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Amity Symbolism as a Resource for Conflict Resolution.

The Case of Franco-German Relations

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ABSTRACT: Since the early 1960s, Franco-German (FG) relations have taken place within an idealistic atmosphere which celebrates “reconciliation” with the hereditary enemy, the importance of the Franco-German “couple”/ “tandem”, and fraternization between French and German young people. This chapter analyses the political signification of those symbolic practices. We argue that Franco-German amity symbolism does not simply reflect the fact that political actors need to resort to idealism in order to legitimize their decisions. The moral notions of amity and reconciliation also provided the meaning structure within which some concrete Franco-German policies have taken shape. The paper therefore sets out to identify which cultural and symbolic resources contributed towards this development.

INTRODUCTION

On September 4th, 2013, French President François Hollande and German President Joachim Gauck visited Oradour-sur-Glane, the Second World War martyr village in central France whose population was massacred by an SS division in 1944 during the Liberation of France. During the ceremony, the two Heads of State stood together in silent commemoration, holding each other's hand. By so doing, they reproduced a symbolic gesture which had resonated strongly in 1984, that of President François Mitterrand and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl holding hands in front of the memorial to the battle of Verdun. These elements illustrate a more general fact: over the last couple of decades, Franco-German (FG) relations have been maintained within an idealistic atmosphere which celebrates “reconciliation” and “friendship” between the two countries. These celebrations take the form of grandiloquent speeches, spectacular political gestures, and commemoration rituals which are intended to give a particular meaning to Franco-German cooperation. This chapter analyzes the forms, the historical importance, and the logic of these symbolic practices. I try to understand whether they have had an impact on Franco-German political relations, and what this tells us, more generally speaking, about how symbolic resources can be used in post-war conflicts.

The text proceeds as follows. The first section presents in more detail the semiotic (form) and semantic (content) elements of those symbolic practices. The latter revolve around three interconnected ideas: the narrative of Franco-German reconciliation, the image of the Franco-German “couple” or “tandem”, and the prophecy of fraternization between young people. We shall see that the habit of displaying such fictional elements emerged in the 1960s, and has never been challenged since then.

Secondly, we shall see that specialists diverge when they assess the political significance of those practices. On the one hand, realist scholars analyze them as mere communicational actions, arguing that they reflect the need to give a moral veneer to decision-making which is mainly driven by material interests. On the other hand, some journalists and historians have argued that these idealistic references to Franco-German “friendship” or “reconciliation” reflect genuine moral motivations on the part of the actors concerned. In what follows, I will put forward a “middle-of-the-road” argument. I will show that these symbolic practices did not revolutionize the course of history but, nevertheless, succeeded in modifying what Gramsci might have called the “common sense” of Franco-German relations.

Finally, I will review the factors which have contributed to these ambivalent but nevertheless remarkable effects. My general argument is that this transnational policy amounts to an embryo of national political symbolism. To put it differently, FG amity symbolism differs from “classical” (national) political symbolisms in magnitude and scope, not in nature. More precisely, it has drawn upon three symbolic resources which proved efficient in fashioning “imagined communities” (Anderson 1991) at the national level: a well-instituted imaginary; the ambiguities of natural language; and the logic of ritualization. All these resources have contributed towards naturalizing the narratives, images and allegories displayed by the actors in this Franco-German theatrical performance.

A SET OF PRACTICES WHICH EMERGED IN THE EARLY 1960s

It is important to bear in mind the general chronology of Franco-German rapprochement in order to understand the political significance of FG symbolism. In what follows, I will follow the mainstream periodization of FG post-war relations by distinguishing three timespans: the conflictual aftermath of the war (1945-1950), the pragmatic rapprochement (the 1950s), and the time of FG amity symbolism (since the early 1960s).

Between 1945 and 1949, Germany had ceased to exist as a sovereign state. The German “territories” were officially ruled by the Allied Control Council, an institution bringing together representatives of the four occupying powers: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union. In practice, however, each of the Allies conducted separate occupation policies. This holds true in particular for France. From 1945 to 1949, France implemented a materialistic security policy toward Germany. This policy consisted of exploiting German economic resources (in particular coal and steel production), attempting to annex some border territories (such as the Sarre region), and blocking the reconstitution of a (West) German democratic state. It is important to note that France pursued this material security policy until the very end of the occupation regime. Indeed, France did not follow the US and the UK when these countries revised their policy towards Germany. In 1947, for instance, France refused to join what appeared to be a prelude to the creation of a West German state, namely the merging of the British and American zones. Until 1949, the French

seemed obsessed by one single question: how to deprive the Germans of the material capability to invade France again.¹

Most specialists agree that Franco-German political rapprochement started in the early 1950s in the context of European integration. In this respect, May 9, 1950 undoubtedly constitutes a key date. At that time, French foreign minister Robert Schuman proposed to eliminate “the age-old opposition of France and Germany” by creating a “supranational community” with powers to organize the production of coal and steel. This proposal resonated with German Chancellor Adenauer’s policy of *Westintegration*. Consequently, the West German government accepted it without hesitation. Following this, the French government ended the state of war with Germany (July 26, 1951) and both governments began cooperating within the framework of the European Coal and Steel Community. The prospect of German rearmament thwarted this process for about four years (1950-1954). However, the Paris Agreements of October 1954 solved all the remaining concrete war legacies: French opposition to West German rearmament, the dispute over the Sarre region, and disagreements regarding cultural cooperation. Consequently, European integration recommenced after the signing of the Rome Treaties of 1957.

At that time, during the 1950s, French and German official representatives conceived of Franco-German cooperation on a highly pragmatic basis. They cooperated within the European framework but hardly ever talked about Franco-German “reconciliation” as a goal

¹ This picture offers only one apparent exception, the cultural domain. Throughout this period, the *Direction de l’Education Publique* of the French occupation administration - the administrative department in charge of cultural issues – implemented a policy which appears, with hindsight, to have been more constructive. It is important to note, however, that this policy did not pursue a different goal. See: Mombert, Monique. 1995. *Sous le signe de la rééducation : jeunesse et livre en Zone Française d’Occupation : 1945-1949*. Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg.

per se. In the few cases when they did, their discourse appeared abnormal and inaudible to the general public. A good illustration of this is Chancellor Adenauer's proposal of March 1950 to create a "Franco-German Union" with one single Franco-German parliament. In contrast to Robert Schuman's "pragmatic" declaration of May 9, 1950, Chancellor Adenauer's ode to Franco-German reconciliation went completely unnoticed². Another example is the Schuman Declaration of May 9, 1950 itself. The word "reconciliation" does not appear in the text. The idea is present, notably when Schuman talks about eliminating the "age-old antagonism between France and Germany". Yet it is always framed as a means towards a greater end: the creation of a "unified Europe".

The rapprochement initiated by Adenauer and de Gaulle in the early 1960s constituted an important turning point in this respect. It gave birth to a new social practice: the habit of commenting on Franco-German cooperation through grandiloquent political speeches and symbolic gestures (Buffet and Hauser 1998: 201; Nourry 2005; Rosoux 2002). One might mention, among other examples:

- The "Ceremony of Reims" on July 8, 1962 when de Gaulle and Chancellor Adenauer attended a mass together in Reims Cathedral (about 45 years after its destruction by German artillery);
- Charles de Gaulle's speech to German youth in Ludwigsburg, Germany, on September 9, 1962;
- The embrace between Adenauer and de Gaulle following the signing of the Elysée treaty in January 22, 1963.

² Beuve-Méry, Hubert. 1950. "La proposition de M. Adenauer pour une union franco-allemande éveille jusqu'ici peu d'écho, 10 mars 1950." *Le Monde*.

Parallel to this, the Elysée treaty provided for the creation of a Franco-German fund in order to encourage meetings between young people. Although this project featured a strong educational component, it was also highly symbolic. Until then, the most striking images concerning “encounters” between French and German young people had been those of their mutual slaughter in First World War trenches (Audouin-Rouzeau 2004; Audouin-Rouzeau 2008), and of their unfortunate fraternization within French and German military units: the German *Waffen SS* from 1941 to 1945 and the French *Légion Etrangère* from 1945 to 1962³. In this context, the youth exchange policy instituted in 1963 sent a completely different message. French and German young people were asked to meet in a peaceful context on a massive basis, with 300, 000 participants each year.

Besides those numbers, the symbolic dimension of this youth exchange policy emerges from the public statements of the time. A senior official responsible for implementing it repeatedly declared, for instance, that it aimed at “bringing about the largest migration of peoples ever organized in human history in peace time and with pacific intentions”⁴. The French Minister of Youth went a step further by declaring, in 1970, that “French and German young people want to go beyond reconciliation. They want the fusion of both nations”⁵.

³ During the Second World War, thousands of French young people enlisted in the so called “Charlemagne” *Waffen SS* division. From 1945 to 1962, thousands of young German people enrolled in the French *Légion Etrangère*. They constituted the most important military units during the Indochina and Algerian wars. (See: Bene 2012; Michels 2006).

⁴ Rovan, Joseph. 1972. “Les relations franco-allemandes dans le domaine de la jeunesse et de la culture populaire (1945-1971).” *Revue d'Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande* 4:675-704.

⁵ Comiti, Joseph. 1970. “Les jeunes de France et d'Allemagne veulent aboutir à la fusion des deux pays.” *La nouvelle république de Centre-Ouest*.

All this illustrates that the early 1960s constituted a turning point for the story under investigation here. It is important to note, in this respect, that this political symbolism has never been seriously challenged since that time. Since the early 1960s, symbolism has revolved around three main tropes: the narrative of Franco-German reconciliation, the image of the Franco-German “couple” or “tandem”, and a prophecy of fraternization between young people.

In 2003, for instance, the French and German governments decided to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Elysée Treaty. They did so by bringing together all French and German members of parliament in the Palace of Versailles. Like the 1962 ceremony in Reims, this gathering worked upon memories of the war (here the memory of the Treaty of Versailles which imposed drastic terms on Germany after WWI) in order to legitimize a rapprochement between the two countries. Six months later, a Franco-German “youth parliament” sat under the cupola of the German Bundestag in the presence of French President Chirac and German Chancellor Schröder. With historical hindsight, the semantic continuity appears all the more striking.

BEYOND REALIST AND IDEALIST READINGS OF FRANCO-GERMAN RECONCILIATION SYMBOLISM

The question of the actual political significance of these symbolic practices has led to stimulating debates within scholarship. Two opposing assessments have emerged in this respect, with the second adopting a more idealistic perspective. The first of these may be called “realist” in the sense of the realist theory of international relations (Gilpin 1996).

Realists have pointed out the gap between the literal meaning of Franco-German reconciliation symbolism and the reality of Franco-German relations. This idea emerges, for instance, from Gilbert Ziebura's seminal book *Die deutsch-französischen Beziehungen seit 1945. Mythen und Realitäten* (Franco-German Relations Since 1945. Myths and realities) (Ziebura 1970). As the title suggests, the book opposes "myths" and "realities" and argues that political leaders resort to the former in order to hide their cynical calculations. This view has led to a voluminous literature which argues that de Gaulle and Adenauer were mainly concerned with power and security interests, and that they invented the story of Franco-German reconciliation, the image of the Franco-German "couple", and the topic of fraternization between young people in order to legitimize their controversial strategic alliance. As a matter of fact, some recent findings support this interpretation. For instance, Nassima Bougherara has shown that the Soviet Union and the United States suspected that the Elysée Treaty entailed secret clauses concerning military cooperation in the nuclear field. Consequently, they strongly criticized the treaty. In this context, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that de Gaulle and Adenauer resorted to reconciliation symbols in order to counter the mainstream characterization of the Elysée Treaty as a military alliance (Bougherara 2006).

A revised version of this realist reading of Franco-German reconciliation symbolism states that de Gaulle and Adenauer invented this set of myths, narratives and allegories for instrumental reasons, and that these became constitutive elements of French and German identities at a later stage. John Baylis has observed a similar mechanism in the context of the Anglo-American special relationship. Quoting Henry Morgenthau, he notes that, more often than not, "the Government fashions an imaginary world that pleases it, and then comes to

believe in the reality of that world and acts as though it were real”⁶. In turn, Valérie Rosoux has convincingly developed this argument concerning Franco-German reconciliation symbolism (Rosoux 2002). Finally, a number of authors have argued that this political symbolism has had no effect on what really matters (to them), namely defense and security cooperation. Buffet makes a strong statement in this respect in his book on myths and international relations:

If the test of mutual confidence and even of the willingness to organize a common defense is applied, it becomes apparent that the relationship glories in symbolism: while the hard facts of operational and doctrinal nuclear concertation are worked out with Britain or even the US, Franco-German defense relations revolve around symbolic parades and the creation of goodwill-furthering joint brigades which are operationally useless, and stripped even of their symbolism with the abandonment of conscription in France (Buffet and Hauser 1998: 203).

At the other extreme of the theoretical spectrum, some authors have taken a more idealist perspective, i.e. a perspective which highlights the importance of the moral motivations of the main figures conveying this symbolism. Thus, a significant number of commentators insist on the (alleged) personal friendship between de Gaulle and Adenauer and their “genuine” desire to associate the French and German peoples with their own personal rapprochement. This literature usually argues that de Gaulle and Adenauer inherited an important cultural legacy: the efforts of those private actors who after 1945 restarted the cultural dialogue between France and Germany (Defrance and Pfeil 2005).

Given its idealistic bent, this literature stresses the idea that Franco-German reconciliation symbolism changed the course of history in a substantial way. Several authors have reached this assessment in respect of the youth exchange program. According to Ménudier, this

⁶ Baylis, John. 1984. *Anglo-American Defense Relations, 1939-1984 : the Special Relationship*. London Macmillan.

program constitutes an “exemplary contribution to the unity of Europe” (Ménudier 1988). Defrance makes a similar point when arguing that the program is the *fleuron* or jewel at the in the crown of Franco-German reconciliation policies (Defrance and Pfeil 2007: 101). This literature is often criticized as hagiographic as it heavily stresses the heroic dimension of the reconciliation process (Deloye 2006). It is interesting in the sense that it helps to overcome one limitation of the realist literature on this subject: namely the notion that States are be the only actors in international relations, and that they only pursue interests defined in terms of national security and power. However, as noted by Lefranc, this literature suffers from an epistemological bias: it does not distance itself from the testimony given by witnesses of the events. Yet witnesses of the processes of reconciliation are not neutral: rather, they have a strong tendency to lend enchantment to the reconciliation processes in which they participated. Consequently, it is important to deconstruct the discourse of witnesses or, to put this differently, frame this discourse as what it is: a constitutive element of the object under investigation (Lefranc 2006: 8). In what follows, I will take a different stance and analyze this political symbolism as what it is, namely a set of symbolic and ritual practices whose effectiveness has to be studied empirically.

Although co-variation does not mean causality, one can observe that two changes occurred at the same time as the institutionalization of the reconciliation symbolism of Franco-German relations. The first concerns public opinion. Although this change is difficult to assess, it is clear that Franco-German amity symbolism consolidated the pacifying process which began in the early 1950s in the context of European integration. Indeed, quantitative studies reveal that the level of mutual trust increased in the 1960s. Before that time, both French and German public opinion ranked the other country among the countries they trusted the least. From the early 1960s on, mutual representations became “normalized”. In concrete terms, French and German respondents started to rank the other country between the fifth and tenth

countries they trust the most, a level specialists consider as “normal” if one takes into account the structural determinants of mutual trust: the size of the country, its geographical proximity, its GDP, etc. (Rabier and Inglehart 1984).

Besides this, several qualitative enquiries have shown that the image of the other country changed during the 1960s. Admittedly, French and German people have continued to represent each other in a stereotyped way. However, positive stereotypes have taken the upper hand over negative ones (Demorgon 2002). For instance, many French people seem to consider that German people have a penchant for being highly organized. Yet this cliché no longer has the negative connotations it used to have. On the contrary, it is often expressed in a positive way in order to make the point that French people could probably learn from this alleged German talent for organization (Jeanneney 2000). This illustrates a more general trend: positive stereotypes now have the upper hand over negative ones.

A reason for this effect on mutual representations has been proposed by Rosoux in her seminal study of the uses of the past in Franco-German relations. Rosoux shows that French and German political leaders invented various stories in order to legitimize rapprochement between the two countries. She mentions, among others, the narrative presenting the First World War as a “shared martyrdom” (Verdun ceremony in 1984), which frames the various Franco-German wars as a set of “European civil wars” (speech by French President Valéry Giscard-d’Estaing of May 7, 1975), which depicts reconciliation as a return to the original (mythical) union of the Carolingian empire of Charlemagne (de Gaulle’s speech of May 26, 1966 in Verdun), etc. All these stories, Rosoux argues, have contributed towards a “working on the past” in Ricoeur’s sense. They soothed the memory of the conflictual past and naturalized Franco-German rapprochement.

The second measurable effect concerns a change in the commonplace understanding of the role of Franco-German bilateral cooperation within the European framework. Before the early

1960s, cooperation between France and Germany had been understood as a fortunate consequence of European integration (see above). Franco-German amity symbolism began to tell a different story. Through the notion of reconciliation, bilateral cooperation between France and Germany ceased to be understood as an instrument for the greater good. Rather, it became a “greatness” in Boltanski and Thévenot’s sense (Boltanski and Thévenot 1991) that it is by its very nature something to be aimed at.

Although trivial at first sight, this move from the “realm of technology” to the “realm of morality” (Latour and Venn 2002) is important. Indeed, it initiated a change within the European integration dynamic by legitimizing what specialists in the field call the Franco-German special partnership, a key idea which has proved its worth several times in the history of European integration. To cite only a few examples, this Franco-German “special relationship” contributed towards, among other key processes:

- outlining the Common Agricultural Policy in the 1960s (Pinder 1998),
- initiating the institutional reform that led to the direct election of European Parliament in 1979 (Cole 2001),
- setting up monetary union in the early 1990s (Nourry 2005).

All this raises the question of the reasons for this (relative) success story. I turn to this question in the next section by investigating the mechanisms which (probably) explain the power of Franco-German amity symbolism.

THE SYMBOLIC RESOURCES USED BY FRENCH AND GERMAN RECONCILIATION ENTREPRENEURS

The general argument put forward in this chapter is that Franco-German amity symbolism turned into a meaningful political allegory because it sat well with the grammar of (national) political symbolism. Three mechanisms are worth mentioning in this respect.

1/ Relying on well-institutionalized tropes

Students of domestic political symbolism have demonstrated that it does not come out of the blue. In order to find resonances among its audience, it has to rely on a number of shared images and narratives. This is the reason why political symbolisms often develop in an incremental way. In his famous book on this phenomenon, Pierre Nora argues, for instance, that it took the French national novel more than a century to find an institutionalized shape (Nora 1997).

This general observation sheds some light on the (relative) power of FG amity symbolism. A good example is the ceremony of Verdun 1984 when French President Mitterrand and German Chancellor Kohl held each other's hand in front of the ossuary of Douaumont. A couple of hours before the famous photograph was taken, the two political leaders accompanied a group of 2,000 French and German young people on the former battle field. Together, they planted seventy "peace trees" in order to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the start of the First World War.

This theatrical performance was an exact reproduction of another play acted sixty years before. In 1926, French pacifist militant Marc Sangnier invited thousands of French and

German young people to his park at Bierville, near Paris. A number of French official representatives, including the French Deputy Prime Minister and the Crown Prince of Saxony attended the ceremony. Everybody then drove to a battle field of the First World War nearby Reims in order to plant a “Tree of Reconciliation” commemorating the end of the “Great War”.

François Mitterrand and Helmut Kohl probably did not have this example in mind when they organized and played out the political liturgy of Verdun in 1984. However, the resonances between the symbolic elements displayed in both cases - the narrative of reconciliation, the First World War sites of memory, the presence of young people and official representatives, the peace/reconciliation trees, etc. – are not mere coincidence. All these tropes (to use Foucault’s term) had been employed in different contexts during the entire twentieth century. In 1984, they joined together to form a well-constituted political imaginary.

2/ Playing with ambiguous symbols

Students of national political symbolisms have documented the fact that the best symbols are those which legitimize a given political order or policy whilst leaving some space for varying interpretations. The reason for this is functional. On the one hand, the symbols need to transform social representations in a particular way, for instance by fashioning a national novel. On the other hand, the new idea is unlikely to be found an audience if it completely disrupts or contradicts former narratives. Ambiguity serves this purpose of working on meaning without explicitly contradicting existing narratives and memories.

According to Maurice Agulhon (1989), this logic played a central role in the success of the allegorical figure of Marianne under the French Third Republic, with its origins in the context of national defeat in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71. At that time, important segments of

French public opinion were nostalgic for previous regimes, in particular the Bourbon or Orleans monarchies and the Napoleonic empires. In this context, republicans tried to come up with myths and allegories likely to rally skeptics to their cause. Agulhon convincingly shows that the figure of Marianne became a powerful symbol because of her “constructive” ambiguity. On the one hand, it was explicitly republican and echoed some popular “left-wing” images such as Delacroix’s famous painting *Liberty Leading the People*. On the other hand, it clearly echoed the image of Virgin Mary and a number of other Catholic and monarchist symbols such as Joan of Arc (Agulhon 1989).

In the case of Franco-German relations, a similar logic explains the success of the myth of Charlemagne. This myth states, basically, that France and Germany constituted one single country under the reign of Charlemagne, and that this state of being, namely the union of both countries, constitutes the natural form of Franco-German relations. A good illustration of this narrative is de Gaulle’s speech at Verdun 1966 when he stated that the Elysée Treaty signed three years before “re-establishes a natural bond, a natural bond that had been unfortunately broken when Charlemagne’s Empire broke up 1123 years ago” (Rosoux 2002: 66). Now this story did not spring newly-formed to Charles de Gaulle’s mind in 1966. The myth of the Franco-German Carolingian union is a venerable social construct. Without mentioning its earliest occurrences (Durand-Le Guern and Ribémont 2009), the Nazis popularized this myth during the Second World War when they grouped all the French voluntary combatants within the SS “Charlemagne” division. This popular image re-emerged, in a peaceful and democratic way, after the creation of the “Charlemagne Prize” in 1949.

From then on, the figure of Charlemagne began to work as an ambiguous and, therefore, powerful symbol of reconciliation. In the post-war context, the myth told a story which resonated with the memories of several social groups: those who conceived of Franco-German rapprochement as a continuation of the peaceful rapprochement of the 1920s, those

who wanted to continue the collaboration policy of Marshal Pétain with the victors of 1940, those who assumed that France and Germany were starting a new episode in their common history, and others.

3/ Ritualizing the myth

FG amity symbolism displays a third and last characteristic: its extreme degree of ritualization. Sociologists and anthropologists define rites as embodied symbolic practices which are repeated over time in order to state what a given society holds to be sacred. Those body choreographies which display the Franco-German couple obviously fall into this category. This ritualization dynamic also emerges from the fact that French and German political leaders have adopted the habit of celebrating the reconciliation itself (instead of working with the conflictual past as they did until the 1980s). Whereas the first few anniversaries of the Elysée treaty had gone largely unnoticed, the 30th, 40th and 50th anniversaries led to some important ceremonies. In September 2012, François Hollande and Angela Merkel commemorated nothing less than the “Speech to German Youth” given by Charles de Gaulle 50 years before!

At first sight, the ritualization of this symbolism suggests that current political leaders lack imagination. I have personally made this observation in a previous publication (Delori 2007). However, closer investigation may lead one to a different assessment. Indeed, anthropologists and sociologists teach us that political rites – like those displayed at a domestic level – have ambivalent effects. On the one hand, they are noticeably powerless when it comes to giving content to public policies or providing an accurate image of a given community. On the other hand, political rites are successful in shaping a powerful sense of belonging (Durkheim 1912).

Several reasons have been put forward in order to explain this ambivalent performance⁷. Whatever the explanation, it is noticeable in the case of Franco-German relations. On the one hand, French and German people know little about the actual cultures and societies of the other country. On the other hand, they show a strong attachment to the general principle of Franco-German cooperation, as we have seen.

CONCLUSION

This chapter analyzed the origins, consistency, and political signification of Franco-German amity symbolism. I have showed, firstly, that it emerged in the early 1960s and has never been seriously challenged since then. Secondly, I have pleaded for a normalization of the study of this set of symbolic practices, that is to say, for a perspective which would overcome the shortcomings of the realist and idealist literatures on the subject. My central argument is that this symbolism did not revolutionize but instead modified the “common sense” of Franco-German relations in two ways: by “naturalizing” positive stereotypes and by legitimizing the FG special relationship. The reason for this ambivalent performance lies in the allegorical character of the symbolism. It did not provide a clear “policy frame” to French and German political leaders, i.e. a detailed political program to be applied like a road-map. Yet this set of ideas constituted more than a mere diplomatic veneer. It took the form of an

⁷ The most important of these explanations points to the functional “polysemy” of political rites. The fact that they do not have any clear meaning is both an asset and a drawback. This lack of clarity is an asset when it comes to generating a sense of community belonging, but a drawback in the sense that it cannot provide any clear representation of the signified.

embryonic political symbolism. As such, it instituted a sense of belonging and the notion that bilateral relation between France and Germany can be a driver for European integration.

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