SECURITY, DEFENSE DISCOURSE AND IDENTITY IN NATO AND EUROPE
HOW FRANCE CHANGED FOREIGN POLICY

Falk Ostermann
Analyzing changes in the role and place of NATO, European integration, and Franco-American relations in foreign policy discourse under Presidents Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy, this book provides an original perspective on French foreign policy and its identity construction.

The book employs a novel research design for the analysis of foreign policies, which can be used beyond the case of France, by combining the discourse theory of the Essex School with Interpretive Policy Analysis to examine political ideas and how they are organized into a foreign policy identity. On these grounds, the volume undertakes a comparative analysis of parliamentary and executive discourse of President Chirac’s failed attempt at NATO reintegration in the 1990s, Sarkozy’s successful attempt in the 2000s, and the Libyan War. Ostermann depicts French foreign policy and identity as turning away from the European Union, atlanticizing, and losing its American nemesis. As a result, France uses a much more pragmatic, de-unionized, and pro-American strategy to implement foreign policy objectives than before.

Offering a new and innovative explanation for a major change in French foreign policy and grand strategy, this book will be of great interest to scholars of NATO, European defense cooperation, and foreign policy.

Falk Ostermann is Assistant Professor of International Relations at the University of Giessen, Germany. He specializes in French security and defense policy and studies NATO, European defense, identity, and discourse analysis. He has published, inter alia, in European Security, International Relations, and West European Politics.
The field of international relations has changed dramatically in recent years. This new series will cover the major issues that have emerged and reflect the latest academic thinking in this particular dynamic area.

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Security, Defense Discourse and Identity in NATO and Europe
How France Changed Foreign Policy

Falk Ostermann
To Dietlind, Helmut, and Katharina
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One strain of the New International Relations that emerged as the Cold War was coming to an end focused on complementing the until then thoroughly rationalist study of foreign policy with more social and ideational approaches. Besides Foreign Policy Analysis and Comparative Foreign Policy there began to appear a sidestream that looked at how American Foreign Policy could be understood as a boundary-making practice (David Campbell) and how the foreign policies of European states toward one another could be understood as identity-driven, so that a particular state would pursue an EU policy that was based on writing their own state’s constitution into the emergent fabric of the Union (Ole Wæver). This way of analysing foreign policy quickly spread, first to Russia and Turkey, and then to the study of Asian states and beyond. Up until now, however, the case of France has been underrepresented in this literature.

Falk Ostermann’s present book takes care of that. He focuses on France’s NATO policy, but given that this policy has always been balanced and tempered by France’s EU and global policies, the result is an analysis that holds direct interest beyond Security Studies and the study of international organizations.

The basic timeline is this: Whereas France was a founding member of NATO in 1949, President de Gaulle took France out of NATO’s integrated military structure in 1966, remaining an ambivalent member ever since. In 1997, President Chirac tried to rejoin the military structures, but the stiffness of French discourse and political institutions, as well as the priority given to the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), proved definite limits to how far this reintegration can go. In 2007, against resistance from a united left, President Sarkozy mustered the discursive and practical resources needed to ram through the reintegration.

Ostermann’s basic contribution in this volume is to demonstrate how this happened. Where others have speculated about beliefs, motives, and political tactics, he has chosen to establish two sets of textual corpuses, consisting of parliamentary and presidential documents. This allows him to trace how the changes have been wrought, as well as how and when change-resisting utterances have carried the day. The basic analytical take is to focus on how frames, narratives, and metaphors are used to equalize certain phenomena, with what effects, and how to combine these observations into a coherent explanatory framework,
where the Essex School comes in. A key example concerns how Chirac was able to propose French reintegration with NATO by seizing the post-Cold War opportunity of changing global politics, but finally failing – with some help from the U.S. – to equalize these changes with a primarily European foreign, security, and defense identity construction, leading to an abandonment of transatlantic and Franco-American rapprochement.

Sarkozy though was able to nudge discourse in the direction of French reintegration with NATO by equalizing the phenomena of ‘family’ and ‘the West’. Ostermann sees this as the decisive move that opened the discursive field to reintegration. The key move that sealed the reintegration he finds in Sarkozy’s insistence that the way to strengthen the CSDP was to see it not as an alternative to NATO, but as a European spin-off of reintegration with NATO. In the third main empirical chapter of the book, Ostermann goes on to demonstrate how French 2011 participation in the Libya campaign naturalized the reintegration but blew up the European identity constructions, particularly with regard to the EU. Change in warmaking practices and change in security discourse went hand in hand and constituted each other reciprocally.

Ostermann’s book is a welcome addition to the study of foreign policy, and, we hope, a further building block for those who want to theorize EU and NATO policies in terms of how clashing identity-driven member policies shape these institutions.

Iver B. Neumann
This book is based on research that I have conducted for my doctoral dissertation while staying at the VU University Amsterdam’s Department of Political Science and Public Administration. A large part of this research was conducted on a grant from the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES), which offered generous funds and opportunities for conference trips. Ursula Bitzegeio, Julia Vater, and Simone Stöhr were easily accessible for all kinds of support at the FES. I am also grateful for additional support from the Graduate Fund of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the VU. I owe my thanks to Rainer Baumann, Ben Crum, Marieke de Goede, David Howarth, Patrick T. Jackson, and Wouter Werner for taking over the task of reading my long manuscript extensively, providing great comments, and being members of my reading/defense committee.

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Finally, I would not have been able to write this book without the continuous support of some longtime mentors, friends, and family. Academically, before Wolfgang Wagner took over as PhD supervisor, Hans-Friedrich Knorr, Thomas Ziehe, Wolfgang Gabbert, Hans Sanders, Ekkehart Drost, Peter Fricke, Hinrich Lange, and Andreas Oppermann have provided the intellectual and practical foundations for this work. My oldest friend, Nora Janina Scholz, her husband Andreas and their children Jan David and Laura Marie kept me motivated to work and distracted me when necessary. Similarly, Andrej Fedchyshyn, André Rischmann, Marc Rudloff, Sven Schröder, Moritz Specht, and Astrid and Hans Schück have faithfully stood by my side. The love and support of my parents, Dietlind and Helmut Ostermann, has always been unconditional and exceptional. They did not only categorically back the ways of their son into a science and a world that was so much different from their own, but even encouraged me to proceed when I was not sure myself where I was going. You taught me dedication, perseverance, solidarity, the interest in other cultures, and so much more… At the end of these acknowledgments, I must extend my thanks to my partner, Katharina Monaco, and her parents, Marita and Franco. You, Katharina,
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Abbreviations

French parties

AC       Alliance centriste (center-right, liberal)
EELV     Europe Ecologie-Les Verts (green)
FN       Front national (radical-right)
LGM      La Gauche Moderne (center-left)
MC       Mouvement des citoyens (left, precursor of later MRC)
MoDem    Mouvement démocrate (center, liberal)
MPF      Mouvement pour la France (right-sovereignist party)
MRC      Mouvement républicain et citoyen (left)
MUP      Mouvement unitaire progressiste (left)
NC       Nouveau centre (center-right, liberal)
PCF      Parti communiste français (radical-left)
PG       Parti de gauche (Mélenchon, radical-left)
PR       Parti radical (center-right)
PRG      Parti radical de gauche (center-left)
PS       Parti socialiste (center-left)
RPR      Rassemblement pour la France
          (conservative, migrating to UMP in 2002 and Les Républicains in 2015)
UDF      Union pour la démocratie française (center-right, liberal)
UDI      Union des démocrates et indépendants (center-right, liberal)
UMP      Union pour un mouvement populaire (center-right, conservative)

Executive functions

Coop     Assistant Minister for Cooperation (partially also with Franco-
          phonie portfolio)
EcoF     Minister of the Economy and Finances (partially also with
          industry portfolio)
EurA     Assistant Minister of European Affairs
FgAff    Minister of Foreign Affairs
MoD      Minister of Defense
PM       Prime Minister
### Abbreviations

**Organizations, policies, and other abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Allied Command Transformation, Norfolk, Virginia, USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFSOUTH</td>
<td>Allied Forces Southern Europe (today Joint Forces Command), Naples (NATO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>Critical Discourse Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFSP</td>
<td>Common Foreign and Security Policy (EU)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CJTF</td>
<td>Combined Joint Task Forces (NATO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNT</td>
<td>Comité national de transition (Libyan interim governing committee)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSDP</td>
<td>Common Security and Defence Policy (EU)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFC</td>
<td>Defense Planning Committee (NATO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSACEUR</td>
<td>Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (NATO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>European Communities (precursor to the EU)</td>
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<td>EDA</td>
<td>European Defence Agency (EU)</td>
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<td>EEAS</td>
<td>European External Action Service (EU)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMU</td>
<td>European Monetary Union (EU)</td>
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<td>ESDI</td>
<td>European Security and Defence Identity (EU)</td>
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<td>ESDP</td>
<td>European Security and Defence Policy (EU)</td>
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<td>ESS</td>
<td>European Security Strategy (EU)</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FPA</td>
<td>Foreign Policy Analysis</td>
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<td>IPA</td>
<td>Interpretive Policy Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>IR</td>
<td>International Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>JFC</td>
<td>Joint Forces Command</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organization</td>
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<td>NPG</td>
<td>Nuclear Planning Group (NATO)</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PESCO</td>
<td>Permanent Structured Cooperation (EU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2P</td>
<td>Responsibility to Protect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACEUR</td>
<td>Supreme Allied Commander Europe (NATO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHAPE</td>
<td>Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (NATO, Mons, Belgium)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN(O)</td>
<td>United Nations Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSCR</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. (USA)</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>WEU</td>
<td>Western European Union</td>
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*Note: In France, the order of hierarchy in ministries runs from the Minister to the Assistant Minister to the State Secretary.*
1 Introduction
Rediscovering discourse and identity in French security and defense policy

This study provides a new perspective on the specific configuration of European and transatlantic security and defense policies in France under the presidents Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy. It provides answers to the question of whether there is continuity or change in this configuration and its underlying foreign policy identity, which had formerly been guided by Gaullist, strongly autonomy-focused strategies. For this purpose, the study focuses on the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) of the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and on Franco-American relations as the paramount realms of French security and defense policies.

This study makes a three-fold contribution: first, it argues for foreign policy change in France that has so far been overlooked; second, it unveils a reconsideration of the shape and content of French initiatives in European defense; and finally, it offers a new model for analyzing foreign policy change through a combination of the discourse theory of the Essex School with Interpretive Policy Analysis. Thus, the study contributes to a better understanding of the relationship between ideas, identity, and policy-making beyond the case of France. In a constructivist spirit, it shows how identity guides foreign policy, but also how identity is reshaped while conducting policies.

The struggle between autonomist and cooperative/integrative policies in the above realms has been a defining feature of French security and defense since the advent of the Fifth Republic in 1958 (Cerny 1980; Grosser 1984; Menon 2000). The search for autonomy led France to stay outside NATO’s integrated command structures for 43 years. This withdrawal had been decided by President Charles de Gaulle in 1966 to stay as distant as possible from the bipolar bloc confrontation and to be on an equal footing with the U.S. by guaranteeing absolute decision-making autonomy (Cerny 1980, Chapter 8; Martin 2011; Vaïsse 2009, 209ff.). The French had a hard time accepting U.S. hegemony over Europe, which they perceived as overly – and overtly – patronizing. They did not want to be drawn deeper into America’s global foreign policy agenda. European cooperation, naturally implying (not less hegemonic) French leadership, was the preferred solution for policies that France could not conduct on its own. Europe was to become a fully fledged international actor, able to act independently from the U.S. – including the defense realm – to balance American influence on European states and world
affairs alike. The French did not principally question allied solidarity when it came to collective defense against the Soviet Union, and they indeed remained solidaric in all major crises during the Cold War (Bozo 2014, 380). They cooperated tacitly with the Americans and NATO in military matters below the level of re-joining the integrated command structures (Cerny 1980, Chapter 9; Fortmann, Haglund, and von Hlatky 2010, 2f.). However, French politicians were keen to underline – as the saying goes – that they were friends, allies, but non-aligned with the U.S. Hence, they distanced themselves verbally and politically from a country that resembled their own very much in its universalist-exceptionalist vocation and status-seeking (Godin and Chafer 2006; Gordon 1993, 16; Rieker 2017, 17; Vaïsse 2009, 167ff.).¹ The ambivalence in its position within NATO and toward the Americans was considered the French raison d’état in security and defense and a central element of its foreign policy identity (Irondelle and Mérand 2010, 29; Lelouch 2009, 10, 236).

With the end of the Cold War though, this identity and its respective policies were put to the test. At its eastern border, through unification, Germany gained the strength France had always tried to prevent it from achieving. The U.S. was thought to leave Europe alone in managing its defense and had become the unipole of world politics. Hence, France was losing leverage on the U.S. and the margin of autonomy that it had kept for more than 20 years by not participating in the integrated command structures of NATO.

Since the 1989/1991 watershed then, France has fostered multilateral cooperation, integrated security institutions, or created these institutions itself, as old strategies of power politics no longer worked (Rieker 2017). A somewhat more pragmatic position toward intergovernmental cooperation both within the European Communities and NATO had already started to emerge under presidents Georges Pompidou and Valéry Giscard d’Estaing. Especially though with François Mitterrand, Jacques Chirac, and Nicolas Sarkozy, we have witnessed broader cooperative and integrative policies. Beginning as early as the late 1980s, Mitterrand focused on Franco-German cooperation and the establishment of a European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI, see Duke 2005; Smith 2004). Chirac continued France’s pro-integrationist policy in the EU with the implementation of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). He furthermore sought but failed reintegration into some bodies of NATO, while pushing Franco-British cooperation forward.

The Sarkozian sacrilege: from autonomy by withdrawal to autonomy by integration

Sarkozy intensified his predecessors’ pro-integrationist policies. After much struggle, he finally achieved NATO reintegration in 2009. (A detailed introduction to the reintegration policies can be found in Chapter 3.) Whereas de Gaulle argued that autonomy could only be achieved by withdrawing from NATO’s military command structures, Sarkozy argued that the only way to maintain autonomy was by integration. Whereas previous presidents made a fundamental
reform of allied institutions – meaning decreasing American influence while enlarging the European one – a precondition for reintegration, Sarkozy contended that reintegration was the only means to increase French influence and maintain autonomy (Cameron 2009, 2; Cizel and von Hlatky 2014, 360ff.). Irondelle and Mérand explicate that Sarkozy’s logic was to aim “at NATO to get Europe, rather than imposing Europe to get to NATO” (Irondelle and Mérand 2010, 34). Hence, Sarkozy turned the Gaullist conditionality upside down and ended a situation in which France was contributing massively to NATO operations without being properly represented in its command bodies (Howorth 2010; Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet 2009, 100ff.). Altogether, the new president tried to forge an uncomplicated relationship between the EU/CSDP and NATO, and by extension between France and the U.S. Moving even further, I suggest that although strengthening CSDP had originally been Sarkozy’s intent, NATO reintegration gradually laid the grounds for a quite different French foreign policy identity and related policies than intended. Put differently: NATO reintegration has been resignified through the backdoor. At the same time, Franco-American relations have shifted toward a wide alignment of interests in many policy areas, which was only broken up again with the election of Donald J. Trump as U.S. president in November 2016 (see Epilogue). In opposition to the 1990s, when French foreign policy identity had only been western at its margins (Stahl 2006, 244), this is a tide change for France.

This book argues that this policy shift has not yet been properly explained by existing scholarship. Consequently, I suggest taking a fresh approach to addressing Sarkozian security and defense policies in the EU, NATO, and with the Americans. When two presidents (de Gaulle and Sarkozy) use the same argument, autonomy, to defend opposite foreign policy steps – NATO withdrawal or integration – we have sufficient reason to believe that the meaning of autonomy and the policies that it influences have shifted away from the Gaullist dogma. Such an observation straightforwardly demands an analysis of discourse for explaining foreign policy(-making). To this end, the study will apply the discourse theory of the Essex School (Glynos and Howarth 2007; Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000; Torfing and Howarth 2005). The Essex School provides a coherent poststructuralist framework for integrating so far supposedly contradictory elements of Chiracquien and Sarkozian policies. At the same time, however, I will add new stepping stones for its use in Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) by drawing on the tradition of Interpretive Policy Analysis (IPA, e.g., Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006). Through the analysis of discursive relations, a phenomenological field is provided in which we can trace how explanatory factors are signified and brought together in more encompassing formations (e.g., in an identity) that constitute foreign policies. It goes without saying that by using discourse, I cannot explain how policymakers conducted foreign policy sensu strictu, such as in international negotiations or behind closed doors. It would be equally problematic though to assume that discourse as the social field where the struggle for constituting reality takes place before all else is unrelated to the conduct of foreign policy (see below in detail). A discursive approach to
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Foreign policy-making explains as much (or, if you like: as little) as other ones, while relying on a coherent phenomenological ontology (Jackson 2011, 88; Larsen 1997, 7ff.). Against this background, I contend that my application of discourse theory and IPA can bring such an explanatory approach to (new) life. First, however, I must provide some more basics of French foreign policy to understand the pertinence of the puzzle. I must also explain why it has been overlooked so far.

French foreign policy identity in a nutshell

French NATO and CSDP policies touch on key concepts of French security and defense policy that have developed historically in central political discourses of the Fifth Republic. These discourses have been institutionalized during the Cold War into a rather coherent foreign policy identity. This identity combines elements of European integration, democratic-republican cultural universalism (Chafer and Godin 2010; Godin and Chafer 2006; Hewlett 2004) and national grandeur (Rieker 2017), a pinch of third-worldism and third-way anti-bloc policies (Cerny 1980, 201ff.), Atlantic solidarity, and the willingness to play a powerful global and European role in a unique way.3

Gordon (1993), Hoffmann (1993), and Menon (2000) have most thoroughly established autonomy as a leitmotif of French foreign policies. Hoffmann refers to this norm and the ability to conduct an independent diplomacy as one of three foreign policy “imperatives” (ibid., 128) of the Fifth Republic (next to European integration and sphere-of-influence policies in Africa and the Middle East). Hoffmann suggests that it was not just the distribution of power in the international system – which, according to Waltz (1979), states mainly respond to with their foreign policies – that made France cherish autonomy and adopt balance-of-power policies. Instead, he explains that the experience of humiliation and dependence through the occupation in World War II and the shrinking of France through the “forced decolonization” (ibid., 133) process made de Gaulle adopt this policy.4 Earlier, many moments of Franco-American-British foreign policy conflict had occurred, culminating in the Suez Crisis (Lellouche 2009, 38ff.; Pannier 2017b, 479f.). Gordon emphasizes the domestic and cultural origins of the autonomy doctrine when he speaks of the particular French desires of national revival, the maintenance of a global role, and influence on, if not freedom from, the dominant United States (Gordon 1993, 4).

Grosser (1984, 155ff., 180ff.) explains that a global rank was central for de Gaulle: for him, foreign policy was the primary purpose of the state, and power and rank its goals, to which all other policies had to be subsumed underneath.5 Against this background, de Gaulle was principally skeptical toward any limitation of national autonomy through European or allied institutions, which cannot have the same value and status as the sovereign state, least one with a special, universalist vocation and grandeur like France (Rieker 2017, 19ff.). Grosser (1984, 188f.) and Parsons (2003, 119f.) underscore that cooperation could only mean cooperating without adapting national identities, whereas supranational
integration was strongly associated with weakness and dependence. The importance of the nuclear force de frappe, the ultimate guarantee of national autonomy, derives from this thinking (e.g., Bryant 2004, 124; Grosser 1984, 156, 193ff.; Martin 2011, 235ff.; Welch Larson and Shevchenko 2014, 37). De Gaulle’s principled reluctance toward integration became evident, for instance, in the refusal of binding agreements and qualified majority voting in the European Communities (resulting in the empty chair policy in 1965/1966 – Parsons 2003); in the condemnation of the Americans’ unilateral approach to disarmament with the Soviets; and the American domination of the integrated structures of NATO. All these aspects of world politics stood in the way of autonomy and the achievement of national interests (Woyke 2010, 42ff., 59ff.).

In sum, Gaullism designates a political philosophy which:

• sees the nation-state (état-nation) as the only legitimate and effective form of government (in detail see Larsen 1997, Chapter 3) and thinks that this can only be achieved by keeping its action independent from any constraints on autonomy (or at least the most possible);
• strives for power and rank in world affairs;
• affirms a democratic-republican, universalist mission civilisatrice enshrined in French culture (e.g., Cerny 1980, 29ff., 85; Gordon 1993, 15; Rieker 2017);
• wants to construct a new, peaceful, non-hegemonic positive nationalism out of a feeling of defeat and weakness;
• in the context of the Cold War, meant to stay as far away as possible from the bipolar superpower confrontation, to mark one’s difference from U.S. hegemony whenever possible, or at least to force the U.S. into a leveled bargaining position when common policies were needed.

Gordon (1993, 5) and Martin (2011, 237ff.) point out that while these ideas about a global role, rank, grandeur, autonomy, and the refusal of U.S. dominance had already existed before (in detail Raflik 2011), it was only de Gaulle who translated them into a coherent foreign policy posture, ultimately leading to the withdrawal from the integrated command structures in 1966/1967. In this identity construction, European and NATO policies on the one hand, and a suspicious eye on the balance between autonomist and integrative policies on the other were the defining dimensions of (and points of friction in) French security and defense policy. This identity was decisively pro-European while reserved toward the U.S., the American role in Europe, and NATO integration. In Europe, integration increasingly shaped the French security and defense policy agenda (Vaïsse 2009). Larsen (1997, 95ff.) and Wæver (2005, 44ff.) explain that the French progressively transferred their cultural, democratic-republican universalism (Hewlett 2004) and grandeur to the European level. Accordingly, every supranational body that is supposed to play a political role must take over this universalism and autonomy, which the French realized they were no longer able to fulfill alone (Bryant 2004, 124; Gordon 1993, 176ff.; Hoffmann 1993,
Mérand (2006, 136ff.) underlines that ultimately this transfer entailed a security and defense dimension (cf. also Larsen 1997, 143ff.). In NATO, however, policies followed the leitmotif of autonomy. Menon grounds the French reticence to NATO integration in domestic struggle and elite disunity between interest groups. In his analysis, this situation forged an illusionary consensus “cliché” (Menon 2000, 185) for the sake of showing unity and strength to the outside world. Deviance from this consensus on autonomy was chastised as unpatriotic, and policy adaptations had to be put into the light of the Gaullist legacy. Ultimately, the French were only willing to support the dislocation of national identity toward Europe (Larsen 1997, 108; Marcussen et al. 2001, 105ff.; Risse 2010, 73ff.).

Despite the difficulties such an autonomy-sensitive position created, especially with respect to European integration, this political philosophy crystallized as the leitmotif of France’s action extérieure far beyond de Gaulle’s times (Grosser 1984, Chapters 8–10; Hoffmann 1993, 134). Gordon clearly affirms a lasting continuity of this Gaullist legacy ‘for better or worse’ (Gordon 1993, 22). He distinguishes between policy adaptation, which happened, and normative change, which did not: “French security policies might have been good and might have been mad, but one thing is for certain: they were fundamentally Gaullist” (ibid., 165). Thus, Gaullism and its ideas on autonomy were established as the rules the discourse on foreign policy had to pay tribute to, forging a national consensus around foreign policy (Bozo 2014, 380ff.). In the terms of the later chapters, we can say that Gaullism and autonomy belong to the social logic of the discourse. Authors generally agree that neither President Georges Pompidou, nor Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, nor François Mitterrand changed anything on these Gaullist-autonomist orientations in relation to NATO during Cold War times.

However, when François Mitterrand decided after the end of the Cold War to send some officers back into NATO’s command structures to ensure the better coordination of allied operations in Iraq and Yugoslavia, and when Jacques Chirac tried to reintegrate France into these structures between 1995 and 1997, many of these identity-dimensions were seriously put to the test (Hofmann 2017, 518). Although Mitterrand’s rapprochement efforts should rather be seen in the light of operational requirements, Gnesotto (1997, 40) and Grant (1997, 58ff.) argue that this was already a small step away from a strict interpretation of the Gaullist doctrine. Woyke (2010, 143) reminds, however, that this apparent effort at influence-seeking was not unusual for a Gaullist strategy at all, and Howorth (1997, 26) underlines that this rapprochement did not change anything on the primarily European priorities of the French. While Chirac’s initiative – as his successor’s a decade later – was meant to Europeanize NATO, this policy was not successful in the 1990s. Hence, French strategy remained decisively autonomist toward the Atlantic Alliance, propelled by the fierce resistance of the U.S. to share the command burden in NATO. This policy was thus incompatible with French ideas about European autonomy. Chapter 2 will deal with this in detail. While the apparent weaknesses of European and French forces in the Gulf War
in 1990/1991 and the Yugoslavian conflicts were driving France to closer cooperation with NATO (Müller-Brandek-Bocquet 2009, 96ff.; Varwick and Woyke 1999, 122ff.), the French kept their skepticism toward the overwhelming power of the U.S. Therefore, they saw the need for autonomy from the U.S. confirmed (Burmester 1997; Hoffmann 1993, 137ff.; Schmidt 1997). During the debate on the alliance’s transformation from a collective defense to a collective security organization, the French policy was especially designed to limit NATO’s role in international security issues (Gordon 1993, 166). At best, NATO engagement outside the realm of Article V was an intermediate step on the way to European autonomy (Bryant 2000, 26).

Consequently, French strategy remained integrative in European security and defense. This agenda was to widen the European impact on world politics (Art 1996, 32; Bozo 2008, 8; Menon 2000, 78ff., 138, 149ff., 200) in an overall Europeanized foreign policy approach (Lequesne 1993; Wong 2006, 19ff., 50ff.) in which “European affairs are no longer really foreign affairs” (Vaïsse 2009, 166). It was a central goal of French policy under Mitterrand and Chirac that the EU should become an international actor of its own in a multipolar world (Brenner 2003, 204; de Swaan 1994, 12ff.; Kupchan 1998, 60, 68). Accordingly, CSDP was launched in December 1998 by a Franco-British initiative at the Saint-Malo summit (Déclaration de Saint-Malo 1998; Mayer 2003; van Ham 2000). Since then, it has been institutionalized in numerous political, civilian, and military bodies. The at first glance promising efforts at Franco-British cooperation were, however, extremely difficult to conduct because of the transatlantic divide between the two countries: the UK and France were not able to overcome mistrust and alienation, especially in the backwash of the Iraq War in 2003 (Croft 1996, 787; Irondelle and Mérand 2010, 31ff.; Jones 2011, 19; Mongrenier 2008, 32; Peters 2007, 26ff.). Despite a multitude of initiatives and some common military facilities, cooperation was not running smoothly. The duplication of NATO structures was accepted by the French, an issue of fierce debate with the U.S. and the UK (Boyer 2003; Hunter 2002).

When CSDP became operational with its first missions in Africa and the Balkans since 2003, furthermore the Iraq War was causing severe scissions in Franco-American-British relations, bringing to light such strange initiatives as the 2003 Tervuren chocolate summit between Belgium, France, Germany, and Luxembourg, held without the UK. In this transatlantic quagmire, European integration was confirmed as the paramount political project for gaining autonomy from the U.S. (Howorth 2010, 14; Mérand 2006, 145). France pursued a Europe first! policy that prevailed through all EU treaty negotiations including Lisbon.

This policy did neither question allied solidarity, which had been reaffirmed by 9/11 and the subsequent French engagement in Afghanistan, nor did it doubt the prevalence of NATO in Article V tasks. Nevertheless, it was evident that CSDP should be dealing with all other security challenges. The increase in the number of European political and military bodies since the Amsterdam Treaty and Saint-Malo can consequently be interpreted as a balancing act between the French wish for European autonomy and Atlantic necessity. This strategy relied on the
powerful construction of a first and foremost European identity for France and the formulation of corresponding policy preferences, even though this often meant trying to have Europe accept French positions in a process of uploading (Charillon and Wong 2011). CSDP was not supposed to challenge NATO in principle but be autonomous from it. Hence, the question of whether there was competition or complementarity between the two security institutions had to be answered ambivalently (Dumoulin 2007; Hunter 2002; Perruche 2014, 434ff.).

The French EU and NATO policies can be considered as opposite sides of the same coin (Hoffmann 1993, 139; Vaïsse 2009, 166). In sum, although Chirac initially showed openness toward more transatlantic integration, the perception of global events and American policies remained rather stable. The course of autonomy and European-only integration continued.

**The new guy in town: Sarkozy and the end of continuity!?**

When Nicolas Sarkozy became president in May 2007, the style of French politics changed immediately and much further than after Chirac’s inauguration in 1995. The new president enacted a massive verbal détente with the U.S. and the UK. In August 2007, Sarkozy’s announcement at the *Conférence des ambassadeurs* to reintegrate France nearly fully into NATO’s command structures flabbergasted the French political class. Nobody really saw this move coming (Bozo 2008, 1). Simultaneously, after a lame-duck period in European affairs since the negative French referendum on the EU’s Constitutional Treaty in 2005, Sarkozy tried to bring France back to the forefront of European policies (Charillon 2008; Kempin and Schwarzer 2008; Liberti 2010). He especially tried to give CSDP a new momentum with an intensification of Franco-British cooperation in early 2008, leading to two defense treaties, even in the nuclear realm (UK Government 2010, 2011), and manifold cooperation initiatives (Hajdenko-Marshall 2010; Jones 2011; Pannier 2016). In taking these steps, Sarkozy brought an end the ambivalent French position in NATO which was perceived as anti-American and autonomy-centered by its allies (Bozo 2010, 185; Charillon and Wong 2011, 24; Maulny 2009, 6). At the same time, the Americans re-assessed their former positioning toward CSDP from skeptical to full support or at least indifferent approval on both sides of the partisan divide (Boyer 2009, 9; Bozo 2014, 383; Perruche 2014, 437; Pesme 2010, 55ff.; Toje 2008, 13ff.). This certainly opened a window of opportunity for the French to proceed with NATO reintegration.

The intense national debate (see Fressoz and Roger 2009; Houchard 2009; Irondelle and Mérand 2010; Védrine 2009) about NATO reintegration demonstrates, however, that the initiative had an ideational and symbolic dimension for the French elite and public (Lellouche 2009, 235; Lepri 2009). It was a clear testament to the high relevance of this issue to the overall French foreign policy identity and strategy, including the future of autonomy and national *grandeur*. Whether France was giving up autonomy or not with the reintegration policy was vividly debated in public and in parliament, as the analysis will show. Ultimately, the Fillon government connected the vote about reintegration to a motion
of confidence in parliament, which it won. Reintegration was then symbolically achieved on NATO’s 60th anniversary summit in April 2009. Although France did not reintegrate the Nuclear Planning Group (NPG) and thus keeps its nuclear forces separate from permanent allied institutions, Sarkozy brought the large-scale French absence from the integrated command structures (also in simple terms of personnel)\(^8\) to a formal and visible end.\(^9\)

Whether this policy was a break (rupture) with Gaullism or not was the crux of the matter, both in the national and scholarly debate (Kempin 2009; Vaïsse 2009, 559ff.). Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet (2009) argues that reintegration is still limited, for instance, due to the persistent absence of France from the NPG and its opposition against a global NATO. Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet (2009) and Howorth (2010) further explicate that Sarkozy had not yet given up on strengthening CSDP via reintegration. They interpret the decision as ending the gap between troop contributions to NATO operations without having real influence on NATO’s daily work. Hence, the authors describe NATO reintegration as a purely rational, interest and influence-driven policy, which brought France the lead of the Allied Command Transformation (ACT) in Norfolk (Virginia) and of the Joint Forces Command (JFC) in Lisbon, confirming the validity of Gaullism and the Europeanization strategy.\(^10\) Bozo (2008) similarly draws a line between Sarkozy’s personal pro-Americanism and persistent critique of U.S. policies. From an institutionalist perspective, Bozo raises doubts whether achieving more influence will be possible for France in the face of a 40-year long absence from the integrated bodies and practices (ibid., 7f.; also Bozo 2010, 184). (The problems of these accounts will be discussed in the next section.) The NATO-led Libya campaign in 2011 though was then a strong sign of smooth cooperation between the Americans, British, and the French, while the EU had shown almost perfect immobility (Fabbrini 2014; Howorth 2014; Koenig 2014; Ostermann 2016). During the rest of Sarkozy’s presidency, there have not been any sincere French efforts at further institutionalizing European security and defense policies, which only speeded up after the British vote to leave the EU (Brexit) and the election of Donald J. Trump as U.S. president in 2016 (see Epilogue). Hence, already back in 2010, Irondelle and Mérand (2010) are much less certain about continuing French engagement for CSDP. They investigate the meaning and scope of pragmatism, as this study does for Sarkozy’s whole presidency. The *Revue internationale et stratégique* spring 2010 dossier on the issue shows an altogether fuzzier picture on continuity and change, too. Similarly to the above accounts though, symbolic aspects are acknowledged but not integrated into the analysis. Considering the importance of NATO and the EU/Europe in French debate, we can rightfully ask whether these policies equal a strategy change, and whether they still conform to the same foreign policy identity that has been outlined above. This will be the task of this book.
Tackling the deficits of existing interpretations: 
continuity, but ...

The French return to the integrated command structures of NATO since 2009, its consequences for CSDP, and the repercussions on foreign policy identity have been widely discussed in the political class – conceived as executive and parliament for the purpose of this study – and scholarship. Huge disagreements on the interpretation of these policies and their consequences remain. Hence, it is fundamentally disputed whether reintegration marks a moment of continuity or change in both policies and identity. Should the move be understood as a continuation of French foreign policy strategy by following old goals with new means? Has reintegration only been a symbolic gesture without any policy significance, or has it brought substantial changes to French NATO and CSDP policies as well? None of these points is answered consensually – and we might ask how they ever could, recalling that basic political and cultural aspects are involved that are subject to considerable normative and political struggle. Thus, the dissent by political agents themselves provides sufficient ground for conducting an analysis of how different ideas interact and policies are chosen. The political-class answers to the above questions, their discursive performances of NATO and CSDP policies and related elements, such as Franco-American relations, will be the subject of the empirical analysis in this study.

I contend that explanations of the Sarkozian policies are problematic in two interrelated respects. First, explanations claiming policy continuity, especially in the case of NATO reintegration, ignore many changes in the policy-constituting identity discourses on European and allied security and defense policies. Accordingly, changes to the realm of appropriate policy choices are not duly considered analytically and in their reciprocal configuration. Continuity explanations tend to implicitly adopt a top-down, unbounded rational-choice model of French interests and action, rendering the domestic and symbolic struggle irrelevant (e.g., Bozo 2014; Cameron 2009; Cizel and von Hlatky 2014, 355; Howorth 2010; Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet 2009). Whereas Bozo (2010, 176) acknowledges identity aspects more centrally, he does not treat them analytically. Consequently, this explanatory model under-theorizes the relevance of identity and of the domestic origins of the autonomy doctrine, whose unique relevance for French foreign policy has been established above. This often leads to what I call continuity but explanations (e.g., Bozo 2008; Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet 2009). By establishing hierarchies, in a neorealist fashion, between rational/interest-based/material factors and ideational and/or symbolic ones (yet claiming the latter’s epiphenomenality), these explanations run the risk of overlooking a new configuration of identity elements that constitutes policies in the first place, no matter whether they are deemed changing or continuous. Diez (1999a, 50) reminds us though that the ideas–interest distinction is a socially constructed one. Following Hopf (2002, 16ff.) and Wendt (1999, 1, 20, Chapter 3), it is also simply pointless to oppose ideational explanations with interests-based and materialist ones. People act in a way that is always interest-driven, but those
interests and rationalities derive from the realm of their constructed identities, and they are not a somehow natural, unbounded rational choice (cf. also Finne-more and Sikkink 1998, 909ff.; Onuf 2013 [1989], 259ff.). Ruggie (1998b, 867) astutely observed that a general problem of claims for consequentiality and rational utilitarianism is that they blind out that which has originally led agents to think they have had one choice only. Hence, when Howorth (2014, 411f.) or Rieker (2013) argue that France has been forced into NATO to conduct the Libyan intervention, they dismiss the possibility that it could ultimately have refrained from military action altogether. This prevents the authors from seeing the interactive and constitutive processes between ideas and interests and hence from appreciating configurational change. I argue that by relaxing the two assumptions of unbounded rational choice and a hierarchy between ideas and matter, these explanatory problems can be overcome. Instead, the analysis of discourses can help us in bringing together supposedly contradicting findings or epiphenomenal explanatory elements and integrate them into an explanation that tells us how these elements are relevant in policy-making.

The second but related point is that the analysis of language and interaction in French foreign policies is mostly confined to a perspective that sees language as a rhetorical device (e.g., Irondelle and Mérand 2010). As a consequence, analyses of French foreign policy that study the role of language as meaningful, symbolic interaction which constitutes visions of the world (Foucault 1971 [1970], 55) and signifies policies in accordance with them are scarce (exceptions are Stahl 2006; Wæver 2005). To avoid any sort of misunderstanding: language is certainly used strategically as a means of persuasion but limiting the analysis of language in politics to a rhetoric one clouds the underlying struggle for meaning and sense-making by political agents and the cultural and discursive environment they are embedded in. A rhetoric-only take on language discards intersubjectivity and therefore the way people relate to each other through language. These aspects can help us, however, to better understand the political and cultural stakes in struggles and to explain social dynamics that develop in policy-making and influence it. The focus on meaningful, symbolic interaction avoids the pitfalls of an individualist ontology. It applies the insight from poststructuralist linguistics and Derridarian deconstruction that meaning is neither inherent to the subject (agent), nor a fixed relation between signifier and signified, but a conventional system of practice established between subjects attributing meaningful differences (Fierke 2002, 338; Diez 1999a, 52; Hopf 2002, 20; Howarth 2005, 320). Unlike the authors that have been cited and quoted in this chapter, the asset of this study is that it can look at Sarkozian policies over his whole presidency. Criticism of these prior contributions must be put into this perspective.

For addressing the shortcomings in the literature, this study analyzes executive and parliamentary discourses on foreign, security and defense policies. The use of the theoretical framework of the Essex School with its logics approach (see below) allows for analyzing social rules and discursive structures in conjunction with political agency that tries to construct hegemonic foreign-policy projects. Combined with interpretive micro-methods, this approach can weigh
different discursive elements against each other in their relevance for policy-making and explain why a certain project has been chosen at the expense of another (cf. also Guzzini 2017, 11f.). Ruggie (1998a, 94) sees this configurational perspective as one of the two assets of narrative explanation (next to thick description).

**NATO reintegration: to Washington via Tripoli**

On the grounds of this review, this study will argue that NATO reintegration mattered more than observers originally thought. I contend that it was embedded into a change of French security and defense policies in Europe and its defining identity narratives. As regards the latter, and contrary to Stahl’s (2006, 244) findings for the 1990s, there has been a fundamental Franco-American rapprochement which makes France redefine itself more centrally as belonging to the West. Concomitantly, the study demonstrates that due to significant disappointments with the EU’s effectiveness and actorness, especially during the Libyan War in 2011, the French approach to these policies was largely emptied of its European identity dimension. It was considerably normalized and pragmatized under Sarkozy, a development that most observers have failed to grasp so far in its full breadth. (Elements can be found in Rieker 2017; Talmor and Selden 2017.)

When other authors recognized the importance of pragmatism for the decision to reintegrate NATO, the rational-choice bias of these contributions blinds them from investigating the conditions of possibility of pragmatism itself. This book will contend that pragmatization – though maybe not in NATO, where we would intuitively expect it, but in Europe – is the very piece of the puzzle that helps us explain the change in French identity and policies. Consequently, NATO reintegration has been resignified post factum to represent another normal option for French security and defense policies that must no longer necessarily be used to strengthen EU defense policies. The story that will be told at the end of this study neither shows that France is abandoning its quest for autonomy, nor that its quest for influence has disappeared. What it does show though is how the ideational foundations of French policies have been fundamentally altered. For these reasons, French foreign policy identity and its realm of appropriate policy choices have changed in a way that was overlooked by prior explanations: its normative rationalities (Hopf 2002, 16ff.) have shifted, and it has indeed moved closer to Washington via Tripoli. Showing that this means much more than a simple alignment to the U.S. will be a central revelation of this study. Showing how this can be done will be the purpose of the following pages.

**Identity, change, and poststructuralist discourse analysis**

This study combines International Relations (IR) constructivism’s unique ability to analyze change through social constructions with the Essex School’s ability to fathom the achievement of political hegemony. This is possible because the two approaches share an ontology of constructedness (Fierke 2002; Jackson
Introduction

Constructivism is well known for its focus on how culture, identity, and ideas shape politics (Katzenstein 1996; Lebow 2008a; Neumann and Welsh 1991). I understand ideas with Laffey and Weldes as intersubjectively shared symbols or “symbolic technologies [...] that enable the production of representations” (Laffey and Weldes 1997, 194; term originally by Greenblatt 1991, 12). This definition does not distinguish between ideas that refer to material artifacts (such as money, or pressure) or social ones (such as the norm of Responsibility to Protect), because they are all made sense of in linguistic construction and discourse (Adler 2013, 121).

Identity designates a specific set of ideas and relations that is characteristic of a social collective and, here, of a particular policy field. It functions as a generator of interests and a guideline for behavior. It is not something previously given and thus not an essentialist, subject-independent disposition or structure of the nation-state (e.g., Wendt 1987, 360; 1999, 96, 224ff.). Neither is identity voluntarily chosen, but it is an intersubjective social structure that emerges out of discursive practice: “Society is assumed to consist of a social cognitive structure within which operate many discursive formations. Identities constitute these formations” (Hopf 2002, 3). Hence, identity (culture) offers cognitive “heuristics” (ibid., 4) to bring order to a complex world (cf. also Berger and Luckmann 1966, 159ff.; Somers and Gibson 1994, 40ff., 64ff.; Tilly 2002, 6ff., 39). It defines that which makes a social group special, constructs self-other relationships, and limits the realm of interests and possible policy choices without deterministically prescribing one single policy (Hopf 2002, Chapter 1; Marcussen et al. 2001, 102ff.; Neumann 1996; Neumann and Welsh 1991; Risse 2007, 50ff.). Lebow explains that “People invent and propagate the discourses that instantiate identities. Within limits, contemporary people make choices about what they want to be.” (Lebow 2012, 7). Identity, then, is a relational structure and construct that is performed and narrated in discursive practice (Campbell 1992, Chapters 3, 9; Lebow 2012, 37, 46ff.; Tilly 2002, 19). Hence, it is a visible phenomenon that can be analyzed through texts.

This dynamic approach to identity is not to say that political debate departs from nowhere, void of any traditions, habits, or rules. It means though that identity is not conceptualized as a social structure to which agents have no access and that they cannot change. For knowing whether traditions are relevant for an identity construction and policies, they thus need to be articulated in discourse. This dynamic approach to identity does not suggest, either, that there are no continuities. Defending a clearly poststructuralist legacy, however, it holds that these continuities rely on contingent re-articulations rather than subject-independent structural forces (Baumann 2006; Diez 1999a, 54, 84, 338). Contradictions in identities (and their discourses) are therefore the rule rather than the exception. Consequently, I follow Hopf (2002, 3ff.), Nabers (2009, 194f.), Neumann (1996, 160) and Wæver (2002, 24ff.) in conceptualizing identity in more contingent, non-stable terms. In this way, change and causation become more easily understandable as the product of these permanent and contingent re-articulations (or their absence) and their contradictions (Guzzini 2017, 11f.).
It goes without saying that constructions of meanings and cultural appropriateness are put front and center in these explanations, as opposed to rational choice preferences. As Hopf (2002, 16ff.) or March and Olsen (1989, 51) observe, rationality itself derives from what is considered socially and normatively appropriate to a specific identity. Consequently, from a constructivist perspective, the world is one “of our making” (Onuf 2013 [1989]) and the first product of action before any other action takes place in it. Hence, reality is intersubjectively constructed in social practice (Boekle, Rittberger, and Wagner 2001, 106ff.). Clifford Geertz put this famously when he stated that “man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun.” (Geertz 1973, 5). Authoritatively, Guzzini has referred to this ontological position as “sociological constructivism” (Guzzini 2000). Later, he has underscored that this entails an “endogenized” (Guzzini 2017, 8) analysis of preferences in their social-relational conditions (similarly Fierke 2002, 350). Consequently, constructivism retains the idea of an influence of the international system on human practice, but only through actors’ efforts at making sense of this environment themselves, reproducing or changing its man-made characteristics (e.g., sovereignty, anarchy, and hegemony, or rational, self-interested cooperation; cf. also Jackson 2006, 14ff.). This position is often misunderstood as relativism, which it is not. On the contrary, it is a reasoning that understands the system (or any other social artifact) as a product of (e.g., states’) action and therefore as a historically contingent structure which can be changed (Foucault 1972, 25f.; Onuf 2013 [1989], 167). This does not mean, either, that constructivists (or poststructuralists, for that matter) deny the existence of a reality outside discourse (Wendt 1999, 24), or brute facts (such as an earthquake in the famous example of Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 108). They explicate, however, that the interpretation of the brute fact and actions that are conducted upon it are not straightforward derivatives of the fact itself, but happen in language-related, intersubjective processes that make sense of it (Dreyer Hansen 2011, 97; Fierke 2002, 338; Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 108; Nabers 2009, 193; Schmidt 2008). Guzzini (2000) terms this insight the “epistemological” constructivist position. The particular strength of a constructivist approach is in showing precisely how brute facts matter (Risse-Kappen 1994) – or as Adler puts it: “constructivists of all types are not interested in how things are but in how they became what they are” (Adler 2013, 121, emphasis in the original). The next section shows how these concepts of ideas, identity, and change can work in a discursive research design.

**Change, foreign policy, and discourses as unit of analysis**

Constructivist and discursive approaches suggest that discourse, contingency, and intersubjectivity have a much larger role in foreign policy-making than structural theories that the international system want us to believe (Diez 1999b, 599; Hansen 2011; Herschinger 2011, 15f.; Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986; Milliken 1999, 242, 247). Basing his argumentation on Max Weber, Jackson has a case in point when he sees a strong “comparative advantage” (Jackson 2011,
of a constructivist world view in its ability to include these elements of language and intersubjectivity (similarly Jackson 2006, 24; Spencer 2012; Zehfuss 2004, 157f.). Epstein concurs that this comparative advantage of constructivism plays out best in its poststructuralist variety of discourse analysis. Therein, the investigation of the intersubjective relations built through language in discourse occupies a “midpoint” (Epstein 2013, 514) between closed, static universalist (i.e., structuralism) and individualist-solipsist positions (similarly Dreyer Hansen 2011, 98; Jackson 2006, 23f.; Larsen 1997, 5ff.).

Hajer describes discourse as an “ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories” (Hajer 2005, 300) that gives meaning to a phenomenon and that is (re)produced by definable practices. Hansen (2006, 51ff.) simply explains that discourses have a common topic and a carrier that promotes them, while underlining with Foucault the necessity of a historical reading to understand why discourses have become what they are. Foucault interchangeably speaks of discourse as all meaningful statements around a topic, as a single group of statements, or as a set of practices with respect to a topic at various moments (Foucault 1972, 80; Mills 2004, 6). Diverse elements – such as ideas, norms, concepts of self and otherness, or values20 – about political issues are discursively performed and then enable or restrain policy choices (Neumann 1996, 154ff.). For Foucault, discourse is then a creative process which signifies its subjects and objects and thus establishes certain “regime[s] of truth” (Foucault 1971 [1970], 19ff.; 1984, 74). In sum, discourse is a social practice around a certain topic (object) that constructs meanings and enacts a specific set of power-related and rule-driven relations between the subjects of discourse (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000, 12f.; Weldes 1996, 280; Yee 1996, 99).

A discursive-constructivist framework appears to be very appropriate for investigating contested and competing performances of security and defense policies and their overarching identity constructions. I consider this approach to be promising, both in terms of giving the agents’ “self-interpretations” (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 34) of policies a prominent place in the explanatory exercise, and in terms of integrating factors into the analysis which could only be insufficiently explained up to the present, such as the symbolic and ideational foundations of NATO reintegration in France. On these grounds, I suggest that we should conceive of policies as an integrated interdiscursive structure (a discourse consisting of several other discourses). We can analyze these discourses to understand, for instance, how the French executive and parliamentarians make sense of the world and the political issues around them. From there, we can explain how policy-making is constituted21 by and performed in social practice. Consequently, we can understand how identity is discursively defined (Laffey and Weldes 1997).

In the context of this study, the discourses under investigation are those on allied and European defense, autonomy, national grandeur, and Franco-American relations. The specific discursive practice I examine is executive and parliamentary speech, which has a phenomenological character (Jackson 2011, 32ff., 77ff.). Consequently, when we study discourses, we can investigate how
discursive agents understand the world(s) they are living in, how they make sense of the political challenges in front of them, and how they try to impose their policy goals on the democratic constituencies they are responsible to (Geis, Müller, and Schörnig 2014a, 36; Hansen 2006, 7, 23ff.; Wæver 2005, 35). These constitutive how-possible questions can be considered as a strength of constructivist and/or discursive scholarship (Laffey and Weldes 1997, 205; Wendt 1987, 362; 1998; 1999, 77ff.).

**French foreign policy discourse: a terra incognita**

Discourse-analytical contributions on French security and defense policies are scarce. Major exceptions are the works of Henrik Larsen (1997) and Bernhard Stahl (Stahl 2006, 2009; Krüger and Stahl 2016). Larsen investigates British and French discourses on Europe in the 1980s and how they influence foreign policy. Regarding France, he finds out that the discourse on Europe developed considerably since 1983/1984 to identify Europe with the Communities and France with the EC, making the EC’s development along French ideas and interests a necessary, primordial political endeavor. While Larsen addresses some elements of Laclau and Mouffe’s theoretical framework to be used in this study and outlined below, he does not apply them widely in his analysis. In his book on identity crises, Stahl (2006) conducts an inquiry into discourse formations in foreign policy in the 1990s, but he touches on one defense episode only, the Kosovo War. Stahl re-establishes the relevance of both a modified Gaullist idea of balancing U.S. hegemony through the EU, and autonomy-related ambivalences in the French commitment to pooling foreign policies and sovereignty in the EU (Chapters 4 and 5, 241ff.). He identifies three major formations in the 1990s foreign policy discourse, which he labels as realist-autonomist, realist-European, and idealist. Importantly, he concludes that a narrative of western community was not a salient-identity element in the 1990s, a finding this study revamps considerably. Irondelle’s and Mérand’s work (Irondelle and Mérand 2010; Mérand 2003, 2006) analyzes social representations of foreign policy, but it is agnostic about the role of language. Finally, in a study on Germany and France, Wæver (2005) describes identity discourses on the nation, the state, and Europe in relation to concepts of European security and integration.

Poststructuralist discourse approaches have been used more frequently for explaining other countries’ foreign policies at large. Major contributions exist on Germany (Baumann 2006; Zehfuss 2004), the UK (Diez 1999a; Hansen 2006), or the U.S. (Campbell 1992; Doty 1993; Hansen 2006). In two other available foreign policy studies extensively using Laclau and Mouffe’s theoretical framework, Birsen Erdogan (2017) analyzes Turkish discourses on humanitarian intervention and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), while Dirk Nabers (2009) investigates the reconstruction of U.S. foreign policy identity after 9/11. These studies have provided highly insightful, new results. They have the great merit of analyzing language beyond its rhetoric function. They argue instead for understanding language, speech acts, or discourses as constitutive process by which
policies are signified and constructed in policy-making. These contributions have succeeded in illuminating the role and relevance of identity, ideas, and language in foreign policy making (see also Neumann 1996, 157ff.). Hence, they have achieved a social contextualization of foreign policy beyond the dimensions of national interests, domestic lobbies, or institutional analysis. In comparison with constructivist literature that focuses on culture and identity (Katzenstein 1996; Duffield 1998), the specific value of these poststructuralist contributions lies in their ability to grasp and trace small scale changes underneath the surface of policies or institutions (see also the concept of layered changes in Wæver 2002) that reconfigure identities and appropriate policy choices incrementally (Diez 1999a, 54, 84). In its further focus on the struggle for meaning, a poststructuralist approach seems particularly appropriate in a situation where identity is openly contested, where huge disagreements over policies occur, and where arguments about continuity or change are inconclusive, be it by agents themselves or scholars alike (cf. also Herschinger and Renner 2017, 329). Such situations produce intense discursive battles that allow for a condensed tracing of discursive positions and the interaction between them. This is certainly the case for the policies under investigation here.

Against this background, a poststructuralist discourse analysis of Sarkozy’s security and defense policies in Europe and NATO is overdue. Giving credit to the authors that have already written on this or related topics, I should point out that none of them were able to cover the entire duration of Sarkozy’s presidency and hence to address these issues and this puzzle comprehensively. This study aims at filling this gap. At the same time, it adopts a comparative perspective in presenting an in-depth analysis of discourses on NATO and Europe from the Chirac years. As a consequence, claims for continuity and change(s) can be hardened methodically. The purpose of comparison here, however, is not to generalize findings beyond the context of France’s foreign policy (although a case study on a different country could, of course, adopt the same or a similar design), but to “specify particular configurations” (Jackson 2011, 200) of ideas in foreign policy and the identities they construct. Comparison is therefore “individualizing” (ibid.) in the sense of making us understand the powers that have driven certain discourses at their time (similarly Suganami 2017, 15). For doing so, we need a coherent theoretical, and analytical framework, which will be provided in the next sections.

The discourse theory of the Essex School and its explanatory contribution

As laid out above, constructivism and discursive approaches both focus on process, or the how and why social phenomena – here: ideas, identity, and policies – have changed (or remained the same). Discursive approaches work in a constructivist ontology and research environment because they are interested in the construction of meanings. Since its canonization by Michel Foucault (Foucault 1972, 1989), discourse analysis has developed into a panoply of
different schools (in detail see Torfing 2005, 5ff.). In sum, the notion of discourse has been widened to conceptualize discourse as the totality of social phenomena in some schools. This view abandons the idea of extra-discursive elements that is still present in Foucault’s work (Foucault 1972, 45f.) and in much of Critical Discourse Analysis’ (CDA) writings (Fairclough 1992; Fairclough, Jessop, and Sayer 2003; Wodak and Krzyzanowski 2008). Power, structure, agency, hegemony, and contingency have arisen as discourse analysis’s key concepts.

The discourse theory of the Essex School, associated with names such as Laclau, Mouffe, Glynos, Hajer, Howarth, Norval, or Torfing, adopts this more inclusive perspective on social relations and gives up on the distinction between different realms of social practice. The central advantage of this poststructuralist discourse theory is that it locates explanation in observable speech acts which we can use to explain social interaction. Wæver points out that relying interpretively on discourse has the great merit of taking available texts “for what they are, and not indicators of something else” (Wæver 2002, 26) – e.g., expressions of individuality, or subjective intentionality. This means that discourse is something that can be analyzed phenomenologically to inform us “which codes are used when actors relate to each other” (Wæver 2002, 26f., my emphasis) in order to achieve a political goal. Hence, explanation remains strictly phenomenological in the Essex School. This commitment sharply distinguishes it from CDA, the other fully developed explanatory framework using discourse theory. CDA’s critical-realist epistemology (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002, 61ff.; paradigmatically Kurki 2008, 161ff.; Bhaskar 2011) relates discursive phenomena to non-discursive, empirical causal influences (such as material practices, culture, institutions, desires, cognition) limiting the freedom of discursive expression (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999, 28, 125; Fairclough 1992, 47f., 63ff.; cf. also Herschinger and Renner 2017, 317). This theoretical commitment, however, partly outsources the explanatory process to the non-discursive world. This reinstates the very same structuralism this study avoids with a look at the deficits of existing explanations of French policies. This structuralist predicament is still present in Larsen’s (1997) analysis of the 1980s’ European discourses in France and the UK, even though he addresses Laclau’s and Mouffe’s poststructuralist approach in his theoretical framework. Conversely, Jackson sharply underlines the asset of a phenomenalist ontology: “Limiting oneself to observables and detectables does not guarantee the avoidance of errors, but it might be a more risk-averse strategy” (Jackson 2011, 88). Thus, a phenomenological use of discourse exactly reflects Elster’s idea of causal explanation, which he defines as the explanation of interaction (Elster 1983, 25ff., 84). (I will address the question of causality later in this chapter.) Jackson (2006, 32ff.) explicates further that this approach also has the merit of avoiding a structurationist method of analysis (Giddens 1984; Wagner et al. 2006; Wendt 1987) where either structure or agency are bracketed for investigating the respective other. Consequently, this poststructuralist use of discourse is valuable for limiting difficult assumptions: in demanding from ideas to be present as a discursive statement, we make them
phenomenologically accessible for showing how they matter to politics. When using the Essex School, we cannot explain what went on in the minds of decision-makers when they came to a decision (what analysis can actually do that? Cf. Jackson 2006, 22ff.). It is strong, however, in providing a coherent theoretical framework for the analysis of meanings, intersubjective relations, and the achievement of discursive hegemony (cf. also Erdogan 2017, 2, 6). Nevertheless, the study remains in a critical-productive relationship with CDA. CDA’s “textually-oriented discourse analysis” (Fairclough 1992, 37) treats a large variety of discursive phenomena, such as vocabularies, intertextual references, or communicative situations and cognitive dispositions of the speaker (Fairclough 1992, 75ff.; also Mills 2004, 118ff.; Phillips and Jørgensen 2002, 72ff.). Hence, it offers an array of techniques for semiotic analysis which will be applied in this study (see below). CDA’s analysis of language as social practice also places the concept of creativity and openness into the center of interest. I argue, however, that the Essex School’s theoretical foundation in phenomenology makes creativity better accessible methodologically.

The Essex School enables this study to pursue its investigation into central ideas of French policy identity – such as Europeaness and Atlanticism – the way politicians relate these in politics, and how and why they opt for a certain policy at the expense of another. This sort of explanation is not a relativist approach of anything goes, but one which highlights the historic contingency of social constructions and structures which have come into being through political struggle. Therefore, unlike CDA’s framework for analysis, structures are part of the analysis and not exogenous factors with independent causal influence (cf. also Erdogan 2017, 10f.). Structural constraints such as military capabilities, bureaucracies, or institutions are thus constraints because they are perceived and experienced as such by agents (Hansen 2006, 30ff.). In Security Studies, John H. Herz (1950) has made this point prominently when describing the interpretive foundations and dynamics of the security dilemma (also Booth and Wheeler 2008).

The construction of hegemony and truth

The Essex School overcomes the ideational-material dichotomy and unveils it as a prior discursive construction (Wæver 2002, 22). It consequently deploys the Gramscian concept of hegemony (e.g., Cox 1983; Herschinger 2011) in underlining a hegemony’s unstable character and its discursive production. The temporal establishment of hegemony is achieved when a statement or a larger discursive formation, such as an ideology, is considered to be a valid, true reading of a social or political issue (e.g., capitalist rule) by the discursive community (Cox 1983, 164, 168; Laclau 2000, 54ff.). This has, for instance, happened in the case of the legitimization of the Libyan campaign in terms of making the Libyans belong to the same democratic community as the French, which henceforth legitimized intervention (Ostermann 2016). The claim for the truth of an argument is thus not a matter of fact, but of political struggle, persuasion, and power (Cox 1977, 387ff.; Hansen 2006, 6, 18; Torfing 2005, 14). Change (dislocation) is
possible, though not necessarily easy, as Wendt (1992) has noted earlier. Change in a hegemonic situation can happen though when the existing discursive structure is not able to integrate new elements. Then, the interpretation of events requires answers that lie outside established thinking and acting – a crisis occurs (Guzzini 2012a, 46; Risse \textit{et al.} 1999, 156). Hansen (2006, 77ff.) argues that these times of crisis are very fruitful for political analysis, as structure and agency become highly visible (cf. also Guzzini 2012a, 60; Marcussen \textit{et al.} 2001; Nabers 2009, 192; Risse 1999; Risse \textit{et al.} 1999). Debate and political struggle in these times happen in a concatenated manner. This allows for a better following of both political processes and of the development of the whole discursive structure. All three cases that are investigated in this study – two NATO reintegration policies and the Libyan War – can be understood as crises for French security and defense policies and identity. More consequently than in CDA then, language is conceived as an \textit{explanatory mechanism} for politics. This poststructuralist approach to discourse has the merit of enabling agency from the angle of intersubjective linguistic construction (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000, 14; Patterson and Monroe 1998, 322ff.).\textsuperscript{25} Agency is there, but not as the expression of unbounded individuality and intentions, but in intersubjective performance. Intentionality in the decentralized subject of Foucault, Bourdieu, or Laclau is therefore always broken (Bevir 1999; Diez 1999a, 45; Foucault 1972, 12ff.).\textsuperscript{26}

Using discourse in this way thus makes two sorts of analysis possible that remain connected nevertheless: first, a thick, descriptive analysis produces a picture of the whole discourse with its various statements and formations showing how reality is performed by agents; second, the struggle around these statements, persuasive moves, and the temporary closure of the struggle allow for an analysis of policy-making and, by virtue of this closure, for a statement on identity that functions as heuristics for policy-making in delimiting the realm of appropriate policy choices. Put differently, we could say that discourse (or discursive struggle) serves as explanans for two different but connected explananda, identity and policy-making. In opposition to earlier explanatory approaches to French security and defense policy, the poststructuralists’ unique focus on small-scale changes of meanings and contingencies has the ability to see changes where a non-discursive analysis might see continuities. It has the potential to anticipate future changes in policies that have developed underneath the surface but that redefine the realm of appropriate policy choices nevertheless (cf. paradigmatically Baumann 2006; Hellmann 2006). In French security and defense discourse, this happened, for instance, when the performances of European integration started to be more pragmatic than emphatic during the early years of the Sarkozy presidency, but led to a redefinition of security and defense identity during the Libyan War only.

Thus, the Essex School’s \textit{logics} approach assures that we do not base our explanation on individual statements only, but on intersubjective relations in which rules, creativity, power, and persuasion are performed. Another advantage in using public discourses for analyzing foreign policy identity and policy-making is the quest for legitimacy. In a democratic constituency where office-holders are
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responsible toward the public and/or seek re-election, leaders’ own ideas cannot fall completely outside the intersubjectively available repertoires but need to resonate instead (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 900, 914f.; Hansen 2006, 7, 23; Jackson 2006, 19ff.; Larsen 1997, 5f.; Wæver 2005, 35). As Stahl has observed, “Who decides usually has to reason, too” (Stahl 2006, 105; similarly Schmidt 2008). Whereas the logics approach has been used before in European Studies (Larsen 1997; Fanoulis 2014), on IR terrorism and drug discourses (Herschinger 2011), and for analyzing Turkish foreign policy (Erdoğan 2017), this study will attempt a novel combination of the Essex School’s logics approach with a consequent use of micro-techniques for analysis. How the theoretical considerations can be operationalized in and through concrete research methods will now be the subject of the following pages.

Methods: logics, mechanisms, and interpretive policy analysis

The research design relies on two intertwined methods of investigation: first, it uses mechanisms, or logics in the language of the Essex School, for a fine-grained analysis of discursive relations, hegemony, ideas, and identity in foreign policy (for IR see Herschinger 2011, 30). Investigating logics allows us to both understand the principal elements of French security and defense discourse and the relations that are built between them. Second, I will combine this step with micro-methods of linguistic analysis, such as narratives, or frames. This enables me to make more fine-grained statements on the relevance and value attached to discursive elements, and hence in estimating their respective explanatory weight. Thus, I can show how a certain hegemonic project was discursively accepted. This approach illuminates the exercise of power in these interactions, shedding light on what can and cannot be said for reasons of conventionality in particular discourses (Foucault 1971[1970], 10ff., 39ff.; Milliken 1999, 229f.). This two-fold approach is fruitful for a better understanding of intersubjective, discursive dynamics. In doing so, the study further refines discourse and linguistic analysis in foreign policy.

A short clarification of the concept of mechanism is necessary at this place. Mechanisms are often portrayed as “middle-range theorizing” (Hedström and Swedberg 1998, 6, with reference to Merton) between description and general laws (also Elster 2007, 34ff.; Schelling 1998, 36f.). They put agency and the explanation of individual behavior into the center of the explanatory exercise. This approach became most prominent with Jon Elster’s work on psychological and biological mechanisms (Elster 1983, 20; 2007, 36, 42) or with Charles Tilly’s (1999) work on inequality. Tilly defines mechanisms as “recurrent causal sequences of general scope” (Tilly 1999, 7) that are enacted by agents in social interaction (ibid., 17ff.). Thus, while acknowledging the general and repetitive character of mechanisms in a specific social process (such as structures of inequality), Tilly underlines that ultimately, agents maintain mechanisms – in which agents are to be understood, as laid out in the previous section, in the
decentralized subject-sense as relational beings and not as solipsist individuals. Hence, this understanding of mechanism is not structuralist, and it is careful as to locating causal explanation in the individual, too.

Schelling provides two distinct understandings of mechanisms: for him, a mechanism is:

a plausible hypothesis, or set of plausible hypotheses, that could be the explanation of some social phenomenon, the explanation being in terms of interactions between individuals and other individuals, or between individuals and some aggregate. [...] Alternatively, a social mechanism is an interpretation, in terms of individual behavior, of a model that abstractly reproduces the phenomenon that needs explaining.

(Schelling 1998, 33)

Schelling’s two definitions of mechanisms are closely tied to explaining individual action. They also aim at explaining a social phenomenon in smaller units than the whole through the discovery of a process between cause and effect. Therefore, they bear a close resemblance to the less individualist process-tracing literature (Checkel 2008; George and Bennett 2004). The second definition, however, more strictly conceptualizes mechanisms as abstract, *interpretive models* that are *constructed* for the sake of providing a *best-fit* explanation for observable phenomena. It is this definition that will guide the analysis. Glynos and Howarth suggest that mechanisms should not be understood as subject-independent, as Elster does, but as mechanisms sustained (or abandoned) by subjects within intersubjective interaction (Checkel 2008, 115ff.; Guzzini 2011, 335; Tilly 1999, 8ff.). Thus, they are not a feature of psychological processes, but of discourse, and hence of power relations. This view combines the possibility of subjective agency with the intersubjective production of meanings and relational explanation, refuting methodological individualism (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 95ff.; Tilly 1999, 17ff.). This understanding of mechanisms makes clear that in explaining, we create an analytical model whose primary purpose and added value is to structure experience for causal explanation (Jackson 2017, 12). Jackson formulates this idea of science with reference to Weber’s ideal-types: an ideal-typical model accentuates some traits of observations and defends its truth claim by the instrumental strength of the explanation it provides, not by a reference to reality (cf. also Guzzini 2011, 337; Humphreys 2017a, 6). Such an understanding of explanation frees narrative explanation from the criticism that it provides mere descriptions (Jackson 2011, 143ff.; Weber 2004, Chapter 22). Hence, if we take, as Schelling’s definition suggests, both the constructed character of mechanisms and their intersubjectivity seriously, then maybe we should not attempt to explain individual intentions. We could instead more earnestly embrace Elster’s claim that intentional explanation and causal explanation are distinct (Elster 1983, 25ff., 84ff.). We should accept then that a mechanism explanation – and ultimately: any explanation – must not necessarily aim at including individual intentions. It must not necessary generalize beyond the case,
either, in order to be an explanation. There are evident patterns in human behavior, but the very bottom line is that we should not dismiss explanation in scholarship that does not aim at providing general laws but tries to understand particular cases in depth (Jackson and Nexon 2013, 549).

In line with these considerations, the Essex School argues for taking seriously actors’ “self-interpretations” (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 34) of the world and their behavior for the explanation of politics (cf. also Laclau 2000, 85). It conceives this step as a double-hermeneutical process which accepts, first, actors’ self-interpretations as real social facts, but, second, uses the researcher’s concepts to understand them. We can neither by-pass agents’ interpretations to ascertain a meaningful idea of action, nor can we take them as they are, but we have to show how these interpretations become meaningful for political and social interaction (Erdogan 2017, 7f.; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 891f.). This approach avoids the subject’s inconsistencies and an enclosure into individual particularism. It reflects the scientific community’s practices and concepts of structured knowledge-production and abstraction. Consequently, the Essex School suggests explaining discursive action through three mechanisms, which serve as analytical constructs that render social processes intelligible: the social logic, political logics, and the fantasmatic logic. Together, these logics ideally explain why a certain policy has been chosen by agents at the expense of another through the construction of hegemonic coalitions and discourses.

Social logics

Glynos and Howarth label as social logic everything that characterizes a specific discourse (e.g., European defense, or the Libyan intervention): it defines the objects of discourse, the subject positions created in discourse, involved norms, and rules for behavior. Hence, when investigating the social logic, the researcher looks for what is at stake in a discourse, who is engaged in it claiming what position, and which rules govern the discursive practice (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 137ff.). Self-interpretations of agents (their performance of the discourse) must be structured in accordance with the researcher’s analytical vision. Ultimately, this step informs us about the structure of a discourse, conceptually describing its agents (both those who act in a discourse and those who are named by it), the normative framework of behavior, institutions, and the objects of the debate (cf. also Laclau 2000, 76). Foucault (1989, 20) has already pointed out that who and what is excluded or included into a discourse is a fundamentally political and normative process (cf. also Herschinger 2011, 13). Lebow even puts the quest for influence on behavior and on ideas in politics on an equal footing: “Politics is at least as much about efforts to shape language and ideas as it is to shape behavior” (Lebow 2008a, 556).

In this study, the choice of the discursive agents and the institutional setting is highly selective. I do not simply posit, however, the centrality of the president, the government, and parliament for security and defense discourse. The decision has been made, first, on the grounds of these agents’ constitutional powers in the
respective policy fields and the political practice that ties these actors together in the general foreign policy discourse; second, because of the highly interactive character of parliamentary debate, which allows for following the process of construction of meanings, rules, subjects, etc.; third, on the grounds of the widespread use of these sources in foreign policy scholarship; and fourth reflecting the necessity to bring this study to an end in a reasonable time-span.

Political logics, empty and floating signifiers

The Laclauian concept of political logic can best be described as a perspective on the emergence, performance (also: contestation), and change (or continuity) of a discursive practice. According to Laclau, a political logic always starts with a feeling of lack (in the case of the Libyan intervention discourse, for instance, of safety for and the respect of fundamental rights for the Libyan people), which conversely creates a demand for fullness that can be filled with new demands again. Put in more common discourse-analytical language: there is a dislocation of the discourse because the existing discursive structure can no longer integrate contradicting elements; political agents then try to impose their point of view on a political issue. This process is a struggle for hegemony and the institutionalization of one discursive position as the solely valid description of a social phenomenon (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 143ff.; Laclau 2000, 54ff.). Hegemony is therefore a (temporary and incomplete) attempt at the fixation of meaning (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 115ff.).

This hegemonic struggle can be centrally characterized by the building of relations of equivalence and difference between agents and discursive projects. A logic of equivalence describes the process establishing a we-feeling for a group or a gathering point around a political issue which puts it into antagonisms with other discursive agents and formations. In this logic, differences between group members and their subject-issues are actively lessened to produce – more or less – coherent self-constructions. The logic of difference conceptualizes what makes this we special and distinguishes it positively from others (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 143ff.). Accordingly, the logic of equivalence can be understood as a process of simplification of the political issue at stake, wherein the differences between single discursive elements are overcome for the sake of constructing a unifying discursive formation. At the same time, however, this formation must logically express its differences with other formations so that it can be recognized as a distinctive political project. Thus, logics of equivalence and difference must always be conceived as a dialectical process where one logic implies the other (cf. also Herschinger 2011, 23). To a substantial extent then, discourse theory conceives politics as the construction of meanings, frontiers, and hegemony (Laclau 2005a, 78ff., Chapter 4; Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 105ff., 127ff.). While this is not a new insight (see earlier Neumann 1996; Neumann and Welsh 1991; Tilly 2002, 11), the Essex School’s approach avoids a bias of stability, structural determination, and essentialist power relations by its use of language as an explanatory mechanism. It retains
instead the principle of contingency and social openness because of the role of language. Language and discourse are therefore drivers of change (Hajer 1997, 60; Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 115, 121f.).

Laclau and Mouffe operationalize these two political logics as naming processes in discourse. When a discursive agent succeeds in making her particular discursive articulation universal, the word(s) representing this moment loses its original descriptive quality to signify something other than itself; this discursive element has become an empty signifier representing a new totality, a discursive moment, or a nodal point (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 263f.; Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 112f.). One example of such an empty signifier is the concept of Europe politique in French discourse, which can be charged with very different meanings depending on who utters it. Nevertheless, Laclau acknowledges that empty signifiers are rarely pure and fixed but may be constantly floating between different hegemonic projects. Put differently, the empty signifier describes a situation of established bordering, while the floating signifier belongs to the process of contingent border displacement/formation/discursive change (Laclau 2005a, 131ff.; Nabers 2009, 196). The concept of power defended here is obviously Foucauldian (Dryzek 2005, 9; Hajer 1997, 47ff.). Power is not simply an ability that certain actors have because of a certain social position (what would be hierarchy) or resources, but it is the ability to influence the acceptance of certain meanings, knowledges, and truths in discourses (Foucault 2002, 31ff., 40ff., 47ff., 1990 [1978], 48f.; Guzzini 2017, 5; Onuf 2013 [1989], 210f.). This is not to say that different actors do not have different potentials for influencing discourse and imposing their ideas, but it means that the potential for influence has to go through the actual process of intersubjective performance. Hence, the power a French president has in foreign policy is never immediately determinative of its power over the discursive production of meaning. It is a discursive practice that has different shades and that is so to speak negotiated. Power becomes a relational practice which has its sender but also needs somebody to pick it up (Mills 2004, 15; Schmidt 2008, 310f.).

**Fantasmatic logic (persuasion)**

Finally, Glynos and Howarth go beyond the work of Laclau and Mouffe and conceptualize a third logic, the fantasmatic one (voluntarily to be understood as fantasy). Whereas Laclau vaguely talks about the “force[s] behind” (Laclau 2005a, 101) agents’ efforts to achieve hegemony, Glynos and Howarth explicate that this further logic is needed to make the step from the description of particular self-interpretations to the explanation of politics, and hence to render the choice of specific discursive elements over others intelligible (similarly Jackson 2017, 14; Schmidt 2008, 312). Thus, the fantasmatic logic is concerned with the concrete means of persuasion (one is tempted to say the more small-scale tactics – Glynos and Howarth 2007, 145ff.). For the sake of legibility in the analysis, I will also denote this logic as persuasive logic. Whereas Glynos and Howarth necessarily focus on theory-building in their seminal book on critical explanation, I will shore
up their efforts by showing more extensively how we can make them palpable for analysis. This is what I will use Interpretive Policy Analysis for.

Combining the Essex School and Interpretive Policy Analysis

For theorizing the fantasmatic logic further, I suggest leaning on a large body of literature on linguistic micro-methods in Interpretive Policy Analysis (authoritatively Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006; Cienki and Yanow 2013), Critical Discourse Analysis, and the field of Public Policy Analysis (e.g., Gusfield 1981; Keeler 2007; Rasmussen 2011; Schmidt 2006; Yanow 1992). As do (other) discourse-analytical approaches, these disciplines underline the linkage between language and political struggle. We can use their techniques for weighing the relevance of various discursive elements in the construction of discursive formations, enabling an operationalization of the fantasmatic logic for the analysis of French foreign policy. This study employs two sets of linguistic and discourse-analytical techniques which will be presented on the following pages.

Naming: vocabularies, and subject positions

The process of naming a political issue — the signifying operation — and the use of specific vocabularies for doing this tells us already what is at stake in a discourse and informs about underlying presuppositions (Doty 1993, 306ff.; Hellmann, Weber, and Sauer 2008, 20ff.). For instance, framing the Libyan war as a situation of Responsibility to Protect implies a concept of statehood in which it is the executive’s task to protect its people. It also implies a relationship between the oppressed and the intervening party, as, for instance, the belonging to a democratic community. In Foreign Policy Analysis, authoritative studies using these techniques have been conducted by Doty (1993), Hellmann, Weber and Sauer (2008), and Sjöstedt (2007). Due to the differential way in which language ascribes meaning (when we say that something is small it is not big), this is ex negativo also a statement about what is not at stake, information as interesting as positive qualifications (Fairclough 1992, 77; Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000, 9ff.; also Kratochwil 1989, 34ff.). If a policy is e.g., successfully defended on the basis of joint commercial or industrial interests, switching its defense to an affective character will need another discursive effort to be legitimate. This explanatory approach reflects the counterfactual procedure of constitutive causation, which Lebow (2008b), Wendt (1998, 105ff.), Price and Reus-Smit (1998, 282), and Jackson (2011, 148f., 199; 2017, 14) identify as central for constructivist scholarship and causal explanation. The causal relevance of an idea can be demonstrated both by investigating how it has been made relevant discursively and by establishing the necessary character of an element for an effect — “what it is that makes the possible into the actual” (Price and Reus-Smit 1998, 282) — through an informed assumption about what would have happened had it not been present.

Vocabularies and predications also reflect the formation of subject positions in discursive practice. Subjects of discourse are not just subjects by the quality
of their individuality or office, but by the position they take or are given in a discourse, for instance, as a protector of democracy or anti-capitalist fighter (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 115ff.; Mills 2004, 30). When a subject position is created, it is endowed with distinctive qualities, an identity and legitimacy to participate in a discourse (Fairclough 1992, 43ff.). Subject positions in a discourse can be multiple (Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000, 3f., 12f.): when the discourse is one about protecting fundamental democratic rights, a politician does not only speak as politician granted with an office, but possibly also as a democrat. Hence, looking for subject positions in discourse instructs us about what mainstream constructivists would conceive as concepts of self and otherness, which are central to constructivist and identity-related scholarship in general because they define lines of belonging and not-belonging.

**Framing: frames, narratives, and metaphors**

Whereas subject positions instantiate relations of power between subjects, *frame analysis* is a useful method to understand the set-up of political controversies and the stories which are told to legitimize a policy on a broader level. Frame analysis departs from the observation that a policy is an interwoven construction of facts, values, norms, interests, and ideas about appropriate actions for goal-attainment by specific actors, groups of actors, or organizations (Abolafia 2004; Kratochwil 1989, 32ff.; Rein and Schönbauer 1996; Schmidt 2006). A frame can be characterized as: “a way of selecting, organizing, interpreting, and making sense of a complex reality to provide guideposts for knowing, analyzing, persuading, and acting” (Rein and Schönbauer 1993, 146). Entman (1993, 52ff.) observes that culture provides the repertoire for these selections, organizations, and interpretations of reality that highlight certain aspects of an issue while blinding others. Since values are implicated in these frame constructions, frames are always open to contestation. Accordingly, at first sight policy-motivated (supposedly factual) dispute might reflect more fundamental value disagreements and questions of identity (e.g., Kangas, Niemelä, and Varjonen 2014, 16; Schmidt 2006). Hence, framing is used by agents to make their own perspective for analysis and action hegemonic, drawing on readings of the past, a symbolic negotiation of the policy in question, and the crafting of signals for future action (Abolafia 2004; Charnysh, Lloyd, and Simmons 2014; Entman 1993; Rein and Schönbauer 1993, 1996). Since 2009 for instance, the effectiveness frame is very often used in France when conceptualizing NATO reintegration.

Similarly to frames, *narratives* are also discussed as framing devices. Scholars using narratives instead of frames more broadly apply concepts that derive from literature theory. These scholars pay much attention to the sequence of storytelling. Bruner (1996, 88ff.), Patterson and Monroe (1998), Shenhav (2005, 76, 79f.), or Somers and Gibson (1994) see narratives as fundamental expressive modes of human beings that are frequently used by politicians. They provide a sequential storyline of real or fictional events, drawing on culture, history, or identity, and transport a coherent message from a speaker to an
audience (cf. also Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle 2013, 2ff.). Narratives are then a rhetoric assemblage that weaves discursive elements together:

it is the sequence of the sentences, the way events are recounted (rather than the truth or falsity of any of the particular sentences or of the events recounted) that reveals the speaker’s mode of mental organization. How the speaker organizes events to give meanings to them is what becomes important, for it is the process of organization that reveals much about the speaker’s mind.

(Patterson and Monroe 1998, 316)

Narratives therefore reveal where one comes from and where one is to bring the audience someplace else. They create relationships as causal chains from single events to sequences, communicate identity, share knowledge, embody solutions, and try to rally support for a policy (Tilly 2002). They bring order to a complex world the decision-maker or any other individual must deal with. Narratives allow us to analyze competing positions with a high cultural burden, because narratives can be as contested as frames (Browning 2008; Patterson and Monroe 1998, 317–327; Polkinghorne 1988, 36; Somers and Gibson 1994, 58ff.; Stone 1988, 108ff.). The past and future of Gaullism, for instance, is one of the central narratives of French foreign policy. I see the concept of framing – voluntarily choosing the progressive form here to underline its performative character – as a discursive strategy within which particular symbolic technologies, such as narratives, can be used to persuade people (for strategic narratives in International Relations see Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle 2013; Roselle, Miskimmon, and O’Loughlin 2014).

Finally, for understanding the linkages between discursive elements and their persuasive power, it is useful to investigate the use of metaphors, too, as they carry considerable symbolic weight and inform us about perceptions of the world. Interpretive scholarship investigates metaphors (and other tropes such as metonymy, synecdoche, or antonomasia) to analyze signifying processes and cognitive structures. In metaphors, two elements within unlike domains are brought into a condensed analogy with each other, entailing a relational change (Dumarsais and Fontanier 1967 [1818], art. II, IV, V, X; Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 35ff.; Perelman 1982, 120). This analogy creates new perceptions of the two elements and the focused element in particular (Perelman 1989, 397ff.; Yanow 1992, 5ff.). An example of a metaphor in European integration is, for instance, the house of Europe, denoting the belonging to a common European family today. Accordingly, tropes have a textual dimension in being a means with which relationships can be represented in a specific, meaningful way, and an intertextual component in the necessity to read them as an expression of wider patterns of thought rooted in knowledge specific to an epistemic and linguistic community. (You have to know, for instance, that Europe in the house metaphor refers to the EU.) Drawing on the pragmatist writings of Searle (e.g., 1979) and the paramount work of Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors and other tropes are
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considered to be an organizational device of thought that orders the construction of reality in highlighting some features of a concept while blinding others; they are *A figure of thought* (Lakoff 1986) that is context-specific and contains advice on appropriate and inappropriate action (Perelman 1989, 397ff.; Schön 1979, 254ff.; Stone 1988, 117ff.; Yanow 1992). Therefore, tropes transcend the quality of a solely grammatical phenomenon and reach out to the very structure of how humans perceive the world. Consequently, they can be a valuable tool for the analysis of discursive performances. In the investigation of foreign policy discourse, metaphors tell us something about how an actor sees the world she tries to make sense of or how she wants a policy to be interpreted (and how not, cf. Musolff 2017).

For the purpose of investigating French security and defense policies and its identity during the Chirac and Sarkozy presidencies, I will thus conduct several analytical steps in order to grasp both discursive performances involved in the formation of the respective cases’ discourse, and the way they were assembled for the creation of discourse coalitions and hegemony. Consequently, we can improve our understanding of continuities and changes in French identity and policies, of the relevance of particular identity elements at specific points in time, and with regard to specific issues. Thus, the use of the Essex School and Interpretive Policy Analysis micro-methods increases analytical depth in explaining security and defense policy. Table 1.1 gives an overview of the different analytical concepts and steps.

The preceding discussion has shown that these concepts and steps often imply each other – the investigation of one concept necessitates the use of another (Laclau 2005a, 78). Not all micro-methods have the same importance or salience throughout the research process but depend on the analyzed linguistic performances. Against this background, it seems reasonable to rely on more than one method for analysis. After these clarifications on methods, I will now turn to a final one on causality.

**Daring causality? Yes!**

With the central place attributed to contingency and agency, it is obvious that this study’s explanatory model does not aim at law-like explanations or predictions. In constructivist and poststructuralist scholarship, causation is a disputed term. Wendt (1999, 24ff., 77ff.) is cautious in using the notion of *causality* with its positivist, empiricist, Humean tradition (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994; Suganami 2017, 9) for constitutive explanations. Campbell (1992, 4ff.) or Hansen (2006, 18ff.) exclude causal explanations entirely from poststructuralist approaches. On the contrary, Laffey and Weldes (1997) do not see any need to dismiss causality and explanation in constructivist research that examines the co-constitution of agents and structures. Kratochwil and Ruggie (1986, 765), Price and Reus-Smit (1998), or Torfing (2005, 19) argue in a similar way. Hence, Hollis and Smith’s (1990) distinction between *objectivist explanation* and *interpretive understanding* is misleading (see recently Humphreys 2017b, 1). Kurki
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Table 1.1 Main concepts and methods of analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method/Concept</th>
<th>Definition/Purpose</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discursive element (and floating signifier)</td>
<td>Observable elements of discourse (statements) which can be incorporated into any discursive formation/moment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discursive moment/nodal point, discursive formation</td>
<td>The connection of discursive elements with each other; performances unite elements to describe a policy or an idea. NB: I will use the term discursive moments or nodal point in a rather small-scale concatenation of discursive elements and discursive formation for a larger one, also reflecting a temporal dimension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty signifier</td>
<td>The word/name that stands for a universal claim can be voided of its original meaning to represent the universality, often being a floating signifier, too. The latter term stands in the center of the analysis, as it is more important for the argument about the creation of discursive formations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasmatic logic (also persuasive logic, fantasmatic means)</td>
<td>Conceptualizes what persuasive means are employed by discursive agents to achieve hegemony as the legitimizing basis for policies; the “force behind” (Laclau 2005a, 101) discursive struggle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frames, narratives</td>
<td>Setting of a political issue into a specific perspective involving values, norms, and cues for organizing and interpreting complex reality in a particular way and serving as guideposts for action (e.g., economic frame, rational choice, democratic community).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naming</td>
<td>The process of signification of a discursive element and the achievement of acceptance of this meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political logics of equivalence and difference</td>
<td>Conceptualize how discursive elements are put into a relation to build a supporting discursive formation (equivalence); drawing of boundaries between this formation and others (difference).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social logic</td>
<td>Delineates what a discourse is about; its rules, subjects, institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject positions</td>
<td>Highlight the various positions from which discursive agents speak, both those with which they are endowed with officially (e.g., the president) and which are created in discursive practice (e.g., the defender of human rights, the villain).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: own compilation.

(2008) astutely observed that the disregard of causation and the voluntary self-limitation to non-causal science in poststructuralist scholarship reifies the central position of the positivist concept of causality as a benchmark criterion.38 The Essex School develops a logic of retroductive reasoning which develops its causal model from the data (discourse). Causal explanations – and by virtue
of that: truth claims – are limited to that model. As Glynos and Howarth explicate, there is neither a need to tie deductive reasoning to prediction, nor to equate constant conjunction and prediction with explanation, which Popper implies (Popper 1966, 261ff.; also quoted by Glynos and Howarth 2007, 22; Patomäki 2017, 2f.). Explanation is defined here as intelligibility, practical usability, or “epistemic gain” (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 71, quoting Taylor; Jackson 2017, 10, 17) and sense-making (Dryzek 2005, 11; Kurki 2008, 153ff.). Therefore, explanation becomes a narrative or causal story (Hellmann 2017; Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996, 67; Patterson and Monroe 1998, 324ff.) through which we structure reality by virtue of (our) experience. This necessarily emphasizes some causal factors more than others (Humphreys 2017a, 15). It goes without saying that methodologically, the role attributed to language and discourse here makes evaluating results against an external reality impossible (Jackson 2011, 33ff.). Consequently, the validity of an explanation cannot be measured against an outside and independently existing extra-discursive reality, but in its best fit to the phenomenon under investigation (also Humphreys 2017a, 8). This entails that taking the position of an objective observer is not possible (Herschinger and Renner 2017, 330), but the conduct of structured, scientific analysis is (Adler 2013). Language is therefore considered to be much more than merely ornamental rhetoric and not just a mirror of reality, either (Epstein 2013, 511f.): it “creates reality” (Zehfuss 2004, 153) in a socially meaningful, performative way in the first place. For instance, when both Charles de Gaulle and Nicolas Sarkozy use the norm of autonomy to legitimize their withdrawal from or reintegration into NATO respectively, this is more than a rhetorical exercise: it is an expression of their construction of reality (France–NATO relations) with a signal for action using symbolic codes with a specific ‘conceptual universe’ (Wæver 2002, 29) which is intersubjectively available.

Such analysis of meaning entails careful attention to context. While not claiming absolute, big-T Truth, a narrative analytical approach claims comprehensiveness in developing a complex causal story for a specific case. It does not aim at general laws, but it does make more generic statements than only repeating agents’ interpretations (cf. also Adler 2013, 116, 122f.; Koslowski and Krasnochwil 1994, 225; Zehfuss 2004, 96). While this epistemological basis limits claims for generalization, this concept of explanation can claim at the same time to take into consideration that social processes rarely unfold in a linear way, are not necessarily constant over time, are multi-layered, and vary between countries (Guzzini 2012b, 258ff., 2017, 2, 9f.; Wæver 2002, 31ff., 2005). In studying discourses on central questions of security and defense policy, we can get a picture of (here: French) policies and identity as they are constituted during the time under analysis. The Essex School thus helps us in understanding the causal role of ideas and identity on security and defense policies. Hence, we can write a causal story which explains how France has chosen certain security and defense policies within NATO and Europe at the expense of others (cf. also Bevir 2006; Jackson 2011, Chapter 5, 2017, 12). This broader analysis of the discourse allows for estimating the dispositional causal relevance of various discursive
elements in their specific configuration (Guzzini 2017, 17f.). This equates to a counterfactual procedure that George and Bennett (2004, 213), Guzzini (2012b, 254), or Price and Reus-Smit (1998, 282) qualify as the central element of process-tracing on policy-making. A discourse-theoretical approach like the one of the Essex School seems particularly appropriate to analyzing constructions of meaning in smaller time frames within one discursive arena and thus for investigating within-country developments (Wæver 2002, 24). Figuratively speaking, this approach can cash the chip of constructivist scholarship, which claims that environments shape identities (ideas in general) and behavior (and vice versa, cf. Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996, 52ff.). The approach shows how this shaping takes place.

On a side note, in this research design, it is impossible to categorically differentiate between policies on the one hand and discourses on the other: policies and discourses are mutually constitutive in the sense that policies are formulated within a discursive structure and influence the very discursive structure they emerge from reciprocally. Both are social practices and performative in the sense of speech act theory (Austin 1955, 94ff.; Onuf 2013 [1989], 23). In her study on Deterrence by Diplomacy, Sartori (2005, 4) observes that the announcement of a certain foreign policy is always more than just speaking, but part of the implementation and hence the performance of this policy already. Campbell similarly explains that foreign policy is specifically characterized by its intense struggle over words and meanings:

*The impossibility that understanding can occur outside of discourse – which means that the discursive/nondiscursive distinction is unsustainable – is made even more definite in the realm of world politics and international relations by the overtly textual nature of the domain. Indeed, U.S. foreign policy is quite literally concerned with the power of writing and with texts as the facts of power. [...] we can declare without overstatement that the conduct of foreign policy depends upon and has a predilection for texts.*

(Campbell 1993, 9)

This statement can apply to France, too, whose foreign policy discourse is saturated with ideational and symbolic struggle over encompassing cultural concepts like national grandeour, democratic universalism, or global actorness. Policy is constructed in discursive practice in a specific discursive arena providing “webs of significance” (Yee 1996, 95) through which environmental influences are interpreted and possible policy choices are signified as appropriate or inappropriate ones (cf. also Milliken 1999, 240ff.). Hence, the discourse on French security and defense policy and identity that will be analyzed here is not the same as the policies’ enactment toward the world outside France, but it is part of it and therefore, it at least contributes to the explanation of foreign policy. We cannot understand the latter without the former. Discourse gives meaning to policies.

It goes without saying, too, that this (any) study exclusively analyzes parts of a discourse, in this case the executive and parliamentary one. Hence, this study
represent an elite approach that does not investigate a possible split with mass opinion. This decision reflects the practice of French security and defense policies, which shows a strong presidential authority, but this choice also takes into account more recent developments that aim for a stronger parliamentary control of the military via mission extension votes, as enshrined in Article 35 of the reformed French constitution of 2008 (Ostermann 2017; Wagner et al. 2017a).

**Case selection, documents, and the research process**

This study will engage with three cases to make its point on security and defense policy and identity change in the realm of NATO and Europe. For increasing reliability and for having a comparative case that can be used for counterfactual explanation in the absence of controlled comparison (George and Bennett 2004, 214), the empirical analysis will start with the attempt at NATO reintegration under Chirac between 1995 and 1997. While this period has been researched a lot from various angles (e.g., Andréani 2000; Bryant 2004, 2000; Howorth and Menon 1997; Hunter 2002; Menon 2000; Pascallon 2007), as far as my knowledge carries me, there is no other study that combines these two periods in a single analytical framework that investigates policies and identity.

For the years of the Sarkozy presidency (2007–2012), I am analyzing two time periods, falling in its beginning and its end. The combination of a case on institutional policies (NATO reintegration 2007–2009) with a military operation (Libya, 2011–2012) creates a most-different design. Hence, it is promising for investigating the development of the discourses, identity, and policies in different contextual situations – notably in the hot realm of military action – which remain connected nevertheless. Accordingly, the case for identity change can be hardened. The selection of the cases according to their generally accepted centrality and cultural and political relevance is providing the necessary legitimacy and methodologically sufficient condition for both comparison and structured analysis (George and Bennett 2004, 23, 30ff.). Both NATO and Europe occupy the central place in French security and defense thinking and strategy, and they are deeply interconnected.

The research process borrows from grounded theory (Strauss 1987, 5–14; Strauss and Corbin 1998; Glaser and Strauss 1967) and qualitative content analysis. The methodical baseline is that the analysis sticks close to the text and works mainly with the original or coded parts of it. In doing so, it is possible to grasp small changes in meaning and interactions. In the realm of qualitative content analysis, Rust (1980), Mayring (2000b) suggest an analytical approach that combines a rule-driven, hermeneutic analysis with creative openness for the discovery of new meanings through the application of both deductive and inductive steps of categorization and feedback loops. Therefore, the analysis works both with previously defined codes (categories) and enlarges its coding scheme during the research process (Mayring 2000a, 2000b, 2005) to take into account unanticipated issues (Baumann 2006, 94ff.; Duffield 1998, 38; Ragin 2004, 130). This manual coding procedure assures that the big advantage of discourse
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analysis in validity is preserved. A qualitative analysis software has been used to facilitate retrieval, consistency checks, and coding refinement.

To achieve a high social and intersubjective validity, the inclusion of documents beyond the executive is crucial (Diez 1999a, 88; Hansen 2006, 61f.). Parliamentary debates have emerged as a central avenue of scholarly work in Foreign Policy Analysis (e.g., Geis, Müller, and Schörnig 2014b; Larsen 1997; Schörnig 2007; Wagner 2002; for an overview see Raunio 2014). These debates do not only inform us about ideational backgrounds, but are part of the place where public struggle performs reality and where the struggle for hegemony itself takes place. The coding distinguishes between left and right-wing parliamentarians, members of the executive, and presidential speech acts (see also the Excursus below). Next to two presidents, 26 members of government as well as 450 lawmakers have been coded. Given the large time frames of 18 to 36 months in the different cases, the degree of construction of the discourse by the researcher will be substantial: statements will be put into relationship with each other which do not have this relationship on their own (as they would, for instance, in a single parliamentary debate). Debate on allied and European defense, however, has also been concatenated around some key presidential interventions and debates in parliament. Then, the degree of constructedness of the discourse by the researcher decreases considerably, when e.g., equivalences or differences between discursive elements are drawn by the agents themselves and persuasive means are most clearly deployed.

All documents were searched for an important keyword of the respective cases. These keywords were *otan* (French for NATO) for the two reintegration cases and *libye* for the Libyan intervention one.41 Documents were mostly downloaded from elysee.fr, assembleenationale.fr, senat.fr, and vie-publique.fr and the respective archive sites of the institutions.42 Selected documents include: declarations, interviews, letters, newspaper articles, online articles, press conferences, and speeches for the presidential part of the apparatus. I have excluded the agenda of the president, the agenda of the Council of Ministers, travel summaries, and communiqués; the latter function more as very short records of activities, often not consisting of more than a few lines. For parliament, I use plenary transcripts (*comptes rendus*). These transcripts also contain questions to the government and answers. Documents from the committees, reports, laws, and delegation transcripts were excluded because the plenary material was already rich, and because the debates are most promising for knowing about ideational struggle (cf. also Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). Central deliberations such as the foreign, security, and defense budget debates in parliament, the presidential speeches on the Conference des ambassadeurs, or general debates on governmental declarations are part of the apparatus.43 Due to the richness of the executive and parliamentary apparatus, administrative officials below the state-secretary level and military personnel have not been included in the analysis to focus on public speech acts and their legitimatory function instead. The according operationalization of foreign policy discourse can be considered sufficiently relevant and, due to the comprehensiveness of the material, dense enough
to allow for general statements on French foreign policy, its underlying identity, and behavioral heuristics (such as role models, norms) to be made.

I opted for keeping the coding procedure manual. In doing so, I tried to create a balance between reliability and retrieval through PC-coding on the one hand, and inductive openness, linguistic analysis, contextual sensibility, and closeness to the texts on the other. Coding was done on the paragraph level, assuring an adequate coverage of context. I coded beyond a single paragraph when an idea was continued in the following paragraph or interrupted due to interjections in parliamentary debates. For checking whether important utterances have been overlooked, I also applied automated semantic field queries on major codes. As regards the analysis’s central topics, only little codings had to be added. Neither the search nor the added codings, however, contributed any new dimensions that had not been found previously.

Outline of the book

Having outlined the relevance and need for a new discussion of continuity and change in French NATO and European defense policies and Franco-American relations, the point for a novel theoretical and methodical perspective on French policies and identity has now been made. Before the empirical analysis begins in Chapter 2, the book proceeds to a short overview on two issues that put the analysis into context. First, the institutional and agentive features of French foreign policy discourse (its structure) will be laid out, so that this does not have to be done extensively at the beginning of each empirical chapter. Second, an overview on the French party system will be given in order to make the positions that are taken in the discourse more comprehensible.

Chapter 2 contributes the first of three discourse analyses of France’s NATO and European security and defense policies. It expounds President Chirac’s failed attempt at NATO reintegration between 1995 and 1997 and the launch of ESDP. The analysis discusses how the NATO reintegration policy connects to lessons from the end of the Cold War, the role of the U.S. in the new world order, and how France can relate to this. Whereas the right majority maintains that these changes in world order allow for reintegration without giving up Gaullism, performances of othering the U.S. and their dominance hinder reintegration principally on the left. Only in the EU can grandeur, autonomy, and the maintenance of a global role for France be reconciled, whereas the right-wing majority connects these aspects to NATO reintegration, too. Logics of equivalence and difference will be of particular use for distinguishing between various discursive projects. Discussing European security and defense policies, it will become clear that Europe puissance (what freely translates to the EU as an independent power) is built on an identity-project of the political center that consists of both tremendous steps of institutionalization and capability improvements to enable EU actorness in security and defense. Questions of NATO’s Europeanization as a precondition of reintegration and deliberations about autonomy and influence are still central. They mark a major discursive battleground between
the two particular political projects, with the left rejecting the possibility of ceding autonomy for realizing influence in the alliance. While the right argues for achieving influence by integration, the left only conceives this as an option in Europe, if at all. These differences help us in estimating the role autonomy plays as social logic of the discourse. The failure of reintegration will be explained in the context of cohabitation, which will be rejected as the sole explanation of the end of the policy. In 1997, the reactivation of a latent idea of U.S. dominance in the right majority combines with the search for European autonomy against NATO reintegration.

Chapter 3 investigates the reintegration policy of President Sarkozy between 2007 and 2009 and its articulation with European security and defense policies. It will demonstrate that the discourse on NATO and its connection to French identity and policies have not lost anything of their vividness between the two opposing camps (still a right majority/president and a left opposition). More effectiveness and the achievement of actorness capabilities are established, however, as major discursive rules against a narrow-minded understanding of Gaullist autonomy. Hence, they denote a new social logic. This powerful discourse on the right is amended by the central concept of joining their own democratic, western family via NATO reintegration, an element that has been newly moved to the center of discourse. Against this background, autonomy is not perceived as being lost; influence can be increased; and rather than threatening grandeur, it is indeed argued that it must be saved by reintegration. The balance in Gaullism between autonomy and influence-seeking is thus changed in favor of the latter. Hence, reintegration does not stand in contradiction to still powerful demands for Europe puissance. A so far largely unrecognized development begins, however, that moves away from the emphasis on institutionalization as part of the European defense identity project, starting to favor pragmatic progress and actorness instead. Due to the under-theorizing of this ideational change in existing literature, the symbolic relevance of NATO reintegration has not been properly taken into account in continuity explanations. Reflecting these developments, the political right can relax the strong conditionality of NATO reintegration on prior progress in its Europeanization. They rather conceive of reintegration as a chance to push CSDP further. This is a gamble too dangerous for the left. Altogether, the realm of appropriate policy choices is redefined, and the relevance of autonomy in the social logic of the discourse decreases.

Chapter 4 looks at how the previously analyzed identity construction is put to a test in a crisis situation, the Libyan war, in 2011. It will be maintained that the Libyan War has been a tipping point for French security and defense policies. The EU’s immobility could no longer cater to the rules of effectiveness and actorness capabilities developed in discourse during the 2007–2009 NATO reintegration process, which have now become prevalent throughout the political spectrum. Simultaneously, the center-left Socialists and Radicals have downgraded their NATO and U.S. criticism considerably in the wake of these European disappointments, which signals a shift in the political and social logics of discourse. It will be argued that although French claims for grandeur and specificity are still
transferred to Europe, the political project of *Europe puissance* through the EU and CSDP is seriously challenged by the EU’s immobility. The chapter lays out that while French security and defense policy still *Europeanizes*, it *de-unionizes*, while developing a new ease with NATO at the same time. CSDP’s identity dimension and narrative are practically evacuated from the discourse at the expense of resignifying security and defense cooperation along pragmatic lines that pay attention to tackling an issue effectively with or without the involvement of CSDP. NATO reintegration is thus resignified after the fact. Altogether, the Gaullist legacy has been considerably reconfigured under Sarkozy to the point of vanishing.

The conclusions of this study (Chapter 5) take stock of the possibilities of using the discourse-theoretical, post-structuralist program of the Essex School and Interpretive Policy Analysis methods, underlining its contribution to the explanation of foreign policies. Thereafter, it will finally discuss the changes that have occurred in French policies and identity. In the Epilogue, I will provide a brief look at how French NATO and European security and defense policies have continued under the presidents succeeding Sarkozy, François Hollande (2012–2017) and Emmanuel Macron (since 2017). This is done in order to corroborate the claim for fundamental policy and identity change, which is fully affirmative and invalidates the argument that French NATO policies from 2007 to 2012 have been the mere consequence or result of a pro-American president: Hollande did not introduce any changes to the new Sarkozian legacy but mainly continued it with his policies. New challenges emerged though when dealing with Brexit and the election of Donald J. Trump as U.S. president, mainly concerning Macron’s presidency. Theoretically, the Epilogue will come back to the unstable understanding of identity that has been theorized above.

Notes

1 A structural disposition toward anti-Americanism in French politics is refuted by numerous authors (Bryant 2004, 125f.; Heumann 2005, 123; Stahl 2006, 112).

2 If not quoted directly, frequent terms used in the French documents and vocabulary that exemplifies semantic fields are given in italics (also in parentheses, keeping the French original). In the sentence, I refrain from translation when the original French is easily understandable for etymological reasons. All translations from French and German are my own.


4 Cerny (1980, 5, 147, 223) is even more skeptical toward external power considerations in de Gaulle’s policies. He argues that *grandeur* policies and NATO withdrawal did not change anything in the relative power gap between the two countries. Instead, they meant to create a situation in which France could more freely decide on what to cooperate, and with whom (ibid., 270). Hence, Cerny underlines the symbolic dimension of *grandeur* policies in making the Americans understand the limits of their own universalism against the claims and interests of other nations.

5 Gaullism centrally reminds us of the importance of status-seeking for world politics, as theorized in realist (Gilpin 1981; Morgenthau 2006 [1948], 90) and post-realistic
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status scholarship (Neumann 2014; Paul, Welch Larson, and Wohlforth 2014; Wood 2013). The interpretation of French status-seeking in terms of this literature though is an ambivalent endeavor. While the general thread that states seek prestige and status to achieve authority and legitimacy is intuitively compelling for France, three observations must be made: first, the strong enmity and war-peace threads of this literature (e.g., Sartori 2005; Paul, Welch Larson, and Wohlforth 2014) pose a problem of fit to Franco-American relations; after all, France and the U.S. are close allies. At best, “status enhancement”, rather than “displacement” (Welch Larson and Shevchenko 2014, 37) might be at stake, while it might make more sense to see Franco-American disagreements through the lens of intra-institutional bargaining than through hegemon-challenger relations (Brooks and Wohlforth 2005). As shown above and below, other motives – if we stay with this socio-psychological language of this literature for a moment – have been more salient in French politics. Second, while status literature today has a sound theoretical basis in social identity theory, which stipulates the relevance of self-esteem for individuals and groups in comparison to others (e.g., Welch Larson and Shevchenko 2014; Volgy et al. 2014; cf. also Weber 1970, 160; Markey 1999, 138f., citing Rousseau), it remains puzzling why certain states strive for more prestige and status (France) than others (Germany). Although Volgy et al. (2014, 60) suggest a combination of capabilities, willingness, and status recognition to explain status policies (see also Neumann 2014), this study suggests that the French search for prestige is more grounded in identity-defining narratives of democratic and cultural universalism. Third, the above literature suggests that status-recognition is as important as the willingness to opt for status policies in the first place. French NATO reintegration in 2009, however, was met with much reluctance as to whether it would be followed up by new French policies (e.g., Bickerton 2010; Gardiner and McNamara 2009). If the ultimate purpose of policies of prestige is to have a “reputation for power” – as Morgenthau (2006 [1948], 90) defines prestige – and one way of demonstrating it is diplomatic ceremonial (next to military capabilities), then France did not increase its power position tremendously. These observations on status theory are not meant to discredit these approaches altogether. What this reflection should highlight though is that claims for prestige must be analyzed in the context of the overall foreign policy identity, their manifestation in and articulation with concrete policies.

6 A broad scholarly discussion spun around whether the implementation of ESDP should be interpreted as some sort of balancing of the U.S. via the EU (affirmatively Burmester 1997; Pape 2005; Paul 2005; Posen 2006; opposingly Bickerton 2011; Brooks and Wohlforth 2005; Howorth and Menon 2009; Lieber and Alexander 2005).

7 Sarkozy was personally known to be America-friendly. He already made many favorable remarks on behalf of the U.S. as a presidential candidate (Jarreau, Leparmentier, and Ridet 2006). This earned him the reproach of being a neoliberal economist and of being Atlanticist (for a critical appreciation of this see Bozo 2008, 2f.; Jones 2011, 19ff.; Lepri 2010).

8 Müller-Brandec-Bocquet (2009, 98) notes that France had a total of 280 personnel in NATO bodies in 2004, of which 100 officers in SHAPE. Rieker only gives a number of 110, but is unclear on whether this refers to the state before or after an agreement has been reached in 2004 (Rieker 2013, 384). Müller-Brandec-Bocquet’s numbers amount to approximately 10 percent of the German or British contribution at that time. She underlines, however, that French officers were not part of the standing command chain, and therefore no senior positions were held (cf. also Bozo 2010, 179). Maulny (2010, 113) estimates that the number of officers to be dispatched to the command structures will be a total of roughly 1000. Rieker tells us that as of February 2012, 700 officers have been deployed, equaling 11 percent of all posts. Hence, a considerable increase in numbers has taken place.

9 Lellouche (2009, 240) states though that the NPG was only of little relevance since the end of the Cold War.
Howorth (2010, 15) and Kempin (2009, 16f.) underline that the French military establishment had long been principally supportive of NATO reintegration for reasons of military pragmatism.

In Wendt’s words: “Without interests identities have no motivational force, without identities interests have no direction” (Wendt 1999, 231).

Talmor and Selden (2017) conducted a media analysis and interviews with members of the foreign policy elite resulting in similar conclusions on their levels of analysis. They did not investigate executive and parliamentary documents and the intersubjective construction of meaning though, as this study does. Rieker (2017) focuses on status-seeking/maintenance and micro-practices of foreign policy/diplomacy rather than discursive interactions. Her results are thus complementary.

Adler asserts that “It may be only a slight exaggeration to say that if constructivism is about anything, it is about change” (Adler 2013, 123, emphasis in the original).

Zehfuss (2004, 237 et al.) makes a compelling point about the German debate on military intervention, where material shortcomings of the German armed forces were seen as a problem that had to be tackled rather than as a hindrance to policies. Hence, material shortcomings did not pose a “crucial limit to reality construction” (ibid., 237).

Duffield (1998, 27) uses the notion of culture in the same way as identity is used in the other sources.

Discourse analysis uses a broad notion of text including written, spoken, and other forms of language (Diez 1999a, 44; Gamson and Lasch 1980; Hansen 2006, 23).

One might make the objection that some traditions, habits, or rules are so self-understanding that they are not articulated but are relevant nevertheless. I think that this is a problematic position on two levels. First, it suggests a totalizing idea of politics in which identity, culture, or policies are completely uncontested between different agents. Second, such a position runs into structural determinism and excludes the possibility for agency. This is a position incompatible with both discourse analysis and constructivism. Even more importantly, it dismisses patterns of empirical variability that we can clearly recognize in domestic and world politics.


Kratochwil (1989, 65f.) distinguishes norms (or rules) from values in that the former are specifically directed toward action, whereas the latter are a more general statement of attitudes.

Onuf (2013 [1989], 36) holds that to constitute and to construct are synonymous.

The following sections represent more extensive discussions of my first attempt at rolling out the Essex School with IPA methods in Ostermann (2016).


Jackson (2011, 77ff.) coins this position as transfactualism. Many psychological mechanism-explanations rely on this procedure. Wendt (1999, 136ff.) positions his variety of constructivism in a similar way.

Drawing on the later Wittgenstein’s thoughts on the value of ordinary language, meanings can be understood as both unstable and open enough to allow for change due to the indeterminacy and conventionality of linguistic construction. At the same time, they are stable enough for the possibility of communication and acting in the world (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 36f.; Hellmann 2006, 207; Patomäki 2017, 5ff.).
This is not to say that individual intentions do not exist, but we can never access subjective individuality and intentionality appropriately in a language-related ontology; therefore, we cannot construct a model that considers agents of whatever kind (individual, organizational, institutional) as independent agents that exist only for themselves and act on behalf of their own beliefs, ideas, convictions, or interests that are not socially and linguistically constructed (Bevir 2006, 287ff.; Diez 1999a, 49; Howarth 2005, 320; Laclau 2005b, 3; Patterson and Monroe 1998, 328).

Larsen’s study is sort of a hybrid between IR and FPA, but he does not make wide use of the logics approach.

I have tested this design before in a study on the construction of the Libyan War intervention in France (Ostermann 2016).

The neglect of an analysis of power that has been recognized as the caveat of constructivist scholarship (Guzzini 2000; Williams 2007) is thus avoided.

Positivist authors usually claim that mechanisms can offer a causal model to correlative, quantitative methods (George and Bennett 2004, 205; Hedström and Swedberg 1998, 8ff.; Schelling 1998, 33, 36ff.).

This conceptualization of the achievement of hegemony develops the idea-resonance hypothesis of Risse et al. (1999) further by endowing it with a concrete model of how resonance happens and is used for goal-attainment.

Tilly (1999, 7; 2002, 11) adopts a similar concept of bordering when talking about processes of social exclusion and inequality.

The two terminological pairs: self/other, subject/object do not describe principally different processes of differentiation, but rather emanate out of different research traditions.

Narratives and frames are often used interchangeably. Storytelling or narratives are sometimes referred to as framing techniques (Rein and Schöen 1996), while other work is more interested in critical analysis of framing moves (Abolafia 2004; Schmidt 2006). Feldman et al. (2004, 149) also refer to stories as subsets of larger narratives. Miskimmon et al. (2013, 7) underline that in opposition to mere discursive frames, narratives issue causal understandings of the world and are oriented toward the future.

See extensively the April 2013 issue of the Journal of International Relations and Development (Cienki and Yanow 2013). Spencer (2012) gives a good overview of the use of metaphor analysis in IR.

More precisely, the two relationships between element and domain are brought into an analogy (also Dumarsais and Fontanier 1967 [1818], art. X). Perelman gives the seminal example: “From the classical example of analogy ‘old age is to life what the evening is to the day,’ we derive the metaphors ‘old age of the day,’ ‘evening of life,’ or ‘old age is an evening.’” (Perelman 1982, 120).

Ruggie (1998b, 869) distinguishes “reasons for actions” from “causes of actions.” In his thinking, reasons do not cause an effect directly, but enable a causal factor to have its “specific effect.” Ruggie gives the example of “the aspiration for a united Europe” (emphasis in the original) as reason for the European integration process, whereas “bipolarity and economic interests” might have been the causal factors. If this reason was necessary for producing the “specific effect” of European integration, there is, however, principally no need to dismiss it as causal factor (cf. also Humphreys 2017b, 3).

This is also a problem of Larsen’s (1997, Chapter 4 and 183) study on Europeanization in French foreign policy: it refers to discourse analysis as understanding scholarship and labels other approaches as explaining, while keeping the analysis of discourses and policies apart. Hence, Larsen does not really show how discourses matter, but rather states that they do.

Recently, Suganami (2017) and others have started to question the regularity assumption in Humean concepts of causation.
This is an important explanatory point due to the epistemic reality that formally, French parliamentarians do not usually make decisions in the field of foreign policy except for ex-post mission extensions and in those specific cases where the government asks them to do so (Ostermann 2017). (This happened in the case of NATO reintegration under Sarkozy though, so that this analysis indeed contains such an instance of decision-making.) The causal model posits though that identity and ideas matter causally as social conditions influencing the realm of appropriate policy choices. Hence, they are not efficient causes where A precedes B or makes B more probable, but constitutive ones (Guzzini 2017, 2ff.). Therefore, the analysis of executive-parliamentary discourse is one kind of a causal explanation.

I opted for the keyword *otan* because European and allied defense cannot be disentangled in French politics. A cross-check for *défense européenne* for the 1990s case conducted on presidential documents on vie-publique.fr produced only a bit more than a third of the results that have been produced for *otan* (47 to 126 documents for the whole years 1995 to 1998). Out of these 47 documents, only five have not been part of the results for *otan*. *Otan* also produces results for the adjective *otanien/otanienne*, while searching for *europ~* would have produced too fuzzy results. For the same reasons, the keyword *libye* was chosen over *Libya*.

The official webpage of the *Élysée* could only be used for the Libya case analysis, as with the inauguration of Hollande, all documents prior to his presidency were deleted from the webpages. Upon consultation of the National Library and the National Archives, *vie-publique.fr* was used instead to collect presidential documents.

For parliamentary documents, I have limited the textual data to interactions including the central keywords of the respective case, starting and ending with the speech of the respective lawmaker in whose speech the keyword appeared. If such a clear delineation was impossible, the document was kept entirely. Before opting for the dismissal of parts of a protocol or a whole document, the respective data was screened with more keywords from the security and defense field. A detailed list of excluded documents can be obtained from the author. Due to further steps being conducted on the basis of the coded passages, the different length of the documents does not entail a skewing of e.g., word-frequency searches.

Studies in party positioning have also shown that automatized word-count coding has difficulties in producing reliable and valid results compared with a manual procedure that is able to deal with semantic connotations and linguistic practice (Budge and Pennings 2007, 125ff.).
**Excursus**

General characteristics of French foreign policy discourse – agents and parties

**The general structure of French foreign policy discourse**

This section will provide an overview of the basic social logics of French foreign policy, security, and defense discourse regarding institutions and rules, bearing in mind though that the poststructuralist analytical framework considers structures to be in flux and subject to processes of (re)construction and change. The empirical analysis will then highlight particular case contexts and possible changes.

The Introduction has shown that the French president profits from a powerful and preeminent position in the Fifth Republic’s constitution, but she is constrained in her exercise of power nevertheless. The president does not have the right to address parliament directly but only through the reading of a speech; the only exception is joint sessions of the Assemblée nationale and the Sénat for constitutional changes (Assemblée nationale 2011, art. 18). Given the predominant position of the president in foreign policy, however, she will usually define the government’s position when the government, the parliamentary majority, and the president belong to the same political family. Nevertheless, even in times of *cohabitation* when more coordination with an ideologically hostile majority in parliament and the government is needed, the president’s role as the ‘guarantor of national independence, of the integrity of the territory and of the respect of treaties’ (art. 5, my translation), as commander-in-chief (art. 15), and as negotiator of international treaties (art. 52) assures her the leadership position in foreign policy practice. This counts for the security and defense realm in particular. The Élysée operates a considerable staff of special envoys and advisors which give the president direct administrative leverage next to the administrative power of the ministries (Vaïsse 2009, 33ff.). To a substantial extent then, foreign policy is the “domaine régalien par excellence” (Vaïsse 2009, 16) of the president and her *domaine réservé* (freely translated as royal prerogative). This domain has been established beyond the realm of constitutional stipulations in a practice of presidential leadership, strongly shaped by the eminent personality of Charles de Gaulle (Kimmel 2005, 256ff.; Menon 2000, 149ff.). Conversely, the prime minister remains rather weak, while the ministers of foreign affairs and defense are often confidants of the president, executing his policies (Stahl 2006,
References


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