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SARKOZY AND MERKEL: FRANCO-GERMAN RECONCILIATION IS GREAT NEWS FOR EUROPE... AND PROBABLY THE FIRST SIGN OF A MUCH NEEDED EU LEADERSHIP AND VISION!

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The so-called "divorce" of the Franco-German couple was lamented after the French EU presidency. The air has now been cleared; the two leaders were reunited on 10 May 2009 in Berlin regarding the upcoming European elections.

The aim of this campaign meeting was to defend the vision of a European (political) "commune". With less than four weeks to go until the European elections, between 4 to 7 June, this political meeting took place close to Potsdamer Platz in Berlin – a symbol of Germany's reunification – and delivered the kind of Franco-German hammer blow last felt at the G20 summit in London, on 2 April.

The leaders statement came together perfectly on the Lisbon Treaty and chasing expansion of the EU; French president Nicolas Sarkozy and German counterpart Angela Merkel have both renewed their position regarding the question of Turkey's addition to the EU, calling for a "privileged partnership".

The Lisbon treaty – which has yet to be signed by the Republic of Ireland and Czech Republic – has well-and-truly been put called into question. Angela Merkel has pointed blame towards "eurosceptics" – directed principally at opposition by the UK-based conservatives. The German chancellor is not willing to lend a helping hand to those that refuse the Lisbon treaty which allows new members and, at the same time, talk about expansion. The consequences of EU expansion have not won over everybody. The proof: further south on the Italian peninsula, prime minister Silvio Berlusconi's immediate response to the Franco-German talks was to declare that his vision of Italy was not a "multi-ethnic" one.

But is there more to it? Is this a sign of a much sought EU leadership and vision? With Britain out of the game and the Brown government in the midst of one of the country's worst crisis since the 80s, if not worse (UK now wishing that they did adopt the Euro...), it is only obvious that this new Franco-German approach provides the EU with new prospects and dynamics.

If the polls are confirmed and Angela Merkel wins the September elections then the "obsession" of Berlin with enforcing the Stability Pact and its reservation with the policy of injecting liquid funds into EU economies shall continue more intensely. The other question that arises though is whether Nicolas Sarkozy can afford to play along, bearing in mind the "explosive" social and political unrest in France – the collapse of Chirac-Juppe caused by the social unrest in 1995 with a series of three-month long strikes must be fresh in the mind of every French ambitious politician...

Even if the Irish and Czech say finally yes to the Lisbon Treaty, the need of a dynamic EU leadership, an EU leadership that is able not to only tackle the current financial crisis but to provide for a proactive judgment and clear strategy is a must!

Let's hope that personal ambitions and local petty politics will not once more overshadow the "idea" of a truly united Europe, a Europe that undoubtedly lacks strong and effective leadership. Let's hope that this Franco-German "axis" is the way forward.

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