Dr Hélène Bilger-Street
Lecturer in French
Department of European Studies and Modern Languages
University of Bath
Claverton Down
Bath, BA2 7AY
Email: H.Bilger-Street@bath.ac.uk

The private lives of French politicians, a matter for political scandal or for entertainment?

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Sexual misconduct, financial corruption and abuse of public office are the three most common sources of political scandal in the western world. For these moral and/or legal wrongdoings to give rise to a fully fledged scandal a complex process of 'scandalization' needs to occur.

According to Moodie (1980, 216) 'there are at least three major requirements: an exposer or informer, channels through which to communicate the message and an audience or public which finds the information to be scandalous'. If the media does not provide a channel for these misconducts, there can only be whispers and rumours circulating among a select few. If there is no outraged reaction from a large section of the public, the scandal will be a flash in the pan. Public disclosure is not enough, there also need to be public outrage. Williams (2006, 47-8) believes that 'the combination of alleged misconduct and media reporting are the basic elements of political scandal' and, like Moodie, that 'the breadth and depth of media coverage' and 'the receptiveness and interest of the public' are important indicators. He goes beyond Moodie however by adding another element to his definition: a 'process of political contestation'. What this process of contestation entails is very much dependent upon 'the roles and positions adopted by particular political institutions and political personalities'. In order to evaluate whether the private lives of French politicians or rather private misconduct by French politicians have become a matter of political scandal, these three essential ingredients of scandals will be examined in turn. We will see that while there has been undoubtedly a marked increase in the disclosure by the media of all aspects of French politicians' private lives in recent years, it is much more difficult to evaluate whether this exposure has led to public concern let alone outrage and whether it has been associated with a process of political contestation.

Public disclosure of private lives

Private life is by essence that part of your life that should remain hidden and protected from public view. In the case of public figures however, the boundaries between private and public life are not as sharply drawn as those of private individuals. Where those boundaries lie varies from culture to culture but can also evolve in time. American and British attitudes towards the privacy of politicians are often contrasted with European continental perceptions. Yet there is a marked contrast between the absence of media coverage of Kennedy's numerous liaisons in the 1960s and the media frenzy surrounding the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal of the 1990s. France has undergone a similar evolution in recent years: from a strict separation between private and public life to an increasingly uncontrolled media exposure of politicians'

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private lives, thus fulfilling the first step in the scandalization process of private behaviour in French politics.

The traditional separation between private and public life in France

Traditionally, France has been counted among the countries where private life is seen as distinctly separate from public life. This separation has long been entrenched in the legal system and in the media and political culture.

The legal notion of privacy emerged in French law in the 19th century summarized by legal theorist Royer-Collard in the often repeated maxim: 'private life must be walled off' (Whitman 2004, 1173). Various pieces of legislation contributed to this 'walling off' until the general principle of the 'right to the respect of one's private life' was enshrined in article 9 of the Civil Code by the law of 17 July 1970. According to article 9, 'everybody is entitled to the respect of his private life. Judges can (...) order all measures such as sequestration and seizure to prevent or stop an infringement of the intimacy of private life'. It is worth noting that this article steers clear from providing a substantive definition of what private life entails. This was left to the judges to flesh out, case by case. They provided a very extensive definition encompassing not only the home, family life and affairs of the heart but also health and wealth (Errera 2006, 83). Furthermore, before 2002, judges considered that privacy covered all details of an individual's private life however innocuous they might be. In practice, however, before 2005, politicians very rarely had cause to bring the media to court on a breach of their privacy, this was the preserve of princesses from Monaco and cinema stars who derived considerable financial benefit from their court actions in these matters.

Self censorship in matters of intimacy relating to politicians is a long held tradition in media circles. There has long been 'consensus shared by politicians and journalists' that 'the personal lives and amorous activities of politicians are not an appropriate subject for public discussion' (Bornstein, 1994, 272). This is in part due to the very nature of French journalism. Alexis de Tocqueville remarked, more than two centuries ago that the 'spirit' of French journalism 'consists in a violent but frequently an eloquent and lofty, manner of discussing the great interests of the state' while 'the characteristics of the American journalist consist in an open and coarse appeal to the passions of his readers, he abandons principles to assail the characters of individuals, to track them into private life, and disclose all their weaknesses and vices.' (1864, 237-238). Without going quite that far back, French political journalism has a tradition of being concerned with debating ideas rather than investigating facts. It is only in the 1990s that the French press started taking on a more investigative role (Chalaby 2004). This investigative role did not however stray into the private sphere, focusing exclusively on instances of illegal party funding and abuse of public office. In some cases, when certain scurrilous details did emerge, the newspapers did not deem them a

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matter for public concern before the 2000s. For instance, when Defence minister Roland Dumas' involvement in the notorious Elf scandal was traced through the gifts made by his mistress, Christine Deviers-Joncourt, it was the gifts rather than the mistress that were condemned. In fact, early press coverage of the scandal took care to refer to 'l'amie du ministre' (the minister's friend) rather than using the word 'maitresse' until the protagonists had publicly confirmed the nature of their relationship. In particular, Christine Deviers-Joncourt's decision to publish in 1999 a book entitled 'la putain de la République' (Republic's whore) put her private life in the public domain. Still, it was the fact that Roland Dumas had allegedly bought expensive Italian boots with bribes handed via his mistress by Elf rather than his infidelity that exercised the French press.

The French media's reluctance to report on sexual misconduct on the part of French politicians is best illustrated however by the case of François Mitterrand's illegitimate daughter, Mazarine Pingeot. Mazarine's existence remained a secret until November 1994, 7 months before the end of her father's second 7 year presidential term. Mazarine was already 19 years old and had lived with her mother throughout her father's presidencies in a flat adjacent to the Elysée, the presidential palace, paid for and under the protection of the French state. The secret was let out through the publication of 5 photos of Mazarine coming out of a restaurant in the company of her father in Paris Match, the current affairs magazine. The immediate reactions in the national press to these revelations range from mild amusement in Le Monde to indignation towards Paris Match in L'Humanité, the communist national daily. Le Monde recalls an anecdote dating back to 1984 when Mitterrand questioned on the matter by a TV journalist had replied: 'Yes, I have an illegitimate daughter, and so what?', and concludes the 300 word article with 'Mr Mitterrand has an illegitimate child. He shares this happiness with many French people. It doesn't prevent him from working (...) she is pretty and seems well adjusted, and so what?' (Le Monde, 4 November 1994). Le Figaro and L'Humanité, from opposite ends of the political spectrum, are joined in condemning Paris Match for its 'pigsty journalism' (Le Figaro, 5 November 1994) and for showing 'contempt for the readers' and 'endangering democracy' (L'Humanité, 5 November 1994). The leftwing newspaper Libération is the only one to inquire whether Mazarine and her mother lived at the expense of the state but is inclined to think that it probably wasn't the case (5 November 1994). The news break out on 3 November, by 11 November, no further mention is made in the broadsheets of the revelations. There clearly isn't the breadth and width of media coverage needed to start the 'scandalization' process. Yet, this affair was not just a question of sexual misconduct as only Libération pointed out: the fact that Mitterrand's second family lived at the expense of the state and under police protection could have been seen as misappropriation of public funds and could have prompted further investigation from the press. The subsequent revelations in February-March 1995 that a polemical journalist, Jean Edern-Hallier, had had his phone tapped by the presidential protection team in 1984 because he was threatening to reveal the existence of Mazarine should have provoked further interest. Yet again, however, the protection of his private life was seen by the media as a strong justification for the presidential actions. Most of the

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subordinates who had carried out the illegal tapping eventually received suspended sentences, the leader of the police unit was condemned to 8 months incarceration and compensation was paid by the state to the 150 people whose phones had been tapped and their 1368 interlocutors for the violation of their own private life, following the 2004 trial. All the moral ingredients for a major political scandal along the lines of both the Watergate and the Lewinsky scandals were present in this affair. Yet the French press colluded in keeping the President's secret and rallied in his defence when it was disclosed. The Mazarine incident can nonetheless be interpreted as a turning point in the evolution of the public/private divide. While it has been widely alleged that Mitterrand gave his implicit if not explicit authorization to release those pictures, there is no evidence that this was the case. Mazarine Pingeot herself recalls the episode as 'rape' (Le Monde, 3 January 2006). It could be counted thus as one of the first instances of an uncontrolled public disclosure by the French media of a French politician's private life.

The increasingly uncontrolled public disclosure of politicians' private lives

One of the main reasons advanced by the media at the time to justify the publicization of Mazarine's existence was the fact that she had recently attended a state banquet. In essence, Mitterrand had himself chosen to make this aspect of his private life public. In fact, French politicians have long chosen to reveal to the public some select aspects of their private lives. Christian Delporte (2008) has explained how this self exposure has increased over time to cover more and more of the private sphere. As far back as the 1920s, politicians were prepared to be interviewed in their home. Delporte quotes the exemple of minister Edouard Herriot posing for the photographers at his piano, in his armchair and even in his bedroom for new picture magazine Vu in 1928. There was however no photo or mention of his family. In 1953, newly elected President René Coty opens his family album to Paris Match. Among the pictures published, there is one of his wife serving him some soup and another taken from the family album of one of his daughter and himself in swimming costumes. From then on, and especially with the advent of the 5th Republic in 1958 and the election of the president of the Republic by direct universal suffrage in 1962, there was an escalation of the willing exposure by politicians of a carefully constructed version of their family life. Wives and adult children were all increasingly used to bolster politicians' public image at key points in the electoral calendar. For Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, the extensive exposure of his private life was not just a question of political marketing but also part of his efforts to modernize the presidency and French society as a whole. Some areas of private lives still remained taboo however such as marriage breakdowns and younger children. The first notable exceptions to this rule occurred in 1991 when Michel Rocard announced his divorce in an interview to current affairs magazine Le Point (2 November 1991) and the occasion, when Ségolène Royal, then Environment minister, invited Paris Match and a television channel to the hospital where she had just given birth to her fourth child, Flora, (Paris Match, 16 July 1992). These instances generated very little media media coverage at the time. In the Royal case, Le Monde asked, in its only article devoted to the incident, whether politicians shouldn't be wary of breaching the 'implicit

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taboo' surrounding their private lives thus opening themselves to the attacks of a 'certain press' (4 July 1992). This was rather prophetic since Royal's choice to expose this intimate part of her private life has been used since repeatedly to justify further media intrusion into her personal life.

The same argument was also used when the taboo was finally breached for good in 2005. The press on that occasion, for the first, chose to report a series of rumours regarding the fragile state of Nicolas Sarkozy's marriage to his then second wife, Cécilia Sarkozy, their separation, their extra marital relations and the subsequent return of the errant wife to the family home between May 2005 and January 2005. These revelations culminated with the publication on its cover by Paris Match at the end of the summer (Paris Match, 1 September 2005) of stolen photos of Cécilia Sarkozy and her lover Richard Attias (later to become her third husband). There was also a newswire released by Agence Presse on 11 October 2005 which gave the name of Nicolas Sarkozy's new partner, a journalist from Le Figaro. The major national broadsheets chose not to relay that particular information but it was covered by local newspaper Le Parisien who didn't give the name of the journalist and by ailing popular daily France Soir which did. The taboo surrounding politicians' private lives was visibly crumbling.

At every stage of this '*feuilleton'* or 'soap opera', the media justified their intrusion into Nicolas and Cécilia Sarkozy 's privacy by their own willingness, prior to their marital difficulties, to publicize their private life. One example often used was the fact that, while at the ministry of the interior, they had staged a photo of their 9 year old son in his father's ministerial office along the lines of the iconic photo of Kennedy and his son in the Oval office at the White House. Much was also made of the fact that Cécilia Sarkozy had been a close political advisor of her husband, usually occupying an office right next to his, in his various ministerial posts. Nicolas Sarkozy himself had often said that he didn't have two lives, a political life and a personal life but only one life.

During that episode, the width and breadth of the media coverage of the actual marital difficulties were much greater than in the Mazarine case. It was worthy of a full scale political scandal. The ingredients of affair could have also fitted the definition, especially if we take into account two key incidents during the saga. One relates to the pressures exerted by Nicolas Sarkozy in November 2005, at the instigation of his then estranged wife, to stop the publication of a biography based on interviews she had willingly granted to a journalist before the break up. The other is the dismissal of Paris Match editor, Alain Genestar, by the magazine's owner and close friend of Nicolas Sarkozy, Arnaud Lagardère, in November 2006. If we take Tiffen's typology (2002), media coverage of a major scandal goes through 3 phases, from the initial disclosure, through routine news coverage to saturation news coverage. According to him, not many scandals reach the final stage but all proper scandals reach the second at least. Nicolas Sarkozy's marital difficulties certainly reached the second stage on the news agenda if not the third at key intervals. This does not make this episode a political scandal on its own but it certainly fulfils the first dimension of the scandalization process as defined by Williams.

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From this incident in 2005, the gates have become truly open and stolen photos of French politicians' private moments have become routine in celebrity magazines while the more 'serious' press has devoted more and more space to reporting these transgressions. Ségolène Royal has been a prime target: from pictures showing her in her swimming costume in August 2006 in celebrity magazine Closer to an extraordinary spread of full page pictures in Paris Match (8 August 2009) showing her staying good bye to her new partner on a railway platform under the title worthy of a movie star's love life, 'Ségolène Royal, in love?'. Nicolas Sarkozy has remained however the main focus of attention thanks to his election as president,his further marital difficulties and his continuing willingness to expose intimate details of his personal life. The public announcement of his divorce on 19 October 2007, five months into his presidency, his first outing with Carla Bruni on 15 December 2007 to Disneyland Paris, their marriage on 2 February 2008 led to ever more media coverage. One incident in particular demonstrates the increasingly uncontrolled nature of the media reporting. On 6 February, the website of current affairs Magazine Le Nouvel Observateur published an article revealing that Nicolas Sarkozy had allegedly sent a text to his ex-wife, Cécilia, in which he declared: 'If you come back, I will cancel everything'. This article was published on the internet rather than in the magazine itself but it was promptly relayed by the mainstream media. The broadsheet press took pains, of course, to cast doubts on its authenticity but still printed it. President Sarkozy decision to take the magazine to court for a breach of privacy -the first president to do so while in office- further fuelled the media coverage. A month later, he chose to drop all legal action but by then media coverage had reached 'saturation' stage.

The classic distinction between the public and private sphere was first eroded by a growing willingness by politicians to disclose more and more aspects of their private lives as a marketing tool. This, in turn, has led in the last five years to public disclosure of elements of their private lives they would have rather had been kept hidden from public opinion. One striking element of the media coverage of private life is the fact that it very much relies on rumours first aired on the internet which are subsequently reported by the press. It simultaneously absolves the journalists of breaching the private life taboo –they are after all only relaying something that has been said elsewhere- and yet ensures a wider circulation of these breaches. Media coverage however is not enough in itself to make a political scandal. We now need to examine what impact, if any, these disclosures have had on French public opinion.

Public reaction

For Seiler (2002, 163) France ranks among 'societies as whole' (*sociétés holistes*) where political roles are distinguished from those who hold them. According to him, in such societies, citizens will consider that a good politician can have dubious private morals. By contrast in 'individualistic societies' such as the United States, the political actor and the person are deemed inseparable and citizens will consider that

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unfaithfulness in the private sphere will necessarily lead to unfaithfulness to the electorate and will distrust politicians whose private life is not beyond reproach. Yet, if we compare public reaction to the Lewinsky scandal in 1998 and public reaction in France to public disclosure of potentially scandalous private behaviour, there doesn't seem to such a gulf in attitudes in practice between American and French public opinion towards public exposure of such behaviours, just a time lag.

Evaluating public reaction to scandals is difficult. A lot of studies on the impact of scandals focus on electoral response. They try to assess what influence if any, scandals have on voting behaviour but recognize ultimately that electoral choice is complex and that the impact of scandals will depend on many internal and external factors (Jimenez & Cainzos, 2006).When considering the French case, there is very little literature to draw on. Lafay & Servent (2000) have analysed the impact of media coverage on local elections but nobody appears to have done so for national elections. Eveno (2001) tried to establish a link between press coverage of scandal and increased sales of newspaper but, against his own expectations, couldn't establish a link between the two. Incidentally, this would come as a disappointment for the French press, Le Monde in particular, since they had deliberately chosen to increase their coverage of the many political scandals that emerged in the 1990s in order to arrest the decline of their readership.
The most abundant literature on the topic is to be found on the other side of the Atlantic where it has long been a prominent issue in electoral campaigns. Interestingly, these studies run counter to Seiler's assumption that political actors and their personal lives are seen as inseparable by American citizens. When assessing the electorate's attitudes towards the revelations of presidential candidate Gary Hart's extra-marital affair with Donna Rice during the 1992 presidential campaign, one of Stoker's main conclusions is that 'reservations about character can be crowded out by the candidate's programmatic appeal' (Stoker, 1993, 213). In the Lewinski scandal, Miller (1999) and many others show that American citizens were perfectly able to differentiate between Clinton's morals and his abilities as president. Throughout the scandal, 70% of Americans continued to support Clinton while simultaneously refusing to condone his private behaviour. They were perfectly able to distinguish between private sins and public virtues and to choose to favour one over the other.

There have been some polls in France which look into attitudes towards the disclosure of politicians private lives but they are sporadic and have been prompted by isolated incidents, years apart and as such provide a limited glimpse into public reaction. By contrast, in the US, public opinion on private aspects of politicians' life is routinely sought, especially at electoral times. If we look at the limited sample available, we can see that opinions on the separation between the private and public spheres, politicians' attitudes and media coverage have not much evolved over the last twenty years (see annex 1). At the time of the Lewinsky scandal, for instance, 85% of the French felt that a politician who lied about his private life should not be punished. This result was immediately presented as a strong vindication of Mitterrand's decision and actions to keep his daughter a secret (Le Point, 19/09/1998). In February 2006, 71% felt that

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the media had talked too much about Nicolas and Cécilia Sarkozy (Le Point, 23/02/2006). Two years later, when their divorce is finally announced, 89% continue to feel that this is a private rather than a public matter (Le Journal du Dimanche, 17 October 2008). This is however not the most reliable of indicators due to the paucity of data available. Ideally, we need a set of polls asking the same type of questions over a politically significant period of time, ie a national election.

The opinion polls commissioned during this presidential campaign of 2007 do include questions relating to the image of candidates. These questions were centred however on 3 general qualities such as 'being honest', 'willing to change things', 'having the capacity to be president' and one negative trait, 'being frightening' (Boy & Chiche, 2007). Honesty could conceivably relate to politicians' private lives but it is rather abstract and the period covered by these polls start in March 2006, 3 months after Sarkozy's reconciliation with his second wife (Cécilia). We need therefore to turn to popularity polls to attempt to make the link. If we consider Nicolas Sarkozy's personal approval ratings during his first period of marital difficulties between May 2005 and January 2006, no impact can be inferred. The biggest gap occurs between October and November when Sarkozy's approval rate increased by 11% in the IPSOS poll and 7% in the TNS SOFRES poll (see annex 2). It seems hardly possible to attribute this jump to the revelations mid October that he had found love again with a journalist. It is most certainly due to his vigorous response to the crisis of the *banlieues* which dominated the political agenda at the end of October till mid November. During the second period of his marital saga, from October 2007 to February 2008, the picture is different. In the January 2008 IPSOS poll, his ratings dropped for the first time under 50% and yet again in February to a dismal 39%. His TNS SOFRES rating also dropped from 49% to 37% between the end of December and the end of February (see annex 2). Other polls at the time also confirmed this downward trend. In this instance, overexposure of his private life during those months is widely credited as one of the main causes for this diminished popularity. It does seem then that over time, increasingly critical reporting of Nicolas Sarkozy's private affairs has had a negative influence on the public's opinion of him. Other politicians' attitudes however need to be considered also.

Political contestation

To put it simply, for sexual misconduct to lead to a political scandal, it not only needs to be disclosed by the media and have an impact on public opinion, it also needs to become a political issue.

The media may have chosen to end the separation between public and private, public opinion may also have done so but if politicians themselves do not decide to do the same, the scandalization process cannot be complete. The 1993 Backs to Basic campaign in Britain is a case in point. If John Major had not chosen to take the moral high ground, he would not have lost quite so many ministers over allegations of sexual misconduct. Nicolas Sarkozy's continuing propensity to lead his private life in public is certainly

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helping to turn it into a political issue. Ségolène Royal has also suffered from the same effect, to a lesser extent. Other politicians' positioning on this issue however also needs to be considered.

During the 2007 presidential campaign, there were repeated calls from some politicians from both sides of the political divide against what was commonly defined as the '*peopolisation*' of French politics, a word that while inspired by the English language cannot really be translated into it. It is derived from the term 'presse people' which emerged in the 1990s to designate the rapidly expanding French celebrity press. The first use of the expression occurred during the 2002 presidential campaign but it only came into common usage from 2005. It is linked by Daklia to three phenomena: 'the association between politicians and celebrities -either politicians becoming celebrities or celebrities dabbling in politics-, the exposure of politicians in the celebrity press and the alignment of other media on the standards of the celebrity press by treating politicians as celebrities and lifting the veil on their private affairs' (2008, 66). Delporte provides a simpler definition: it is associated, according to him with the turning into celebrities of politicians ('*vedettisation*') and the increased exposure of their private life in the media (2008, 28). François Bayrou, the centre right candidate, who turned out to be the strongest contender during the presidential race, repeatedly used the term as a political insult principally directed at Ségolène Royal and Nicolas Sarkozy. Laurent Fabius, who was one the main candidates in the socialist primaries, declared that his programme was not Voici (the name of a celebrity magazine). These politicians clearly did feel that there was some political gain to be made from choosing this line of attack but stirred clear from specific allegations or rumours regarding the private lives of their political opponents.

The private has clearly become political but politicians as whole do not seem to be convinced that there is 'potential political benefit' in making specific scandal allegations relating to the private lives of their opponents (Williams, 2006, 53). The true test will be the coming electoral campaign for the 2012 presidential campaign. The electoral calendar plays a key role in political scandals. Scandals which do not break out near an election will not be as politically damaging as those who do. If we look back to the Mazarine case, Mitterrand's situation at the time of disclosure was an important factor. In November 1994, Mitterrand was finishing his second term and had already disclosed that his cancer was terminal. With his second presidential term ending in May 1995, his death in January 1996 and the election of his political opponent Jacques Chirac, there was no political stake in pursuing the scandal. The situation would had been very different, if it had come out in 1984 when Edern-Hallier first attempted to publish his book on the topic.

CONCLUSION

French politicians' private lives have now become a matter for public consumption. Rumours, gossip and speculations about the most intimate aspects of their love lives have become fodder for the celebrity

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press. These revelations have also found their way into the mainstream press. National broadsheets still will pretend to maintain some critical distance but are prompt enough in propagating rumours whatever their origin. From the limited evidence that can be gathered at this stage, there does seem to be a growing intolerance from the general public not only towards this evolution but also towards the politicians who have chosen to play the media card and expose some of their private life. Politicians' attitudes have remained circumspect in the matter. The recent rumours relating to Nicolas and Carla Sarkozy may turn out to be a test case. On 10 March, Nicolas Sarkozy dismissed the idea that he or his wife may be having extra marital liaisons as pure fabrications ('élucubrations'). If these had any foundation in truth, he could be facing a true scandal. After all, as Clinton learnt in the Lewinsky scandal, ultimately it is the lie that makes the scandal.

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Annex 1

French Opinion polls on Politicians' private lives

Date/source	Questions asked	Results
August 1989 L'Evénement du Jeudi (quoted in Errera, 2006)	- Is it is a good thing that the French press hardly ever talks about the intimate life of politicians - In other countries, some ministers' careers are stopped because of extra marital affairs, should it be the same in France?	Yes 73% Yes 20% No 67% Don't know 15%
March 1990 La Croix Quoted in La Croix (24/01/96)	- It is not normal for the press to make revelations about a politician's private life	80%
6 November 1991 AFP BVA Paris Match	- Do you think that it is a bad thing that the media are talking about politicians' private life? - Was it right for Prime Minister Michel Rocard to announce publicly his divorce? - Will his divorce hamper his political career?	Yes: 55% No: 32% Yes: 43% No: 47% Yes: 26% No: 66%
8 December 1994 Sud Ouest	- The press should devote less coverage to the private life of public officials	Yes 75%
January 1995 La Croix Quoted in La Croix (24/01/96)	- Do you think that the media is undermining the respect due to politicians by providing information on their private life?	Yes 62%
February 1997 L'Express (quoted in Errera, 2006)	- Should the private life of politicians be respected in all cases?	Yes 68%
19 September 1998 IPSOS/Le Point	- Do think that, in the Lewinsky scandal, the American media and justice have gone too far - Do you think that a politician who lies about his private life should be punished?	Yes 80% No: 85%
23 September 2005 AFP	- Could Nicolas Sarkozy be elected president even if he and Cecilia separated?	No: 30% Yes: 58%

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CSA/Canal + poll		
12 January 2006 Le Parisien	- Has Nicolas Sarkozy's reconciliation with his wife changed your opinion of him?	No: 87%
23 February 2006 Le Point	- The media have talked too much about Nicolas and Cécilia Sarkozy	71%
17 October 2008 IFOP Le journal du dimanche	- Do you think that Nicolas and Cécilia Sarkozy's divorce is a private matter ? - Do you think the divorce will weaken the President's role of representation in international affairs	Yes 89% No: 76%

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Annex 2

Nicolas Sarkozy's approval ratings during periods of marital difficulties[1]

a) May 2005 to February 2006

TNS Sofres/Figaro Magazine *Do you want Nicolas Sarkozy to play an important role in the future? (Yes%)*		**IPSOS/Le Point** *Do you have a favorable opinion of Nicolas Sarkozy? (Yes%)*	
End of April 2005	48	6-7 May 2005	55
End of May 2005	49	3-4 June 2005	57
End of June 2005	51	15-10 July 2005	60
End of July 2005	54	19-29 August 2005	56
End of August 2005	53	9-10 September 2005	58
End of Sept. 2005	47	7-8 October 2005	52
End of October 2005	47	November 2005	63
End of November 2005	54	9-10 December 2005	54
End of December 2005	45	13-14 January 2006	55
End of January 2006	52	10-11 February 2006	58

b) October 2007 to February 2008

TNS Sofres/Figaro Magazine *Do you trust Nicolas Sarkozy to resolve the issues France currently faces? (Yes%)*		**IPSOS/Le Point** *Do you have a favorable opinion of Nicolas Sarkozy? (Yes%)*	
End of October 2007	53	5-6 October 2007	63
End of November 2007	49	9-10 November 2007	58
End of December 2007	49	7-8 December 2007	55
End of January 2008	41	11-12 January 2008	49
End of February 2008	37	February 2008	39

[1] The dates indicated are not those when the polls were taken rather than published.

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