



**Sarkozysm: New European and
Foreign Policy into Old French Bottles?**

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ABSTRACT

The Gaullist French president Nicolas Sarkozy has announced that France has to break with French past policies. The break refers to the launch of a new French European policy, re-enter in NATO's military integrated structure, up-grading of human rights in international politics and a new World Order. However, the analysis demonstrates that Sarkozy does not break with the past. Sarkozy's activism, his permanent speed and change of issue hide the fact that he continues Charles de Gaulle's and late president Francois Mitterrand's European and foreign policy which was guided by the concept of a 'European Europe', a multipolar world, France being allied to the US but not aligned and France as a politically visible actor in Europe and in international politics. The means to accomplish French European and foreign policy visions changes according to the specific European and international situation. The re-enter in NATO's Military integrated structure is such a change, but Sarkozy does not break with the past concept of not being automatically aligned with the US. Sarkozysm exists, but as we argue in this working paper Sarkozysm is an amalgam of past policies whose purpose is to satisfy all French societal layers and to strike a balance between Gaullism and Mitterrandism.

INTRODUCTION

When coming into power May 2007 the French Gaullist president Nicolas Sarkozy declared that French domestic, European and foreign policy needed a thoroughly overhaul after years of passivity. He even announced that he wanted ‘a break with the past’, ‘a new European policy’, and ‘a political change’.

Did Sarkozy want to break totally with the past? Did he want to obliterate the past? Did he want to create a ‘new Frenchman’ whose horizon of expectations should be the present and the future without any past burdens of experiences? If so, is it possible to ‘forget’ the past and the specific political culture that has marked France since the ‘revolutionary break’ in 1789? Or did Sarkozy want to break with some specific legacy of the past? Did the Gaullist Sarkozy go for a break with the Gaullist legacy? If the break was about a break with Gaullist legacy, what is then the Gaullist European and foreign political legacy? Did Sarkozy want to break with Mitterrand’s conceptualization of Europe?¹ If so, how did Mitterrand conceptualize Europe and did Mitterrand draw on a Gaullist legacy and if so which parts of this legacy?

The paper argues that the ‘break with the past’, ‘a new European policy’ and ‘a political change’ have happened at the level of day-to-day policy. The ‘break’ has not touched upon the ‘deep structure’ of French foreign and European policy. This argument rests on the assumption that European and foreign policy is a question about ‘who we are as Frenchmen’. European and foreign policy is thus analyzed

as a question of construction of identity and projection of the representation of national identity onto the European and global scene. The analysis of European and foreign policy therefore has to start at the level of the nation-state in order to understand what kind of European and international policy makes sense at the national scene.

The paper rests on discursive conceptual analysis. The concepts that are to be analyzed all relate to the representation of France as a specific state-nation with a specific conceptualization of its role in Europe and in foreign policy.

Recurrent guide concepts in texts and speeches constitute the empirical findings of the analysis. The use of these concepts is analyzed to which extent they make sense at the domestic political arena. A concept as – for example – multipolarity, which has been central in de Gaulle’s and Mitterrand’s discourse, is also currently used by Sarkozy. However, the political *means* to attain a multipolar world are not the same as during the Cold War. Furthermore, the weakening of the United States’ political prestige and economic power at the global level opens up for a lot of questions of how to construct a multipolar world. The analysis therefore makes a distinction between the concepts used which refer to ‘the deep structure’ of identity which is projected onto the European and global scene. The *means* are seen as tactical tools at the day-to-day level to achieve the goals of for example the constitution of a multipolar world. These means change according to the power structure either in the EU or at the global level.

Sarkozy’s speeches to the French Ambassadors, to the European Parliament and speeches at the EU summit meetings are analyzed, because it is the president who outlines the conceptualization of the French European

¹ There is a strong tendency in French political discourse not to distinguish between the EU as an institutional framework and Europe as an idea of values and of political geography.

and foreign politics.² The president has – so to say – the right to speak about these issues and he chooses the issues that are considered important and how to speak about them. He has also the right to silence issues.

In the first part, we shortly outline the German historian Reinhart Koselleck's definition of concepts, which according to Koselleck both represent and are constitutive of meaning. Conceptual analysis therefore shows us what the premises are for politics and political change. The second part addresses the question of how Sarkozy uses the concept of 'break' in relationship to the French past in order to legitimize his quest for being elected president and how he as president tries to silence the past. Thereafter, the concept of state-nation and fatherland (*patrie*)³ is analyzed, and to which extent Sarkozy breaks with the relationship between the three concepts that frame what can be said and done. Subsequently Sarkozy's use of Gaullist concepts as 'multipolarity', 'une Europe européenne', 'a certain idea of France', 'allied but not aligned with the US' are analyzed. The fourth part will then move on to analyze whether Sarkozy's concept of 'break' is a 'break' with the Gaullist concept of 'a Europe of the States' and Mitterrand's concept of 'a state-like Europe' and how Sarkozy legitimizes the French re-entry in NATO's military integrated structure. Finally, the paper discusses whether French European and foreign policy

is subject to profound changes because of changes of French national identity and of the international environment or whether changes 'only' takes place at the political level of day-to-day policy.

THE CONCEPT OF THE CONCEPT

The question of political change is approached as one of change in the understanding of concepts (Lund Petersen 2007, 25). According to the conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck concepts frame the present space of meaning including the present horizon of the future, and meaning always emerges in a reference to meaning which is ascribed to concepts which must always maintain a measure of ambiguity in order to remain a concept (Koselleck 1995, 84). This ambiguity of meaning is the very sign of the concept of the concept. Any concept condenses a lot of meanings and comes into being as a generalization that overrules the particular situation. Koselleck writes that the ambiguity of a concept can be partially captured by focusing on how oppositional concepts are constituted in semantic fields. Still according to Koselleck semantic fields⁴ are basically characterized by a community of meaning where a chain of concepts enter into a relation with one another. Hence, the meaning of the concept is constituted in the relationship between concept and counter-concept (Koselleck 1985, 160).

A concept attains thus a partial fixation of meaning through its relation to other concepts and through the construction of sub-concepts that are used to define and sta-

² The president is of course not the only discursive actor even if he represents French European – and foreign policy. His discourse is challenged by political parties, intellectuals and social movements. A thorough analysis has to deal with the various discourses in order to lay bare how competing discourses challenge the presidential discourse and whether they displace the meaning of the presidential recurrent concepts. Such an exhaustive analysis is not carried out in this paper.

³ The state-nation and not the nation-state because it was the state that created the nation.

⁴ 'Discourse' comes close to meaning of 'semantic field'; it is thereby the 'community of meaning, that the concept is inextricably linked with' (Petersen, 2008).

bilize the concept and the counter-concept. It is not only the relationship between the concept and the counter-concept that stabilizes partially the meaning of the concept. It is also the construction of the chain of sub-concepts to the concept that stabilizes the concept. However, this chain of sub-concepts only makes sense in relationship to the chain of sub-counter concept. The order of the chain of sub-concept might change because of an external or internal event happens that puts pressure upon the order of both the concept and the counter concept and their respective chains of sub-concepts.

The order of the concepts and the relations of the concepts and counter-concepts has thus to be studied in order to detect whether profound changes in the production of meaning are taking place. In addition to this analysis one has to study how the singular – in this case Sarkozy in a singular actual situation – tends to establish his singularity by means of general concepts, claiming them as his own (Koselleck 2004, 156). But also the other way round: how Sarkozy tends to establish his singularity by means of *singular* concepts – as ‘his break with the past’ and ‘his new European policy’ (see chapter: Sarkozy: Break with the Past).

The conceptual analysis of Sarkozy’s speeches serves thus the purpose of demonstrating how past general concepts of French European and foreign policy are claimed by Sarkozy as something new he has invented and how he at the same time tries to silence the past concepts by using concepts that he claims he has invented too. However, Sarkozy’s rather constant claim to represent a singular new policy hides the implicit and explicit use of French general concepts as ‘European Europe’ and a multipolar world.

SARKOZY: BREAK WITH THE PAST?

On 30 November 2006 former French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy announced his candidature for the presidential elections. Sarkozy made it clear immediately that he wanted a change of France and a change of French European and foreign policy. Both the inside and the outside of France – which are two sides of the French same coin – has in Sarkozy’s view to be changed. The question is whether change is only a question of Sarkozy’s political style, of his permanent verbal and travelling activism, his relentless ‘mise en scene’ of himself and his constant talk about his will to power. Or does Sarkozy inaugurate a new policy that changes the ‘deep structure’ of French European and Foreign policy?⁵

In relation to his announcement of running for the Presidency, Sarkozy declared in an interview: ‘*(i)n a world that moves rapidly how is it possible that one remains immovable. I want a quiet break (rupture tranquille)*’⁶. This statement was a softening of his former statements about the necessity of a ‘break with the past’. Sarkozy added the adjective ‘quiet’ to this ‘break’ slogan in order not to alienate the conservative electorate. Furthermore, the concept ‘quiet break’ had the advantage of referring indirectly to the socialist candidate Ségolène Royal’s electoral slogan ‘the quiet force’ (*force tranquille*). Royal on her side referred to late socialist president Francois Mitterrand’s slogan ‘quiet force’ which he launched in 1981 during his presidential election campaign.

⁵ The French researcher Frédéric Charillon writes that in France analysts and commentators most often deduce political actions from the President’s style, whereas, abroad, the leader’s decisions are studied in the first instance and afterwards the presidential style is analyzed (Charillon 2009, 393).

⁶ ‘Sarkozy promet une “rupture tranquille”’, *L’Express*, 30 November 2006.

The concept 'quiet break' is an oxymoron. The concept can thus be subject to various interpretations due to the inherent contradiction between the subject and adjective. Many of Sarkozy's speeches during his electoral campaign were marked by concepts and counter-concepts, by oxymoron, by binarity and by juxtaposition of different historical personalities who represented different set of values. The use of oxymoron made it possible to remain vague as for what policy Sarkozy would conduct when/if he were elected president.

During the presidential election campaign, Sarkozy often referred to various aspects of French history in order to ensure the French that he was able to synthesize left-wing and right-wing heroes within his own person (Sarkozy 2007, 27-28). He represented himself as the person that could infuse France with hope of escaping from the political and economic morass that the country had suffered under Chirac. It was therefore no accident that Sarkozy presented himself at the tomb of de Gaulle at Colombey-les-deux Églises as a reincarnation of de Gaulle, who stopped the war in Algeria in 1962 and thus saved France from total chaos. According to Sarkozy, '*General de Gaulle was the symbol of hope. When everything had been lost, de Gaulle gave the French hope once more. I love France, and I will give the French hope*'⁷. By referring to de Gaulle he assured the Gaullist electorate that a 'break' was not a 'break' but a reconstruction of the heroic past incarnated in de Gaulle.

In February 2007, Sarkozy stated that '*France is a country of 2000 years of Christianity*' (*Nous sommes les héritiers de deux mille ans de chrétienté*) (Quoted in Bertrand 2007, 39). This utterance is really a break with French

republicanism that relegates Christianity to the private sphere and represents Catholicism as belonging to *l'Ancien Régime* and therefore has to be combated. In the same speech Sarkozy declared that France synthesizes *l'Ancien Régime* and the revolution in 1789, the Capetien State and the Republican state, patriotism and universalism (Bertrand, 39). He thus tried to fuse binary and incompatible values in order to overcome the battle of the so-called *two France* (the republican and the catholic France), which continues today in the form of discussion of the concept of republicanism and *laïcité*. By referring implicitly to the *two France* Sarkozy paid a tribute to the way de Gaulle interpreted the history of the construction of the French nation-state (Agulhon 2000, 31-32) as both Republican, catholic and monarchical. However, Sarkozy's attempt at fusing the *two France* resulted in an outcry from many republicans who have constructed a line of demarcation between before the revolution and after revolution and between secularism and religion. Sarkozy was therefore represented as a traitor to the Republican legacy.^{8,9} In the Republican view he was represented as the Man of the bad past.

Since the presidential election May 2007, Sarkozy's speeches are no more marked by a lot of references to past historical figures. Present and future are what count in his

⁷ Quoted from 'Nicolas Sarkozy se place sous le patronage du général de Gaulle', *Le Point*, 14 April 2007.

⁸ The French internet is overloaded by reactions to what is represented as Sarkozy's betrayal to secularism and republicanism.

⁹ This paper does not deal with the debate on *laïcité* (laicism) and religion (Islam). If so, the famous speech to the European Parliament 13 November 2007 in which he speaks of 'spiritual politics' and 'lay morality', and his declarations in the Roman basilica of St John Lateran (20 December 2007) in which he coined the term 'positive laicism' would have been very important documents. The concept of 'positive laicism' combines a positive attitude to the role of religion in human life and republicanism understood as adherence to French political principles.

speeches. The actions, acts, and movements of the present serve as markers for the future. Sarkozy represents himself as the statesman of the present and the future. He wants that *'France is leading the countries that create history and do not subordinate to history'*¹⁰. The past is 'passé'. The horizon of expectation is present because of the promise of the will to create the future – incarnated in Sarkozy's person.

The apparent lack of references to France's past makes Sarkozy appear to be the man for the break with the past. However, the past catches up with him after all, when he emphasizes that France will create history, stay *primus inter pares* in EU and will be *'the soul of the new European renaissance needed by the world and bearer of the message of human rights'*¹¹. This statement is practically a replica of the former President Jacques Chirac's New Year speech 1999 to the French Diplomatic Corps. In this speech Chirac presented his European vision of the 21st century *that should be characterized by 'a new Renaissance grounded in its idea of individual liberty and humanism'*.¹²

France in this view can still achieve something that other countries cannot: play a decisive political role in the EU because France has invented the universal human rights (1789). Sarkozy puts his hand in the pocket of French history in order to legitimize French 'exceptionalism' in the EU. The new history Sarkozy wants to create remains thus a child of revolutionary history of the past – not in its violent form but in the form of political liberalism. Like his predecessors, Sarkozy

makes use of the 1789 revolution as a nodal point from where France's political culture radiates to Europe and the world.

THE CONCEPT OF FRENCH NATION – STATE AND FATHERLAND (PATRIE)

'Our foreign policy is a reflection of our identity as nation' (Sarkozy's speech to the French Ambassadors, 27 August 2007)¹³

European policy is about 'who we are'. France projects – like all European state-nations – a vision of Europe as part of its vision of who it is and thereby where it is going. This vision 'thing' is rooted in the 'we feeling' which is represented by the concept of state-nation identity and in the French case also by the concept of fatherland (*patrie*) (Holm 1999).¹⁴

The concepts of state, nation and fatherland are the basic codes that frame and constrain what can be said about what kind of European and global visions that make sense at the French domestic arena. No matter whether a politician belongs to the extreme right, the right or the left, he/she cannot avoid speaking about these codes. The various political parties conduct of course different foreign politics but they all share the same basic codes. They just relate to them in different ways. President Sarkozy relates to these codes in his speeches. That is not to say that he explicitly talks about the concepts. But the way he represents the role of France in European and foreign policy refers implicitly to the concepts.

¹⁰ Allocution de M. le Président de la République. XVI^{ème} conférence des ambassadeurs. Palais de l'Elysée – mercredi 27 août 2008 www.ambafr-pk.org/IMG/pdf/Con_amb_sarkozy/fr.pdf.

¹¹ Intervention de M. le Président de la République. Conférence de presse. Palais de l'Elysée – mardi 8 janvier 2008. www.astrid-online.it/rassegna/10-01-2008/SARKOZY08_01_08pdf.

¹² www.france.diplomatie.fr/index.html, 31 December 1999.

¹³ <http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-sarkozy-s-speech.html>. Paris, 27 August 2007.

¹⁴ Part of this chapter is a very short résumé of the arguments of the author's PhD dissertation from 1999.

French policy is structured against the background of the invention of the sovereign state-nation in 1789 by the revolutionaries. The French revolutionaries invented the *political* nation. Political, in the sense that the French chose to join 'project France' on the basis of a voluntarily entered political contract. They subscribed as individual citizen to the contract with the state, which on its side guarantee equality and liberty. The French become national citizen *in* the state. Only the state can guarantee that the national contract comes alive. Therefore the nation *is* the state. The nation became a state and the state became the embodiment of the nation. As a result, the two concepts became totally fused.

The fusion of the state and the political nation results in an indivisible national sovereignty, a state-nation that is seen as a transformer of society by administrative centralization and uniform education of individuals to ensure a uniform political concept of the citizen. The strong state was required to ensure that the large regional differences could not threaten the unity of the nation. Hence the state 'roof' had to cover the entire territory. The state should ensure that no particular interests disturb the comprehensive view of a nation consisting of political citizens.

The message of the fused state-nation from 1789 was that all mankind ought to follow the 'universal French message'. Universal, because in principle it was neither linked to a territory, to time nor to a social category. The French state-nation is therefore represented as a carrier of a 'mission civilisatrice' spreading its values globally and regionally, and that is why the French state-nation is represented as exceptional (Meunier 2000). As de Gaulle put it: '*Our acting is directed towards goals, which are coherent and which, because they are French, mirror the ambitions of mankind*'

(Quoted in Grosser 1984, 93). This representation of French universalism requires an external dimension to the political state-nation that might be represented in European and global politics.

The fusion of the state and the political nation is the ideal concept which is highly abstract. But it is linked to the culturally defined concept of fatherland which is an emotional container. The concept of fatherland relates to the non-institutionalized affiliation of a particular group to a defined territory on the basis of common history, habits, language, culture and religion. The concept relates to a deep, trans-historical and organicist concept of a community. The concepts of the political nation and fatherland are bound together. The political nation is the core concept and fatherland the sub-concept thus keeping each other in check. The 'earth' is assured by the fatherland but is held in check by the political nation. The three concepts: state, nation and fatherland are thus bound in a marriage with firmly defined role.

Sarkozy does not break with the fusion of the state-nation even he attempts at limiting the role of the state in organizing the citizens' social and economic life. The state is still considered a 'roof' that has to guarantee the existence of the nation. However, some very important changes are en route: the concept of *fatherland* breaks slowly away from the linkage to the concept of the political state-nation and a *decentralized* concept of the French state-nation is getting some political foothold.

The reference to the concept of fatherland is increasing. The extreme right FN (Front National), some right wing parties and part of Sarkozy's Gaullist party UMP (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire) argue that religion and ethnicity has to define the affiliation to France and to the EU. This argument turns

upside-down the usual linkage between the political nation and fatherland where the latter gets the upper hand. This turn has huge consequences for the relationship to especially Muslims inside France and to the attitude to Turkey's (im)possible membership of the EU (see chapter: A State-like EU has to have Borders).

The concept of decentralized France is characterized by its emphasis on the need for loosening the grip of the state over the territory by delegating political power to intermediate levels. This conceptualization of the French territory is a heresy to the political thinking of the state-nation. The centralized France does not exist any longer. This discourse has been marginalized because it breaks up two hundred years of French state-nation identity. However, the Green party, which adheres to a decentralized federal France, is gaining ground. At the European Parliament elections June 2009, the Green party (*Europe Ecologie*) scored 16.28 per cent of the vote and thus became the second-biggest French party in the European Parliament.¹⁵ Of course the climate crisis had a huge impact on the voters' resolve to vote for the Green party. Nevertheless, the score indicates also that the 'old' France might slowly turn into a 'new' France of decentralization which has been in very slow route since Mitterrand's laws on decentralization 1981-82.

A discursive struggle between the protagonists of a centralized political state-nation and those of a decentralized political state-nation is slowly coming to the political

fore. This struggle is supplemented by the discourse on the importance of the concept of fatherland to the detriment of the political state-nation. Sarkozy tries to incorporate the three discourses in his speeches. This attempt at bridging the discourses manifests itself in quick changes of politics. Sarkozy pleads a centralization of power in his hands and at the same time he tries to deepen decentralization. He advocates more room for the concept of fatherland but at the same time he goes against the burka in public spaces. These contradictory policies demonstrates how French identity is undergoing a crisis.

Another discursive struggle takes place as for the relationship between realist state-policy and the call for a French 'mission civilisatrice' which is an inherent part of the French concept of the political state-nation. Civilization and politics become manifest in action turned outwards. An introvert centre solely occupied with everyday problems does not set an example to be imitated by other state-nations. However, at the same time this 'mission civilisatrice' has most often been subordinated to realist economic and geopolitical interests (Maïla 2007, 102).

Sarkozy announced in his speech to the French Ambassadors 28 August 2008¹⁶ that a break with the hitherto downplaying of export of human rights had to be brought about. However it has not at all been the case. Sarkozy's foreign policy is still more characterized by economic and geopolitical interests.

Le Monde journalist Daniel Vernet writes that Sarkozy's foreign policy is marked by schizophrenia because Sarkozy at the beginning of his presidency promised that human rights concern should play a very important role in international politics. These rights are disappearing still more from Sarkozy's in-

¹⁵ With just under 28 per cent of the vote, Sarkozy's Gaullist party, UMP was the first presidential party to come out on top in EU elections since 1979. The Socialist party PS (Parti Socialiste) got 16.48 per cent of the vote, claiming just 35,000 votes more than the Europe Ecologie list. <http://welections.wordpress.com/2009/06/18/europe-2009-french-results-and-analysis>.

¹⁶ <http://www.franceonu.org/spip.php?article2374>.

ternational policy agenda, however (Vernet 2008).¹⁷

The Libyan Gadaffi's visit to France September 2007 caused an outcry amongst intellectuals and politicians because of the lack of any presidential reference to the situation of human rights in Libya. Sarkozy's shuttle diplomacy in various Arab countries has neither much to do with export of human rights. Sarkozy's diplomacy is foremost marked by geopolitical and geoeconomic interests. It is the realist Sarkozy that travels. Therefore Sarkozy's diplomacy towards Arab countries has been nicknamed 'Areva-diplomacy' or 'nuclear diplomacy' which refers to the huge French nuclear enterprise Areva whose nuclear plants Sarkozy tries to 'sell' abroad each time he travels.

Taking into account the criticism of conducting realist economic and geopolitics Sarkozy legitimized in his New Year speech to the diplomatic corps January 2008 his priorities by referring to the need of a diplomacy of dialogue and reconciliation: *'The age of relative powers¹⁸ is marked by rising attacks on the legitimacy of external intervention and a widening of religious, ethnic and social divides, France needs to engage in dialogue with everyone because we stand foursquare at the heart of our Western family, we are conducting these dialogues on the basis of values and principles.'*¹⁹

In this speech it is not declared straight out with whom France and the EU have to

reconcile. However, the reference to 'relative power' and 'the Western family' points to dialogue with states and not with civil societies.

In Sarkozy's New Year speech January 2009, there was no explicit reference to human rights and civil society. Sarkozy declared that *'(t)he world needs an independent, united, imaginative and strong Europe, which is the friend of the whole world in the sense of being ready to talk to the whole world.'*²⁰ Who represents 'the whole world'? In the speech, the wording 'the whole world' is linked to the relationship between the EU/France and Ukraine and Russia as fair energy suppliers to Europe. This linkage points once more to the *states* and to *'Europe has to have a structural, strategic, long-term agreement with the Russians, and we have nothing to fear from Russia, which is a great country, with whom, moreover we share many cultural features.'*²¹ This declaration sounds very much alike de Gaulle's view on the former Soviet Union. De Gaulle made a clear-cut distinction between the Russian *state* which de Gaulle considered an ephemeral entity directed by interests and the *nation* that incarnate eternal historic and cultural values that are not rooted in the *state* itself. France could therefore negotiate with the authoritarian state without doing any harm to the nation. The distinction made between state and nation made it possible for de Gaulle and makes it also possible for Sarkozy to talk about values and to conduct realist policy with the 'cold state monsters': *'States are cold monsters'*, as de Gaulle has declared (quoted in Daguzan, 2002, 135).

During the Russian-Georgian conflict, 'balance' had top priority. Sarkozy explained be-

¹⁷ Vernet, Daniel (2008): "La diplomatie schizophrène" in *Le Monde*, 13 May. The French researcher Frédéric Charillon writes along the same lines however not using the word 'schizophrène' but the word 'pragmatism actif' (Charillon 2009, 396).

¹⁸ For the concept of relative power see chapter: the Concepts of Relative Power and Multipolarity.

¹⁹ New Year greetings to the diplomatic corps – Speech by M. Nicolas Sarkozy President of the Republic, 18 January 2008. www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-sarkozy-s-New-Year,10186.html.

²⁰ New Year greeting to the diplomatic corps – Speech by M. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the Republic. 16 January 2009. www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-sarkozy-s-speech-to,14347.html.

²¹ Opus.cit.

fore the European Parliament October 2008 that *Russia is an important partner for the EU and therefore it was necessary to find a solution – a cease – fire with Georgia.*²² The term ‘partner’ refers implicitly to Russia as an important energy supplier for Europe and as a guarantee of stability in the neighbourhood of the EU. This realist view on Russia is softened by Sarkozy’s addition: *‘(i)n the end Europe wins victory for the values of balance, democracy and respecting one’s neighbours.’*²³ In the chosen order of the chain of concepts²⁴ *balance, democracy and respect*, balance is the most important concept. Balance becomes a value in itself but ‘softened’ by putting democracy just after balance.²⁵ Sarkozy thus tries to strike a balance between realism and adherence to export of values. He thus becomes an exporter of ‘soft realism’ (Malmvig, Holm, 2009).

Sarkozy does not break completely with the ‘mission civilisatrice’ as an important part of the concept of the political state – nation. But he displays the contradiction between ‘mission civilisatrice’ and France as a realist power. This displayed contradiction arouses intellectual and political discursive struggles that are as heated as the struggles between those who adhere to the priority of the concept of fatherland and those who claim that the concept of the political state-nation has to define the relationship to ‘the others’. These strug-

gles demonstrate the instability and ambiguity of the concepts from the very moment they have to be operationalized at the concrete political level.

BREAK WITH GAULLISM?

‘Toute ma vie je me suis fait une certaine idée de la Franc.’ (De Gaulle, *Mémoires de guerre*, 1954, 5)

‘(j)e me suis fait une très haute idée de la France et donc de son rôle dans le monde d’aujourd’hui.’ (Sarkozy’s Speech to the French Ambassadors, August 2007)²⁶

Sarkozy has stated that ‘France creates history and does not subordinate to history’. However he is not able to skip French political culture that forms how France has to be represented at the regional and global level.

Sarkozy’s statement to the French Ambassadors August 2009 that ‘he has held a high idea of France and consequently of its role in the world of today’ is a carbon copy of de Gaulle’s famous opening sentence of his *Mémoires de guerre*: *‘I have always held a certain idea of France’* (*Mémoires de guerre*, 1954).

These statements are voided of concrete substance. They do not refer to any specific concepts that might be used to defining the statements. They are however used in specific contexts and situations that connote a specific interpretation of French history which is that of regeneration of France after wars and economic/political disasters. The decline of French position and strength at the regional and global level is represented as contrary

²² ‘Sarkozy relance l’idée d’un gouvernement économique” in AFP, 21 October 2008. Speech before the European Parliament 21 October.

²³ See note 28.

²⁴ See for the definition of a chain of concepts the chapter: Break with Gaullism?

²⁵ The minister of foreign affairs, Bernard Kouchner happened to make a slip of the tongue with regard to Russia’s intervention in South-Ossetia. Kouchner told the press that the Russian troops prepared for an ethnic cleansing (*‘Géorgie: Kouchner accuse Moscou de préparer un nettoyage ethnique’* in AFP 26 August 2008). Sarkozy immediately called Kouchner into order.

²⁶ <http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-Sarkozy-speech.html>.

to the nature of the French 'great nation' (*grande nation*). In the case of de Gaulle it was about regeneration of France after the Second World War and the Vichy regime. For Sarkozy it is about loss of influence after the French 'no' to the European Constitutional Treaty 29 May 2005 and about bad French economy that weakens French capability of acting beyond the French borders. Hence the question is whether the Gaullist Sarkozy is a 'true' Gaullist.

When Sarkozy was elected president, commentators, politicians and intellectuals asked immediately²⁷ whether Sarkozy's talk about change signified change with Gaullism. Since de Gaulle's death, every French politician has been on the hunt of 'the spirit of Gaullism'. Every new Gaullist president – but also every centrist and socialist president – is measured by Gaullist standards. The discussions are heated because Gaullism as a concept and as specific policy is contested. Gaullism as a concept has a built-in ambiguity of meaning, which is the very sign of the concept of the concept (see chapter: The concept of the concept).

A chain of five sub-concepts is attached to the concept of Gaullism: 1) *French national sovereignty* – a certain idea of the French exceptionalism (Greatness and honour) because of the concept of the political state-nation; 2) '*une Europe européenne*': Europe has to be a power in itself, detached from the American political 'overlay'; 3) *multipolarity: logical derivation from the concept of a 'European Europe'* ('*une Europe européenne*'); and 4) bridge builder between big powers and between Israel and the Arab countries.

The logical chain of counter-concepts to the five Gaullist sub-concepts is: 1) a '*banalized France*' – a France that is similar to other

states, having lost its exceptionalism; 2) *institutional integration* (supra-national EU-institutions); 3) *bipolarity or unipolarity*; and 4) Atlantism.

The right – and left wing political elite subscribe to the concept of an exceptional French nation, a 'European Europe' and the concept of multipolarity. When it comes to the question of the concept of national sovereignty and a realist concept of state politics, heated discursive struggles are displayed. The Gaullist discourse of national sovereignty and of realist politics is 'attacked' by the further de facto European integration and by a world of interdependence that demands common political and economic decisions.

Reality strikes thus back on the attempt at stabilizing the chain of Gaullist sub-concepts. The concepts continue nevertheless to exist as guiding lines for politics. It is however not only reality that strikes back, it is also de Gaulle himself as deceased politician that strikes back, because at the level of concrete politics he operated with *strategic simplicity, diplomatic flexibility and political ambiguity* (Hassner, 1968).

The strategic simplicity is expressed in de Gaulle's vision of a multipolar world in which 'Europe européenne' has to be a big regional power and the US has to be on an equal footing with Europe. The diplomatic flexibility and political ambiguity refer to the political means of reaching the goal of a multipolar world in which 'Europe européenne' exists as a global power.

There are various tactical means at hand as for constructing a multipolar world and the goal of the construction of a multipolar world justifies the means. In principle that means that the French president without any political problem can be a close ally to the US or to the Soviet Union/Russia if these alliances do not touch upon the vision of a

²⁷ See for example Vaisse (2008), Maïla (2007), Lagro (2008).

multipolar world. As a consequence of this diplomatic flexibility the ‘political ambiguity’ refers to political pragmatism that takes into account the power structure of the system. De Gaulle was foremost a pragmatic realist, as the French researchers Justin Vaisse (Vaisse 2008, p. 5 and Denis Lacorne (2008) write. De Gaulle changed his policy according to the actual situation – as long as the changing policies did not touch the conceptual ‘deep structure’ that consists of the concept the above-mentioned concepts.

However, the Gaullist pragmatism at the political level and the fluidity of Gaullist tactics is silenced by both parts of the right and left wing parties that are continuously hunting the spirit of Gaullism in the quest for a fixed meaning. This hunting results very often in measuring the used tactics instead of looking at the possible maintenance of ‘the deep structure’ that guides long term strategy.

Sarkozy has been accused of betraying the Gaullist legacy because of French rapprochement to the US, to Israel and the re-entry in NATO’s military integrated structure in April 2009. However, these rapprochements take place at the political level, at the day-to-day level. Underneath these tactical moves, the concepts of ‘une Europe européenne’ and a multipolar world are still functioning as guidelines for politics. The political means to operationalize the two concepts have changed because of the changed international situation.

THE CONCEPTS OF RELATIVE POWER AND MULTIPOLARITY

According to the French researcher Justin Vaisse, it is tempting in French political culture since de Gaulle to distinguish between Gaullists (anti-Atlanticist) and Atlanticists when discussing the foreign and European

policy orientation of French leaders (Vaisse 2008, 5). This constructed dichotomy originates in the deep national opposition to American dominance at the global level which is seen as leaving no space for a great power as France (Meunier 2006). De Gaulle underlined during his era (1958-1969) the necessity of creating ‘a third way’, which meant a strong Europe and a strong France in Europe and in the world that could counterbalance the two superpowers – the USSR and the US. De Gaulle often used the term ‘multipolarity’ when describing his vision for a global system that was liberated from the dominance of the superpowers (Boniface 1998). It was not an ideological driven concept but a geopolitical concept that referred to distribution of power in the system.

Multipolarity has since the end of the Cold War been presented as the means to overcome American unilateralism (Meunier 2006). The concept has gone as a leitmotiv through especially Chirac’s speeches on international politics. Sarkozy is no exception from this conceptualization of the international system. In his first speech to the French Ambassadors, August 27, 2007, Sarkozy stated that the world had turned out to be a multipolar world – a concert of great powers. However, still according to Sarkozy, this concert has built – in a malign aspect – a tendency to ‘clash of power politics’. In order to avoid the development of a multipolar world of antagonism, Sarkozy pleaded in his speech ‘*a European Union as a global 21st century player that will be capable of contributing in a decisive way to the reconstruction of a more just and effective world order*’ (Sarkozy 2007, 2008). This vision of the world system as composed by strong regional entities that constrain especially the US power and actually also the new emergent economic powers like

China, Brazil and India is a prolongation of de Gaulle's, Mitterrand's and Chirac's vista on international politics. In Chirac's words: '*(m)y ambition is for the European Union gradually to assert itself as an active and powerful pole, on an equal footing with the United States in the world of the twenty-first century, which ... will be a multipolar one.*' (Quoted in Menon, 2000, 130).

In his speech to the French Ambassadors August 2008 Sarkozy declared that the 21st century *is characterized by being an age of relative power* (puissance relative).²⁸ This concept was invented by the French researcher Pierre Hassner. In an article from 2007 Hassner analyses the 21st century as a century where no state, no institution/organization will be able to impose its laws. It would be a system of 'l'antagonisme incomplète et du partenariat imparfait' (incomplete antagonism and imperfect partnership).²⁹ Hassner argues that the 21st century will neither be '*a new American century*' nor a multipolar system – a concert of big powers as in the 19th century – nor the rule of multilateral institutions. Instead, the 21st century will be marked by heterogeneity which manifests itself in the powerlessness of the relative power' (Hassner 2007).

Sarkozy interprets the content of Hassner's article as a warning signal against fierce competition between powers and regions, at-

tacks on the legitimacy of external intervention and a widening of religious, ethnic and social divides. In opposition to Hassner's definition but in continuation of de Gaulle's and Chirac's concept of multipolarity, Sarkozy represents multipolarity as a remedy against superpowers dreams and against the fierce competition between relative powers. The concept of multipolarity is attached to the concept of a 'European Europe' which is perceived as a precondition of the creation of a multipolar world.

This conceptualization of the relationship between Europe (the EU) and international politics has continued since de Gaulle. The relationship is still based upon the concept of multipolarity. However, what *has* changed is the nature of the international system and thereby the political means to uphold 'a certain idea of France' expressed in French 'activism/exceptionalism', a 'European Europe', and multipolarity. The more unstable the regional and global environment is perceived and the more emergent powers as China, Brazil and India set the global political order, the more world politics might be subject to change. Thus the question is who is going to set the future world agenda and whether France will be able to play a role in the construction of multipolarity. At any rate, it is difficult to imagine that Sarkozy gives up the concept of multipolarity because it makes sense amongst the politicians both to the right and to the left.

The big question is whether Sarkozy resorts to the Gaullists concept of 'a Europe of the States' or Mitterrand's concept of 'a state-like Europe' with regard to the attempt at creating Europe as a big and important player at the global level.

²⁸ In his closing speech at the conference on "France, European Defence and NATO in the Twenty-First century", Sarkozy referred once more to Hassner's concept of 'relative power'. This time, he did it in order to legitimize French re-entry in NATO's integrated military structure by stating that 'no State can on its own impose its point of view. And cooperation and solidarity are the cornerstones of its action'. *President Sarkozy Speech on France, European Defence and NATO*, 11 March 2009. <http://www.acronym.org.uk/docs/0903/doc03.htm>.

²⁹ Already in 1968, P. Hassner used the terms 'incomplete antagonism' and 'imperfect partnership' as for describing the future of Europe. He wrote: "(S)he (Europe) will be the 'mixed' – motive' Europe of 'imperfect partnership' and 'incomplete antagonism', of overlapping groupings and cross-cutting alignments, of spectacular but inconsequential manoeuvres, of subterranean but essential evolution" (Hassner 1968, 24).

THE FRENCH EUROPEAN PRESIDENCY: A PROTECTIVE EUROPE IS A STATE-LIKE EUROPE

I believe that a strong France cannot exist without Europe, just as a powerful Europe cannot exist without France ... The European construction is France's absolute priority, because without Europe, France will not be able to provide an effective answer to the challenges of our time (Sarkozy's speech to the French ambassadors, 27 August 2007).

The European people are suffering from an identity crisis that is connected with globalization and the emphasis on markets. The word 'protectionism' should therefore not be forbidden (Sarkozy to the European Parliament, 13 November 2007).

Sarkozy tells the French that *'everywhere there is an urgent necessity for reforms'*.³⁰ The necessity of urgency means that something has to be done very quickly because the survival of the French nation-state, the EU and the global system is at stake. Sarkozy dramatizes in order to wake up the French after the 'no' to the European Constitutional Treaty. He represents himself as the person that will be able to wake up the French. It is therefore no accident that Sarkozy in many speeches says 'je, moi' (I, me) instead of 'on, nous' (one, we) (Calvet, Véronis 2008).³¹

³⁰ Voeux en direct de M. Nicolas Sarkozy, Président de la République. Monday 31 December 2007. www.elysee.fr/download/?mode=press&filename=Voeux2007.

³¹ The Gaullist concept of the presidential role and his power is manifested in the presidential extensive powers with regard to the so-called 'domaine réservé' and in de Gaulle's contempt for party policy which he considered as an expression of partisan interests whereas he as President was above partisan politics. To a certain extent, Sarkozy has broken the Gaullist conceptualization of 'domaine réservé'. 27 July 2008, the combined membership of the French National Assembly and Senate approved a reform proposed by Sarkozy to the con-

'To act is to exist', as the late Mitterrand declared 1986 (Mitterrand 1986). In the political elite's representation of the French state-nation diplomatic activism has to guarantee the maintenance of France as a visible actor at the regional and international arena. Sarkozy is no exception to this representation of the need of activism. The only difference to the former presidents is the speed Sarkozy displays.

Sarkozy's diplomatic activism during the French EU-presidency was a wake-up call after the 'no' to the European Constitutional Treaty 20 May 2005: *'France is back again in Europe'* as Sarkozy declared³² when he became the French president. France has not been away from Europe, but it has been passive for the last years. The question is therefore which kind of Europe Sarkozy is referring to when he announces the return of France to Europe.

Sarkozy has often stated that he works for 'a new Europe' and a 'break' with European policy of the past. At the same time, he also speaks about the necessity of a pragmatic European policy that prioritizes small concrete steps towards 'a Europe of results'. Thus Sarkozy uses an oxymoron 'a pragmatic break' which is an ambiguous concept. The concept 'pragmatism' refers to *the way* policy is carried out. Pragmatism is about which *means* to use in order to construct Europe as a powerful actor, whereas 'break' points

stitution of the Fifth Republic. One of the reforms concerned military actions abroad. It requires the government to obtain parliamentary approval for military action: "When the length of the intervention exceeds four months, the government submits its prolongation to the authorization of parliament". No such limits existed previously. Contrary to this limitation of 'the domaine reserve' is now the president's possibility to unfold the domestic, European and foreign policy in a speech once a year before the 'Assemblée nationale' (the House of Commons).

³² "Sarkozy: "La France est de retour en Europe", *Le Figaro*, 10 February 2008.

to the *conceptualization* of Europe.³³ President Sarkozy's use of the concept of 'break' connotes a new policy but when linked to the notion of pragmatism the 'break' refers to (small) reforms and to compromises thereby destabilizing his use of 'break'. Sarkozy did in fact make compromises during the French EU-presidency. However, these compromises did not touch upon the deep structure of French concepts of Europe.

Sarkozy's wake-up call for 'a protective Europe' (*l'Europe protection*) is a continuation of Mitterrand's concept of 'a state-like Europe'. Sarkozy legitimized his European vision by referring to the need of an EU from where common economic, financial and industrial policy should radiate. The EU should thus accomplish what France no longer can. This vision is a carbon copy of Mitterrand's concept of a centralized state-like Europe, a kind of super-state-like Europe (Holm 1999). This concept looked illogical in relation to de Gaulle's dogma of the independent, sovereign nation-state and of 'a Europe of the States'. However, what happened was that Western Europe was imagined on the basis of the French state model. The European concept was wrapped in the tricolour thereby constructing the European core, the EC, with as many state qualities as possible. The Western European concept thereby became an enlarged, doubled French state possessing the same features as the French state. Mitterrand's

term 'the more Europe, the more France' was therefore quite logical. Brussels was Paris and Paris was Brussels – seen from Paris. Brussels should do all that which France was not able to do any more alone. Thus the EC had to become a 'Europe-puissance' (power-Europe) as France had been it before.

French policy is about state policy, about a powerful and welded-together actor with the aim of coining 'great projects' to structure consciousness, culture, economy and security policy. Thus, it is not surprising that the doubled French-Western European state-like concept is seen as a strong centre of politics, radiating towards other centres (USA, Japan, China) and as a centre endowed with clear boundaries and lines of demarcation vis-à-vis other countries in order to maintain its role as an actor of high politics. The strong French President rules from a place where he is in control of French-European state affairs, from a place where defence identity, economic mobilization towards other centres, values of civilization and the recognition of status emanate.

Sarkozy has taken over Mitterrand's European legacy. For example Sarkozy is in line with Mitterrand's vision of a European economic government. When Mitterrand negotiated the Maastricht Treaty together with the then Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Mitterrand suggested that a European economic government should define the general guidelines for EU's monetary and exchange policy and the EU-member states' financial policies. France had to give up this demand; but this did not prevent the French presidents from continuing their criticism of the Central Bank's monetary and exchange policy as well as the Growth and Stability Pact, which sets narrow limits for the Euro-countries' state deficits.

Sarkozy has followed the same track ever since he ran for presidential election

³³ Since the end of 1990s European pragmatism has been a key word in French political speeches because the French political leaders had difficulties in coming up with strategic visions after the Balkan wars and before the big EU-enlargement in 2004. In 1997 the then socialist minister of foreign affairs declared that 'France was now a pragmatic power' (Védrine 1997, 181). Former minister of European affairs, the Gaullist Catherine Colonna expressed the same view in her speech to the French Ambassadors 31 August 2006. It is not only the French political leaders who talk about the necessity of 'pragmatism' and of a 'EU of results'. For Example José Manuel Barroso also uses these terms because of the increasing EU-scepticism in all the EU-member states.

(Lequesne, 2007). In a speech 2008 before the European Parliament Sarkozy proposed that *'(a)n economic government should work closely with the European Central Bank. The Bank should however maintain its independence but also be able to hold discussions with an economic government'*.³⁴ At the various summit meetings on the financial crisis, Sarkozy pleaded for establishment of an economic government with its basis in the Euro-Group. However, in opposition to Mitterrand and Chirac, Sarkozy does not attack the independence of the European Central bank. But he does criticize – like Mitterrand and Chirac – its monetary policy.

When speaking of the economic and financial crisis, Sarkozy refers to the necessity of the construction of a 'protective Europe' that has to be able to act at the global level in order to regulate the financial and economic disorder. In order to 'socialize' big emerging economic powers like China, Brazil, Mexico, India and South Africa, the French EU-presidency called the G20 to rally together November 2008 in Washington. At that meeting, G20 agreed on the four principles that should guide the response to the crisis: The need for enhanced coordination and cooperation, the rejection of protectionist measures, the strengthening of regulatory systems in financial markets and global governance. Sarkozy stated at the meeting that the intention of the meeting was that the emergent powers should participate in a fair international system of competition (Sarkozy 2008).³⁵

Sarkozy has been criticized by European liberal governments for pushing for a French-coloured protective Europe. He legitimizes

his concept of a 'protective Europe' by stating that the adjective 'protective' does not connote 'protectionism'. According to Sarkozy 'protective' connotes 'reciprocity' from its foreign partners (Sarkozy 2007). *'I am for free trade ... (But)I want reciprocity and clarity. Europe must open up, yes, but the others must too, at the same time and under the same conditions'*.³⁶ 'Reciprocity' means that all countries must be on equal footing in global competition; *'therefore, demands must be made of non-European enterprises that want to enter the European market, with regard to the environment and energy security, as well as wages and health conditions. If this does not happen the EU-member states will be exposed to unfair competition'* (Sarkozy Ensemble 2007, 85).

EU shall therefore save failing enterprises and invest in big industry. This can only happen if EU has a common European industrial policy that especially invests in huge enterprises that produce infrastructure (*les champions*) a sector in which France has great expertise. In October 2008 – in the midst of the financial crisis – Sarkozy emphasized that it was EU's duty to support production of ships, cars, planes and trains; otherwise, *'Europeans would wake up one day and discover that European enterprises had been sold to non-European capital'* (Sarkozy 2008).^{37, 38}

Sarkozy's argumentation for protecting agriculture follows the same logic as his defence

³⁴ www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT*IM-PRESS*2, 10 June 2008.

³⁵ Speech at the G20 meeting 15 November 2008. 'Assertive EU leaders fly to G20 finance summit'. <http://www.euractiv.com/en/euro/assertive-eu-leaders-fly-g20-finance-summit/article>.

³⁶ Point de presse de M. Sarkozy (en anglais) le 23 mai 2007 à la Commission européenne. www.rpfrance.eu/spip.php?article683. Brussels, 23 Mai 2007.

³⁷ Discours du Président de la République devant le Parlement européen, 18 octobre 2008. www.elysee.fr/docements/index.php?lang=fr&mode=view&cat_id=7&press_id=1951.

³⁸ Norman Bowen writes that Sarkozy's European wide industrial planning looks very much like a kind of Euro-Gaullism (2007, 8). The author of this paper disagrees unless Bowen refers to de Gaulle's vision of France as a 'grande nation' that projects her vision onto the European scene. However, de Gaulle's vision of French economic modernization was linked to the national level not to the European one.

for protecting European/French industry. Large agricultural countries outside EU must follow the same rules as European agriculture. They must meet the conditions for food security and improved environment. Sarkozy has stated that it *'cannot be tolerated that farmers suffer environmental and social dumping, and tax and exchange dumping; a limit must therefore be set for 'dumping' of food products. This limit shall be set through WTO negotiations. We demand reciprocity and balance in the discussions at the WTO'*.³⁹

With regard to the financial crisis which was one of the dramatic issues during the French presidency, Sarkozy compared already in 2007 the global financial speculators with predators that prevent healthy production of consumer goods (Sarkozy *Ensemble* 2007, 94). Sarkozy's representation of the speculators as predators allows of a dehumanisation of the speculators towards whom the EU has to react firmly in order to humanize the predator animals. The representation of the speculators as predators turns the crisis into a question of security because something extraordinary has to be done in order to 'pacify' the predators. It becomes a question of survival of the EU/France. The means to pacify – according to Sarkozy – is a strong state-like EU intervention that prevents the EU-member states from being 'devoured' by the predators.

The idea of political and economic state intervention is grounded in the French political culture that is marked by a strong state-policy that shall ensure that no particular interest disturbs the nation-state. This goes also for Sarkozy's conceptualization of the EU regardless whether he wishes less state on the national state's territory. One might even say

³⁹ *The future of agriculture – Speech by M. Nicolas Sarkozy, president of the Republic (excerpts)* Daumeray, 19 February 2009. www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-Sarkozy-s-speech-on-The.html

that the less 'state-roof' on the national territory, the more state-intervention at the EU-level in order to compensate for reduction of the national state. EU shall thus multiply the economic and political power that France lacks. Hence, the Mitterrand wording *the more Europe the more France* applies also to Sarkozy's European vision with regard to economics, industry and finance.⁴⁰

A STATE-LIKE EU HAS TO HAVE BORDERS

It is a commonly known secret that France has not been a warm supporter of EC/EU expansions. If expansion cannot be avoided, it should only happen after the empowering of the EU that ensures the EU as a visible and active actor. However, suddenly in autumn 2007, Sarkozy announced that France would no longer oppose expansion that included the Balkan countries. Jean-Pierre Jouyet, the then minister of European Affairs, declared in January 2008 that *'(t)he Sarkozy government had ditched its longstanding scepticism about enlargement and now saw a bigger EU as a stronger force in the world. And therefore would push for the eventual integration of the Balkan countries, including Serbia'*.⁴¹

⁴⁰ The new French party entitled *Debout la République* (DLR), established in Mars 2009 by a Gaullist deputy Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, argues that Sarkozy has given in to 'supra-national integration' instead of sticking to the 'true' Gaullist concept of 'a Europe of the States' (see chapter: Europe of the States). The party goes for suppression of the supra-national EU-Commission. However, DLR got only 1.77 per cent at the European election in June 2009⁴⁰. Two other 'sovereignist' parties; *Libertas* and *Mouvement pour la France* are both against more integration. They even want to unravel the hitherto institutional set-up in order to safeguard the French national sovereignty. At the European elections June 2009 they got about 7 percent.

⁴¹ 'France to press for EU enlargement – Europe Minister Jouyet', *AFP* 8 January 2008. Jouyet, Jean-Francois (2008): *L'Europe élargie est une chance*. 5 January. www.jpjouyet.eu/?post/2008/01/05/LEurope-elargie-est-une-chance.

This announcement was apparently a ‘break’ with Mitterrand’s state-like Europe. It goes against the conceptualization of a core of power that is not to be easily accessible to other countries. Other countries cannot sneak in through the back door, economically or politically. Access to the club is only granted if the power of the centre is not at risk of being blurred. The EU thus forms a core with clearly drawn frontiers and lines of demarcation in order to sustain its role as a high-profile actor.

Sarkozy’s apparent break with former policy was made possible because of the Lisbon Treaty that ensures stronger executive power. But as long as the Lisbon Treaty has not been ratified by all member states, Sarkozy opposes further enlargement: *‘If we stick to Nice, it’s the Europe of the 27. If we want enlargement – I do -, we need new institutions before enlarging. It’s Lisbon and enlargement ... It is matter of consistency, honesty and logic. So when it comes to Croatia, we have to continue the negotiations.’*^{42, 43} The ‘break’ is thus not a break with the past. Deepening before further enlargement is perceived as a condition sine qua non. The Lisbon Treaty is a must. Sarkozy’s declaration is thus a continuation of the conceptualization of a core-power to which new countries only can be added if the core is strengthened beforehand.

A border has to be created to Turkey, which Sarkozy, and with him a large percentage of the French population, do not recognize as European. However, Sarkozy had to make a compromise when he became French presi-

dent. He agreed to continue EU negotiations with Turkey, and on 27 June 2008 the French Congress (the National Assembly and the Senate) voted to soften a constitutional requirement from 2005 to hold a popular vote before a new country can enter the EU.⁴⁴ An amendment was added to the French Constitution just before the referendum on the Constitutional Treaty in May 2005. The amendment of 2005 stipulated that a referendum had to be held prior to a country’s EU accession if the country represents more than 5 per cent of the overall EU population. The new 2008 amendment of the 2005 amendment requires an endorsement by referendum of any European proposals to accept new countries into the European Union. However, the president can propose a waiver of this provision. Thus, the solution of the ‘Turkish problem’ is up to the French president to solve according to the political situation in EU/Europe and internally in France.

Even if Sarkozy made a compromise with regard to French attitude to Turkey before the French EU-presidency, he tried to push through that EU should establish a so-called ‘group of sages’ that should make *proposals* for EU’s future borders and how to develop EU institutions; but also in this case, Sarkozy had to make a compromise. It was decided to set up a ‘the reflection group’ which only is to *discuss* all possible issues, such as climate, terror, immigration, and international criminality, as well as a European social and economic model.

The question about the entry of Turkey has provoked a heated discussion about where Europe ends and what kind of European message France communicates in relationship to its concepts of nation-state

⁴² Speech by M. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the Republic, before the European Parliament, 10 July 2008. www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-Sarkozy-addresses,10892.html?var_recherc...

⁴³ Conférence de presse de M. Nicolas Sarkozy Président de la République lors du Conseil européen de Bruxelles, 20 juin 2008. www.elysee.fr/download/?mode=press&filename=conference_de_presse_ouverture20.06.pdf.

⁴⁴ The constitutional requirement was stipulated few months before the referendum

and fatherland. In principle, the idea of the political nation does not operate with borders defined by religious, cultural or ethnic criteria. That is to say, Turkey should not be excluded from being a member of the European club because of its Muslim identity. It has a 'vocation européenne' as de Gaulle put in 1963, a year after Turkey sought membership. Chirac – in line with de Gaulle – referred several times to Turkey's 'European vocation'. *The National Front* on the extreme right and the conservative *Movement for France* but also a big part of the Gaullist party UMP argued against the entry of a big Muslim country. Chirac was therefore forced to moderate his argumentation for Turkish EU-membership. However, Chirac never used cultural or religious argument in the attempt at excluding Turkey.

Contrary to Chirac, Sarkozy uses cultural and religious argumentation in order to keep Turkey outside the EU. Sarkozy writes in his book *Testimony: '(e)ntry of a country, whose 98% land is outside European continent, who will be the most populous country of the Union in the coming 20 years, and moreover whose culture mainly carries several aspects of Islam into the EU, will create an overall transformation within the EU, thus will weaken the initial idea of the founding fathers of the EU in terms of a political union eventually leading to a chaos.'* (quoted in Lagro 2008, 72) Sarkozy's use of cultural and religious exclusion criterion is thus legitimized by reference to the necessity of saving the EU as a political project. 'Saving' Europe from being a cultural and Muslim entity allows of affiliation of the extreme right and the right to Sarkozy's policy.

The use of religion and culture as a mechanism of exclusion points to the importance of the concept of fatherland. In the discourse of the extreme right and in parts of the right, the concept of fatherland

is decoupled from the concept of the political nation-state when it comes to Turkish (non)membership.⁴⁵ The concept of the political nation disappears to the benefit of fatherland, which is emotionally related to the past, the memory, cultural roots and heritage. This is a heresy with regard to the conceptualization of the French state-nation. It is a heresy that becomes still more 'normal', the more Islam is represented as a threat to France/Europe/the EU. This turning upside down the relationship between the concept of nation-state and fatherland is a 'break'. It is not Sarkozy that has introduced this 'break'. It has since mid-1990s come slowly to the political fore where it competes with the 'normal' relation between the concept of the political nation-state and fatherland where fatherland is hold at check by the concept of the political nation-state. This 'break' points to a profound French domestic identity crisis that has a huge impact on who is included and who will be excluded from the EU-club.

The 'break' has a certain impact on the future of the concept of 'a strong state-like Europe'. This concept has become still more challenged by the Gaullist concept of 'a Europe of the States'. The combination of fear of 'the other' and the transfer of more sovereignty to the EU in case of the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty opens up for the competing discourse on a 'a Europe of the States'.

⁴⁵ Since 1998 France has tried to find a solution to Turkish request for EU-membership. In order to keep Turkey half in and half out, France launched in 1997 the idea of 'the European conference' where all the potential members of the EU should 'train themselves' in becoming EU-members. This idea was rejected by Turkey. In 2003 the French government declared that Turkey should be treated as 'a privileged partner' as the southern Mediterranean states. Turkey rejected this idea. The last French proposal includes Turkey in Sarkozy's project of a *Mediterranean Union* which caused anger in Ankara.

A EUROPE OF THE STATES: THE GREAT POWER GAME

The Franco-German axis should be expanded to comprise the EU, Italy, Benelux, Spain and Poland ... These countries constitute about 75% of the European population. They make up a big and therefore important group, and France has to be aware that coordination and cooperation between the big countries shall be a model for other EU-member states. (Sarkozy quoted by Brückner, Glücksmann, Prazan, Reza 2006)

The concept of a Mitterrand 'state-like Europe' competes in Sarkozy's speeches with the Gaullist concept of 'a Europe of the States'.⁴⁶ This concept is linked to the vision of the strong states' 'playing in concert' at the regional and the global level. To a certain extent Sarkozy expressed this vision in his speech to the French ambassadors on 27 August 2008: *'France should be the avant-garde in the European project, just as France should remain a power that plays a role on the world scene.'*

France as an avantgarde state-nation is an inherent feature of the vision of herself. It is a permanent goal in French European and foreign policy. However it makes a difference whether this concept of avant-garde is linked to a concept of 'a Gaullist Europe of the States' or to 'a state-like Europe'. The concept of 'a Europe of the States' operates with a concept of Europe that lies outside the French state-nation. The French state-nation acts *out* in Europe. Thus a line of demarcation is constructed between the territorial border and the EU/Europe, which is considered an arena for French diplomatic manoeuvres characterized by shifting alliances, by balance

⁴⁶ See for a discussion of the content of the concept 'Europe des États' in Maillard, Pierre (1995), 192-233.

of power. The concept is shared by the extreme right, the communists, the extreme left and part of the Gaullists.

Especially small and new EU member states fear the Gaullist European conceptualization and this fear was visible when Sarkozy came to power in 2007. In the capitals the political leaders asked whether Sarkozy's vision was the Gaullist concept of 'a Europe of the States'. They put this question because Sarkozy's European visions pointed to the construction of a *directoire* of the big EU-member states who decide amongst themselves how to construct the future of Europe.

This fear of a Metternich-Europe was also present in the EU during Jacques Chirac's presidency (1995-2007). Chirac assumed to a certain extent the concept of 'a Europe of the States' in his speech in June 2000 in Germany when pleaded a 'pioneer group'. The concept of 'pioneer groups' made some researchers talk about the danger of the emergence of a *directoire* of France, the UK and Germany (Stark 2002). Even Metternich, the architect of the outcome of the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815), was used in order to warn against the return of the alliances of the past, of a Europe of the States. 'Metternich-Europe' was seen as a replacement of 'the Monnet-Europe' (Stark 2002).

The spectre of Metternich still haunts Europe, and France is very often subject to suspiciousness with regard to being a promoter of Metternich policy. Sarkozy has added fuel to these flames. In an interview with four famous French intellectuals 2006 Sarkozy declared that the Franco-German axis was not strong enough to re-launch the European vision. Sarkozy therefore suggested that *'the axis should be expanded to comprise the EU, Italy, Benelux, Spain and Poland. — These countries constitute about 75% of the European population. They make up a big and therefore important group, and*

France has to be aware that coordination and cooperation between the big countries shall be a model for other EU-member states' (Brückner, Glücksmann, Prazan, Reza 2006). The same year, in a speech to the think-tank *Les amis de l'Europe*, Sarkozy tried to legitimize this statement by explaining that his suggestion was caused by the new EU-member states' fear of a Franco-German directorate (Sarkozy, 2006).⁴⁷ Sarkozy said on the same occasion that 'the EU has to be based on a new and more flexible model. Ad-hoc groups of member states (those who are most affected by particular issues) should hold informal meetings to prepare for debates on Europe's major decision such as illegal immigration, the Middle East crisis and terrorism'. It was an ambiguous message. Sarkozy did not clarify who should be the members of the proposed ad-hoc groups. Was it ad-hoc, pragmatic co-operation to integrate more closely in a particular policy area – in 'a coalition of the willing' (Král 2008) – that excludes the 'unwilling' and thereby creates a multi-speed EU where 'the coalition of the willing' constitutes in reality the 'core-Europe'? Or was it a means to strengthen the whole EU-structure?⁴⁸ This was not evident

⁴⁷ Speech by Sarkozy 8 September 2006. Bibliothèque Sovay, Brussels. Organized by *Les amis de l'Europe* and *La Fondation Robert Schuman*.

⁴⁸ The researchers Martin Koopman and Jochim Schild go so far as to writing that Sarkozy has never hidden his preference for an intergovernmental (a Europe of the States) approach established on the cooperation between the big G6. According to these two researcher Sarkozy has manifested an evident preference for the European Council and disrespect of the EU-Commission (Koopman, Schild 2009, 2). This was however also the case for former French president. They agreed on a strong Europe but when they had to design the concrete form of the EU-institutions they preferred the Council of Ministers and the European Council to the Commission and to the Parliament. However, Sarkozy told the French Ambassadors 26 August 2009 that he 'would like to draw the lessons of his experience (during the French EU-Presidency) and that he had sought to act collectively, working closely with the Commission and the European parliament while listening attentively to each member state (<http://www.franceonu.org/spip.php?article4127>). Sarkozy thereby admits that this was not always the case during the French EU-Presidency.

at all as it was not the case with regard to Chirac's suggestion of 'pioneer groups'.

The will to big power design – to 'a Europe of the States' – marked Sarkozy's launch of the idea of a *Mediterranean Union* comprising the southern European countries and the southern Mediterranean countries.⁴⁹ Sarkozy presented the Mediterranean Union as a 'grand design for civilization' (Sarkozy, 2008).⁵⁰ Thereby Sarkozy linked up to the French vision of being a big civilizational power that takes initiative in the name of her 'exceptionalism'.

The idea was not well received in Europe, because it excluded the EU as an actor. It was considered to be an expression of typical French quest for being *the* European actor that conducts policy on behalf of all other EU-members. Angela Merkel signalled thumbs down, and in March 2008 France had to accept the German demand that a *Mediterranean Union* should be a joint European project that was not separated from the Barcelona process, which had been initiated in 1995 between EU, Arab countries in the southern Mediterranean, and Israel. The *Mediterranean Union* was thus rechristened as the *Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean*.

It is not at all sure that Sarkozy gives up the idea of a concert of big states, of so-called ad hoc pragmatic groups. The use of the concept of an EU of ad-hoc pragmatic groups prevents Sarkozy from speaking of the institutionalization of the flexible and pragmatic EU. The advantage – seen from a French political point of view – is that

⁴⁹ Sarkozy suggested that Turkey should participate in the *Mediterranean Union*.

⁵⁰ New Years greetings to the diplomatic corps – speech by M. Nicolas Sarkozy President of the Republic, 18 January 2008. www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-Sarkozy-s-New-Year,10186.html.

this concept balances between a concept of ‘a Europe of the states’ and ‘a state-like Europe’. On the one hand, it might be interpreted as a loose structure that allows for the willing states to take initiatives. On the other hand it might be interpreted as the will of some states to press forward EU-integration in some important areas in order to create a strong Europe – ‘a state-like Europe’.

A concert of the big states that connotes the Gaullist concept of ‘a Europe of the States’ creates fear amongst the EU member states because of the big states’ will to power at the expense of other member-states’ vision of Europe and themselves as specific nation-states. This fear was fuelled by a speech just after the EU-summit in December 2008. Sarkozy declared that *‘it is up to the big countries to take initiatives. They have no more rights than other EU-countries but they have more responsibility’*.⁵¹ Sarkozy went on in a speech January 2009 to a conference entitled *Nouveau monde, nouveau capitalisme* (a new world, a new capitalism) by declaring that *‘he expected great things from the so-called old Europe and that with Italy, Spain, the UK and of course Germany he would carry on talks about the future of the EU’*.⁵²

The Gaullist concept of ‘a Europe of the states’ that represents a strong France acting in a strong Europe is on Sarkozy’s political table. The question is whether this concept is going to overrule the concept of ‘a state-like Europe’. For the time being, they compete just as they did during Chirac’s presidencies (Holm 2008).

⁵¹ “UE: Sarkozy consacre les grands” in *Libération* 17 2008.

⁵² Discours de M. le Président de la République. Colloque “Nouveau monde, nouveau capitalisme”. Paris – École militaire – Jeudi 8 janvier 2009.

RE-ENTRY IN NATO’S MILITARY INTEGRATED STRUCTURE: A SYMBOLIC BREAK WITH THE PAST

‘To address the external threats we need three things: strong diplomacy, strong defence and a strong Europe’ (Sarkozy 2009, 2)

In his speech to the French Ambassadors 28 August 2008, Sarkozy underlined that a break was necessary as for the hitherto French relationship to the US and NATO.⁵³ This announcement caused an outcry from intellectuals, some Gaullist politicians and especially socialist politicians. They accused Sarkozy of betraying Gaullism, ‘Mitterrandism’ and ‘Chiraquism’. Their concern did not deal very much with the concrete military re-entry in NATO’s military integrated structure but with the political outcome of this re-entry. They charged Sarkozy with Atlanticism, ‘Occidentalism’ ‘Americanism’ and as a consequence hereof with abandoning of French foreign policy role as a mediator and bridge builder – especially between Israel and the Arab countries. Sarkozy’s underlining of the French position inside the Western family⁵⁴ made former socialist foreign minister and the very influential debater on foreign politics Hubert Védrine rush into print. Védrine warned especially against Sarkozy’s Atlanticism. In an interview February 2008 to the French weekly *Marianne*, Védrine declared that *‘In a great part of the right, and a small part of*

⁵³ He also mentioned the break with the hitherto European and African policy and the lack of export of human rights in foreign policy. Sarkozy has been very much criticized for his paternalistic attitude to Africans whom he in a speech qualify as children who have to be educated by the ‘the West/France’. The paper does not deal with the ‘new’ African policy.

⁵⁴ Discours de M. le Président de la République. XVI Conférence des ambassadeurs. Palais de l’Élysée – 27 August 2008.

the left, there is a scent of a return to old-fashioned Atlanticism. There exists almost no Gaullism in the French right and certain people, on the left, want to liberate themselves from a foreign policy à la de Gaulle-Mitterrand-Chirac' ... 'French occidentalisation would result in French subjection to the US and thereby prevent France from cultivating its traditional good relations with the Arab nation – states and from creating a multipolar system.' (Védrine quoted by Van Herpen, 2009)

This attack was followed up by another socialist. In an article in *Le Monde*, Ségolène Royal, presidential candidate for the Socialist Party in 2007, attacked Sarkozy for his 'Westernization' of France: 'France sends a signal to return to the fold of the West'. She would have preferred France to remain a 'bridge' between East and West and North and South because 'the world needs countries that play the role of mediator'⁵⁵ Opponents in Sarkozy's own Gaullist party UMP joined the debate. For example a UMP deputy, N. Dupont-Aignan, the leader of the new party *Debout la France* (DLR) accused Sarkozy in *Le Monde* of being 'a part of the Right that is ferociously Atlanticist and profoundly alienated from the deep sentiments of the French people to whom Charles de Gaulle had rendered its dignity'.⁵⁶

Sarkozy counterattacked the opposition by using de Gaulle's definition of who the friends of France are. Sarkozy declared that he was in line with de Gaulle's announcement from 1966 – the year the year France withdrew from NATO's military integrated structure: 'NATO is the alliance of the free peoples of the West.' (Sarkozy 11 March, 2009)⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *Le Monde* 17 February 2009.

⁵⁶ *Le Monde* 21 February 2009.

⁵⁷ Closing speech by Nicolas Sarkozy at the 'conference on France, European defence and NATO in the twenty-first century', 11 March 2009. www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-sarkozy-on-france.html.

At the time of de Gaulle, the concept of 'the West' referred to the ideological division between the West and the East. In Sarkozy's discourse the opposition to the 'West' is implicitly the 'rest' which embraces all states that are subject to, especially religious, fanaticism (read: Islamism) which according to Sarkozy is the root cause of conflict.⁵⁸ This implicit reference to 'the rest' does not have any calming effect. On the contrary: It demonstrates to the opposition that Sarkozy has no intention of playing a mediating role between the Arab countries and Israel even if Sarkozy tries to make France play an important role in the Middle East by inaugurating an active diplomacy towards for example Syria and by condemning Israeli attacks in Gaza December 2008 and January 2009.

Another means to convince the opposition of his 'non-Westernization' is to use yet another Gaullist declaration. In his speech to the Ambassadors 2007, Sarkozy declared that 'Although France is USA's ally, it is not automatically aligned behind American foreign policy'.⁵⁹ This statement is a direct taking over of de Gaulle's dictum (Bertrand 2004) which former minister of foreign affairs Hubert Védrine also used. As a concrete example of French political independence of the USA's decision Sarkozy pointed to the fact that both France and Germany had said no to the US' request to Georgia's and Ukraine's entry into NATO.

In this speech and in other speeches Sarkozy underlines that French relationship to the US will not change: 'I am a friend of USA; but I want EU to have an independent defence, for if we are not able to defend ourselves, then we are

⁵⁸ Sarkozy's speech to the European Parliament 13 November 2007.

⁵⁹ <http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-Sarkozy-s-speech.html>.

*not able to defend our independence.*⁶⁰ In line with de Gaulle, Sarkozy establishes a direct link between the US/NATO to the necessity of the construction of ‘a European Europe of independent defence’. Furthermore Sarkozy refers implicitly to Mitterrand’s concept of a Europe of defence. Mitterrand used the expression ‘l’Europe de l’indépendance nationale’ (Europe of national independence)⁶¹, which is an expansion of the national independent defence lifted up to the European level. In this conceptualization France remains the same but bigger thanks to the French/European defence. This is a logical construction with regard to the conceptualization of Mitterrand’s ‘state-like Europe’. It signals the conceptualization of the EU as ‘une Europe démultiplicateur’ (a multiplier of French power)⁶² as a big military power. This representation of France and the EU points to the conceptualization of the EU as ‘Mars’ and not as ‘Venus’ (Kagan 2004). The EU has not to shy away from using military means⁶³, or in Sarkozy’s wording: ‘Europe is not a huge Red Cross! It must be capable of acting militarily to defend its interests or simply peace.’⁶⁴

Sarkozy uses yet another argument that apparently has nothing to do with neither the

policy of de Gaulle, Mitterrand or Chirac. The argument is instrumental with regard to the increasing influence France will have being in NATO’s military integrated structure: ‘If France shoulders all her responsibilities in NATO, Europe will have more influence in NATO. And so NATO will not be an exclusively US-dominated organization.’⁶⁵ The message is thus: the more France in NATO the more European defence identity.⁶⁶ Furthermore this legitimization points to the relationship to the US – how France still has the right and possibility to keep up a certain distance to the US and even to be an equal partner via the EU as a military actor.

Sarkozy’s final argument against the French opposition is that he is the only president that dares to tell the truth, that France has de facto contributed to NATO’s military operations by participating in NATO’s rapid reaction forces. In a speech March 2009 to a conference entitled *France, European defence and NATO in the twenty-first century*, Sarkozy declared: ‘(If this choice (of re-integration in the integrated military command of NATO) is a break with the past, it isn’t so much as regards its substance, which is the result of a long maturation process. It’s as regards the method.’⁶⁷

This announcement turns Sarkozy’s narrative of the necessity of ‘break’ upside down. In other speeches ‘break’ is represented as something new in relation to past policies. In this speech, the presence and the future are represented as identical to the past. Presence and future are a prolongation of the past which has up to now been hidden to

⁶⁰ Sarkozy’s speech to the Gaullist party UMP, 12 January 2008. http://www.u-m-p.org/site/index.php/s_informer/discours/discours_de_nicolas_sarkozy_conseil_national_de_l_ump_12_janvier_2008.

⁶¹ Mitterrand, Francois: “lettre à tous les Français” in *Le Monde*, 8 April, 1988.

⁶² The term ‘démultiplicateur’ has for example been coined by former right wing Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dominique de Villepin in his book *Un autre monde* (2004) by Chirac in his speech to the French Ambassadors 29-31 August 2005 and Sarkozy has often used this term for example in an interview with the Italian newspaper *La Stampa*, 24 February 2009.

⁶³ Robert Kagan has used the metaphor of ‘Venus’ as a representation of the European civilian power and ‘Mars’ as the American military power.

⁶⁴ Speech to the Ambassadors, 26 August 2009.

⁶⁵ Opus. cit.

⁶⁶ Kaiser, Karl and Moisi, Dominique (2009): “Europe needs a stronger France inside NATO”, *Financial Times* 25 February.

⁶⁷ Closing speech by Nicolas Sarkozy at the ‘conference on France, European defence and NATO in the twenty-first century’, 11 March 2009. www.ambafrance-uk.org/President-sarkozy-on-france.html.

the public. At the political level, this linkage between past, presence and future serves the purpose of convincing the opposition to agree with the decision of the re-entry because it has already happened to a large extent. Sarkozy thus states that he does not betray neither de Gaulle, nor Mitterrand or Chirac. It is the opposition that is a carrier of a myth.

In spite of following both de Gaulle's and Mitterrand's 'routes' of representation of the wanted relationship between France and Europe and France-NATO, Sarkozy was not at all sure of the outcome of the debate on the re-entry in the National Assembly (the Congress) March 2009. Therefore the French Council of Ministers authorized the Prime Minister, Francois Fillon, to make the vote of confidence on the whole French foreign policy 11 March 2009. The decision on the re-entry was thus wrapped into the whole French foreign policy. This meant that there was no possibility of going against the re-entry and France re-entered NATO's military integrated structure at the NATO summit meeting in April 2009.

French re-entry marked a break at the day-to-day level of policy. It did not mark a break with the conceptualization of the relationship between NATO and a 'European Europe of defence'. It did neither indicate an abandon of the Gaullist dictum: France is an allied but not automatically allied with the US. Thus, if the French re-entry appears to turn into automatic alliance with the US in all kinds of conflicts around the world, many French intellectuals and politicians will react vehemently.

CONCLUSION

We have argued that Sarkozy has not changed 'the deep structure' of French national identity which frames the European and foreign policy. Concepts as 'Europe of the states', a 'state-like Europe', multipolarity, a 'European Europe' and France as a visible actor at the regional and the international level constitute French regional and international vista. These concepts are a set of 'preconditions for action at a specific time and in a specific place that may exist in more or less explicit and systematized form and that is actualized in practices' (see Neumann, Heikka. 2005, 14).⁶⁸ With Koselleck, we have argued that concepts frame the present space of meaning including the present horizon of the future, making actions possible. The French recurrent concepts are past concepts that still function as a frame of present and future action. However, these concepts 'say' nothing about which kind of policy to pursue. They frame the 'route' of policy, but they do not dictate policy. At the day-to-day level of tactical policy there are many policies available to Sarkozy as long as he does not replace the set of concepts which have hitherto made sense at the domestic arena by a completely new set of concepts. If the politicians all of sudden stop talking about multipolarity and 'a European Europe', France become a quite new France. This complete change is hardly perceivable.

Concepts are however characterized by an inherent ambiguity. Their meaning is there-

⁶⁸ Neuman and Heikka discuss how strategic culture as a discourse might be seen as a dynamic interplay between grand strategy, which is understood as a system for formation of statements and the practices of doctrines, civil-military relations and procurement (Neumann, Heikka 2005, 17). We argue that this discussion is transferable to the understanding of the relationship between the concepts of deep structure' and strategic and tactical policy.

fore only partially fixed. An important event as for example French re-entry in NATO's integrated structure triggered off heated discursive struggles with regard to the concept of Atlanticism and France as a bridge builder between the Arab countries and Israel. These concepts have been created over time as counter-concepts to Gaullism and thereby to multipolarity and a 'European Europe'. These counter-concepts might however lose their meaning as counter-concepts if Sarkozy and with him the Gaullist party succeeds in pursuing a policy towards the US that is not an automatic policy of alliance. If the concept of Atlanticism loses its meaning or even disappears as a counter-concept to multipolarity, the relationship to the US will change. On the other hand, the disappearance of Atlanticism not only depends on the domestic discourse on French foreign policy identity. It is highly related to how the US perceive international politics.

The chain of sub-concepts that stabilize the meaning of a 'European Europe' has up to now been constituted by a 'Europe of the states' and a 'state-like Europe'. The two concepts have been competing for dominance ever since the constitution of the EC. Since the crumbling of the wall in 1989 they have been challenged by a concept of a 'decentralized federal Europe'. For those political parties who are carriers of either a 'state-like Europe' or a 'Europe of the states', a 'decentralized federal Europe' is perceived as a counter-concept that has to be eradicated. If the latter concept is going to gain ground in France it is a break with the hitherto conceptualization of both France and the relationship between France and Europe.

The conceptual analysis cannot say anything about the concrete form of French future European and foreign policy. But it can say something about whether shifts of con-

cepts, sub-concepts and counter-concepts are taking place and how these shifts influence the political elite's perception of French European and foreign policy.

We have argued in the paper that Sarkozy does not represent any break with regard to past concepts. Does Sarkozysm exist as a concept? Yes it does. This concept is defined by a high degree of ambiguity because Sarkozy is a carrier of a 'Europe of the states, of a 'state-like Europe' and influenced by a concept of a decentralized France with more space for religion and ethnicity. Furthermore Sarkozy is a carrier of the concept of multipolarity but at the same time he uses the concept of 'relative power' which clashes with the concept of multipolarity by being defined as 'heterogeneity which manifests itself in the powerlessness of the relative power'.

Sarkozysm is about an *amalgam* of discourses and concepts that hitherto have been on the French political hand. Being carrier of mutual excluding concepts and discourses demonstrates the increasing crisis of French identity with regard to national, European and foreign policy identity. Sarkozy's permanent speed and initiatives at the day-to-day level testifies to the difficulties in handling the amalgam Sarkozysm.

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