood down for one another in the second round.

Tensions are running high within the UDF. Leading figures such as Mme Leforestier are under intense, pressure from both sides. She has yet to announce officially which way she will vote on Sunday. She told me, however, that she had decided - after only a few minutes' hesitation on 22 April - that she would vote for Ségolène Royal.

"In the end, although she may be unimpressive in many ways, she is the more modern candidate of the two," she said. "She understands the desire for a new, less bombastic, more grass-roots approach to politics. Sarkozy just doesn't get it."

According to the polls, about 40 per cent of the Bayrou vote is going to Mme Royal and 30 per cent to M. Sarkozy. The rest - one in three, or more than two million votes - are still undecided or will abstain. Everything will depend, Mme Leforestier says, on how many young Bayrou supporters decide in the next couple of days to substitute a Royal vote for a "blank" ballot or a decision to stay at home.

Mme Royal cannot win on Sunday. Nicolas Sarkozy can perhaps lose. I pressed Thomas, beneath the noise of the boats, for his likely decision. Royal or a blank ballot? "I don't know. I don't know," he says. "I just cannot imagine Mme Royal measuring up as president. I will decide after I see the debate. Maybe."

The Independent

Royal wins round one in 'boxing ring' debate

By John Lichfield in Paris

Published: 03 May 2007

A pugnacious and impassioned Ségolène Royal scored a points victory over an often-rattled Nicolas Sarkozy in the French presidential television debate last night.

The two presidential contestants sparred live for two and a half hours, exchanging flurries of sharp verbal blows without landing any knock-out punches.

In a studio designed to resemble a boxing ring, the Socialist candidate, Mme Royal, 53, gave a fluent, gutsy performance which may go some way towards drawing undecided voters.

It remains to be seen whether she did enough to alter the dynamics of a campaign which appears to be heading towards a comfortable victory for the centre-right candidate.

In an often bewilderingly technical debate, Mme Royal and M. Sarkozy, 52, assaulted each other with batteries of pre-digested statistics. Mme Royal refused to be browbeaten by the confident sometimes overconfident front-runner. She accused him at one point of "political immorality" for talking about policy for the handicapped, after his centre-right government had dismantled programmes for handicapped children.

"Calm down," he said. "I have a right to talk about the handicapped. I don't challenge your sincerity. Don't accuse me of immorality. I wouldn't talk to you like that..."

"Yes," she replied. "But I don't lie."

Mme Royal also attacked M. Sarkozy on his favourite ground of crime and security. She pointed out that he was part of a government which had promised "zero tolerance" for violence five years ago but had seen an increase in violent attacks in schools of 26 per cent.

She also drew attention to the rape of two female police officers in the Paris suburbs in recent weeks. If elected, she said, she would make sure that women police were protected leaving work late at night.

It was the pair's first face to face encounter for 12 years, and over 20 million people watched it half of all French voters. The candidates sat either side of a two-metre square table, with Mme Royal on the left and M. Sarkozy on the right.

Mme Royal looked like a female barrister in a black skirt and jacket and high-collared white blouse. M. Sarkozy wore his usual dark suit and striped tie.

The stakes were especially high for Mme Royal. The latest opinion polls place her four to seven points behind M. Sarkozy with only three days before the second round of voting.

To have any chance, she needed to put on a performance competent enough, and attractive enough, to bring hundreds of thousands of "undecided" centrist voters into her camp.

In her final statement, she urged French voters to have the "bravery" to choose a woman for the first time.

M. Sarkozy tried to paint Mme Royal as an old-fashioned, state-interventionist Socialist, who

wanted to increase public spending and spread the 35-hour working week. He said that no other country in Europe had tried to increase employment by reducing working hours, as the last Socialist government did.

"Look at your friend, Tony Blair," he said. "Look at Scandinavia. They are removing obstacles to people working, not stopping them from doing so." In reply, Mme Royal presented herself as a modern, pro-business Socialist. "I will be the President of what works," she said.

M. Sarkozy said that the key to reviving the French economy was to "revalue" work: to encourage more French people into the work force and allow longer working hours with overtime pay.

The candidates launched into a series of lengthy one-on-one arguments on education, labour law, pensions, taxes and trade. M. Sarkozy took on a patronising edge at times but Mme Royal held her ground. And he often seemed more on top of the details, but she came over as confident and capable of thinking on her feet: something which has not always been evident during her campaign.

"Mme Royal is trying to cover every subject at once. She risks skimming over things and not being precise enough," M. Sarkozy said. But she shot back: "Let me be responsible for my own words, if you don't mind." And she managed to get under his skin too. At one point, he suggested that women had a right to go to court to demand a place for their child in a creche.

"Is that the kind of society you want?" she asked. "Where busy women have to go to court to get a place in a creche?"

What they said

Royal

"For now I don't think Turkey should be part of the EU, but this may change. But, M. Sarkozy, I think it is very dangerous to slam the door in the face of an entire country and its people. You can't lock Europe."

"I will be the president of what works."

"Two days ago a female police officer was raped, five years ago, exactly the same thing happened. What did you do for five years? For five years, you had all the power."

Sarkozy

"I will focus on results and take responsibility."

"The 35-hour week was a catastrophe for the economy. People who want to work more should be allowed."

"You jump off the rails very easily. To be president... one must be calm... I don't know why Mme Royal has lost her calm."

The Independent

Royal redeems herself on TV - but it may be too late

By John Lichfield in Paris

Published: 04 May 2007

Better, much better, but probably too late. France's would-be first woman president, Ségolène Royal, impressed many viewers with a feisty and eloquent performance in a televised debate watched by 20 million people on Wednesday night. But the Socialist candidate may not have done enough to redeem a previously muddled and error-strewn campaign. The centre-right candidate, Nicolas Sarkozy, still appears to be heading for a clear victory on Sunday.

To the disappointment, and anger, of the Socialist camp, the centrist leader, François Bayrou, refused to announce that he had made a personal choice to vote for Mme Royal in the second round of the election this weekend.

M. Bayrou's nearly seven million first round votes hold the key to the outcome of the election.

The centrist leader said yesterday that he would "definitely not vote for Nicolas Sarkozy", a man that he has previously described as a threat to democracy. He also said that Mme Royal had "done pretty well" in Wednesday's debate.

Nonetheless, M. Bayrou refused to say whether he would vote for her, or abstain or cast a blank ballot. Royal campaign officials had been counting on a Bayrou "semi-endorsement" to give her campaign the "bounce" it needs to overcome a four to seven point deficit in the opinion polls in the final days.

Many thousands of young, centrist anti-Sarkozy voters had been waiting for Wednesday's debate before deciding whether to abstain or vote for Mme Royal. It seemed yesterday that she had not done quite enough to bring them into her camp in the numbers that she needs.

Jean-Francois Mabire, 36, leader of the Young People for Bayrou campaign in the Rouen area, said: "She did well but she showed no real vision for the future of France. I will definitely vote blank."

The French media mostly called the two-and-a-half-hour debate a draw. Royal scored points for passion and guts; Sarkozy was praised for his calm and precision.

The great surprise of the televised confrontation was that the two candidates exchanged their usual roles.

Mme Royal has previously been accused, within her own camp, of being too serene and laid-back. On Wednesday night, she was an elegant Labrador who suddenly yapped and growled like a terrier.

M. Sarkozy is accused by his opponents of being an excitable and brutal man, who will generate violent opposition on the streets if elected. On Wednesday night, he was a terrier trying to show that he was house-trained and did not always bite postmen.

The debate ranged over the 35-hour working week, education, taxes, crime and violence

and European and foreign policy. Some of the sharpest exchanges were on minute points of social policy: whether there should be creches for all working mothers; whether disabled children should have places in ordinary schools.

Mme Royal was accused by the Sarkozy camp - and part of the press yesterday - of "losing her cool" toward the end of the debate. She accused the centre-right candidate of talking "with a tear in your eye" about disabled children although his government had scrapped a plan to help them to join ordinary classes.

"We have reached the summit of political immorality," she said.

"Calm down," M. Sarkozy retorted. "And don't point your finger at me."

Mme Royal: "I won't calm down."

M. Sarkozy: "To be President, you have to be calm."

Mme Royal: "Not when there are injustices... I will be angry about those when I am President of the Republic."

M. Sarkozy: "That will be fun."

Overall, M. Sarkozy achieved his aim of seeming calm and reasonable and well briefed on leading issues. After being widely criticised for his ranting and populist campaign style, he was determined to come over as managerial and a moderate man of action on Wednesday night.

For the first time since the Socialist primary campaign last year, Mme Royal found her authentic "voice" as a passionate, but modernising and pragmatic Socialist. She said that, if she was elected, she would make France the "country of enterprise", reconcile the French with market forces, end the confrontational relations between unions and big business and "unblock the machinery" of growth.

A similarly assured and passionate series of performances earlier in the campaign might have made a big difference.

What the papers said

Le Monde

"The televised duel did not fully clarify the choices and, in some respects, disguised them. All the same, we are offered two Frances, two different visions... Mme Royal is right to make the rebuilding of union-employer relations key to a return to economic confidence... Nicolas Sarkozy has a much more 'American' vision, which will favour the upper slopes of the social pyramid."

Le Parisien

"The surprise was that both candidates were playing each others' roles. We expected an aggressive Sarkozy, who gave in to his penchants for domination and overconfidence, and a serene Royal, who put forward her quiet authority concealing an alleged lack of experience. We were presented with quite the opposite."

Liberation

"Nicolas Sarkozy did not lose, but Ségolène Royal won. In a debate of cold anger and

restrained aggression, the Socialist candidate beat Sarkozy on one vital point: legitimacy. Pugnacious, precise and persistent, despite the occasional awkwardness, she often succeeded in putting pressure on the front-runner. Did Sarkozy do badly? No, quite the opposite. But even with all his determination, preparation and the advantage given by 31 per cent of the first-round votes, he did not dominate his rival."

Le Figaro

"Precise and sure of himself, Sarkozy did not let himself go to the excesses which would have given satisfaction to his opponents and could have knocked everything off balance. Often fluent and sometimes aggressive, Royal did not make any serious blunders that could have been her undoing... At the end of the debate, Sarkozy's self control allowed him to keep his punch while also giving him points for serenity."

The Independent

Fashion victor? The politics of style

Ségolène Royal is hoping that elegance and glamour will be vote-winning qualities. By John Lichfield and Jen Wainwright

Published: 04 May 2007

Arguments raged in France yesterday over who had "won" the war of words in the presidential TV debate. There can be no question who won the style war.

Ségolène Royal wore a dark blue skirt and jacket, and a white blouse with high white collar. She looked stunning: part headmistress, part barrister, part mother-of-the bride.

Nicolas Sarkozy wore a dark suit, blue shirt and stripy tie. He looked like the manager of a provincial shipping company.

Mme Royal's "look" was something of a surprise. In recent days she has appeared in tailored, all-white suits, like a vision of purity and toughness; like a Joan of Arc, re-styled for the 21st Century.

One of France's foremost style gurus, Vincent Grégoire, commented: "During the first round campaign, [she] went through a brief stage of wearing different colours and styles, a black leather jacket, or a bright red suit. But she realised that that didn't work for her. She has mostly gone back to her characteristic white."

"She's now using it to demonise Sarkozy. It's like she's saying 'I am the light, I am an angel, a pure and fragile woman. He wears black. He is always dark. I am the future.'"

It may seem sexist to dwell on the clothes of a woman politician but Mme Royal has consciously used style as a political weapon. And why not? Female politicians need all the weapons that they can find.

Fashionistas say that Mme Royal has compensated for her often plodding campaign by creating a brilliantly balanced visual "image": part mumsy, part brisk business woman, part no-nonsense, part chic.

Could these subliminal messages make a difference in the final days? Mme Royal's presidential rival often wears very dark suits and ties, which make him look like a high-class waiter or a pocket-sized Count Dracula. Since many French people are worried there might be "something of the night" about M. Sarkozy, these are puzzling choices.

Mme Royal, 53, used to disguise her femininity behind large glasses and bossy, bright red jackets. In the past two or three years, she has deliberately transformed her appearance (or as the French now say "changée son look").

She had some work done on her once-prominent teeth. Her stunningly youthful appearance owes a little to mild cosmetic surgery - but only a little. Style commentators in France say that her greatest triumph has been her choice of wardrobe.

Mme Royal mostly wears "prêt-à-porter" clothes from quality high-street shops such as Zara, and especially, the rising French label, Gérard Darel. She avoids haute couture, with the exception of a couple of outfits from the French designer boutique, Paule Ka.

The critics have been impressed by the way that she has danced elegantly through the fashion

minefield. She has, they say, created a perfect image for herself as at once modern and stylish and feminine and serious and thrifty.

M. Grégoire is manager of "lifestyle trends" for the Nelly Rodi "TrendLab" in Paris, a company that studies social and political changes and advises the fashion industry on the likely tastes of the near future.

He believes that Mme Royal has perfectly captured the elusive "zeitgeist", or mood, of the early 21st century.

"She's created a look for herself, a silhouette. It's something she's worked very hard on and yet manages to appear quite natural. She comes over as serious, but also very feminine. Someone who cares for the way she looks, but is not too fussy and buys her clothes within a budget. Someone who is ambitious, but at the same time ordinary," he said.

"It is this 'doubleness', this ambiguity, which I have been watching in Ségolène for several years. She has caught exactly what we are telling our clients is the new spirit of the times."

"The 1990s was about ambition, success, hard-things, masculine things. Now the mood has shifted to something softer, more human. People are still ambitious. They still want to get things done and be successful. But they are also more reflective, more caring. They worry about family things and they worry about the environment. It is this doubleness which Ségolène's look captures so well."

Mme Royal favours clean lines, never carrying a large bag or wearing an overly fussy outfit, M. Gregoire says. This helps her to seem tall when she is not. Her wardrobe consists of plain but tailored jackets, matched with well-cut trousers or knee-length skirts and softened by something subtle but feminine, like a knotted scarf, or a simple or homely accessory that might have been given to her by one of her four children.

Outdoors, she often wears long trench-coats which accentuate her slim figure, paired with a knee-length or shorter skirt and long leather boots. These symbolise authority and a readiness to compete with her male rivals.

"She has an attraction to a kind of military look, maybe because of her background [her father was an artillery colonel], but the overall effect is one of understated elegance, sensible without being too serious, and feminine without being too girly," M. Gregoire said.

Laurent Darel, head of Gérard Darel, confirmed that Mme Royal is a frequent customer. "Too often in the past, the wives of political figures in France have felt the need to dress up in haute couture, something which - whether it suited them or not - took them far beyond the realm of what ordinary women, working women and mothers, could aspire to wear," he said. "By choosing to dress prêt-à-porter, Mme Royal is placing herself in the ranks of ordinary women with taste."

Politics cannot succeed on style messages alone. Mme Royal has disappointed many supporters and would-be supporters by the vagueness of her campaign. She is a tough, intelligent and sometimes very funny woman. These qualities - toughness apart - have not been consistently displayed by her supposedly unconventional, but often simply muddled style of campaigning.

All the same, she has defied many pundits and reached the second round of the elections, with 25.87 per cent of the votes, compared with M. Sarkozy's 31 per cent. The election will turn on whether a majority of the nation feels most "comfortable" with the idea of a "Sego" or a "Sarko" presidency. But the subliminal (and sublime) power of Mme Royal's "silhouette" may not be enough. The polls suggest that the decision will go to the managerial Count Dracula rather than the Woman in White.

THE INDEPENDENT

Royal rallies, but Sarkozy is heading for the Elysée Palace

By John Lichfield in Lille

Published: 05 May 2007

All winning campaigns are successful and joyous in different ways. All losing campaigns resemble one another.

Ségolène Royal, like many losing candidates, has discovered an authentic and passionate voice in the final days. Watching the Socialist candidate storm eloquently to the end of her crusade to become France's first woman president, you would not imagine that you were watching a defeated woman (as she surely is). "I feel a tide rising all over France," she told a noisy, final, large Socialist rally in Lille. "The whole world is asking whether France will dare to elect a woman president. I say to France: Be daring! Be daring! Be daring!" A broken and somewhat faded, red rose - the symbol of the Parti Socialiste - hung from her lectern. Other broken roses lay at her feet.

The crowd, though giddy with excitement, was smaller than the crowd that the front-running, centre-right candidate, Nicolas Sarkozy, had attracted to the same hall, in classic, leftist country in northern France, five weeks earlier.

A shrill and ill-advised performance by Mme Royal on radio yesterday morning also told a less confident story. She warned of a government of "brutality and lies" if M. Sarkozy wins the second round of the presidential elections tomorrow. She hinted that a Sarkozy presidency could lead to renewed violence in the poor, multiracial suburbs of French cities.

Many people have similar fears but it was undignified of Mme Royal to fan the flames of Sarkophobia so late in the campaign.

A flurry of final surveys yesterday showed M. Sarkozy widening his lead over Mme Royal to between six and eight percentage points. The outcome tomorrow may be closer than the polls suggest but Nicolas Sarkozy will surely be the next President of the Republic.

The only uncertainty is which Sarkozy will be President. Will it be the pragmatic, open-minded Nicolas Sarkozy, who began his long march to the Elysée Palace four years ago, promising to break down the normal frontiers of right-left ideology?

Or will it be the tribal politician of the right, who has chucked red meat in the past two months at every historical grievance and prejudice of the most blinkered members of the French white bourgeoisie and conservative working class?

During this election, both Mme Royal and M. Sarkozy have achieved a metamorphosis of a kind.

Mme Royal stumbled in January and February, as she tried to graft unreconstructed Socialist Party ideology on to her own vague but more open-minded brand of centre-left politics. Since she went her own way again in March, she has been, personally, more impressive and attractive. Her programme - a mish-mash of the inventive and the antediluvian - has never convinced anyone very much.

Her gutsy performance in the television debate on Wednesday came too late to save her.

Most French viewers, it seems, were watching Nicolas Sarkozy for signs that he might lose his cool under pressure. He did not. M. Sarkozy has metamorphosed during the campaign, not into a butterfly but into a dark moth. His attack on the legacy of "moral decline" from the May 1968 student revolt was a permissible enough distortion of history. (In the 40 years since then, France has had four centre-right presidential terms and only two on the centre-left). But what is one to make of M. Sarkozy hinting that his own former boss, Jacques Chirac, was wrong to apologise for the part played by the French state in the arrest and deportation of Jews in 1940-44?

A typical Sarkozy campaign speech ended with proposals for reasonable-sounding, tax-cutting and market-opening reforms. (He has also called for European trade protectionism and a concerted devaluation of the euro.) But his speeches invariably began with a populist rant blaming "Socialist values" for crime and violence and lumping together "politicians, technocrats, trades unionists and fraudsters" as tax-guzzling enemies of the "silent majority".

M. Sarkozy is not a fascist, even though he sometimes sounds like one. He may, as President, revert to the pragmatic, results-oriented, open-minded man who first declared his presidential ambitions in 2003.

There is much in his programme that makes sense: his emphasis on reducing social charges on companies; his crusade to reduce "under-employment" in France - the relatively small proportion of the population in the workforce - as the key to boosting economic growth, national income and employment.

The problem is that M. Sarkozy, by appealing to the worst instincts of the right, has allowed himself to be monstered on the left and centre. Even many of his natural voters on the centre-right have a deep foreboding about a President Sarkozy but cannot stand the prospect of a President Royal. Even a landslide victory tomorrow and a big majority in the parliamentary elections in June will not ease M. Sarkozy's task in the Elysée Palace. The hatred that he has stirred on the left - and among young people in the multi-racial banlieues - means that he will almost certainly be opposed on the streets.

Even the most reasonable of Sarkozy reforms will be shrieked down as "ultra-capitalist" by the trades union federations. Any small police versus youth incident in any of the poor French suburbs could reignite the riots of autumn 2005.

Which Sarkozy will respond to such a confrontation? The pragmatic, reasonable man of action? Or the man who feeds red meat to the prejudices of the white, conservative, right?

The Independent

The world according to President Sarko

The likely occupant of the Elysée Palace sees himself as a new De Gaulle, determined to reshape France's economy and international standing. John Lichfield sees trouble ahead

Published: 06 May 2007

Le Petit Nicolas is about to become the Next Big Thing across the Channel. Failing a hand-brake turn by the electorate, or monumental simultaneous blunders by half a dozen polling organisations, Nicolas Sarkozy will be elected President of France today.

He will be the youngest man to occupy the Elysée Palace for 29 years. He will be the first French leader to be born after the Second World War. And at 5ft 5ins, he will be, by far, the shortest man to be President during the Fifth Republic.

He has run a deeply unpleasant campaign, in the name of some sensible ideas and some disturbing ones. He has promised to unite France, but has successfully appealed to the most tribal instincts of the hard right and the white middle classes. After the glittering, then tarnished, era of Le Roi Mitterrand, and the muddled era of Le Roi Chirac, the world will have to learn live with Le Roi Sarkozy. It is unlikely to be an easy ride for the French, or anyone else.

Nicolas Sarkozy, 52, is accused by his many enemies in France - not all of them on the left - of being too American or too "Anglo-Saxon" in his attitudes, but the world is likely to find that he is deeply French. His ambition is to be a new Charles de Gaulle, someone who rebuilds the self-esteem, economic strength and international influence of France. He favours lower taxes and a more liberal labour market, but believes in the interventionist duty of the state.

Mr Sarkozy has achieved the extraordinary coup - or imposture - of winning by running against the record in government of his own centre-right party. He will almost certainly win the "third round" of the elections, the parliamentary poll, which follows next month. Then his problems will begin.

The more militant, and even some moderate, French trade unions are spoiling for a "fourth round", in which they oppose the new President's allegedly "ultra-capitalist" social and economic reforms in the streets next autumn. Demonisation of Mr Sarkozy in the poor, multi-racial suburbs of French cities has reached such a pitch that the new President might also face an incendiary "fifth round" - a rekindling of the riots of autumn 2005.

The slightest incidence of police violence after Mr Sarkozy takes office could trigger new protests. The French police, who regard him as "their man", are unlikely to be in an accommodating mood when the hyper-active former interior minister occupies the Elysée Palace. The Socialist candidate, Ségolène Royal, has issued a series of undignified warnings in recent days that a Sarkozy presidency might "unleash a wave of violence and brutality across the country". She was wrong to say it - but she was not the only person to fear it.

Ms Royal ran a frustrating, muddled campaign, which finally came alive in the last few days. In a series of eloquent, passionate speeches around the country, she begged the French people to choose her "creative energy" over the "negative energy" of her opponent. She also gave a gutsy and fluent performance in a televised debate on Wednesday, but it was already too late. The nation was watching Mr Sarkozy, and by attacking him so vigorously, Ms Royal ended up doing him a favour. Would he become nasty under pressure? He did not.

Mr Sarkozy's debate persona - reasonable, restrained - was utterly different from the angry, finger-

jabbing man who has been roaming the country for the last four months. At his rallies, he appealed to the tribal - and, some say, racial - instincts of the right and hard right. He posed as the messiah who would rescue the "silent majority" and the "real France" from "immoral", leftist values. Leftism had infected the whole nation since the student revolt of 1968, he said. That implicitly included the several centre-right governments to which Mr Sarkozy has belonged.

All this has made for an absorbing French election, lacking only a twist in the final chapter. Mr Sarkozy has led the polls since mid-January, and topped the first-round vote two weeks ago with 31 per cent to Ms Royal's 25.8 per cent. To win today, she would need to take more than half the centrist vote (over 18 per cent of the total) which went to François Bayrou in the first round.

Most older centrist voters have - reluctantly in many cases - decided to go along with Mr Sarkozy. Some of the younger ones have switched to Ms Royal, but not enough for her to win: the final polls gave her opponent a lead of between 6 and 9 per cent. Much of the "wider", or harder left, electorate will turn out for Ms Royal, but they represented only about 10 per cent of the total in the first round. One way or another, the whole political spectrum in France has shifted radically to the right in 2007.

That will not prevent the trade unions from opposing Mr Sarkozy's economic and social reforms. His likely prime minister, the smooth and handsome François Fillon, says that a crash programme will be pushed through the new parliament in July. This would probably include - shades of Margaret Thatcher - changes in trade union law to impose secret ballots for strikes longer than eight days and to force unions to operate a "minimum" train and bus service during stoppages.

The unions will oppose these changes on the streets in September. Which of the two Sarkozys will respond? The reasonable man who debated on Wednesday, or the fiery crusader for the silent majority?

Mr Sarkozy is no ultra-capitalist, whatever the unions might say. Nor is he likely to be an easy partner for Britain in Europe. He believes in creating French, or European, champion industries. He wants European trade barriers against alleged "dumping" by the Chinese or developing world. He wants EU governments, not the markets, to fix the value of the euro. He promises to defend the European farm policy, and even to move it back to its price-fixing glory days.

Britain's own leader in waiting, Gordon Brown, knows Nicolas Sarkozy well from EU meetings of finance ministers. They are said to get on. But in the long run, their relationship is likely to be no happier than that between Tony Blair and Jacques Chirac.

John Lichfield's French election diary

That's my boy

The young man at Ségolène Royal's last big rally, in Lille, was being interviewed for television. Did he think Ms Royal could still win the election?

The young man shook his head doubtfully. "Maybe she can win," he said. "But probably not."

And who was this loyal Socialist? Step forward Thomas Hollande, 21, son of François Hollande.

And his mother? None other than the underdog candidate, Ms Royal.

Every cloud has a silver lining

Former European Commission president Jacques Delors was at the Lille rally, looking well for his age. He is 81. As he began to express an opinion to the television cameras, a rather tough-looking

woman dragged him off: "Ça suffit, papa," she said.

This was Martine Aubrey, 56, Mr Delors' daughter, Mayor of Lille, architect of the 35-hour week in France - and once spoken of as France's possible first woman president. She and Ms Royal are not friends.

Royal's high point

Her elegant all-white outfits, which have earned her the praise of fashion editors both at home and abroad. Though one of her colleagues calls it a nurse's outfit. And what of her policies?

Royal's low point

Her comment that the Chinese justice system was more "efficient" than that in France. At what exactly? And, anyway, isn't the true low point sometime after polls close today?

Sarkozy's high point

Winning the first round with 31 per cent of the vote, compared with just under 26 per cent for Ms Royal. The high point so far, that is.

Sarkozy's low point

Using a mini-riot at the Gare du Nord station in Paris to accuse Ms Royal of being on the side of "criminals and fraudsters".

Good riddance

So, farewell, then Jean-Marie Le Pen. The old right-winger was routed in the first poll, the dizzy heights of his second place four years ago long forgotten.

One for the future

François Bayrou, the centrist candidate, is widely recognised as having fought a fine campaign and for a time threatened to squeeze Ms Royal out of the race, which would have been bad news for her, but even worse for Mr Sarkozy. Might his time yet come?

Election facts

A total of 44.5 million people are registered to vote. The polling stations open at 8am (7am British time) today and close at 8pm, although citizens in overseas territories such as Tahiti in the south Pacific and Martinique in the Caribbean voted yesterday.

Où est Cecilia? France agog as Sarkozy's wife goes missing for 10 days

Angelique Chrisafis in Paris
Wednesday May 2, 2007

Guardian

They seemed to style themselves on John and Jackie Kennedy, posing as a happy couple in the great outdoors, holding hands on boats. But for weeks Paris has been asking why Cecilia Sarkozy, the second wife of French presidential favourite Nicolas Sarkozy, has not been seen in public with her husband at his final public meetings before Sunday's election. She appeared with him to cast her vote in the first round 10 days ago, and Le Figaro magazine has published the couple's parting kiss that day as Cecilia "went off to buy petit fours for a lunch with friends".

She has since appeared without her husband in Paris Match magazine clapping hands to a flamenco band at a gala dinner but she has not been seen at his headquarters where she advises him on image and communications and she has not joined him on stage.

Daniel Schneidermann, a media columnist for the left-leaning daily Liberation berated the silent French media for not asking more questions about Cecilia's whereabouts. "A wife leaving the marriage has far more serious consequences, both physical and psychological than some extramarital affair," he warned.

Even the far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen, who yesterday publicly asked his 3.8m voters to abstain rather than elect Mr Sarkozy, drew attention to his wife's absence. Mr Sarkozy replied that he was protecting his family from the spotlight.

France, where privacy laws and a timid media mean politicians' relationships are normally left alone, is increasingly curious about its next potential "first lady" or "first gentleman".

Both the rightwing Nicolas Sarkozy, and the socialist Segolène Royal, said this week that they did not want official status for their partners. But in a nation with a growing love of celebrity, where the taboo over private lives has slowly been eroded following the revelations of Francois Mitterrand's illegitimate daughter Mazarine and Jacques Chirac's recent admissions that he had loved many women "as discreetly as possible", the future president's partnership has taken centre stage.

On the right, Cecilia, who is Mr Sarkozy's second wife, became the focus of media attention after her husband openly presented his family to the press. In 2005, she was pictured on the cover of Paris Match in New York in the company of another man, only to return in a frenzy of publicity while Mr Sarkozy described how having his heart broken had strengthened him and made him closer to the people.

He first met her when he was mayor of one of Paris's richest suburbs. Years later they divorced their partners and married, but, according to his biographer Catherine Nay, not before Mr Sarkozy's first wife, looking for her husband during a ski holiday, found tell-tale footprints in the snow below Cecilia's window.

Described as a "muse" and communications advisor who had an office adjoining her husband's when he was minister, Mrs Sarkozy is said to be wary of a role. She once said: "I don't see myself as a first lady. It bores me. I am not politically correct."

Ms Royal, the first woman with a chance of becoming president, is half of France's biggest political power couple. She has four children with but never married the socialist party leader, Francois Hollande.

Mr Hollande has appeared on a beach with his wife reading "The History of France for Dummies" while she was snapped in her bikini for a celebrity magazine. But he says he prefers his political title to "first gentleman" and would not move into the Elysée palace. Unlike Bill and Hillary Clinton's promise of "two for the price of one", they have been at pains to stress their political independence

Sarko and Ségo go tete-a-tete on TV

[News blog: Live from the debate](#)

Kim Willsher in Paris
Wednesday May 2, 2007

Guardian Unlimited

It is billed as the final showdown between France's presidential candidates: Ségolène Royal and Nicolas Sarkozy head-to-head before around 25 million television viewers - more than a World Cup match.

With the pair just a few points apart in the opinion polls and with several million French voters still undecided who to choose as their next president on Sunday, tonight's two-hour-long live televised debate will be a critical moment. With everything to win or lose, both candidates have reportedly undergone last-minute coaching and preparation for the long-awaited clash.

Both have very different aims. For the ambitious and volatile Mr Sarkozy, 52, the frontrunner for several months, it will be a difficult and delicate exercise. He needs to challenge his female rival and show he has the qualities of a true head of state without appearing bullying or macho, or losing his quick temper. "He wants to avoid a brutal confrontation," said an advisor shortly before the debate.

On the other hand, all agree that the Socialist Ms Royal, 53, the first woman to stand a chance at leading France, has to be on the offensive. Analysts say she has two hours to seriously trip him up or push him to snap if she has any hope of closing the gap that has dogged almost her entire electoral campaign.

The majority of viewers will not be watching to learn anything new about the pair's respective election programmes, expounded at length over the last few weeks. Most will be holding their collective breath to see who - if either - will crack first.

"I think we're all hoping she can push him to lose it and show his real nature so, like him or loathe him, we'll know what we're getting if he becomes president," said one woman at a newsstand this afternoon. "However, I suspect he'll hold it all together."

Ms Royal's partner, François Hollande, who leads the Socialist party, told French television her rival would be trying to simply get through the debate unscathed. "He is going to be playing for time and for a 0-0 draw," he said. Indeed, Mr Sarkozy, the rightwing former interior minister, earlier played down the meeting. Although he described it as akin to cycling up the Alps in the Tour de France, he told French radio, "I'm not one of those people who dramatise the significance of the debate to that point".

He added: "I don't believe the French choose a president on the impression they are left with after a two-hour debate," he said.

Mr Sarkozy also denied he had been practicing softening his tone to avoid appearing too macho. "The idea that you should not debate with a woman in the same way that you do with a man is quite macho I think," he told French journalists.

It is not the first time the pair have clashed live on television. In March 1993, when the Socialist party suffered a crushing defeat during the first round of the parliamentary elections, there was a heated exchange between the two when Ms Royal, the then outgoing environment minister, told Mr Sarkozy, later appointed budget minister: "Don't talk in that tone!"

Every last detail of the debate has been thrashed out by the candidates' representatives in a series of meetings with the French audiovisual authorities over the past week. They were given the choice between a debate "à l'Américaine" in which they would stand facing the camera and answer questions without addressing each other or a debate "à la Française" around a table.

The wooden table, across which they will face each other, can be modulated allowing them to choose the distance between them - agreed at 2.2 metres - and covered in Plexiglas to dull the sound if either decides to thump the surface.

The grey studio carpet is extra thick so any foot stomping cannot be heard either, a lesson learned from 1988, when the current president Jacques Chirac's nervous leg jiggling resonated against the table.

Although French voters do not go to the polls for another three days, Le Parisien newspaper described the debate as "The Decisive Duel" on its front page.

Les Echos, the economic daily paper, ran with: "Television debate: Royal stakes everything against Sarkozy".

In 1974 Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's victory in the presidential election against François Mitterrand was attributed to just one phrase during the televised debate. "Monsieur Mitterrand, you do not have a monopoly

over the heart," he told his rival.

However, the paper says more often than not since then the debate has tended to reinforce opinions rather than change them.

Royal ignites election debate with attack on Sarkozy

- Surprise move after charge of 'lacklustre' campaign
- Socialist accuses rival over record on law and order

Angelique Chrisafis in Paris
Thursday May 3, 2007

Guardian

Ségolène Royal last night surprised France and her rightwing opponent Nicolas Sarkozy by coming out all guns blazing to attack him during their much awaited live televised head-to-head debate.

The moment of high emotion and fireworks came out of the blue, in a surprise clash over the seemingly inoffensive subject of schooling for handicapped children. Ms Royal accused the presidential frontrunner of hypocrisy and immorality, saying his government had scrapped measures he now claimed as his own.

"I'm scandalised!" she fumed. "It's the height of political immorality," He in turn told her, "Calm down, and don't wave your finger at me", suggesting she had "lost her nerve" whereas a presidential figure must learn how to stay calm.

"No I won't calm down in the face of injustice!" she snapped back, before the pair exchanged a quick-fire volley over exactly how angry she was.

Trailing between six to four points behind Mr Sarkozy in the opinion polls for months, and with several million voters undecided ahead of Sunday's election, the debate had been seen as Ms Royal's last chance to level the playing field.

In an election focused as much on personality as on policy, the televised duel - watched by more than 20m viewers, matched only by World Cup football audiences - was scrutinised for the all-important "charisma factor".

Political commentators on chatshows assessed the exchange for signs of psychological strength and to see who got upper-hand in the battle to be boss. They agreed Ms Royal had surprised the nation by showing she had the gumption and standing of a president and had boosted her image, although Mr Sarkozy was tactically brilliant on policy detail. Attacked throughout the campaign by the left as a quick-tempered, volatile, bully, he succeeded in his goal of keeping calm.

Ms Royal was seen to have scored points with her forceful approach, even though some conceded she was weaker on arguments and fine detail than Mr Sarkozy, a trained lawyer. Having been accused of leading a lacklustre campaign and failing to master key policy or confront her rival, Ms Royal put her famously combative and assured opponent on the back-foot at the start of the debate, which lasted more than 2½ hours.

She homed in on what Mr Sarkozy presents as his strong point - law and order - lambasting him for talking tough, but doing nothing in his five years as interior minister. During the opening questions Ms Royal repeatedly interjected with the words "tolerance zero", which she said Mr Sarkozy had refused to deliver.

He scored points on employment policy, ridiculing the Socialists' cherished 35-hour week. He dismissed Ms Royal's attempts to defend the measure, calling it a "monumental error" and a "catastrophe for France". He promised to allow French people to "work more to earn more".

Ms Royal argued this was the wrong way to fix France's acute employment problem. She pursued a state-interventionist line, while he called for lower taxes, freeing businesses in a "pragmatic way". He said: "The problem with France is that we pay too much tax."

Asked what type of president he would be, Mr Sarkozy said he would be a man of "action" and "not hide behind taboos". His aim was to restore France's "morale". In a dig at Mr Sarkozy, Ms Royal said of her vision of the presidency: "It is possible to reform France without brutalising it. I won't pit people against each other." Afterwards, she said she had shown that she was solid, that she believed in herself, and that she had "values and morals" stronger than her opponent's; she had proved that a woman could be president.

Mr Sarkozy's supporters said his arguments on "what mattered" - France's economic problems, the 35-hour week, and pensions - were much clearer.

Head to head

Jobs

Sarkozy: Cut unemployment to less than 5% (from around 8%)

Royal: Reform controversial youth employment contracts

35-hour week

Sarkozy: Opposed; proposing rules to allow workers to put in longer hours

Royal: Supportive, but plans a review to make system work better

EU constitution

Sarkozy: Favours 'mini-treaty' to be passed by parliament

Royal: Favours negotiations on a treaty to be passed by a referendum

Environment

Sarkozy: Green taxes on polluters

Royal: Green taxes on polluters

Crime

Sarkozy: Tougher sentences for young reoffenders, lower age of criminal consent

Royal: Bring back community policing. Alternatives to prison for youngsters such as military training

Sarkozy plays the race card - and our establishment cheers

The French presidential favourite's pandering to the far right is indulged because of his pro-US stance and neo-liberalism

Martin Jacques
Friday May 4, 2007

Guardian

It is a disturbing mark of our times that Ségolène Royal enjoys such little support from the media and politicians on this side of the Channel, notwithstanding her highly credible performance in Wednesday's TV debate. Nicolas Sarkozy seems to be their overwhelmingly preferred choice. Downing Street, unsurprisingly, is backing him: Tony Blair prefers the right as always - Silvio Berlusconi, José María Aznar, Angela Merkel, George Bush. David Cameron is supporting Sarkozy. So is the Economist. Matthew Parris, the Times columnist, is backing Royal, but only for the perverse reason that France is not yet ready for Sarkozy, but a Royal presidency will prepare the ground for his subsequent triumph.

The dominant political consensus appears to be that only the right can sort out the political problems of a country. The preferred choice, thus, is either a party of the right or, as in the case of our soon-to-be-departed prime minister, a party of the left led by a leader of the right. In this judgment, two criteria reign supreme. First, is the party or candidate prepared to adopt Anglo-American neoliberal economic principles, or at least to move closer to them? And second, are they willing to adopt a more pro-American foreign policy?

It is no surprise that neoliberal economic thinking still predominates. New Labour enthusiastically embraced the central tenets of Thatcherism and has presided over an extremely long boom. It is rather harder to explain the continuing attachment to pro-Americanism at a time when US foreign policy stands deeply discredited. Two European nations emerged with credit from the Iraq disaster: France and Germany. Both had the courage to withstand the Bush administration and oppose the US-led invasion.

Who was right: Chirac and Schröder or Bush and Blair? Bush and Blair stand condemned by their own publics and face imminent political extinction. The ability of the French establishment, right and left, to think independently of the US for the past half-century is to be commended in contrast to the supine pro-Americanism that has long characterised British foreign policy thinking and which reached its nadir in 2003. In that same year, France did the world a service by leading the opposition within the UN and refusing to allow the body to be used as a tool of Anglo-American policy. While the US and Britain were committed to the idea of a unipolar world, Chirac upheld the principle of a multi-polar world. As the world changes before our eyes, you need only one partially sighted eye to see who was right. In contrast, New Labour's foreign policy has been a disaster. It is difficult to see how anyone can seriously advocate it as a model for other European countries.

More fundamentally, however, the choices facing European nations are simply not reducible to the two issues of neoliberal economics and a pro-US foreign policy. Such thinking displays a shrivelled view of what matters in the life of a nation, a reflection of how politics and political choice has been debased in the neoliberal era. In late 2005, Sarkozy, then interior minister, condemned the riots that took place in the suburbs, where those of African and Arab origin were concentrated, in calculatedly inflammatory terms, displaying zero sympathy for the plight of the ethnic minorities or any willingness to understand their grievances.

It was a defining political moment. At the centre of Sarkozy's appeal is race: he does not need to bang on about it because in that moment everyone, white and brown, knew where he stood. He staked a claim for the Le Pen vote. As a result of Sarkozy's action, he is hated in the suburbs. Under huge pressure and amid tight security, he eventually visited one such suburb. As François Bayrou, the centrist, third-party candidate, said: "Five years in the interior ministry and he can no longer enter parts of the French suburbs." The suburbs, in response, have registered and voted, politically mobilised for the first time and in no doubt as to what is at stake in this election.

France faces a very different choice in this election to the two preferred by the political consensus here. With an ethnic minority community of a similar size to that in Britain, France can seek either to include them on a new basis or demonise them and blame them for the country's problems - and build a new political majority with race at its core. The most dramatic expression of the former possibility was the multiracial French team that won the World Cup in 1998 and the extraordinary reception that it received in France. The polar opposite of that moment was Sarkozy's condemnation of the riots in November 2005 as purely a criminal matter to be repressed by brutal police action.

None of this seems to matter to our political leaders or media commentators: courting racism and the far right appear to count for little compared with the demons of the left. If you are white, racism is too easily ignored

and forgiven, regarded as of burning concern only to the ethnic minorities, and therefore of relatively marginal significance. Yet these things will matter more and more.

Western Europe is becoming increasingly diverse, especially France and Britain. That process will continue apace. The ability of our societies to embrace all races and cultures will be crucial to their future stability, security and success. The alternative is the "Sarkozy route", which has all too many parallels elsewhere in Europe, not least in the Netherlands: repression, ghettos, gated communities, rampant racism, the exclusion of ethnic minorities from mainstream society, a form of low-level civil war.

One of the great themes of postwar Europe has been immigration from the developing world. It has transformed almost exclusively white countries into increasingly multiracial and multicultural societies. It has been traumatic and conflictual, but also liberating and educative. Europe faces two great challenges, neither of which seem to be on the political radar screen of our leaders and pundits. First, the ability to build inclusive multiracial societies. And second, adapting Europe to a world where it is no longer pre-eminent but one of many centres, and a declining one at that.

The two are closely related. They are far more fundamental to Europe's future than whether or not Sarkozy is going to liberalise France's labour market. In the context of a multiracial society, Royal offers inclusivity and Sarkozy exclusivity - she respects diversity while he preaches nativism. On these grounds alone, the choice could hardly be clearer.

- Martin Jacques is a visiting research fellow at the Asia Research Centre, London School of Economics

France heads to right as political showman delivers final performance of campaign

Polls show Sarkozy moving further ahead as Royal clings to hope of late switch

Angelique Chrisafis in Montpellier

Saturday May 5, 2007

Guardian

In a hangar in the south of France, a burst of violins and dramatic drum rolls marked the arrival on stage of France's most charismatic political showman. At his final gathering before tomorrow's presidential election, the rightwing favourite Nicolas Sarkozy stood surveying his thousands of supporters draped in French football shirts, flags, or face-paint. Some had come to witness what has been likened to a quasi-religious experience, led by a secular evangelist.

"We have two days to liquidate the legacy of May 1968!" Mr Sarkozy boomed, promising an end to the "lax smugness" of the left. "I want to talk about the nation without being called a nationalist," he vowed, to applause. He name-checked Louis XIV, Napoleon, Clemenceau and General de Gaulle, implying that one day his name would be added to that list. Sweat ran down his face, but in all his star performances he never mops his brow, in case it is seen as a moment of weakness.

Mr Sarkozy, 52, now seems unstoppable in his 30-year dream to lead France. More than 100 opinion polls have tipped him to win. Despite his critics' cries that he is a US-style neo-conservative, a racist authoritarian, and a volatile power-freak with a complex about his height, who poses on a horse to look like Napoleon charging into battle, Mr Sarkozy is coasting on the highest support of any politician in France for decades.

Yesterday, three new polls showed his lead widening to between six to 10 points against his Socialist challenger, Ségolène Royal. The first woman to get this close to becoming president of France says her inspiration is Joan of Arc - yesterday, her supporters whispered that she would need a miracle to win.

For "Sarko l'américain", who believes in a "French dream" inspired by US-style meritocratic hope - where those who work hard are rewarded, where children sing the anthem with hand on heart and a name like "Schwarzenegger" is no bar to success - it was symbolic that he staged his last rally in Montpellier, known as the "French California".

The boom town dotted with palm trees is France's fastest growing city, thanks in part to the controversial local politician Georges Frêche, expelled from the Socialist party for saying there were too many black players in the national football team. Montpellier handed victory to Ms Royal in the first-round vote. But Mr Sarkozy chose it because the surrounding region, struggling with some of the worst unemployment in France, has long been the heartland of the extreme-right Jean-Marie Le Pen.

For years, as Mr Sarkozy has plotted his rise through Jacques Chirac's party, he has been convinced that France, despite its social model and powerful state, has shifted firmly to the right. Contrary to Mr Chirac, the "weather-vane", who never proclaimed himself proud to be right, Mr Sarkozy decided long ago that a French election would never again be won on the centre-ground. Unrepentant in his crusade to win over Mr Le Pen's voters, he has pressed every button, tapped into every far-right instinct, hammering home law and order and promising a "ministry of immigration and national identity". Le Pen's vote was decimated and Mr Sarkozy's vote soared in the south of France. The left called him a populist demagogue, but at the rally, the crowd gave thanks.

"He is the man that killed Le Pen," said a waiter from Marseille. "He has restored democracy to the south of France." The crowd in the hangar were the embodiment of Mr Sarkozy's soundbite: "The France that wakes up early." Far from the financial market figures who laud his plans to lower tax and loosen labour laws with a mix of interventionist and free-market plans, many came from the working class whose vote he has wrestled from the left and extreme-right. They were attracted by his vow to "respect those who want to work", rewriting the 35-hour week, and cutting charges on overtime.

"I am Sarkozy's promise of the self-made man," said Philippe Mery, 51, who ran a second-hand exchange shop called Cash Converter. "He talks about work and merit, those are words that appeal." Elphie Carrera, 27, a nurse, was fed up with a debt-ridden, economically sluggish France moaning that it was in crisis and a perpetual state of malaise.

"The moment a record 85% turned out at the polls for the first-round vote two weeks ago, our crisis subsided," she said. "Faith was restored in politics."

Mr Sarkozy's plane was waiting nearby. In his campaign trips he has only slept away from Paris a couple of nights. He likes to be home at 10pm for his own dawn starts. He is not comfortable among the provincial small-fries of local politics.

A non-drinker, frantic jogger and cyclist, he likes to be photographed in perpetual motion, a model of dynamism, the son of an immigrant - a minor Hungarian aristocrat - who rose through the ranks through his own graft and cunning and not the usual silver spoon. Those in his entourage on plane trips say his conversation revolves more and more around his opinion polls, himself and his personal crusade. His speeches are dotted with so many "I", "me" and "I want" that some news weeklies have begun to tally them up.

At Ms Royal's final big stadium meeting in Paris earlier this week, the mood among the crowd was "TSS", "tout sauf Sarko", or anyone but Sarkozy. The gig was like a bank-holiday rock festival, but with the feeling that it was the last time for the ska bands, the actors, academics, comedians, sportsmen who have rallied to Ms Royal to head off the bogeyman at the door. Posters showed Mr Sarkozy with bloodied fangs, a divisive authoritarian who would rip apart social fabric.

For the left, the last day of the French presidential campaign is more than ever a referendum on Mr Sarkozy's personality - a former interior minister, who has been in ruling government for years but has reinvented himself as a type of opposition leader.

"He pits people against each other, he stigmatises French people of foreign origin," said Elyane Barras, a retired administrator. "There will be riots again on the estates," said Sorraya Baiddou, a student from the suburbs.

Ms Royal was presenting as the voice of "justice" against Mr Sarkozy's "brutality". But behind the cheers there was a sense of unease and frustration about the Socialist party itself and how it had run its campaign. How, after the disaster of being knocked out by Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2002, after 12 years of Chirac, after riots that shook the housing estates, could the left lose again?

Ms Royal, an outsider who had a surprise meteoric rise to become the party's candidate last year, has never managed to unite a fractured party behind her. By contrast, Mr Sarkozy has spent years building a base in the party he leads.

Some felt there was still a hope of a last-minute anti-Sarkozy rush. "She's not the ideal woman for the job, but between a cold and cholera, I'd choose a cold," said one voter from Paris.

Ségolène Royal faced sexism, sour grapes and petty jealousies - and she never really stood a chance

Marcel Berlins

Wednesday May 9, 2007

Guardian

The elephants could scarcely contain their satisfaction. They tried to put on a show of being devastated by the result, but "We told you so" was written all over their faces. That woman had outmanoeuvred them in capturing the socialist party's candidacy; but the besuited old guard had now been proved right. Ségolène Royal had been the wrong choice, and now they could blame her for losing the election.

Setting aside the sour grapes, sexism and petty jealousies, do they have a case?

Royal became the socialist candidate mainly because the public opinion polls showed that she was the only one from the left who had a chance of beating Sarkozy. She was different, not just because she was an attractive woman among clever but dull men, but also because she was not part of the inner circle of socialist policy-makers, over-familiar to the public and tainted with electoral failure. Would Dominique Strauss-Kahn or François Hollande (the father of Royal's children, not happy at having to relinquish his ambitions for her), have done better against Sarkozy? There is no reason to believe, even with hindsight, that any of the men would have succeeded where she failed.

But if Royal was the right choice, could - should - she have won? Was her own performance responsible for her loss? She was, undeniably, weak on content. She was not in command of facts and figures, and sometimes wayward on policy. Occasionally her mistakes amounted to embarrassing gaffes. More often, she answered questions requiring precision with flannel. In particular, she too obviously avoided straight answers to questions seeking to ascertain the cost of her various proposals. In general she was widely perceived to be lacking presidential stature and gravitas. But did all these weaknesses lose her votes of such volume as to deny her victory? I doubt it.

She attracted large numbers of votes not because of who she was or what she said, but because she wasn't Sarkozy. The traditional left voted for her - quite a few, as my friends put it, with a heavy heart - because she was the candidate, whether or not they thought she was any good. Was it her fault that she didn't snap up more centrists who had voted for François Bayrou in the first round? No, it was the policies she was peddling. The overriding reason for Sarkozy's victory was that he was selling a new and different message to the French; she was telling them the same old story. She could have performed more convincingly, but I don't believe that she, or anyone else on the left, could have won.

That won't prevent the socialist establishment from turning on her, and not just because she lost. She upset them with her diversions from approved doctrine, and she annoyed them by turning the election into an egotistical (so they said) personal campaign. "It's all me, me, me, as if she was a film star," a man in the cafe grumbled to me. What, then, is her future? Her loser's speech on Sunday was full of commitment to the cause for which she had campaigned: "What we started together, we'll continue together." She clearly sees herself as leading this movement, one of its aims being to re-energise the left.

Fine words, but unrealistic. Royal may have been the socialists' presidential candidate, but she holds no influential position within the party's central body. I cannot see the elephants welcoming her with offers of power and leadership, nor are they likely to encourage her to be instrumental in reforming the party. She may soon find herself back running her region, Poitou-Charentes, with nothing else to show for her few months of fame and glory.

I think I have discovered a little fraudlet perpetrated on viewers of French television on Sunday evening. Under French electoral law, no indication of the result of the presidential election was allowed to be broadcast until the stroke of 8pm. But the media outside France is not subject to the law. Both in the first round and last Sunday, Belgian television, for instance, broadcast the projected results after the first batch of polling stations closed, at 6pm; Sky News told its viewers of one such poll result. French broadcasters had to wait until the last stations - mainly in the large cities - shut at 8pm. But anyone in France with any access to anyone in Belgium could easily find out what the early exit polls had concluded.

My point is that all those politicians and experts who were animatedly discussing the contrasting futures of France, depending on who turned out the winner, must have known the result, just like the presenters. They were pretending to be as ignorant as their viewers, answering questions such as "Do you think Ségolène Royal has done enough to win over sufficient voters from the centre?" with a deadpan "We shall have to wait and see." They debated at length what Royal would do if she won, knowing that she had lost and would not be in a position to do anything. In other words, for an hour or so before the magic eight o'clock, much of the discussion was a sham.

It does not matter much, but I felt a little disconcerted, watching the apparently tense build-up to the result becoming public, already knowing what it was and knowing that those people chatting away on the screen also knew.

This week Marcel saw *The Rose Tattoo*, by Tennessee Williams, at the National Theatre: "Zoë Wanamaker is good as the tragic heroine, but the exaggerated Sicilian accents grated and the atmosphere wasn't right." He read *Beyond Glory*, by David Margolick: "The story of the 1938 Max Schmeling-Joe Louis fight and its subtext: Hitler v America, white v black."

Supplementary material

Q & A with French Presidential Candidate Segolene Royal

Thursday 01 February 2007

By Daphne Barak

Paris, Asharq Al-Awsat- So far, it seems that the main contenders in the race of the French presidential elections are Segolene Royal and Nicolas Sarkozy. However, Royal, the socialist candidate, who is a mother of four children, and whose husband is the leader of the Socialist Party, has a special quality, namely that she challenges the male-dominated French political traditions, because she is the first woman to compete in this race in France.

In this interview, Royal talked about her plans if she were to achieve the highest office in France with regard to the deteriorating problems of unemployment in her country, what it meant to be the first woman in France who might reach the Elysee Palace, and her stance toward the crisis in Iraq and the peace process in the Middle East. Royal considered that were the electorate to choose a woman for government they would be linking her to prosperity and peace. With regard to Iran she said that she was against Iran's nuclear plans, including its non-military program. At the same time she stressed the need for withdrawing the US troops from Iraq in coordination with the Iraqis.

The Following is the full text of the interview:

Q: Segolene Royal, Welcome! What's Segolene? What does it mean? It's a very special name.

A: It's a first name originally from the East of France. It's an old fashioned first name.

Q: You are the first ever woman to run for office in France. Do you remember the

exact moment that you decided upon this?

A: It happened progressively. I didn't decide it. Public opinion did. The French people led me to the front lines and trusted me and at that moment, I became involved in the movement.

Q: Did you understand that by running you would be making history?

A: Yes. From the outset, I've been aware of the historic responsibility that I had, and at the same time, I thought about the exceptional convergence between a woman with a hardworking political experience and a historic moment; I didn't have the right to not run.

Q: India, Turkey, and Pakistan which are supposed to be less developed than America and France have or have had women Prime Ministers. Suddenly, we are so excited about Hilary running for America and you running in France; how do you explain that?

A: I think it is for the same reasons paradoxically. The countries you mentioned need peace, prosperity, education and the people's vows brought them also towards women in order that they weight for peace, prosperity, and education and environment protection.

Q: Do you believe that politically, you are not treated equally or taken seriously because you are a woman?

A: Of course. I think that all the women who become involved in politics are treated in the same way. They rate their physical aspect and above all, there is a permanent doubt about their credibility and their stature. They do not have the height or the "suit". So we have to do more; we do not have the right to make mistakes. This is why we go forward and we're forced to be the best.

Q: What do you think is the biggest problem in France today?

A: The main problem in France is unemployment, especially amongst the youth. I've

launched a movement called "Desirs d'avenir" (Desires of a Future). I would like young people in France to be able to find jobs because it is from there that France will rise. I can't stand hopelessness amongst young people, especially amongst the qualified ones who have difficulties finding a job. I would like France to hold out its hand to them.

Q: Last year, there were riots in France. Can you tell us more about these riots? Why did they take place?

A: I think that it is a rebellion from the young people who cannot stand that the Republic does not integrate them. This rebellion started also from a refusal of a government reform. The right wing government tried to impose a reform, the "C.P.E." which was an insecure working contract, specifically for the young people. The youth who have already suffered from unemployment would not accept their position getting worse.

Q: What do you suggest for this segment of society in your agenda?

A: I think it is the battle for employment. I set up the Suburban States General in order to respond to their concerns about culture, education, scholastic achievement; [addressing] the single mothers to create jobs for parents so that they regain their dignity, and so the children find again the meaning of the scholastic effort, and the fight against employment discrimination. In the suburbs, when a young person has exerted effort to get a diploma, and is unemployed, the younger brothers and sisters do not work hard at school and this is what damages and degrades the trust.

Q: Let's talk about another painful issue: Iraq. You were in opposition to the invasion but what do you think should be done now?

A: Firstly, the French people were against this intervention like all the European peoples. Today, the situation in Iraq is dramatic. The damages are extensive. It's now up to Iraq to put in place a process that allows the American troops to withdraw. I

think that once again, we hit the deep problem of the economic and social development so the international aid must come in order for economic and social development to bring back peace and trust.

Q: So you think that America should leave?

A: Yes, and at the same time, it is up to Iraq to define the conditions of this withdrawal. I think that the damages have been considerable.

Q: Since the war in Iraq, the relationship between France and America deteriorated. If you are elected, how will you rectify this?

A: I do not mix up Bush's America with the American people. The American people are our friends, and I hope that the partnership is strengthened in the research field, in culture, and in the exchanges between young people. The American people are the example of the liberty and of the enterprising mind. We have a lot to learn about each other. Therefore, I do not mix up the two. For me, America is not Bush's America.

Q: With regards to nuclear power in Iran, I read that President Chirac decided to send an envoy there. What is your position?

A: I have a firm position against the Iranian nuclear project, not allowing them access to the civil nuclear [technology]. Because I was Minister of Environment, I oversaw the nuclear installations, and I know by experience that when we have mastered the technology of the enriched uranium for civil purposes, we can then master the enriched uranium for military use. As Iran refuses to be controlled, I am against Iran's access to civil nuclear [technology].

Q: Turkey has been trying to gain entry to the European Union. Do you support Turkey?

A: The process has begun. We cannot suddenly close the doors to Turkey. We are pleased that countries like Turkey would like to embrace European values. At the

same time, I think that we should pause in order to succeed with a European Union with 27 countries. If this works well, Europe could then look over its borders.

Q: Global warming has become a key issue of debate. What do you think about environmental issues and how do you prioritize environment?

A: It is very important for me. I said that I would like France to become the country of environmental excellence. I was Minister of Environment. I am the head of a region; a region that I preside over. I made it the region of the environmental excellence in being involved strongly with the economic networks of the ecological development. I think that it is a chance for France that is already very late. So, Nicolas Hulot's pact is going to be included in my presidential project. I think that it is very useful because it is about time to give a human meaning back to progress.

Q: Which female figures inspire you?

A: A revolutionary woman called Oleinde Degoude who fought for "women citizenship". She was not successful. It took a long time before French women obtained the right to vote and was one of the last European countries [to allow women to vote]. She was executed and even though she did not succeed, the following generations of women relit the torch of this rebellion.

Q: Are you a revolutionary?

A: Yes, but I hope that I am not going to have my head cut off...even if some people feel like doing that to me these days!

Q: How you do juggle campaigning and motherhood?

A: First of all by being in good health. I am the fourth child of a family of eight children so I know what it means to be tough, to sort things out, and to get straight to the point. I think that all women are aware of the difficulty to combine family life and professional life. That pushed me in my political activity to create parenthood vacations, to put in place child care centers, to claim the equal salary for women.

Because as I had this problem, I want all women to benefit from the progress to allow them to have a clear conscience when they are at work and a good conscience when they are with their children.

Q: You were the first woman in French politics to openly talk about your pregnancy.

A: Yes. There was a period, not so long ago, when women would hide their pregnancy. It was the old idea that a woman who had children had nothing in her head, so women had to hide their maternity so that they would be taken seriously. I claimed my maternity whilst I was a minister to help all the women impose their femininity and so that they are not subjected to discrimination because of the possibility of having children.

Even today, there is a 20% gap or more between the salaries of men and women under the pretext that one day women would have to stop working because of their children. That means from a professional standpoint, that men work more than women so the salary inequalities, which are subconsciously linked to the fact that women bear children, are totally outrageous.

Q: You have visited Lebanon and Israel, where do you stand regarding a Palestinian state?

A: My position is the same as that of France. Israel has the right to its security and the Palestinians have the right to a safe state. I think that the peace efforts have to be absolutely pursued and supported in order to have a good balance very soon.

Q: Would you meet one of the organizations such as Hezbollah or Hamas that Washington describes as terrorist organizations?

A: There have been many problems regarding this subject. Hamas is listed as a terrorist organization, so I think that we cannot meet them. If one day we have to comply to accelerate the peace process, it will all depend on the position of these organizations' representatives. If there was a real peace process within the

international organizations, we would have to gather everyone around the same table and that would be a major step. However, unfortunately, today, there is a climate of tension which is getting worse.

Asharq Al Awsat: In London recently, there was much controversy surrounding the Big Brother reality TV show. What is racism to you in one sentence?

Royal: It is rejecting the other because of the difference of skin color.

Q: What does freedom of the press mean to you?

A: Apparently, the media is free in developed countries and in France. But, we have to be very vigilant about the financial concentrations which slowly will allow some groups to control media groups.

Q: What does anti-Semitism mean to you?

A: It is hatred against the one who is Jewish. It is terrible because it is the prolongation of the Shoah [the Holocaust], the biggest crime committed by humans against humans.

Asharq Al Awsat: Tell us about your campaign so far?

Royal: I think that it is when people who have had no voice have begun to speak for themselves that emotion is at its strongest. For instance, two days ago, I was at a town meeting in Roubaix. A woman stood up and said, "I've come to this debate, and I'm going to go home tonight because I don't know where else to go and that is where my children are and my husband is going to beat me. I am an abused wife; I don't have any way out. What can you do for me?"

Q: What did you do?

A: I promised that as soon as I am elected, the first law I pass will be a law against violence towards women i.e. a law that allows the woman and children to stay in the family home and obliges the abusive husband to leave. At the moment it is the opposite: the wife has to leave with her children, and when she has nowhere to go,

she is subject to violence.

Q: What happened to the woman? Did she return to the family home?

A: Yes. We called her to find out what was going on; we let the police know what was happening. These are very strong images. You can see that my way of campaigning right now is to go to see people in these town meetings, to listen to them, to let them have their say in order to build my presidential project.

Q: What kind of role will your husband play if you are elected?

A: That depends on him; he is a very talented politician in his own right. But I don't want to predict what will come next.

The presidential election in France is about the relationship between one person and the French people. But behind that person, there is a team, a family...

He has organized this whole political organization and that has given the Socialists today and the whole left, a hope of winning. So there is this complementary role. But he is facing a lot of questions and media scrutiny.

Nicolas Sarkozy

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Cécile Cornudet, Françoise Fressez, Jean-François Péresse and Dominique Seux from the FT's sister paper, [Les Echos](#), interviewed Nicolas Sarkozy in Paris on February 13.

Les Echos: Since Ségolène Royal unveiled her 'Presidential Pact', do you believe the battle (for the presidency) is becoming a battle between two social projects?

 Sarkozy: Yes. We now know where Madame Royal's project is headed... It's a return to the era of (former socialist Prime Minister Lionel) Jospin. The values Madame Royal puts to the fore are those of state handouts and mollycoddling, egalitarianism and levelling. She retains the 35 hour week, she doesn't encourage work, she still doesn't say if she favours overhauling taxes, but we know she wants to overhaul spending. Where is the modernisation we were promised? Where are the new initiatives? Where is the evolution of French socialism towards European socialism?

Les Echos: Madame Royal develops the idea of 'donnant-donnant' (two-way co-operation). It's not exactly mollycoddling, is it?

Sarkozy: She may put it thus, but what conclusion does she draw? None. It's the same for the reform of the state. It's the same for public debt. She judges the level "unsustainable" but what does she announce? More spending. When I talk about rights and duties, I am precise: no minimum benefits without working in exchange; no papers to stay in France long-term if one can't write, if one can't read, if one can't speak French; no increase in minimum pensions without consolidation of the pension system. It's going too far: Mme Royal promises us a 5 per cent increase in the most modest pensions, while the socialist party wants to challenge the Fillon law (which in 2003 prolonged the period of pension contributions and aligned public sector salaries on those of the private sector). How can one reasonably say to the French people 'I am going to increase pensions and simultaneously dismantle the way they are funded'? We are dealing with two different systems of logic: mollycoddling on one hand, responsibility on the other.

Les Echos: When it comes to costing your (Presidential) programmes, you both face the same criticism: plenty of spending and little detail on the cost savings!

Sarkozy: I will of course respond to that charge, but there is no point in getting into the detail of the proposals if you don't understand the logic that binds them. The cornerstone value of my programme is work. The strategy that gives credibility to everything I do is to say to the French people: 'You are going to earn more because we are going to work more'. And that is how, collectively, we are going to encourage wealth creation. I want to make France the country of innovation and audacity.

Les Echos: In your programme, is it coherent to want simultaneously to reduce national insurance contributions by €68bn over 10 years and reduce the state debt to 60 per cent of gross domestic product by 2012?

Sarkozy: I didn't pick the €68bn figure by chance. That reduction will allow us, over 10 years, to reduce the pressure of our tax and national insurance charges to the average of the EU15. You can't claim to be European and simultaneously impose higher charges than the rest. Is it compatible with the debt reduction objective? There are the figures, but above all, there is the logic. My strategy is to think we will reduce our deficits and our debt the

day we reinstate (the value of) work.

Les Echos: How much does your programme cost, and how would it be paid for?

Sarkozy: My programme will cost €30bn over five years, of which €15bn comes from reductions in taxes and charges. But I want to add two key points that must be understood. First, it is not the same thing to spend to assist, and to spend to invest. €9bn for research and innovation are not the same as €9bn spent to create new rights without matching responsibilities. On the one hand, there is investment, on the other mollycoddling. Then, you have to realise that lightening national insurance charges and taxes on overtime will bring in Value Added Tax receipts. But since you're asking me about the financial balance of my programme, I will tell you more. My aim is to redeploy around 5 per cent of the €590bn of public spending that can be redeployed. There are considerable sums available. I wonder, for example if one couldn't modify the aid connected to the 35-hour week to give more to companies that create jobs and have a dynamic salary policy.

Les Echos: What would be the first sign of commitment to debt reduction?

Sarkozy: The implementation of the principle that we would not replace more than half of the civil servants who retire. During the past 20 years, France has created a million public sector jobs. I would make reform of the state a key presidential project. We have to successfully merge the tax department and the public accounts department; merge the unemployment insurance agency, Unedic, and the job-finding service, ANPE; merge the state's intelligence services. I would encourage the ministries to do so via a supplementary budget, topped up by privatization receipts, which would provide additional funds to ministers who undertake structural reforms. In accordance with the law I introduced and Parliament approved, the capital structure of (state-controlled energy group) Electricité de France can change.

Les Echos: It is said you want to divide up the finance ministry?

Sarkozy: I am reflecting upon the reorganisation of the Ministry of the Economy and Finance. There would be, on the one hand, the management of the government accounts and social security, which it would be logical to bring together. And on the other, I would like a ministry of Economic Strategy or even – let's dare to say the word – of production so that France could have a real response to globalisation.

Les Echos: If you are elected, what would your calendar be?

Sarkozy: My first priority would be the modernisation of social democracy, for reforms have always failed because that wasn't taken into account. The first pillar of that modernisation would be the right for anybody to stand at the first round of the elections to professional bodies. I would push for a wide-ranging and equal negotiation to see how best we can put that in place. Secondly, I want to clarify once and for all the respective domains of the law-maker and the social partners. Our present system doesn't work. I would like the social partners have an effective and systematic period of six to eight months to find, within their field of responsibility, answers to the questions they face about workers' rights.

Les Echos: Will (your proposed) unified work contract be part of this negotiation?

Sarkozy: Clearly, along with work-related social security; the two make up flexible security. There's no question, for me, of going ahead without consultations. I will fix objectives, including that of a unified work contract (to replace open ended and short term contracts now widely used). For me, this contract isn't about ideology: it is a way to overcome the

effects of the existing CDD (fixed term) and CDI (open ended) contracts, and the injustices that arise from them. There will be a dialogue to put this in place. Thirdly, I want commitments to minimum service standards (during industrial disruption) in transport and other public services. It is the pro-rata for having a monopoly. On this issue, there would be a law as early as June. Fourthly, I want to propose that there be a secret vote in companies, universities and the civil service after eight days of strike action.

Alain Madelin and the Socialist Party say this risks being unconstitutional in respect of the right of the individual to strike. This risk does not exist. If 90 per cent of workers vote to return to work, the other 10 per cent can remain on strike. However, they would not have the right to mount pickets.

Les Echos: Would the issue of overtime be subject to consultation?

Sarkozy: The principle of exonerating overtime from tax and national insurance is not negotiable. On the other hand, I would pay close attention to what the trade unions have to say about guaranteeing that overtime working is voluntary. I do not want to make the same errors made by Martine Aubrey (who as employment minister introduced the 35-hour week) in reverse. From summer onwards, I would open to negotiation the following question: 'How do we protect the worker who doesn't want to work overtime?'

Les Echos: Would that not favour those with jobs, without creating new jobs?

Sarkozy: What creates jobs? It is activity. If we raise the purchasing power of people who earn €1,200 or €1,500 (per month), the additional earnings will pass straight away into consumption, it isn't hoarded. Activity creates growth which creates jobs. That's what all successful countries have done. The alpha and omega (beginning and end) of economic growth today is work and knowledge.

Les Echos: How much time would the social partners have for negotiations?

Sarkozy: The summer. We must be ready in the autumn. That must be true too for research and university reform. I would draw up during summer 2007 an autonomy statute for French universities: autonomy of decision making, autonomy over courses, autonomy over the selection of students, for the recruitment of teaching staff. Universities that choose autonomy would have access to new funding. We are the only nation in the world that does not encourage corporate sponsorship. But no university would be obliged to become autonomous. Among the big presidential projects, I would set the objective that, in each region, there should be a campus on a European scale, with a library open on Sundays, lodgings for researchers and students, and sports facilities. The state would invest massively. I would create the conditions for a real guidance service, which covers all careers opportunities. I am convinced that selection is currently something that happens to you when careers guidance and evaluation are inadequate.

Finally, the last priority for the summer would be justice and security, with fixed minimum penalties for repeat offenders, the reform of penal rights for minors, and the (reform of) magistrates' responsibilities.

Les Echos: Would the proposed 50 per cent cap on income taxes, including the Contribution Sociale Généralisée, be put into effect in the summer?

Sarkozy: It will be put in place when it can be. You can't do the same thing with growth of 1.5 per cent and growth of 3 per cent. My tax priorities are the exemption of overtime from taxation, the exemption from inheritance tax of almost all households, and tax relief for

interest payments on household mortgages. The aim is simple: we have to give back to the middle class the opportunity to become home-owners. With low inflation, real interest rates are high. I favour a high level of tax relief, even though there would undoubtedly have to be a ceiling.

Les Echos: You have always said you are not against social VAT. Is that still the case?

Sarkozy: I watch with interest what is happening in Germany. Everyone said it would be a disaster. But there have been neither price rises nor a recession. It is important to know that. I would study this option.

Les Echos: What do you think of the idea, advocated by (socialist MP) Dominique Strauss-Kahn, of a tax on expatriates, immediately re-named "Johnny Tax" (after expatriate singer Johnny Hallyday)?

Sarkozy: I've rarely seen a stranger idea than that which consists of taxing those who carry French culture and French economic interests beyond our frontiers, at a time when everything is being done to encourage French people to be mobile, especially within Europe. That's absurd ! How could one distinguish between those who leave for tax reasons, to study, or for whatever other reason? I hope Dominique Strauss-Kahn is feeling brave when he seeks to explain to the entrepreneur who is off to work in Central or Western Europe to conquer new markets that he will have to pay an additional tax.

On the other hand, I want to raise clearly in this campaign the issue of morality in financial globalisation. We didn't create the euro for it to result in capitalism without ethics or scruples. I am extremely troubled by speculative movements. Who can accept that a hedge fund buys a company with borrowings, makes a quarter of the staff redundant to repay the loans, and sells the business piecemeal? Not me. In that economy, there is no wealth creation. The capitalist ethic, is that he who creates wealth earns money, and he who creates lots of wealth earns lots of money. That's normal. On the other hand, speculation isn't normal. Capitalism won't survive without respecting a minimum of ethical rules. The eurozone should be at the forefront of this thinking.

Les Echos: Do we need coercive measures?

Sarkozy: If I am elected president of the Republic, I will ask the finance minister to propose, at the European level, a measure to reinforce the morality and security of financial capitalism. In this respect, taxation of speculative movements seems to me an interesting idea if it were introduced at a European level. I want to make France a country which rewards wealth creation, but which also knows how to strike predators.

Les Echos: Ségolène Royal also spoke very harshly last week about 'rapacious money' and 'financial and media conglomerates'

Sarkozy: I won't pretend her speech didn't make me smile, to say no more, coming from someone who, to my knowledge, has not been ill-served by the media.

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