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French political symbolism and identity construction

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Abstract

The present study examines how the language of political symbolism operates within the framework of identity construction. It focusses on the themes of sovereignty during the 2022 French presidency of the European Union and the national presidential election campaign. On the basis of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, it suggests that, apart from purely linguistic features, extra-linguistic factors are also essential in order to convey a global view of symbolic rhetoric. The analysis is conducted according to an overall 6-tier model of figurative origins involving the parameters of personal background, political context, cultural history, reference, conceptual metaphor and linguistic metaphor. By applying the parameters of the model, it is proposed that the core of political argumentation in the corpus analysis is based on national symbols and the conceptual mapping they embody. The basic hypothesis of the model assumes that a politician attempts to portray the symbolisation of unity in accordance with his or her political background and personal biography. A political narrative is thereby created within the current political context using predominant symbols in cultural history. An over-riding factor is the role of referential points which may determine divergence in conceptual mapping. These features then lead to the construction of conceptual metaphors which can take on a particularly hyperbolic structure in the ensuing linguistic metaphors. The implications of the study highlight the important role of symbolism in political debate, its interaction with conceptual metaphor, the relevance of extra-linguistic factors portrayed by the 6-tier model, the link between cultural history and hyperbolic linguistic structures and political divergence in similar symbols.

Keywords: *metaphor and symbolism, discourse analysis, figurative origins, identity construction, sovereignty, French politics*

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Французский политический символизм и конструирование идентичности

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Аннотация

Цель статьи – рассмотреть, как язык политического символизма функционирует в построении идентичности. Основное внимание уделяется теме суверенитета во время председательства Франции в Европейском Союзе в 2022 г. и национальной президентской избирательной кампании. На основании теории концептуальной метафоры высказывается мысль о том, что для глобального взгляда на символическую риторику, помимо чисто языковых особенностей, важны и экстралингвистические факторы. Анализ проводился с использованием шестиуровневой модели истоков образности, включающей следующие параметры: личные биографические данные, политический контекст, культурная принадлежность, референция, концептуальная метафора и языковая метафора. Применение данных параметров модели в корпусном анализе позволяет предположить, что суть политической аргументации опирается на национальные символы и воплощаемую ими концептуализацию. Согласно гипотезе, лежащей в основе модели, политик конструирует символы единства в соответствии с собственным политическим прошлым и личной биографией. Таким образом, политический нарратив создается в текущем политическом контексте с использованием символов, превалирующих в истории культуры. Главным фактором является роль опорных точек, которые могут определять расхождения в концептуальном картировании мира. Эти особенности затем приводят к построению концептуальных метафор, которые могут гиперболизироваться в последующих языковых метафорах. Результаты исследования указывают на важную роль символизма в политических дебатах, его взаимодействие с концептуальной метафорой, значимость экстралингвистических факторов, связь между историей культуры и гиперболизированными лингвистическими структурами, а также политические расхождения в сходных символах.

Ключевые слова: *метафора и символизм, дискурс-анализ, истоки образности, конструирование идентичности, суверенитет, французская политика*

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1. Introduction: Political symbolism and conceptual mapping

The role of politically-oriented symbolism is often considered to be the promotion of a unifying force in a nation. The waving of a flag by supporters at a football match is an illustration of how this effect is achieved. The colours and designs of national flags inspire a sense of belonging to the ideals of the country they represent. It can be seen that symbolism generally has this objective of identity construction and the role of unification. The questions which may be raised here are what cognitive processes are involved in the creation of symbolic discourse, where the origins are and how they are used to construct political identity.

Various attempts have been made at defining symbolism and its political implications. It has been suggested that a symbol itself may take on any form from a vast array of different concepts (Theiler 2017). They can include an object, a person, a word, a performance, or a gesture that represents a political institution, hierarchy, movement, belief or ideology. As a consequence, there are a number of implications from this extensive range. First, a symbol may simplify fairly complex political structures within one representation, as in the example of a national flag. Second, it can enhance the emotions as in pride, moral commitment or self-sacrifice. Third, it may promote a certain degree of cognitive cohesiveness by rallying the population, not only around a football team, but also around a particular political movement.

In conceptual mapping, and particularly with Conceptual Metaphor Theory in mind (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), a specific symbol therefore represents the target domain, and the source domain would incorporate any number of themes. In the example of the football match above, nation X is mapped onto symbol Y (the flag). In this study, the themes of political sovereignty and liberty will be analysed and how they are mapped onto conceptual metaphors with underlying national symbolism. As a result, the theme of liberty may also be mapped onto a symbol. The mapping can then produce any number of linguistic metaphors which are embodied in specific conceptual metaphors.

Studies in cognitive linguistics have suggested that symbols are often based on well-entrenched metaphors in culture and that the interpretation of symbols implies defining which conceptual metaphors can be created (Kövecses 2005: 172ff). An example of this definition is the symbol of the Statue of Liberty which represents the themes of liberty, knowledge and justice. A number of different symbolic aspects are embodied in the statue. Among these are the fact that it beckons immigrants into a land of liberty depicted by the Roman goddess, *Libertas*. The torch in her hand represents light symbolising knowledge and the broken shackle and chain at her feet stand for the abolition of slavery. Within the overall representation of the statue, there are thus mappings which relate to America's cultural history. The flood of immigration at the time the statue was erected can be seen in the notion of a woman beckoning to her children. The symbol of light, as in the Christian religion, depicts knowledge and the broken chain illustrates the history of slavery. As a result, symbolic mappings from source to target domains, with the use of capital letters as a standard formula in cognitive linguistics, may be interpreted as: a) LIBERTY IS THE GODDESS *LIBERTAS*; b) KNOWLEDGE IS A TORCH; and c) THE END OF SLAVERY IS A BROKEN CHAIN. The theme of liberty in this case is thereby mapped onto a goddess in the heritage of Western civilisation; knowledge is mapped onto the symbolic light of a torch and justice is mapped onto the end of slavery. The overall objective of the statue is to unite American values and ideas according to their culture.

The example above of the Statue of Liberty demonstrates the fact that there is a unifying force in symbolic mapping which appears to be unidirectional in identity

construction. The description of the statue portrays a unified identity of national ideals projected in the same direction. The following discussion also suggests that symbolic interpretation can be multidirectional. This may trigger alternative emotions in different people and, as a result, mappings diverge towards other conceptual directions. It has been suggested that multidimensional implications of symbolisation can mobilise antagonistic political factions (Gill & Angosto-Ferrandez 2018). As a result, they may lead just as much to power struggles as to political unity.

2. Theoretical foundation: Models of figurative origins

Many of the discussions centred on the creation of metaphor in the cognitive linguistic field have focussed primarily on the role of conceptual metaphor and their related linguistic metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, Lakoff 1987). If the origins of figurative language are analysed in greater depth, it may be observed that there are other factors which play a part at the very beginning of figurative innovation, particularly with regard to extra-linguistic influence. Furthermore, the aspect of symbolism has tended to play a relatively minor role in cognitive linguistic studies.

A recent model of figurative origins suggests that there is a minimum 6-tier construct of parameters involved within a broader methodological approach (Trim 2022). Corpus studies in literary discourse analysis tend to bear this out. The present study suggests that political discourse corpora would appear to follow similar lines. Fig. 1 below visually represents an outline of the model with the different parameters involved. The arrows pointing downwards represent the direction of analysis when tracing the origins of figurative language from a given text. The arrows pointing upwards illustrate the direction of conceptual mapping starting out from the state of mind of the person who creates the figurative items. The process of creation may, of course, involve all steps at once but analytical reasoning suggests that the mind cognitively follows this direction. Without the political opinions based on the politician's experience, the rest can obviously not follow.

If figurative origins are traced back from the textual level, the hypothesis in this model is that items may first be identified as linguistic metaphors (level 1) from which mappings at the conceptual metaphor parameter (level 2) can be construed. The second parameter is open to a certain amount of flexible interpretation, but mappings become more precise when the additional parameters are taken into consideration. The third parameter (level 3) concerns the actual reference point of a mapping, without which the meaning of a metaphor is incomplete. Consequently, a mapping may be likened to a triangular pattern: point A refers to the source domain, point B to the target domain and point C to the mapping's reference. It usually relates to different conceptual entities such as people, objects, themes or events. The reference of the liberty mapping in the Statue of Liberty symbol above is the fact that America is depicted as a free society. Immigrants are able to escape from the restrictive measures in their own countries and find employment.

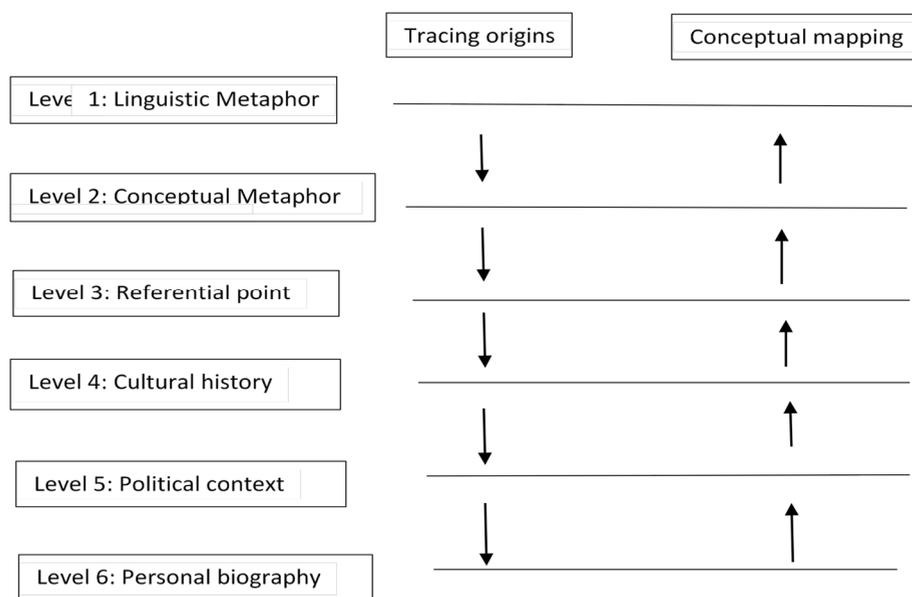


Figure 1. A 6-tier model of figurative origins (Trim 2022)

Reference is very often linked to extra-linguistic parameters, as in cultural history (level 4). The point in time is an important factor when a figurative item is innovated. The US Immigration Act of 1891, five years after the completion of the Statue of Liberty, introduced new immigration legislation which included, among other policies: “the deportation of immigrants present for less than a year if government authorities later found them excludable” (Baxter & Nowrasteh 2021). Continuing harsher restrictions of this kind during the first half of the 20th century undoubtedly changed the symbolic significance of the beckoning statue, at least in the eyes of the Bureau of Immigration.

Cultural history is closely associated with the political context (level 5) of the discourse which very often includes a specific narrative. Without the context, many metaphors may be difficult to interpret. This is particularly the case in literary discourse such as the framework of a novel, in which there is always a narrative or plot providing important contextual information in the interpretation of figurative language. In political discourse, there is usually an overall narrative which forms part of a message that a politician attempts to convey. Finally, the sixth parameter (level 6) concerns the biography of the person who creates figurative language. In literary discourse, personal biography can play an important part in interpretation or at least in understanding its use. This often appears to be the case for politicians, although some politicians may be simply citing the party or governmental line and this form of analysis may be more difficult. Some cognitivists have alluded to these features such as Kövecses (2005, 2006) who discusses cultural history (Kövecses 2005: 241), context in relation to the cross-cultural dimension (2005: 232–241) and personal history (2005: 242–243, 2006: 169–170).

The fact that there are indeed various extra-linguistic parameters in figurative origins which can change according to time and geographical space, as well as the diversified interpretation of symbols, contributes to the assumption that political symbolism must, *de facto*, lead to multidirectional conceptual mapping. This depends on which politician or political party is attempting to build up a notion of identity, regardless of the size of their public support. It implies that the same linguistic metaphors can have varying conceptual metaphors and, in turn, different referential points, cultural histories, narratives and personal biographies. Although not all parameters may necessarily play an equal role, or some may be excluded for lack of relevance or information according to the analysis in question, the following recent research of the “family” symbol in American and French political discourse may briefly illustrate the divergence of parameters within the same symbol and linguistic metaphor. Since Antiquity, this symbol has been used to link the concepts of family and politics within a patriarchal system, according to Aristotelian tradition (Hittinger 2013, Goodsell & Whiting 2016).

Ignoring the last parameter of personal biography at this stage, the first five parameters may be observed in the following example. In American and French presidential speeches, the same linguistic metaphor, family/*famille* in parameter (1) has often been employed but it appears that it stems from two sub-types of conceptual metaphor. In American English, its use is based primarily on a NATION IS A FAMILY metaphor and in French it is more generally adopted as a POLITICAL PARTY IS A FAMILY mapping in parameter (2) (Trim 2018: 87–104). On the basis of this research, it may also be suggested here that the family acts as a political symbol which embodies these two types of identity construction: nation-building in America and the cohesion of political party members in France. They are thereby construed according to differing conceptual metaphors within the same family symbol. The following examples of speeches, given by American and French presidents, point out the differences:

- (1) *That cancer is the budget deficit. Year after year, it mortgages the future of our children. No family, no nation can continue to do business the way the Federal Government has been operating and survive* (George H.W. Bush 1990).

The image of identity in a political party can be seen in the following French speech:

- (2) *I'm telling my friends and to all of you who are my family [...] Today you look like a united family [...] I would like to say you're like a faithful friend who honours our **political family*** (Nicolas Sarkozy 2007)¹.

¹ « Je le dis à mes amis, à vous tous qui êtes ma famille [...] Vous donnez aujourd'hui l'image d'une famille unie [...] Je voudrais dire que c'est un ami fidèle, qui fait honneur à notre famille politique ».

In the first example by George W. Bush, there is a direct connection between a family and a nation in the second line of the quote. In the second example, Nicolas Sarkozy makes a direct comparison between a united family and a political family when addressing his own political party. In American political speeches, in particular, members of a family are often used to reinforce the image of the nation as a family, as in the expression, “the future of our children”. This aspect is elaborated in speeches incorporating several generations such as:

- (3) *The only reason we are here is because generations of Americans were unafraid to do what was hard, to do what was needed even when success was uncertain, to do what it took to keep the dream of this Nation alive for **their children and their grandchildren*** (Barack Obama 2010).

Further developments in this research also suggest that the divergence in conceptual metaphor in the same symbol is thus supported by the additional parameters. Interpretation of varying referential points can be observed in the mappings of parameter (3): a nation versus a political party. Deeper analysis of the reasons for such divergence can be seen in parameter (4), the cultural history of the mappings. American presidential speeches using this symbol are largely based on the image of the Founding Fathers at the beginning of the American Constitution. As a result, American speeches address the nation as a whole, while the French speech above identifies with a particular party within the political spectrum. It is not fully clear how the latter has developed but there have been many fluctuations in identity with the French national motto, as outlined below.

Indeed, parameters such as cultural history naturally fluctuate through the time dimension. On the American side, in particular, the symbol had a stronger connection to religious influence in the past:

- (4) *We are all called upon by the highest obligations of duty to renew our thanks and our devotion to our **Heavenly Parent*** (John Tyler 1841).

French history involving the symbol tends to be more complex. One salient feature of cultural history in the family symbol is the notion of ‘brotherly’, or French *fraternel*, as in English ‘fraternal’:

- (5) *On 6 May, there was only one victory, France which did not want to die, which wanted order but also movement, progress but **fraternity**, efficiency but justice, identity but being open* (Nicolas Sarkozy 2007)².

However, the reference of fraternity in the symbolic expression is very often linked to the slogan introduced during the French Revolution: “liberty, equality, fraternity” (*liberté, égalité, fraternité*). These three words embody the following conceptual metaphors: LIBERTY IS A NATION, EQUALITY IS A NATION and

² « Le 6 mai, il n’y a eu qu’une seule victoire, celle de la France qui ne veut pas mourir, qui veut l’ordre mais qui veut aussi le mouvement, qui veut le progrès mais qui veut la fraternité, qui veut l’efficacité mais qui veut la justice, qui veut l’identité mais qui veut l’ouverture ».

FRATERNITY IS A NATION. The concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity are thus mapped onto the nation and represent the rejection of the preceding monarchy. Nevertheless, identity with these concepts have fluctuated throughout history. It seems likely the motto had religious connotations at its inception. The reason is that the fraternity image, as it appears in the Declaration of Human Rights (1793), resembles the biblical passage: “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you” (Luke 6: 31). This religious connotation led it to being rejected as national identity by French Free Masons such as Léon Gambetta and Jules Ferry (Zask 2011). The latter historical figures played an important role in the founding of the Third Republic in France.

In addition, the word ‘fraternity’ was actually erased from the motto by Philippe Pétain during the Vichy regime. The word was then re-introduced after the Second World War. The constant changing of identity also led to the word representing that of a smaller group than the nation, such as a political party in example (5) above. Fluctuations along the diachronic dimension thus change referential points and political narratives within cultural history.

Further analysis of origins regarding the context and possible political narratives in these examples, as in parameter (5), may be carried out in the following way. In example (1), the context of Bush’s speech is about Federal government spending and, in this particular case, the problem of a budget deficit. For this reason, he suggests there has to be a very strict procedure to deal with the problem. He therefore attempts to unite the nation behind this symbol and the relationship to family spending. However, the ensuing political narrative within this context may also be open to divergence. It has been suggested that two particular narratives have developed in the NATION IS A FAMILY conceptual metaphor of current American politics. One is the idea of a STRICT FATHER morality among conservatives and the other a NURTURANT PARENT model among liberals (Lakoff 2003, 2006).

The first implies three major aspects: i) morality – evil is all around and the basis of morality is self-reliance and self-discipline; ii) justice – people get what they deserve; iii) child development – children have to learn self-discipline and justice through rewards and punishment. In relation to these themes, the second views morality about understanding and respecting other people; justice is not perfect and many people do not seem to be rewarded for their hard work; child development depends on well-meaning parents. The reflection of these family ideals is to be seen, according to its proponents, in policies of the STRICT FATHER model such as the condemnation of abortion, military spending and intervention abroad, as well as a fixed-percentage income tax. The opposite is manifest in the NURTURANT PARENT model.

The question here is whether Bush’s speech follows the STRICT FATHER or NURTURANT PARENT models. Since Lakoff tends to adhere the former model to the Republicans and the latter to the Democrats, the narrative may be construed on different lines between examples (1) and (3), since Bush and Obama belong to the different respective parties. Be that as it may, it is possible that the conceptualisation of the symbol may also diverge accordingly within American politics.

On this basis, it may be therefore suggested that the methodological framework proposed above can help explain not only unity in political symbolism but also its trend towards divergence. The combination of some or all of the parameters outlined in this discussion appear to contribute to how the same symbols may be used to propose very different political agendas of identity. In order to examine the application of this model to identity construction, the aspect of divergence in conceptual mapping will be explored more fully in the following discussions regarding the French general election of 2022.

3. Data and methodology: Identity construction in French politics

The 2022 election involved a number of key political issues which were associated with the French presidency of the European Union during the first half of that year. Furthermore, there was considerable debate between the mainstream / non-mainstream media and social networks used by different candidates regarding political measures adopted at the time for the SARS-CoV-2 (severe acute respiratory syndrome), or Covid pandemic. Two types of national symbols will be discussed here in this connection: the national motto outlined above, and France's wartime hero, Charles de Gaulle. The latter figure is still an important referential point in French history, often being used as a guiding model in political discourse. At the time of writing, the French Prime Minister, Elisabeth Borne, cited De Gaulle's name as a symbol of democracy while putting pressure on the adoption of a pensions reform bill by using the controversial paragraph 49.3 in Constitutional law:

- (6) *The 49.3 is not the invention of a dictator but the profoundly democratic choice of **General De Gaulle** which was approved of by the French nation, (Elisabeth Borne 2023)³.*

The beginning of the symbolic appearance of De Gaulle may be dated to his speech on wartime resistance on 18 June 1940. The speech was not recorded and precise information in the text has been subject to debate. The French newspaper, *Le Monde*, however, claims that certain declarations in popular memory were not true, although others can be verified. The latter statements include:

- (7) *Whatever happens, the flame of French resistance must not be extinguished and will not go out, (Charles De Gaulle 1940)⁴.*

This paved the way to the beginning of the Resistance movement after the armistice signed by the two wartime figures, Philippe Pétain and Wilhelm Keitel, on 22 June 1940. The political events throughout and after the war led to De Gaulle becoming a national hero of freedom and independence. Consequently, the label of Gaullism was often used in political discourse to represent his form of politics.

³ « Le 49.3 n'est pas l'invention d'un dictateur, mais le choix profondément démocrate qu'a fait le général de Gaulle et qu'a approuvé le peuple français ».

⁴ « Quoi qu'il arrive, la flamme de la résistance française ne doit pas s'éteindre et ne s'éteindra pas ».

However, he was not always free of criticism. Some biographies suggest that, despite the construction of a myth after the war, De Gaulle was also seen as an opportunist in the same way as the Free Masons, Gambetta and Ferry, cited above, (Le Gall 2000, reviewing Agulhon 2000). Be that as it may, the symbol of Gaullism has traditionally embodied conceptual metaphors such as the predominant ones of LIBERTY IS FRANCE (A NATION), INDEPENDENCE IS FRANCE (A NATION), SOVEREIGNTY IS FRANCE (A NATION), etc. in political discourse right up until the present day.

The discourse of two very different types of political narratives with the same themes and symbolic images will now be analysed in the following discussion: a press conference by the current French president, Emmanuel Macron, on the one hand, and on the other, discourse in various media by the politician, Florian Philippot, and his followers.

During the first six months of 2022, the French president, Emmanuel Macron, also held the office of president for the European Union Council. In his press conference of 9 December 2021, one of the objectives for the presidency was European sovereignty (Macron 2021). This entailed the following issues on the political agenda: global warming; censorship of certain online data; work equality; a common military defence programme and a common economic policy regarding globalisation. The aims could therefore be construed as a common identity among membership states with regard to a broad number of political issues.

The Secretary of State for European Affairs, Clément Beaune, introduced various symbols at the press conference relating to European and French identity. One group of symbols associated with identity included a logo depicted as U>E, (*Union européenne*, European Union), in which an arrow is pasted on top of the two letters. The arrow symbolises progress. The letter U is filled with the stars of the European Union which represent the member states and their corresponding unity. The general design is completed with the specific national colours of France: the letter U is in blue and E in red on a white background to represent the three national colours of the French flag. The logo of the presidency is presented by the host as representing a “more sovereign, unified and democratic Europe” (Fig. 2).



Figure 2. Logo of the European Union under French presidency introduced at the French President's 2022 press conference

In addition, a new 2-euro coin was introduced at the press conference with a design on one side of the coin which incorporates the stars of the European Union in a new pattern. On the other side, the French motto is inserted into the design of an oak and an olive tree which are presented as being ecological symbols. The stars are inserted in the traditional circular pattern and the new coin symbolises the unity of a common currency among the nations of Europe, (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Symbols of the 2-euro coin under French EU presidency, 2022 press conference

The overall theme of European sovereignty as represented in the two symbols thereby embodies a number of conceptual metaphors. It may be suggested that the logo incorporates the sub-mappings of PROGRESS IS AN ARROW, UNITY IS STARS and THE PRESIDENCY IS A TRICOLOUR. These are conceptualised within the particular theme of sovereignty, among others, outlined above. The coin represents UNITY IS A COMMON CURRENCY, ECOLOGY IS AN OAK/OLIVE TREE and the motto is transposed onto the European political agenda with LIBERTY IS THE EUROPEAN UNION, EQUALITY IS THE EUROPEAN UNION and FRATERNITY IS THE EUROPEAN UNION. This may be seen in some of the issues outlined above such as work equality and the independence of Europe in matters of defence policy. It may be concluded at this stage that the general theme of sovereignty represented by the French government is a future vision of SOVEREIGNTY IS THE EUROPEAN UNION. In other words, the referential point of the French motto in this case is Europe and a basic idea behind it could be construed as common European identity.

As suggested above, conceptual divergence can lead to different political messages and the following types of discourse will demonstrate an opposing political agenda using the same symbols. The parameter of reference thereby acts in this case as the origin for conceptual divergence in identity construction. A further innovation is the particular use of linguistic metaphors which may take on a more extreme hyperbolic form.

There are a number of political groups classified as being on the right-wing or extreme right-wing of the French political spectrum who support the ideal of French, rather than European, sovereignty. The overall concept of sovereignty is diverse, and its advocates are not only limited to the right-wing, but specific, related issues regarding the European Union, the monetary union, globalism and pandemic measures will be examined here. The groups tend to support political movements similar to BREXIT in the UK, called FREXIT in France, although other issues may not necessarily overlap. The result is that the conceptual mapping of sovereignty, with its associated symbols, changes its referential point to France rather than Europe. The overall mapping is SOVEREIGNTY IS FRANCE and not THE EUROPEAN UNION.

Among the right-wing politicians in France who have similar political objectives are Marine Le Pen, Marion Maréchal, Eric Zemmour, Florian Philippot and Nicolas Dupont-Aignan. The latter, whose political party is *Debout la France* – France: Stand up (Fig. 4) proposes liberty as the main theme of sovereignty for France by using the national motto described above. As an official candidate, he used the Twitter social network to convey this message during the election campaign:

- (8) *I take pleasure in revealing a preview of my official poster for the presidential election campaign. #Choose liberty for France to retrieve our national independence and liberty so the French can once again live in a country of equality and fraternity, (Dupont-Aignan 2022)*⁵.



Figure 4. Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, 2022 (TF1)

The conceptual mappings, based on the motto, may be summarised here as LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY IS FRANCE with a referential shift to the nation

⁵ « J’ai le plaisir de vous dévoiler, en avant-première mon affiche officielle de campagne pour cette campagne présidentielle. #Choisir la Liberté de la France pour retrouver notre indépendance nationale, liberté des Français pour revivre dans un pays d’égalité et de fraternité ».

within the Gaullist tradition. Indeed, Dupont-Aignan claims to be “a Gaullist candidate” and mappings reflect the Gaullist metaphors proposed above. Typical political programmes on the right-wing of the political spectrum in his manifesto include FREXIT or, failing that, a fundamental change to EU policies, as well as an exit from NATO. The rationale is then a move towards independence from external political affairs.

A methodological analysis thus includes a shift in reference which is tied to recent political issues linked to cultural history of the past and the consequent political narrative of today. In short, argumentation of this kind developed in France due to a number of mixed events which have taken place in recent years. The first was undoubtedly the outcome of the BREXIT campaign in the UK. The second was the rejection of recent pandemic measures introduced by the French government. A third factor is related to French involvement in the current Ukrainian crisis which started shortly before the French presidential campaign. All are considered to be anti-libertarian and therefore form part of the LIBERTY IS FRANCE mapping. This situation can be seen in another protagonist of the narrative, Florian Philippot. The language he uses in his political discourse is particularly rich in symbolic metaphor within the Gaullist tradition, although the choice of many linguistic and conceptual metaphors are personal ones. On the basis of the foregoing discussions, Philippot’s discourse offers a useful model for exploring figurative origins of identity construction within the overall, 6-tier parameter framework outlined above.



Figure 5. Florian Philippot (left) and Nicolas Dupont-Aignan 2022 (AFP)

So far, it has been seen that conceptual metaphor mappings can vary across cultures, time and within the same culture, according to the political programmes involved. The same themes involve different mappings of symbols according to viewpoints but may also imply diverse reference points with similar source-to-target mappings. Florian Philippot, politically associated with Dupont-Aignan,

(Fig. 5), formed his own political party, *Les Patriotes* (The Patriots). He was also a candidate during the 2022 French presidential campaign but, like Dupont-Aignan, was eliminated during the first round.

A useful text for analysis is the following which he posted on his party website, *Les Patriotes*. It concerns the anti-COVID measures introduced by the French government and his opposition to them:

- (9) *Join the Patriots, a free movement which I am leading for FREXIT, to resist oligarchies and for France. The homeland is in danger of **dying**, let us all fight to save it. These strong words were uttered 80 years ago, to the very day, by **Charles De Gaulle** in his famous appeal for resistance on 18 June 1940. (...) He was faced by those who have always been on the side of the enemy, collaboration and treachery. If they spend their time on giving the opposite message to **Charles De Gaulle's** mission, commemoration then becomes a dangerous scam which needs to be exposed. Today, our homeland again runs the risk of **dying**... (...) leading this political revolution in the **Gaullist** tradition since **Gaullism** has never been anything else than revolutionary. Revolutionary as opposed to conformity, as opposed to giving up, as opposed to despair (...). The **traitors** and **collaborators** today in 2020 have to be named. Today, the **traitors** and **collaborators** are those who left thousands of Frenchmen to die due to conflicts of interest and corruption with the pharmaceutical industry (...) they are those who slowly restricted our liberty (...), they are those who make **slaves** out of French men and women – **slaves of debt, slaves to banks, slaves to the golden fascism** that exists today (...) they are those who knowingly destroy the French nation by importing ethnic conflicts from the Anglo-American world ... **Charles De Gaulle** would be on our side ... he would fight for **a new Frank coin, a symbol of our unity**... Long live **General De Gaulle**, long live the Resistance and long live France!⁶*

(Florian Philippot 2022)

⁶ « Rejoignez les Patriotes, mouvement libre que je préside pour le FREXIT, pour la résistance face à l'oligarchie, pour la France. La patrie est en péril de mort – luttons tous pour la sauver. Ces mots énergiques ont été prononcés il y a 80 ans, jour pour jour, par Charles De Gaulle lors de son célèbre appel à la résistance du 18 juin 1940. (...) Face à ceux qui ont toujours été à côté de l'ennemi, de la collaboration et de la trahison. Passer son temps à faire l'inverse du message de la pensée, de l'œuvre de Charles De Gaulle, alors la commémoration devient une dangereuse escroquerie qu'il faut dénoncer. Aujourd'hui, notre patrie est de nouveau en péril de mort... (...) pour conduire cette révolution politique dans un esprit gaulliste parce que le gaullisme n'a jamais été autre chose que révolutionnaire. Révolutionnaire face au conformisme, face au renoncement, face à la désespérance (...) Il faut nommer les traîtres et les collaborateurs d'aujourd'hui en 2020. Aujourd'hui, les traîtres et les collaborateurs sont ceux qui ont laissé mourir des milliers de Français par conflits d'intérêts, par corruption, avec l'industrie pharmaceutique. (...) sont ceux qui restreignent progressivement toutes nos libertés (...) sont ceux qui mettent les Françaises et les Français en esclavage – esclaves de la dette, esclaves de la banque, esclaves de ce fascisme doré d'aujourd'hui (...) sont ceux qui détruisent sciemment la nation française, en important les conflits ethniques anglo-saxons... Charles de Gaulle serait de notre côté...il battrait pour un nouveau franc, symbole de notre liberté... Vive le Général De Gaulle, vive la Résistance et vive la France ! »

4. Results: A 6-tier model of figurative parameters in political discourse

The results of the methodological analysis may begin with level 1 of the 6 parameters: linguistic metaphors. First and foremost, the over-riding figurative concept is the symbol, Charles De Gaulle and this symbol of unity is backed up by the proposition of a new Frank coin. A selection of prevalent linguistic metaphors includes: dying, traitors, collaborators and slaves.

The terms “traitors” and “collaborators” stem from the wartime Resistance movement. The last term is sub-divided into slaves of debt, slaves to banks and slaves to the metaphor “golden fascism”. The images of the latter therefore refer to money (golden) and a strict monetary system on the analogy with a political doctrine encompassing totalitarian measures (fascism). In many ways, terms such as “traitors”, “collaborators” and “golden fascism” are similar to the use of hyperbole as a means of emotionalisation in British political discourse on the BREXIT and COVID debates in the UK (Musolff 2021). In the first case, highly emotional figurative language in the form of hyperbole was used as a war of liberation against the EU as in, for example, the Daily Telegraph quotes: “Victory for Brussels is inevitable. In adopting Chequers, we have gone into battle waving the white flag”, or: “The EU are treating us with naked contempt – we must abandon this surrender of our country (Musolff 2021: 637). In the second case, Boris Johnson’s use of hyperbole implies a confrontation scenario (UK versus COVID) with superiority, and probably victory, for one side over the other: “[...] looking at it all, that we can turn the tide within the next 12 weeks, and I’m absolutely confident that we can send coronavirus packing in this country.” (Musolff 2021: 640).

The use of Philippot’s hyperboles are, indeed, very emotional since terms such as “collaboration” and “fascism” evoke painful memories of the wartime period. In today’s technology of social networks, the reaction to this type of rhetoric can often be seen in the comments or discussions below messages and announcements online. A perusal of such comments reveals how readers often react in line with the author’s intent and that the use of emotional language can have a considerable impact. This naturally depends on the media outlet but personal websites usually imply political followers and readers react according to the party line.

At the second level of analysis regarding conceptual metaphors, the main symbol with its associated symbols and linguistic metaphors in the passage embody the following mappings in the order found in the text. Symbols and conceptual metaphors may be listed as follows:

Symbols:

LIBERTY IS DE GAULLE

LIBERTY IS A NEW FRANK COIN

Embodied conceptual metaphors:

THE HOMELAND IS DEATH

THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY AND ITS AGENTS ARE TRAITORS

THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY AND ITS AGENTS ARE COLLABORATORS
VICTIMS OF THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY AND ITS AGENTS ARE SLAVES
VICTIMS OF BANKS ARE BANK SLAVES
VICTIMS OF BANKS ARE DEBT SLAVES
MONETARY POLICY OF COVID MEASURES IS GOLDEN FASCISM

As far as the actual mappings of symbols are concerned, the source domain of liberty is mapped onto the target domain symbols of Charles De Gaulle and the new frank coin referring to the currency in use before the euro was adopted. The latter is used to promote unity and therefore group identity. Within the classification of conceptual metaphors, there are a number of suggested mappings. One general mapping is clear in which France is portrayed as dying. The others may be construed as financial constraints regarding the pharmaceutical industry and the role of the banks. In each case, the general population is represented as being a victim of the latter on account of the pandemic measures introduced by the government. These underlying conceptual metaphors of the expressions in the text reinforce the emotional aspect of the rhetoric used.

The third level of referential points is relatively clear in these mappings but it would be useful to define the points as they are essential in comparative rhetoric and to ascertain which features figurative language refers to. The symbolic mappings of the first group clearly refer to France, in contrast to the European Union in the French presidency examples. Likewise, the first mapping in the second classification, which embodies death, also refers to France. With regard to the other mappings, traitors and collaborators refer to the people working in the pharmaceutical industry who produce vaccines and the government agencies who sign contracts with the major companies. The slaves are the general public who are paying for the vaccines and are indebted to the banks. The metaphor of fascism refers to the implied financial severity of the pandemic measures introduced by the government.

Level four involving cultural history relates to French developments during the Second World War and the symbol of De Gaulle in line with the events described above. Without these events, such symbolism could not be used. In addition, there was a certain section of the French general public who was against the measures, particularly during the lockdown period. Philippot himself, in the name of his political party, organised weekly demonstrations in Paris at this time against such measures.

Level five, with regard to the context of figurative language in this study, may be seen in the political narrative that Philippot conveyed, i.e., based on the aspect of liberty regarding the particular theme of anti-COVID measures. This was conducted in conjunction with political parties in other countries such as Italy. At the same time, anti-COVID protests formed part of a wider political agenda which included other policies outlined above such as the EU, monetary policy, NATO, immigration, and overall national sovereignty.

These aspects lead onto the sixth and final level of origins in figurative language and its influence on metaphoric creativity: the personal biography of a politician. Philippot attempts to build up national identity with symbolism based on essential referential points within a broad nationalistic framework. It represents a widespread political approach often adopted by populist rhetoric. How did he personally come to embrace these ideals? This is not always an easy task of investigation. In Philippot's case, however, he appears to be more individualistic and innovative in his language, rather than a politician quoting a party line. A few general indications will be given here to outline the general principle.

A brief summary of Philippot's background may be presented with regard to relevant points about political symbolism. His general political thinking appears to be strongly influenced by common activities within his family. This, in turn, reflects on the types of political adherence he followed during his studies and subsequent professional career. His parents, whose profession was in school education, were originally left-wing in their political beliefs. They voted, for example, for François Mitterand of the Socialist Party at the 1981 French presidential campaign. However, their political activities turned to the right afterwards and Florian Philippot's father, Daniel, was put forward as Director of a right-wing teachers' association, *Racine* (Root), by Marine Le Pen in 2015. His brother, Damien, became advisor to Marine Le Pen during her 2012 presidential campaign and later joined Florian Philippot's own political party, *Les Patriotes*.

The first point to be noted here is that several members of the Philippot family were involved in politics in the same way as Marine Le Pen's party, the *Front National*, founded by her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen. The former's niece and latter's grand-daughter, Marion Maréchal (née Le Pen), became a member of the same political party. The family background therefore appears to play an important part in a politician's political career. The symbolic notion of a political party being a family in France described above can thus represent reality and one conclusion regarding Philippot's career is that the family environment must have played a significant role in his political thinking.

All the features of national sovereignty described above become apparent in his studies and political activities. Among these may be included a dissertation he wrote during his business studies in Paris which focussed on how the Belgian federal model could eventually break up the European Union. He supported Charles Pasqua, (French Home Secretary: 1986–1988, 1993–1995), and his right-wing, sovereigntist party, *Rassemblement pour la France* (Assembly for France). He stated that his political model was De Gaulle and he had plans to found a Gaullist party. He joined the *Front National* and became Vice-President before forming the political party, *Les Patriotes*, as a base for his 2022 presidential campaign. This second point appears to reflect how his family background in politics influenced his career and consequently the type of discourse he created as illustrated in example (9) above.

5. Discussion: From initial ideas to linguistic rhetoric

On the basis of the preceding analysis, the origins of political symbolism, and its objectives in representing identity in specific social groups, become more apparent. It was stated above that cultural symbols embody conceptual metaphors. The structures of these mappings appear to depend on some, or all, of the parameters in the 6-tier model of origins outlined above. This may be seen in political discourse regarding the French presidency of the European Union and the national presidential campaign in 2022. By applying the different parameters, it is possible to see how the same symbols are used for different political agendas of identity construction.

The creative processes of linguistic metaphors used in the examples above may be more transparent if the order of analysis is reversed: in other words, the motivation behind the rhetoric used starts at level 6 with the initial ideas of the politician involved. The actual process of creativity often embodies all parameters simultaneously but the step-by-step analytical procedure defines the individual factors which influence the process. If Florian Philippot's text, (example 9), is taken into consideration, it is clear that he wishes to promote the ideas of liberty, sovereignty and unity for the French nation. These ideas are used with the aim of uniting the French people in favour of an independent France. It could be assumed that, given his family background briefly outlined above, these original ideas come from the political environment of his family members and their associates.

At the next level up, in this case the political context, Philippot proposes a FREXIT manoeuvre, similar to the British BREXIT, in which he uses a narrative that will support French liberty and sovereignty. In order to do so, he resorts to the next analytical step of national symbols embodied in cultural history. The primary symbol is Charles De Gaulle whose leadership involved liberty in the form of the wartime Resistance movement. In addition, currency is often seen as a unitary symbol and the euro depicts a form of dependence on the European Union. For this reason, he wishes to re-introduce a new franc coin as a symbol of unity.

An equally important parameter is the role of reference which indicates any conceptual divergence. Currency signifies unity for the two social groups of France and Europe, the first referring to Philippot's symbolism and the second to the French presidency of the European Union incorporating symbols from the national French motto into the new euro coin. In this way, an over-arching conceptual metaphor may be derived from the symbolic CURRENCY IS UNITY mapping with corresponding conceptual divergence.

This aspect leads onto the parameter of conceptual metaphors employed by Philippot in his Twitter message. Most are financial mappings relating to Covid measures adopted by the government such as 'bank slaves'. These are directly linked to the analogy of his political narrative based on the wartime Resistance movement. Consequently, the conceptual metaphors are used for his particular style of rhetoric which employs hyperboles based on the analogy with the wartime Resistance movement. The style increases the emotional content associated with

wartime suffering with regard to ‘traitors’ and ‘collaborators’. Particularly strong terms are used such as ‘golden fascism’, whereby the political concept is linked to financial management. Once again, the emotional content of such figurative expressions can be extrapolated from dictionary definitions of the political term, ‘fascism’: “a political philosophy, movement, or regime such as that of the Fascisti that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition” (Merriam Webster).

6. Conclusions: Implications of the study for political symbolism and identity construction

A number of implications for future research become apparent from the foregoing analysis. First, it may be concluded that the role of symbolism in general has a significant role to play in political debate and, in particular, within the theme of identity construction in the present study of French politics.

Second, the analysis highlights the types of interaction involved between symbols and conceptual metaphors, as proposed in the foregoing cognitive research on the Statue of Liberty. The symbols illustrated above create a considerable number of conceptual metaphors which develop into a vast array of linguistic metaphors at the textual level.

Third, it may also be deduced that actual origins in figurative creativity involve extra-linguistic factors outside the main core of cognitive linguistics. A model such as the 6-tier framework of figurative origins applied in this analysis suggest that they contribute to the steps leading to the types of linguistic metaphors relating to sovereignty and liberty. These extra-linguistic factors can be seen in the discourse of politicians such as Florian Philippot, ranging from his personal background to the cultural history of France.

Fourth, aspects such as cultural history play a role in the emotionalisation of rhetoric with the use of hyperbolic linguistic structures. National symbols of wartime resistance in France still have a profound effect on political thought, and these symbols are used to further particular political agendas in present-day politics.

Finally, it can be seen that the same symbols can lead to divergent political rhetoric, not only at the international level, as in the former studies of the American and French family metaphor, but at a more fundamental level regarding aims between political parties within the same country. This is emphasised in the present study concerning the sovereignty of France and of the European Union. National symbols in cultural history may be used for opposing political narratives as defined by the parameter of reference. The implication here is that political objectives in two types of discourse may both embody the idea of identity construction but for opposing political aims.

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